

PODIUM

路易斯·西爾圖
Luis Xertu

Halfway Across
未竟之渡
the Rubicon

19.09 ————— 21.11.2026

Halfway across 未竟之渡 the Rubicon

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PODIUM is proud to present 'Halfway across the Rubicon', Rotterdam-based artist **Luis Xertu**'s first solo presentation with the gallery and in Asia. In this new body of paintings, Xertu unfolds a tender, sun-drenched world where the fleetingness of love, beauty, and youth lingers like the last light of summer. He traces delicate passages of intimacy within and beyond friendship, attending to a bittersweet ambivalence shaped by quiet tensions, hidden desires, and unspoken affections that surface as both excess and residue through the fissures of the grammar of social life. The exhibition opens on 19 September (Sat), from 2 to 7 PM, and remains on view through 21 November (Sat).

Rooted in the same sensibility of time's quiet passing, Xertu's practice extends this meditation through his distinctive use of organic matter and process. He incorporates dried flora and foliage—materials that gradually shift from verdant green to autumnal tones—allowing each work to unfold like a slowed cinematic sequence. These evocative scenes are encapsulated beneath a translucent layer of gel that at times form gentle ripples around figures submerged in water, at others create subtle spatial depth that draws the eye inward. Throughout his oeuvre, Xertu returns to recurring backdrops reminiscent of the theatrical black box, imbuing each

composition with a sense of performative stillness and poetic suspension. Here, however, this gravitas is tempered by a palette of cream, violet, and rose, lending the works a newfound lightness and intricacy of touch. Xertu also recently explores the dialogue between movement and stillness through a balance of silkscreen precision and painterly intuition—printing liquid ink on damp canvas in successive variations until one surface attains its rhythm, a texture hovering between appearance and disappearance, like memory itself dissolving beneath water's skin.

The exhibition title draws on the small river in north-eastern Italy that once marked a decisive boundary in the late Roman Republic, and reimagines it as a threshold suspended between becoming and arrival. It conjures the fragile interval in which intimacy has already set itself in motion, yet has not fully revealed its shape—a moment when feeling gathers quietly, lingering at the edge of expression. At the same time, it suggests an emotional point of no return: once desire, attachment, or tenderness have crossed so far, there is no simple way back to the state before they emerged. The title thus holds tension and surrender in the same breath, reflecting Xertu's interest in those charged passages where love moves from the barely perceived to the irrevocably felt.

Work List

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Luis Xertu
Sun Coming Down

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



2
Luis Xertu
Camouflage

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 85 cm | 25.6 x 33.5 in



3
Luis Xertu
Conversation in Purple

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



4
Luis Xertu
Conversation in Pink

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



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Luis Xertu
Conversation in Green

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



6
Luis Xertu
The Waves

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



7
Luis Xertu
Conversation

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
150 x 115 cm | 59.1 x 45.3 in



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Luis Xertu
Gypsophila

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in



9
Luis Xertu
Fertility

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 150 cm | 25.6 x 59.1 in



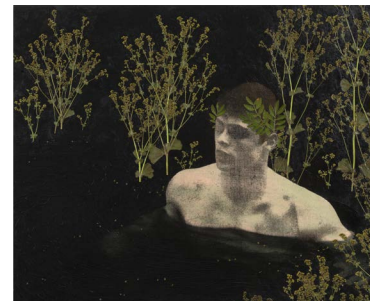
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Luis Xertu
Treading Water

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 150 cm | 25.6 x 59.1 in



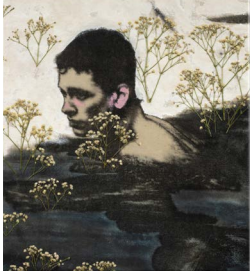
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Luis Xertu
Of Little Light

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ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
55 x 80 cm | 21.7 x 31.5 in



12
Luis Xertu
Held Nothing Against Him

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
60 x 75 cm | 23.6 x 29.5 in



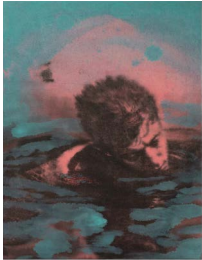
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Luis Xertu
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Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
50 x 45 cm | 19.7 x 17.7 in



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Luis Xertu
A Single Thought

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
60 x 50 cm | 23.6 x 19.7 in



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Luis Xertu
Fahrenheit

2026
Acrylic on canvas
45 x 35 cm | 17.7 x 13.8 in



Luis Xertu
Sun Coming Down

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

Sun Coming Down (2026) unfolds in the afterglow of sunset, where figures stand immersed in jade-green water, gathering the day's last light. Above them, the sky is layered with a pristine, cream-coloured velvet, yet fractured at the same time by gestural punctuations to render the scene precarious, beckoning the men's encounter as they are poised between resolution and heartbreak. As the same gilded warmth of the fading sunrays bathe both flesh and flora, the immediate moment is enveloped with both gravity and intensity, resolving into a final act of ceremonial weight—a quiet rite of passage and acceptance.







