

## Xiyadie: Queer Cut Utopias

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**For press inquiries and images, contact:**

Allison Underwood,  
Director of Communications  
212 219 2166 x119  
aunderwood@drawingcenter.org

**The Drawing Center**

35 Wooster Street  
New York, NY 10013  
drawingcenter.org

**Free Admission**

Wednesday-Sunday: 12–6pm



New York, NY...In February 2023, The Drawing Center will present *Xiyadie: Queer Cut Utopias*, the first solo exhibition of work by Chinese artist Xiyadie in New York. The name Xiyadie, which translates to Siberian Butterfly, is one the artist chose for himself to describe his upbringing in Weinan, a city in the Shaanxi Province of Northwest China. A reflection of his personal and artistic evolution, the pseudonym also denotes Xiyadie’s enduring resilience despite the fact that he has never been able to freely show his work or live openly with regard to his sexual orientation. Occupying two floors at The Drawing Center, *Queer Cut Utopias* will feature more than thirty of Xiyadie’s intricate paper-cuts, dating from the early 1980s through today, each of which articulates his longing to fully express his queer desire. Xiyadie presents a strong sense of artistic autonomy; his highly graphic works on paper fuse traditional folk forms and iconography with narratives from his personal life.

Xiyadie was born in a region of northwest China known for being the center of the ancient art of paper-cutting, one of the oldest and most popular folk arts in China. Largely reserved for women, the practice of paper-cutting is primarily used to create decorations for windows and doorways. With subjects ranging from customs and religion to seasonal landscapes and legends, traditional paper-cuts are said to bring prosperity and fortune into the households that display them. Using the relatively accessible materials of rice paper, scissors, and ink, mastery of the art nevertheless requires a high-level of craftsmanship, dexterity, and imagination.

Xiyadie’s singular artistic language originated in the more traditional techniques of paper-cutting, a skill he learned from his mother at a young age. This expertise allowed the artist to develop intricate compositions that embrace the ancient art form while subverting it with defiant yet joyful expressions of individualism. The works on view in *Queer Cut Utopias* depict duos and trios of male lovers entangled in acts of queer eroticism that are based on the artist’s own experiences and fantasies. These vignettes are also populated with more traditional Chinese symbols and decorative imagery as a means of symbolically integrating and normalizing queer narratives. Recurring motifs include doors, walls, and caves, which allude to the artist’s concealed identity as a gay man while maintaining his role and duties as a father of two children who is married to a woman.

Xiyadie is the first known Chinese paper-cut artist to publicly depart from the Chinese folk-art context as well as the only paper-cutting artist in mainland China to engage with queer themes. Since the 1980s, he has deployed traditional techniques to articulate, destigmatize, and celebrate queerness. “This is my stage. Here I can dance with abandon, I can give free rein to my thoughts, I can live out my fantasies,” the artist has explained referring to his medium. “Here, I can fly to the moon, I can become a butterfly, I can love, and I can hate. This is the place where I can be free.”

*Xiyadie: Queer Cut Utopias* is organized by Rosario Güiraldes, Associate Curator.

### Artist Biography

Since his debut solo exhibition at the Beijing LGBT Center (2010), Xiyadie's work has been shown extensively. He was a participating artist in *Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, the largest survey exhibition of its kind in Asia that was presented at BACC, Bangkok (2019) and MOCA, Taipei (2017). His work has also been shown at Tai Kwun; Blindspot Gallery, both Hong Kong (2022); Haus der Kulturen der Welt; Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, both Berlin (2022); Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw (2020); Long March Space, Beijing (2019); Gwangju Biennale (2018); Nome Gallery, Berlin (2018); Para Site, Hong Kong (2017); Galerie Verbeeck - Van Dyck, Antwerp (2015); Topenmuseum, Amsterdam (2015); Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg (2013); Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm (2012); and Flazh!Alley Art Studio, San Pedro, USA (2012). Xiyadie currently lives and works in Shaanxi, China.

### Publication

*Xiyadie: Queer Cut Utopias* will be accompanied by a new edition of the Drawing Papers series. The publication will feature full-color illustrations of each of the works featured in the exhibition; a foreword by Laura Hoptman, The Drawing Center's Executive Director; and essays by Rosario Güiraldes, Associate Curator; Hera Chan, Adjunct Curator, Greater China, supported by the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, at Tate; and writer and curator Alvin Li, who is based between London, UK and Shanghai, China, and also serves as Adjunct Curator, Greater China at Tate. The publication will be available for purchase at The Drawing Center and in its online bookstore at [drawingcenter.org](http://drawingcenter.org). As with every publication produced by The Drawing Center, it will also be available to read in a digital format, free of charge.

### Credits

Support for *Xiyadie: Queer Cut Utopias* is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional funding is provided by The Drawing Center Exhibition Fund.

### Images:

Xiyadie, *Butterfly*, 2006. Papercut with water-based dye and Chinese pigments on Xuan paper, 11 x 11 4/5 inches (28 x 30 cm) unframed. Courtesy of the artist.

Xiyadie, *Wall*, 2016. Papercut with water-based dye and Chinese pigments on Xuan paper, 55 1/8 x 55 1/8 inches (140 x 140 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

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