

« A prayer for the sunset »
a solo show by Yan Xinyue

March 2 – April 15, 2023

Our conversation started when she sent me a photo of a grey brick wall. The wall framed a small apartment window, and you could just make out that inside the room was a desk with a mess of papers piled on top. A soft yellow tinge bled out of the room and stopped at the edge of the windowsill.

For her debut solo exhibition at Sans titre, Yan Xinyue presents « A prayer for the sunset », a series of paintings that pursue intimacy and refuge from the harsh landscapes of metropolitan cities. Themes of transience, displacement, productivity and fatigue often come to the fore within Xinyue's work, as the artist grapples with the everyday burdens that contemporary society bestows upon us. Living and working in Los Angeles, Xinyue endeavors to find space for herself in an unfamiliar, hyper-capitalistic environment. Through painting, the artist reimagines and delineates her surroundings in an almost filmic way – with an obsessive attention given to light, color, and impression. As dusk nears, relaxed characters take brief moments for themselves, their presence of which appears to be almost always dissolving into moments past. In *Healing* (2022), a figure leans next to an open window, engulfed in the smoke of their cigarette. A moment of respite at the end of the day. Soon it will be time to sleep, wake up, and go to work. The cycle continues. In *Drinking Song* (2023), an almost transparent figure slips out of view, sulking into the dimmed background of their dwelling and into the night. Ever-present within the works is a tension between the forever and the now. Enclosed in stones and concrete adorned with the decorations of yesteryear, figures introduce themselves as if to say « I am also here ».

Rather than attempting precise imitations of the architectural structures referenced within her work, Xinyue instead refigures them from memory. From the perspective of one who inhabits a place unknown to them, there is a kind of candid appreciation of form which is not yet molded by experience or encumbered with connotations. In this respect, as Xinyue carefully observes her surroundings during her time spent in Los Angeles, she is constantly sifting through the myriad of visual stimuli that makes up her reality – plucking out a face, movement, phrase, or even color. From her treasury of images, each recollection contributes to the final composition, which throughout the process is transformed until one is able to read it as a language entirely her own. Just as memory can be imperfect, Xinyue also leaves room for chance within her works by employing techniques that yield results outside of her control. Threads of ink drip down the surface of *Where is my home???* (2023) like condensation on a windowpane. The word “home” appears on the glass as if scrawled by the fingers of a passerby. In *The Street Singers* (2022), Xinyue combines the laborious effort of layering colors using individual strokes of the brush, while simultaneously leaving other elements unfinished. The result is otherworldly, as if each form within the work exists on a different plane. Eschewing realism in favor of effect, the works in « A prayer for the sunset » present themselves as vivid dreams that have perhaps just begun to fade upon waking.

The midday sun glazes her face as she sits on a park bench. We talk about how sunsets in cities are different. Sometimes the air is thick with dust or chalky clouds and everything is muted, greyish. The colors soften. Buildings decay. Our bodies are evaporating.

Christina Gigliotti

Yan Xinyue (born in 1992, China) lives and works between Los Angeles and Shanghai. She graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Art Antwerp (Belgium) with an MFA in painting in 2018.

Yan Xinyue's exhibitions include Capsule Shanghai (2020); Harper's, Los Angeles (2023); Public Gallery, London (2023); Sans titre, Paris (2022), Present Projects, Hong Kong (2021); For Seasons Project, Zurich (2021); Kunstpodium T, Tilburg (2019); Capsule, Shanghai (2019); A+ Contemporary, Shanghai (2019); De Brakke Grond - Flemish Cultural Center, Amsterdam (2018); Cité internationale des arts, Paris (2017) among others.