Luis Xertu
Camouflage

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 85 cm | 25.6 x 33.5 in





Camouflage (2026) depicts two figures veiling their tender moments by submerging in stirring dark water; yet, the water splashes upward, as if straining to engulf everything within its reach. Through Xertu's spirited brushstrokes, the figures shake in denial, their silhouettes melted into the lake until camouflage becomes an act of escapism, a dissolving of the self into the element that threatens to consume it.





Luis Xertu
Conversation in Purple

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

Baring their bodies but not their souls—Xertu's series of *Conversation* narrates a continuum of parallel scenarios, revealing chapters of the ever-changing psychological landscapes and dynamics of intimacy. *In Conversation in Purple* (2026), violet ripples undulate across the composition, embracing the pair in the gentle hymn of midnight reverie. Yet their gazes once again shy away from each other, falling faintly upon the cold, wavering waters. With words withheld, a silent melancholy settles, seizing this dense, impenetrable moment still beneath the nocturnal light.







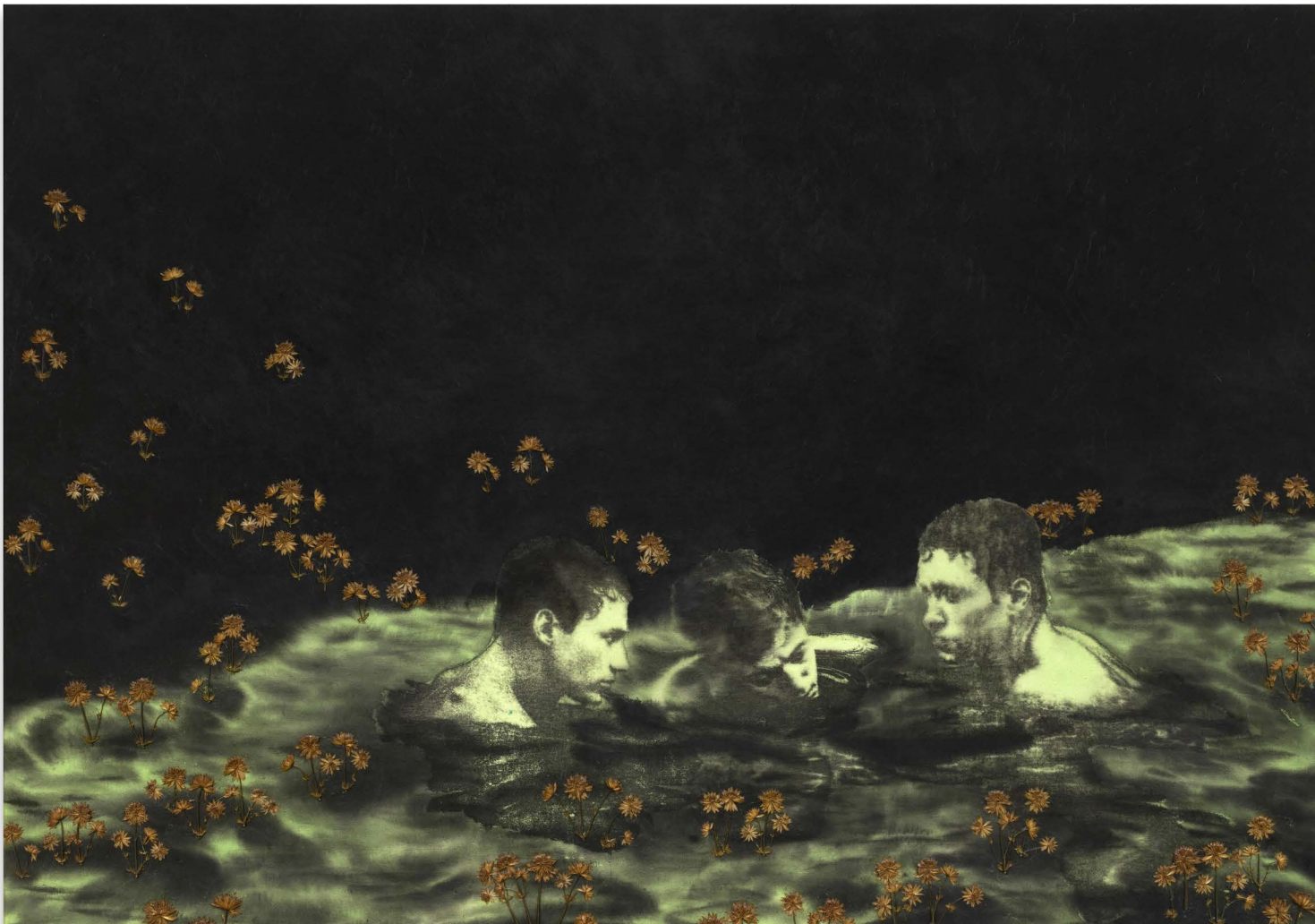
Luis Xertu
Conversation in Pink

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

In *Conversation in Pink* (2026), estrangement sprawls and manifests into a swelling fissure, disrupting the vibrant, blushing dusk with its blackish taint. As the crack of dawn arrives, the pair drifts further apart—one starts to siphon into the metallic rose skyline, while the other is left alone imbued in his lake of melancholia.



