

YI GALLERY



Sarah Pater, *Two glasses of water (window view, relief)*, 2024, Oil and wax on linen, 32 x 28 in 81.3 x 71.1 cm

Sarah Pater + Xingze Li *Here, Before and After Me*

April 13 - May 11, 2024
254 36th Street, B634, Brooklyn, NY 11232

YI GALLERY is proud to announce a two-person exhibition by Brooklyn-based Xingze Li and Philadelphia-based Sarah Pater. An artist reception will be held on Saturday, April 13 from 3 - 6 pm at the gallery's Industry City space. The exhibition may be previewed from noon - 3pm.

Featuring new work by both artists, this exhibition highlights the formal and conceptual dialogue between Li's photo sculptures and Pater's paintings. Imbuing mundane subjects with significance, the artists closely study surfaces and experiences that simultaneously embody and reflect light. Their explorations of the everyday share a focus on the minutiae of ordinary experiences, blurring the aesthetics of boredom and attention. The

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compositions' first-person view works to activate one's visual experience, bringing the viewer into the meticulously constructed tableaux: marks on a wall, paper flying in a sudden gust of wind, a glass of water, flat digital screens and an exposed fluorescent bulb rendered sublime. The experience of "looking" has changed in our daily existence, becoming more passive and disembodied in an image-saturated culture. The artists are interested in reclaiming the tactility of looking—an embodied and active experience in our perceptual world.

Sarah Pater's images allude to windows, desks, fluorescent lighting and screens alongside daydreamed hallucinations, everyday objects, faraway landscapes and times of day. Hand-painted, near-textureless surfaces lack visible sequential order in their construction, contradicting the layered mark-making that typically implies painterly time. Color bends from the quotidian and observational toward the experiential and uncanny. "I see paintings as having the potential to restore embodiment to looking and time; empathetic antidotes to perpetual distraction," says Pater.

Pater does not conceive of paintings in a rational or narrative way. "I think of my paintings as a visual diary of objects, views and ideas gathered from everyday life that I digest through invented compositions." The resulting paintings are composite images that relate to contemporary ways of seeing. The formal elements of the frames reference omnipresent screens that allow simultaneous views and projections. The space in the paintings is frequently fractured, compressed and stacked; thus, the eye holes/portals in an ambiguously flat yet deep space. "I try to select subjects that are relatively plain or ubiquitous and imbue them with reverence and hyper stillness." These subjects are derived from things she's observed in everyday life—primarily flora, fauna and elemental things like light, candles, water and food. These subjects are isolated from a natural environment and mediated through a composed, formal setting—the stage, altar, frame and incongruous colors. The subjects turn alien; they become visualizations of the feeling of zoning out or daydreaming, like the feeling of staring at something for so long that you begin hallucinating.

Her most recent paintings depict subjects at real scale. Crepuscular color fields, and the familiar blunted corners of omnipresent tech products, frame hyper-still, disorienting views from an altar-like desk or table. The compositional structure evolved from her older work, derived from her experiences working in an office and the daily experience of sitting behind a desk. The desk in recent work has become a stage or altar; the screen, a frame or window. The perspective establishes a first-person view and brings the viewer into the painting. The objects in the paintings are painted at 1:1 scale so that the viewer has a bodily recognition of the thing depicted. The compositions are built on bilateral symmetry that reflects our bodies' structure.

In each painting, she shifts the subject and emphasis, sets particular emotional tones and utilizes the components in different ways, while maintaining continuity from painting to painting. Inanimate objects appear to look back at the viewer, and flat, digital design elements merge with observed, deep space, evoking a slowed-down pace of looking. Once seen, the paintings reveal familiar scenes rendered strange—the quotidian turning otherworldly – sometimes, terrifyingly so.

"Reclaiming the sensation of time/duration is one of my modest hopes for painting. I'm interested in boredom, reverie and un-instrumentalized time. The emotion of boredom can propel us to do things and engage with the world meaningfully, but mundane boredom is rare. Something I think about a lot is if I rarely experience the psychic distress of everyday boredom and its (potentially positive) outcomes, how is that altering my sense of time? What vital experiences do I trade for seductive-but-meaningless distractions? I see paintings as empathetic antidotes to perpetual distraction."

