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Yong Xiang Li
Superfluous
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Schwabinggrad is pleased to present *Superfluous*, an installation of new works by Yong Xiang Li that operates within the intersection of painting and sculpture to engage in contaminations that aim at media, formal and cultural specificities. Li employs heterogeneous painterly styles to problematize Western ontologies and attempt a “queer inhabitation” of acknowledged art history: an exploration of alternate subjectivities and agencies mediated through a series of assimilations, dis-identifications and transmutations.

Chestburster go fishing in a pomegranate landscape and *Chestburster go hiking in a pomegranate landscape* (2021) are sculptural paintings depicting insects on the flesh of seedless, abstracted pomegranates on fruit baskets, taking their origin in traditional vanitas still lifes. As exercises in the mimesis of mostly inanimate objects in the process of decay, Baroque vanitas paintings were reminders that Christian, spiritual values were to be held above the transience of carnal life and earthly possessions. They thus also functioned as vehicles of the inherently dualistic worldview that separates the mind from the salacious body, interiority from exteriority, culture from nature and good from evil. Li's inversions, that are mutable and can be folded and unfolded into various configurations, turned this site of duality into a playground. Here, a well known cultural sign of body horror and threat – the chestburster, namely grubs of a different species that have left their host body and signify the Other, or the more-than-human, in science-fiction-horror-movies – co-exists ambiguously within the topography of the fruit.

On the back wall, a large arch-shaped painting on wood is mounted on a sculptural fence that is doubled within its meticulously constructed painterly scene: in *Harp Player* (2021) a man sits sluggishly on a park bench while another person enters the scene through a broken fence on a brick wall in the back. The former seems slightly irritated and disturbed, yet benevolently meeting his eyes with the viewer's while leaning his right arm over the bench's backrest and hiding the screen of his smartphone on his body with his left hand. The situation remains unclear: Who is the intruder in this scenario and why? Is it the depicted man in the back, literally crossing over a border, or is it the viewer whose gaze the man with the pink shirt returns? What kind of activity is the man on the bench hiding on his phone? Who is the empty space on the bench reserved for? The euphemistic or even flowery style of the painting seems to intensify and accommodate these uncertainties.

The spatial-temporal peculiarities and dissonances at play in *Superfluous* present a witty undoing of concepts of interiority and exteriority particular to Li's work. Here, an imagined coherent self and the material world, the boundaries of the works and their surroundings, as well as states of subject-and object-hood are folded into each other to produce novel kinds of subjectivity.

Franziska Sophie Wildförster