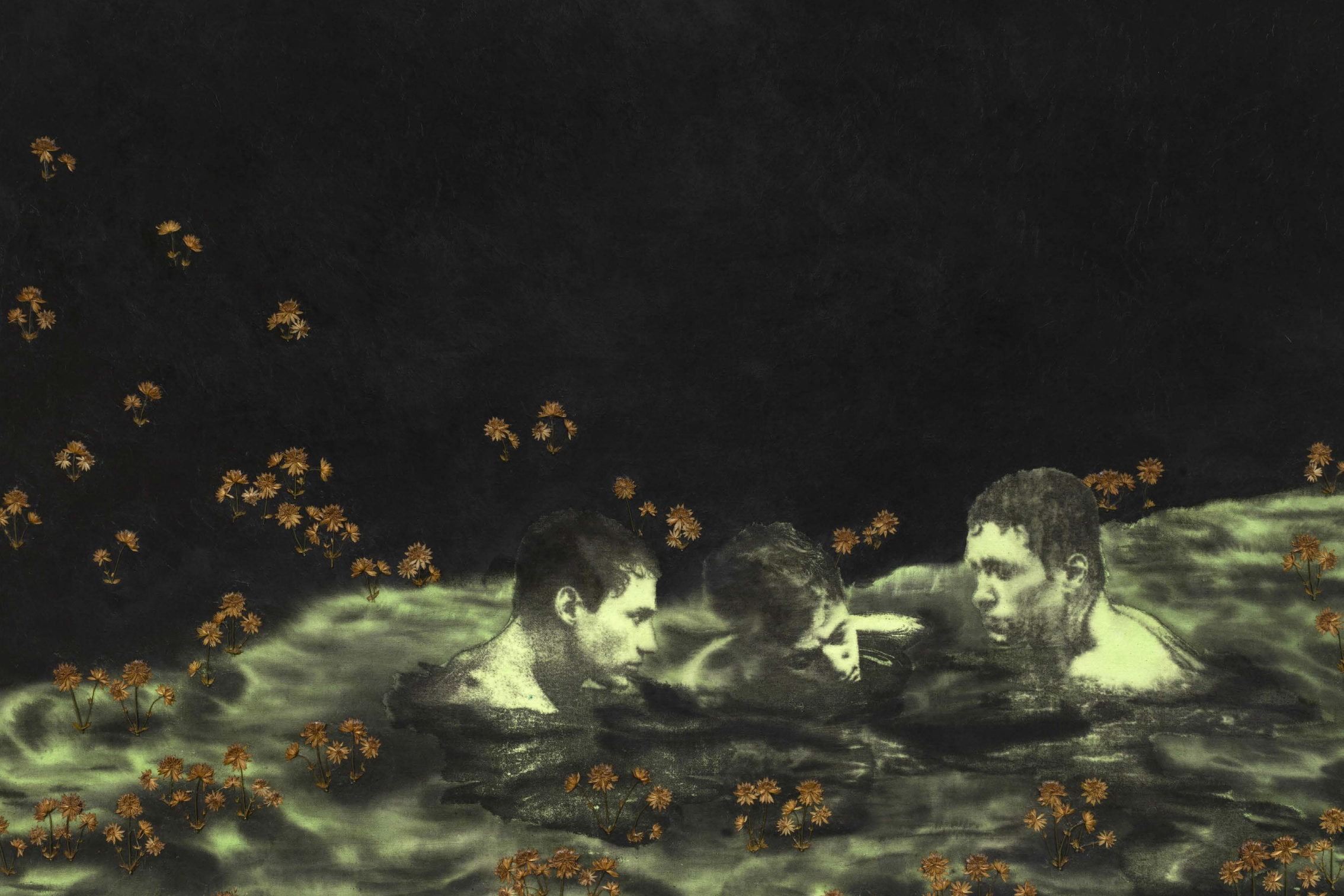


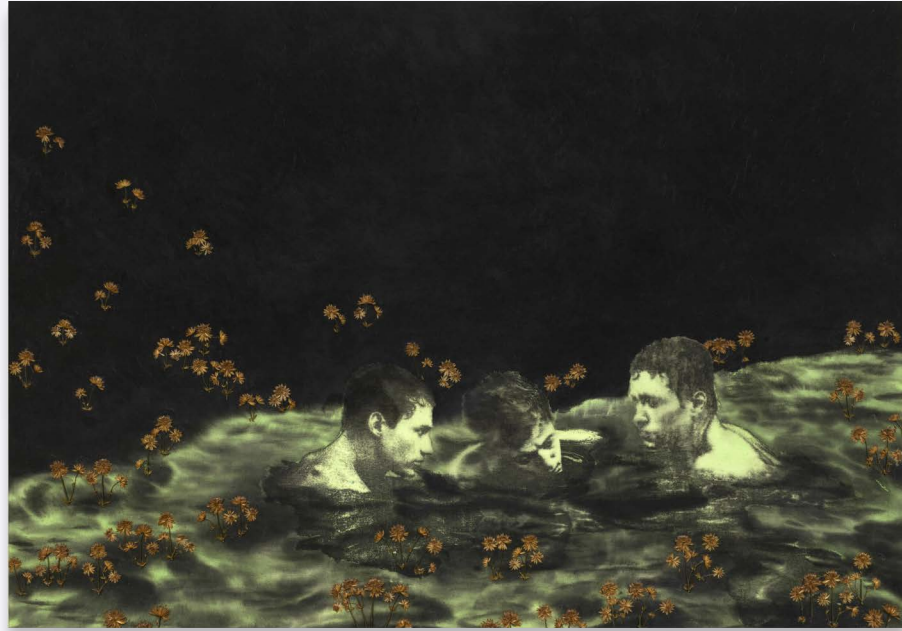


Luis Xertu
Conversation in Green

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

Fate further tangles in *Conversation in Green* (2026), ensnaring a multiplicity of selves in a web of friction and paradox. Submerged in a viscous, lime green swamp, the emotions are at the verge of eruption yet the men are at a loss for words. As golden chrysanthemums bloom across the silky waters, the viewer starts to fathom if the figures may seek resolution between desire and commitment, openness and boundary.