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Xingze Li, *Untitled (4pm, late Jan., 3rd Ave)*, 2024, Dye sublimation on aluminum, 24 x 36 in, 61 x 91.4 cm Edition of 2 plus 1 artist's proof

Xingze Li creates ethereal portraits of walls. Poised at the intersection of photography and sculpture, Li's work lends weight to mostly unassuming blank walls in domestic and semi-public spaces. Each wall has its sense of time, passage of light and history of marks. Since 2016, the artist has lived in Brooklyn, and his observation of these neutral constructs offers a momentary room for reverie and relief when feeling disconnected from his hometown, Yan'an, China. Immersing himself in the ambiguity and richness of the surface textures, and with the desire to preserve those moments, Li uses his cell phone camera to take images, often of his home, studio, a doorway or a hotel room. He then turns these cellphone-captured photos into flat, sculptural installations that appear intimate and ancient.

"I feel safe and comfortable looking through the reflections and through the overlapping layers on the wall surface," states the artist. "So many things exist, at the same time, on a flat surface, with various depths, weights, scales and lights. They help me envision what's behind and what's ahead; they offer me relief and allow me to lose myself, to remember, to forget and jump from moment to moment. The commonality and subtle variances within the appearance of each wall allow me to project my own experience." Marked by a distinct, serene sensuality, each of the works fuses the perspective of the scene when the artist was in front of those walls and surfaces, emphasizing the specific appearance when the color, shade and light all come together and make that moment special and personal. The work blurs the sense of touch, proximity and the experience of light and form, provoking viewers to connect with what is often taken for granted. The original photograph serves as a template for the process; however, the way the printed images are treated and grouped, blurs the boundary between reality and illusion, building the viewer a passageway into those moments of reflection.

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About the artists

Sarah Pater (b.1987, Wilmington, Delaware) is a painter based in Philadelphia. Pater has had her work included in recent solo and group exhibitions at CHART (New York), Pablo's Birthday (New York), Lighthouse Works (Fishers Island, NY), Helen J Gallery (Los Angeles), Peep Projects (Philadelphia) and Taymour Grahne Projects (London). Her work has been featured in *New American Paintings* and *Bat City Review*, and she has been awarded residencies at the Lighthouse Works, the Elizabeth Murray Artist Residency, the Sam & Adele Golden Foundation and the Ora Lerman Charitable Trust. She received an M.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design and a B.F.A. from Boston University.

Xingze Li (b. 1992, Ya'an, China) is a multidisciplinary visual artist based in Brooklyn, NY. He has exhibited in China, the United States and Denmark. He has had solo and two-person exhibitions in New York City at venues including Ortega y Gasset Projects, Sweet Lorraine Gallery, Tutu Gallery and Hunter East Harlem Gallery. Recent group exhibitions were at the Cathouse Proper and Pratt Manhattan Gallery in New York City, Little Berlin in Philadelphia and Carlsberg Byens Galleri & Kunstsalon in Copenhagen. He has curated shows including *A Picnic State of Mind* (2023) and *F-1: Out Inside* (2019) in Brooklyn, NY. Notable awards include the Marble House Project Residency, 77ART Residency and Cope NYC Residency. In 2015, Li earned his bachelor's degree in Oil Painting from Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts and, in 2019, received his MFA in Painting and Drawing from Pratt Institute.

Based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, YI GALLERY produces five exhibitions annually. Guided by the commitment to provide an open and well-informed platform for conceptually rigorous and formally inventive projects, the poetic and critical program prioritizes context and discovery. Informed by the founder's international experience and interest in interdisciplinary inquiry, YI GALLERY aims to present a true reflection of the vitality and diversity of contemporary practices today. Through building a nurturing support structure for a focused roster of emerging artists, the aesthetically-oriented program fosters ongoing dialogue between local and international artists.

Prior to launching a year-round exhibition program in October 2021, YI GALLERY ran an itinerant curatorial project in New York City for three years.

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