

Qiu Xiaofei: *Divination*

November 5 – December 18
540 West 25th Street
New York



Qiu Xiaofei, *Trotsky Mountain*, 2021 © Qiu Xiaofei, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace Gallery is pleased present Qiu Xiaofei's latest solo exhibition *Divination*— whose title is derived from a famous chapter of *The Songs of Chu*, an ancient Chinese anthology of poetry—at 540 West 25th Street in New York, featuring his explorations in painting since 2019. The new and recent works on view trace the artist's return to figuration and symbolism after his 2018 solo exhibition, revealing how the artist pursues and evokes a contemporary impetus for painting in more ancient traditions of art history. This exhibition marks the first presentation of the artist's latest works outside of China.

As a leading figure in the new generation of painters in China, Qiu Xiaofei's practice has always centered on a strong art consciousness and self-revolutionary introspection. For him, painting was a major source of cognitive exploration as he grew up, and the artist also believes the medium has the potential to help humans more deeply understand the world and themselves in this disorganized, fragmented, and severely overloaded information age.

In this new series of work, the artist combines his research into human consciousness and synesthesia with a more intimate, literary, and fantastical visual experience. New imageries are generated constantly in his paintings, as seen in *Snow House* (2020), a house is transformed into a biological cavity. The trees and forest in the work also play a key, dramatic role—the artist grew up in the most forested province in China, though the city of his birth is located on a vast plain far away from the forest. The artist often uses the glade as a metaphor for his meditations and dreams. *Trotsky Mountain* (2021) explores Qiu Xiaofei's family history through a more narrative format—the artist was once known for his focusing on personal memories but consciously shifted to questions regarding painting itself in the past decade. In this new work, Trotsky, a political and ideological figure with connections to Qiu's grandparents, has been internalized as a part of the artist's visual memory and serves as a core image, much like the houses and trees, appearing in various forms in his pictures. History, protection, nurturing, life, and death weave together here to form a new face awaiting analysis.

In his practice, the artist traces ancient human traditions of fiction, illusion, and allegory to grapple with the complexities and ambiguities of the present scene. He has drawn inspiration from certain spiritual compositions with Russian icons, Dunhuang Buddha murals, Sampul tapestry, and ancient statuary. *Red* (2020) is representative while also highly unusual among these works. Created in the early days of the pandemic, the work bears a dazzling yet unsettling red as its main background color. Using a technique akin to glazing and scumbling, the painter has

endowed the picture a unique depth of field to forge a transition from a gloomy, blood-like red to a bright, mottled red, compressing the times and spaces symbolized by the various shades into the same plane. The main subject of *Red* is a seated statue of a man with broken arm. The figure comes from his 2010 oil painting *A Still Indigo*, though *Red* alludes to the artist's recently departed father. The artist was with his father in the last days of his life, sensing his fading vitality and observing how his father's body changed in his final decline. These detailed accounts gave rise to imagery of birth, growth, aging, and death.

In the work's evolution from sketch to painting, the artist repeatedly adjusted the balance between the expansive, dynamic, and destructive aspects of the various images. Meanwhile, the stability brought by the religious schema composition also creates a new tension. The visual impact and tension of the work is inextricably linked to the unique social background and psychological experience of the time, becoming an externalized representation of the artist's internal world.

In conclusion, the works in this exhibition exemplify how Qiu Xiaofei embeds paintings into an ancient allegorical structure, crystallizing a whimsical fantasy that transcends reality through his ongoing questioning of reality.

The exhibition will be on view through December 18.

Qiu Xiaofei (b. 1977, Harbin, China) has worked with diverse media—including oil and acrylic paint, watercolor, sculpture, and installation—in an oeuvre originating in the layered and subjective experiences of personal memory. These recollections emerged in representational paintings and painted objects based on photographs and other visual sources from Qiu's history, communicating an introspective desire to translate memory into tangible images. Developing from his preoccupation with memory, Qiu began exploring more collective realms of thought and introduced abstraction into his work, initiating a creative dialogue and exchange between artist and material. His expressive marks interpret the fluidity of time and space, as well as his psychological states during the creative process. Allowing his subconscious to drive his work, Qiu investigates the profound spaces of consciousness and the dimension between abstraction and reality.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon. The gallery has also spearheaded exploration into the intersection of art and technology through new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists engaging with technology.

Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide including London, Geneva, a strong foothold in Palo Alto, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. In 2020, Pace opened temporary exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach, with continued programming on a seasonal basis. In fall 2021, Pace will continue to expand its European presence with the opening of a larger gallery space in London.



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