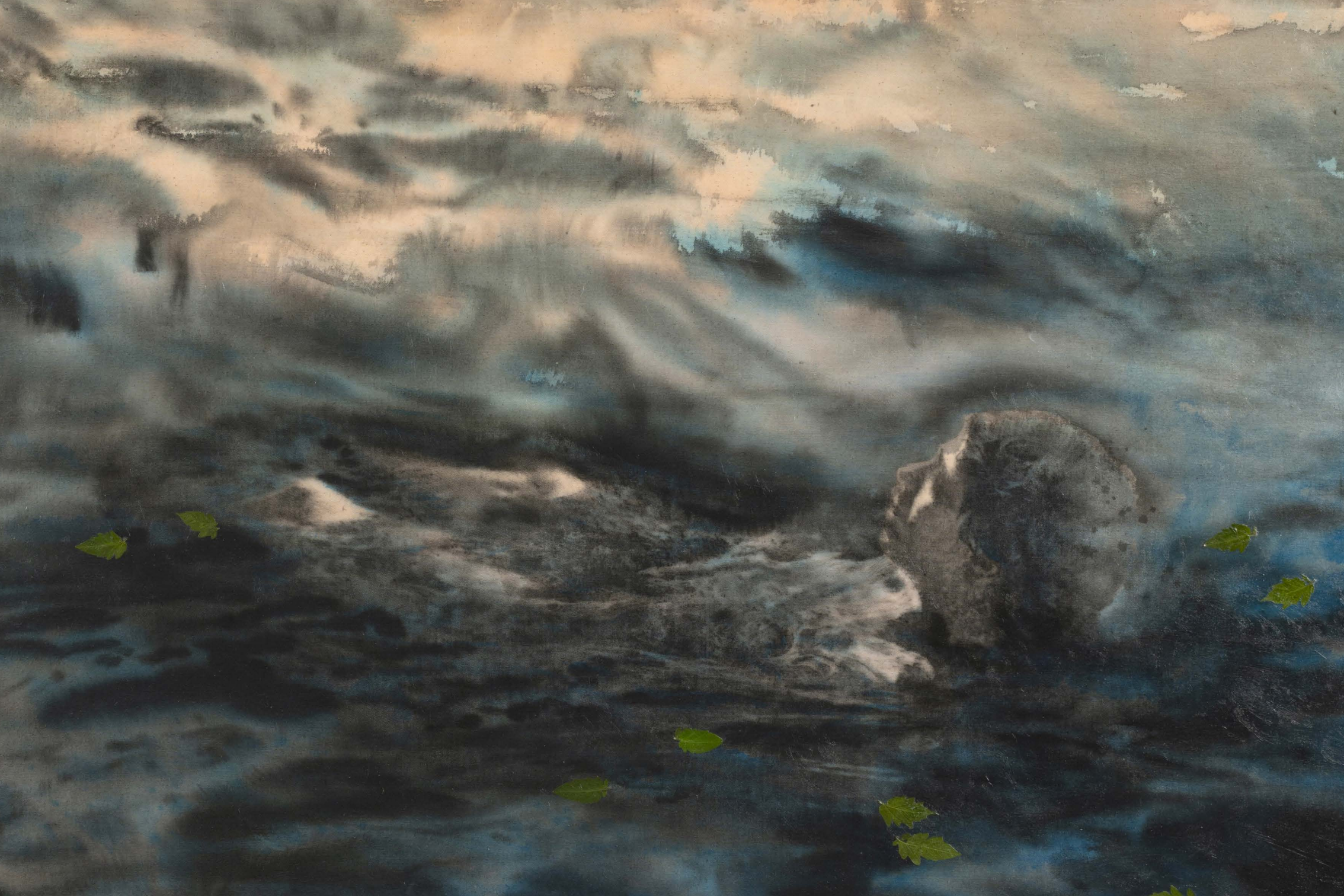




Luis Xertu
The Waves

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

The Waves (2026) unfolds as a dynamic seascape overflowing with immediacy and intensity; fierce, destructive, yet poetically orchestrated, Xertu renders water with rhythmic force and an instinctive palette that answers majestically to light. Here, the currents conflate and conflict, bleeding into the sepia dusk to transform even the sky into a field of volatile, spectral waves. Amidst these restless tides, a solitary figure drifts, stranded and engulfed by the now-distorted collapse of the atmosphere and water body.





The performative suspense that once lingered in Xertu's work, in an instant, ruptures into irrepressible sensibilities: akin to love—or the ache of its afterimage—that can no longer be controlled nor contained. Stirring and colliding, the passionate devotion and the bittersweet memories reverberate in oscillation, like apparitional waves that alternately recede and surge, at times hushed, at times rising from unseen depths to wreak havoc. In surrendering to this vortex of emotions, one is reduced to the frail foliage scattered—abandoned—scantly upon an immeasurable sea, swaying to the errant, indifferent currents of fate.





Luis Xertu
Conversation

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
150 x 115 cm | 59.1 x 45.3 in

Peering through the thickets, *Conversation* (2026) unveils a private encounter between two kindred figures bathing under a lucid summer sky. Framed by lush foliage and branches, they soak naked in the drowsy hush of an afternoon siesta—swaying to the lullaby that hums the season's end. Yet beneath this peaceful rendezvous lurks a creeping unease: their bodies resist at the proximity they share; their gazes divert from the direction they face. Through the murky waters, Xertu underscores the disquiet ambiguity and the impalpable barrier between the two men that renders all conversations unreachable.





Luis Xertu
Gypsophila

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
105 x 150 cm | 41.3 x 59.1 in

In *Gypsophila* (2026), quietude prevails as the central figure is absorbed in silent contemplation. Behind him, the horizon dissolves into an indistinct expanse where sky and water merge into one. Within this muted abyss, gypsophila blossoms drift and scatter across the scene—a flower symbolising everlasting love and purity, persisting even within the indeterminate emptiness that envelops the solitary figure.





