

## Press release

### Exhibition title\_ *Vacation*

Artist\_ Huang Ko Wei, Hoda Kashiha, Rute Merk, Tomoko Nagai, Yuichi Yokoyama, Zhang Ke

Duration\_ July 24–August 28, 2021

Venue\_ Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai

Gallery Vacancy is delighted to announce the group exhibition *Vacation*, on view from July 24 to August 28, 2021, featuring the works of Huang Ko Wei (b. 1988), Hoda Kashiha (b. 1986), Rute Merk (b. 1991), Tomoko Nagai (b. 1982), Yuichi Yokoyama (b. 1967), and Zhang Ke (b. 1996). The namesake of the exhibition references the social behavior of vacation, during which people can take a respite from the regular routine of work to be free and unoccupied. Informed by the existential theorization of vacation, which purports it as a means to resist the existential predicament of modern society and a possibility to reach the state of authenticity, *Vacation* adopts the conceptualization of existential psychology to examine the transcending potentials of art. Transforming the gallery space into a liminal zone where norms and orders are temporarily suspended, the exhibition seeks to provide distinctive experiences by accentuating the essential components of change in space and time.

The journey embarks on the fictional grounding preset in the works of Yokoyama and Kashiha, enacted by the animated figures from their paintings. *Travel* (2010) adapts the typical storytelling format of manga whereas sees innovation from Yokoyama's geometrical formal language; the diagonal and curvilinear lines emanate various levels of intensity of motion and energy, smoothly absorbing viewers into the alternative timeline and space the stories reside. Resonating with Yokoyama's geometrical language, Kashiha treats *How to Make Puffy Clouds* (2020-2021) in a quirky manner that combines both the Cubist and comic style while lending it a graffiti twist. In the painting, the small polychromatic piece of sky contrasts ostensibly with the grisaille depiction of fragmented limbs and bodies, which further compels the viewer's line of sight to its free-standing emergence on the gallery floor. The mobility extends in Huang Ko Wei's *Rewind* (2021), where the swirling forces of butterflies are made visible and caressed within the arms of a human figure. The dynamism captured in the pictorial frames of the works introduces an alternate experience of speed and time, defying any static structural dominance.

Concomitantly, Merk, Nagai, and Zhang transport the urbanites from their familiar settings and reinstate them into the proposed destination of the wanderlust. Zhang's *Cordon I* (2021) contains an eccentric multiplicity of objects, perspectives, and surfaces; the double play between table mirror and wall mirror leads viewers to a surrealist scene of barred shrubs. The surreality is further epitomized in Nagai's *Green Light* (2021) by engaging the artist's frequently visited subject matters: the congenial nexus among nature, animals, and dreams, where the central figure is superimposed by her exuberant depiction of flickering foliage. *Calla Lily II* (2021), nonetheless, invites viewers to a land of a virtual-natural hybrid: while the cut flowers suspend in an illegible background, the formal execution carries on Merk's late '90s RPG video game aesthetics prevalent in her practice, farther dramatizing the canvas through her interplay of sharp contours and fuzzy color fields. The eclectic terrains articulated on the canvases transform into sites of possibilities, where a rupture in the mundane location could potentially leaven a leap of faith.

Mobilizing with Yokoyama, Kashiha, and Huang, and delving into the surreal scenery pivoted by Merk, Nagai, and Zhang, the transcending capacity of art and vacation collides in the physical space of the gallery, activating its role as a liminal zone. The temporal respite from normality unleashes creativity as revealed in the works of art, meanwhile allowing people to step aside and reflect on the governing routines around work and leisure.