

RUOZHE XUE
A DISTORTED REALITY



Hold, Tear, 2019

"A Distorted Reality"
4 October 2019 – 23 November 2019

rosenfeld porcini is pleased to present "A Distorted Reality", RuoZhe Xue's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

In the current world where any idea of truth has been trampled on by fake news, hacking and the abuses of social media, our understanding of what constitutes reality has been grossly distorted. Moreover, the wave of 'populist politics' which has invaded so many countries in the world has added to the potent cocktail where we have a very strong sense of living in a strange unfamiliar world. The paintings of RuoZhe Xue feel like a perfect mirror to what we are experiencing. At the time of his previous exhibition in the gallery the possible political ramifications of his works might have felt more remote to us and our attentions were focused far more on the personal feeling of an eerie universe to which we felt a strange attraction or revulsion. Yet Xue inevitably reflected on his own culture in his works and the attempt in China in the quite recent past to mould the very great differences in human character into a highly regimented and controlled society notwithstanding the raw material is so hugely complex and varying.

Throughout his career Xue has been fascinated by the tension created between the dual image of certain individuals, often situated in a timeless and alienating landscape which, on a superficial first viewing, merely appears a little odd yet, little by little, reveals its total strangeness to our knowledge of the world. Two people are apparently calm, as the landscape in the distance appears to burn; two women illuminated as if by daylight are immersed in a nighttime forest of tropical vegetation; two men are standing on a zebra crossing in the middle of either a totally deserted road or more likely a grey river; a bright orange terrain is part of a dark nighttime landscape. In all these worlds Xue places his figures, who appear totally relaxed in this other-worldly atmosphere, although each has a behavioural pattern very different to the identical person standing alongside. The clear physical connection accentuates a sense of detachment in the viewer as this similarity is not reflected in the inner psychological movements of the subjects portrayed.

Although Xue is an artist whose paintings are always concerned with the 'human', it is immediately noticeable that none of his characters are ever looking straight ahead at the viewer. Invariably we view the figures from behind or to the side or almost totally hidden from view. A man faces a wall, his hands outstretched in front of him as if in punishment; a woman faces another wall as if in shame; faces are partly obstructed by clothing as if the protagonist does not want to be revealed.



Easy Peace, 2019

"I try to put some kind of psychological space into the portrait. The hidden face, squinting eyes and the body viewed sideways, all create an interior tension, thus constructing the transformation through painting which I am trying achieve."

Ruozhe Xue, having studied his MA In London after having completed his BA in his native China has a deep knowledge of both Western and Chinese art and 'The Message' which is the largest work in the exhibition references ancient Chinese painting by creating a very large horizontal canvas which can't be viewed in one look, but rather we read it from left to right and there is no perspective vanishing point.

A further departure for the artist are the small works which will be spread around the exhibition which provide a further element to the surreal and very disconcerting atmosphere: Lower legs perfectly inserted into a pair of shoes, a pair of dresses made from exactly the same material but with very different folds, hang in mid-air; individual highly taut, white stockinged feet and a pair of hands tightly clasped all reinforce the claustrophobic surreal atmosphere yet mostly importantly a very palpable sense of tension.

The power in Xue's unique take on the figurative form is made possible due to the artist's extraordinary technical ability with paint which allows him to achieve this very rarified atmosphere with total credibility. The richness of his colour is never accompanied by a heavy use of material, there is no emphasis in the weight of paint or drama of gesture but instead a very sure sense of line and form. The large canvases which provide the various anchors to the exhibition are highly complex works, both from the point of view of the construction of the image and the richness of the form. The state of mounting tension and unease which the accumulation of viewing these paintings arouses in us, is in effect, a perfect mirror for our very troubled times.

Ruozhe Xue (Xuzhou, China *1987) lives and works between Beijing and London. After studying at the Painting Department of China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, he graduated from the Painting Programme at the Royal College of Arts in London. Award winner of the Neville Burston Prize and the Tom Bendhem Prize for Figure Drawing, Xue has presented his work in numerous exhibitions in London and in China.