The work functions as a meditation on solitary forms of love, addressing those suspended in between: lovers separated by distance, individuals lingering in unrequited affection, or those engaged in the introspective cultivation of self-love. Amid the twilight of struggle and uncertainty, gypsophila continues to flourish, stirring faint ripples that soften the silence and illuminate the void.





Luis Xertu

Fertility

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 150 cm | 25.6 x 59.1 in

Fertility (2026) imagines profusion as a soft, aqueous dream. A cherubic figure rests within the river's caress, its rose-flushed cheeks and lips carrying the warmth of a body in bloom. Surrounding are flowers that gather, flourish, and spill outward, the petals drift across the water like small offerings released into the current. Here, life branches, scatters, and takes root, envisaging a tender vision of proliferation, continuity, and renewal.







Luis Xertu
Treading Water

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
65 x 150 cm | 25.6 x 59.1 in

In *Treading Water* (2026), marsh grass dominates the stage as a contemplative figure navigates through the thickets, traversing the terrain. Overhead, the moon glows with an uncanny radiance, contouring the figure in fluorescent teal and flooding the waterway with a turquoise sheen.





Within this frozen frame, the space hovers between sense and sensibility: though the moonlit figure appears cool, calm, and collected, his facade is softened by the silk-like flow of water, his glacial core thawed by the warmth of the surrounding greens. The mangrove becomes a maze of proliferation; the water passage, a course leading to many crossroads beyond. Caught between reason and desire, restraint and impulse, he continues to tread water but to no avail—left only to struggle and waver along the Rubicon, as the luminescence of midnight perpetuates its cradle and whisper.





Luis Xertu
Of Little Light

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
55 x 80 cm | 21.7 x 31.5 in

Harnessing the darkness and ambiguity of the theatrical black box, *Of Little Light* (2026) traces the faint presence of a shadowed figure gradually dissolving into the sombre backdrop. Before him, flora and foliage proliferate, thickening into a curtain-like barrier as he wades through murky waters toward the canvas' edge—like an actor's exit as he retires from the audience's view and into the backstage.





At this moment of epilogue where the threshold of transition and departure is passionate yet fragile, the figure retreats from the limelight of attention, devotion, and love. The affection that was once intense and sincere recoils like a double-edged blade, leaving behind only hollowness and a lingering residue of ache as he relinquishes the performative facade as someone's other.



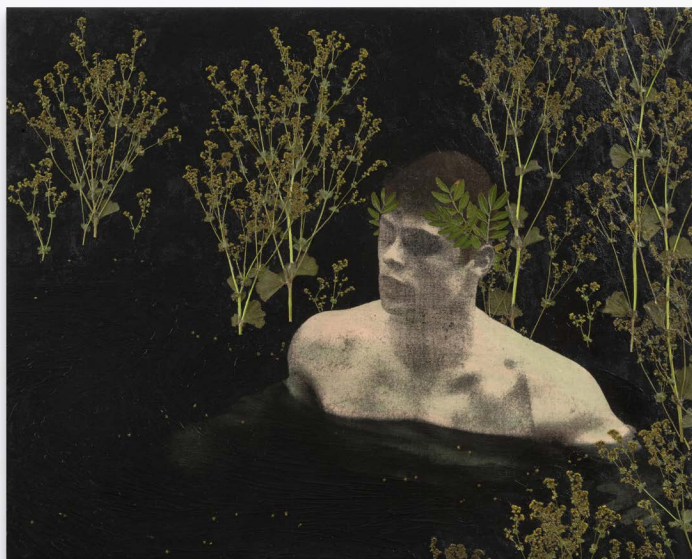


Luis Xertu
Held Nothing Against Him

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
60 x 75 cm | 23.6 x 29.5 in

Another musing figure surfaces in *Held Nothing Against Him* (2026). Off-center, he lies suspended in still water, gaze drifting past the frame's edge, as if some presence, some fragment of a life once lived, has already loosened its hold on him. Yet his eyes refuse to resolve; they dissolve into the skin's soft terrain, unreadable as water at dusk. This double blurring, of what he beholds and of his own capacity to behold, speaks less of sight than of release—whatever he once carried has already drifted downstream, and nothing remains to hold against the distant, half-remembered shape of himself.







