

Yi Gao

*Orion*

May 23 - June 20, 2026

*Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun*, a painting by Nicolas Poussin completed in 1658, depicts the mythological hunter Orion moving toward the rising sun to restore his sight, guided less by certainty than by intuition and sensation. The work has long been understood as a meditation on transformation, illumination and the shifting relations between humanity and the natural world.

In her exhibition *Orion*, Yi Gao returns to this image, connecting its sense of searching to her own practice. Orion becomes a way of thinking about orientation through uncertainty, about moving toward what is not fully seen.

Gao approaches painting as a temporal practice, where time is experienced less as linear progression than as a suspended, eternal present. Growing up in China during a period of rapid urbanization, and later moving to the United States, she developed a heightened attunement to the impermanence of place and identity. The rhythms of domestic life — shaped largely by the women in her family — cultivated a sensitivity to repetition and relation that offered grounding within instability and disorientation.

Working wet-on-wet, Gao uses acrylic, mineral pigments, and ink on Xuan (rice) paper, allowing the medium to spread, settle, and bleed into its porous surface. Supple and retentive, the paper receives hesitation, subtle shifts, and accidental marks, absorbing and preserving them as it expands and stretches in all directions. Nothing is erased. The watermarks left as the surface dries become a record of the work's unfolding, each painting accumulating a sense of lived duration.

Gao has developed a way of working closer to listening than to depicting. Mountains, islands, and grids appear not as depictions of the external world but as perceptual terrains through which relation and orientation become visible. Their forms are elemental, recognized by the body before the mind. Fields of color oscillate between muted, matte, vibrant, and metallic, producing shifting senses of depth, proximity, and spatial tension.

Gao places herself within a tradition of artists for whom landscape is a mode of thought rather than a subject. Her work draws inward, toward a way of sensing how things exist together. To stand before these paintings is to move, like Orion, toward what cannot yet be fully seen, guided as much by feeling as by sight.

Yi Gao (b. 1987 Nanjing, China) lives and works Los Angeles. She received her MFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her BA from Otis College of Art and Design. Gao's work has been exhibited at The Mistake Room, New Wight Gallery, LADIES' ROOM, and Reena Spaulings Fine Art in Los Angeles, as well as Connoisseur Art Gallery in Hong Kong. She held a solo exhibition at LAN Art Gallery in Shenzhen. Gao is the recipient of the Martha Alf Foundation Grant, the Helen Frankenthaler Scholarship, and the Edna and Yu-Shan Han Award.