Luis Xertu
At the Sideline

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
50 x 45 cm | 19.7 x 17.7 in

In *At the Sideline* (2026), a luminous watershed where solitude ceases and love begins. Turning away from the indigo currents and toward a cream-palettéd vista, the figure stands sunburnt or blushing, enchanted, and frozen in motion. His eyes brim with anticipation and optimism, while his gaze devotes unreservedly to a nameless figure beyond the canvas bounds. Here, the viewer witnesses the protagonist's passage across the rubicon—wrenching from the murky depths into a heartening embrace. Yet on the other side of this blank theatrical backdrop await unwritten beginnings that take no sides, inviting new encounters and quiet uncertainties in the chapters to come.







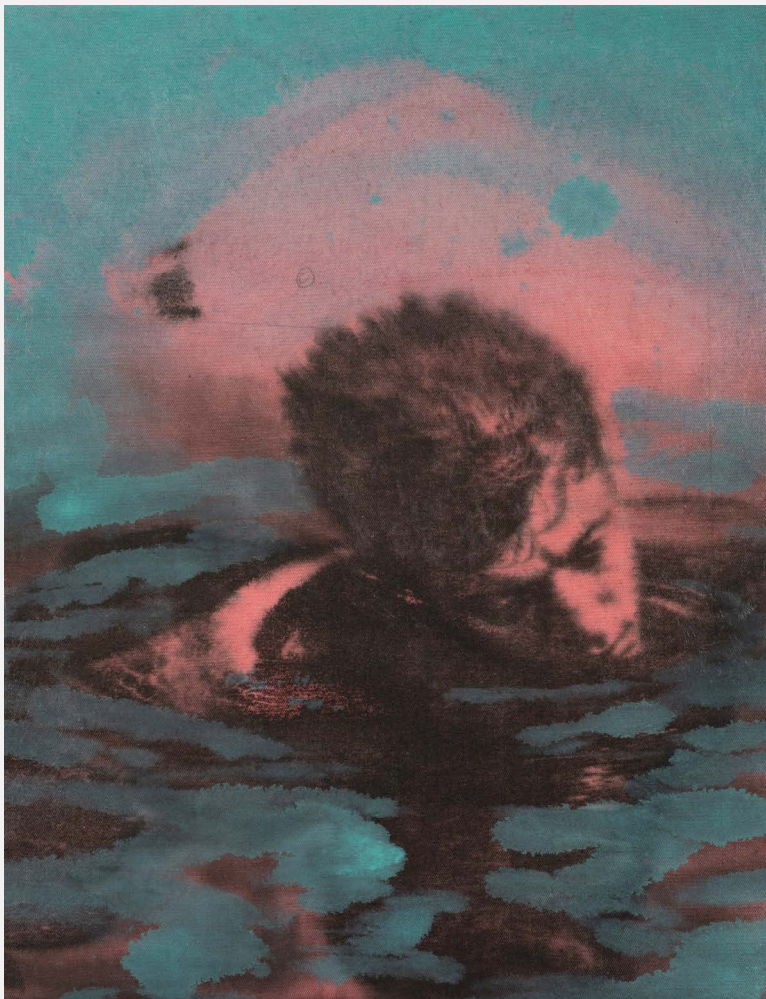
Luis Xertu
A Single Thought

Material transformation initiated 2026;
ongoing natural chromatic shift
Acrylic and organic materials on canvas
60 x 50 cm | 23.6 x 19.7 in

A Single Thought (2026) captures a solitary figure with his head tilted and ear pressed near the water, listening for the lurking murmurs rising from beneath, as if they could be fleeting answers that may dampen the voices he fails to escape. As the violet waters ripple and fracture the protagonist's reflection, the surrounding transforms into a dark abyss, weighing him down just as Narcissus succumbed to his mirror image.





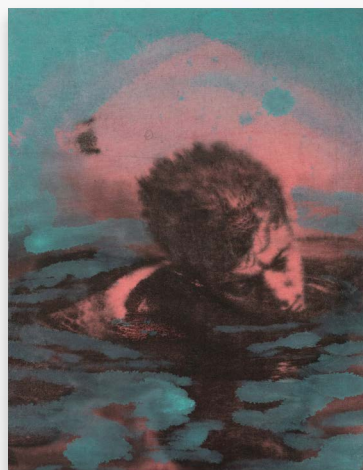


Luis Xertu
Fahrenheit

2026
Acrylic on canvas
45 x 35 cm | 17.7 x 13.8 in

Radiating ardent coral and glacial teal palettes—polarising chromatic charges—*Fahrenheit* (2026) entraps a young man in an emotional swirl. Emerged through thick, insistent brushstrokes, the figure settles its partial presence against the hyperthermic field, yearning to flee yet reluctant to forfeit its embrace. In this feverish state where the physique is acutely aware of its own discomfort, he becomes paradoxically drawn to the intensity that unsettles it. Irrational and limerent, the man remains attached to—obsessed with—the addictive pull of an antagonistic warmth that both bewitches and destroys.





BIOGRAPHY

Incorporating dried flora and foliage into his creative process—elements that gradually shift from lush green to autumnal tones—**Luis Xertu's** (b. 1985, lives and works in Rotterdam) phantasmagorical paintings, inhabited by poetic waterscapes, fauna, and figures, unfold like decelerated motion pictures that visualise the temporal realm and transient nature of reality.

Xertu has held solo and duo exhibitions at NL=US Art Gallery, Rotterdam (2024); TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam (2020, 2023, 2025); and Art Island, Amsterdam (2023), among others. His work was featured in group exhibitions at PODIUM, Hong Kong (2024); Fragment Gallery, New York (2022); BRUTUS, Rotterdam (2022); Museum of Young Art, Oosterhout (2021); Royal Palace, Amsterdam (2019); WTC Rotterdam Gallery, Rotterdam (2019), among others.

His works are included in the Stichting Kunstcollectie KPMG, the Netherlands and MOCA Bangkok (Museum of Contemporary Art), Thailand.



Luis Xertu. Courtesy of the artist.

Luis Xertu

Born in 1985, Mexico City; lives and works in Rotterdam, Netherlands

Education

- 2007-2009 BFA Diploma in Audiovisual Art, Gerrit Rietveld Academie Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2005-2007 BA Illustration, Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2004 BFA Visual Arts, La Esmeralda National School of Painting, Sculpture and Printmaking, Mexico City, Mexico

Solo Exhibitions

- 2026 Halfway across the Rubicon, PODIUM, Hong Kong
- 2025 A Community Status for the Isolated, TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam
- 2023 In Nature Nobody Would Care For You Either, TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam
- 2020 Renditions of Impermanence, TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2026 Amour Aquatique, PODIUM, Hong Kong
- 2024 History Will Say We Were Best Friends, PODIUM, Hong Kong
- At The Fringe: Gardening the Beauty ofthe Unwanted (duo show with Caroline Coolen), NL=US Art Gallery, Rotterdam
- 40 Years of TORCH, TORCH Gallery, Amsterdam
- Art Rotterdam 2024, Rotterdam
- 2023 Art Island Amsterdam, Amsterdam
- 2022 A Room Full of Mirrors, Fragment Gallery, New York
- Wild Summer of Art – Part II, BRUTUS Rotterdam, Rotterdam
- Retrograde, Galerie Du Monde, Hong Kong
- 2021 Opening MOYA, MOYA Museum of Young Art, Oosterhout, Netherlands
- Art Rotterdam 2021, Rotterdam
- 2020 Tropicana Fest, Tropicana / Pottage Foundation, Rotterdam
- 2019 Royal Award for Modern Painting 2019, Royal Palace, Amsterdam
- An Unexpected View, WTC, Rotterdam Gallery, Rotterdam
- Cinédanse Ottawa, Ottawa
- 2016 Allegory of Spring, LifeisArt Gallery, Antwerp
- To Come Between (performative intervention), Museum Boijmans van Beuninge, Rotterdam
- 40 years of compulsive hoarding, Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium
- SISMO Gallery Opening Exhibition, Sismo Gallery, Mexico City
- Moving Futures (performance of ‘The Fool’ throughout several theaters), Netherlands
- 2015 Durational Dance Object, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 24 Uur Cultuur, Rotterdam
- 2012 Galeria Patricia Bernal, Mexico City
- 2011 Photo-installation, the Carnevale dei Ragazzi Festival, La Biennale di Venezia, Italy

Awards

- 2021 CBK Rotterdam O&O Fund - Artist Research Grant, Netherlands
Mondriaan Fund - Artist Project Fund, Netherlands
- 2019 Royal Award for Modern Painting - Audience Prize, Netherlands

Residencies

- 2015 Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium

Public Collections

- Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA Bangkok), Thailand
- The Stichting Kunstcollectie KPMG, the Netherlands

Information

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Closed on public holidays

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ABOUT

Established in 2024, Hong Kong-based contemporary art gallery PODIUM operates as a robust platform for underrepresented emerging and mid-career artists whose creative practices reflect idiosyncratic aesthetics and resonate with current social discourses. Through dynamic exhibition programmes, publications, and institutional collaborations, the gallery remains steadfast in fostering transnational dialogues and synergic and experimental growth among the international artistic community.