

Press Release

Open Stone Gate

Artist: Wang Xiaoqu

Exhibition Period: March 6 - April 18, 2021

AIKE is delighted to present Wang Xiaoqu's solo exhibition "Open Stone Gate", consisting of the artist's latest paintings in recent years. The exhibition will on view from March 6 to April 18, 2021.

The exhibition title is drawn from an ancient folk tale "Open Stone Gate", which typically blends magic, opportunity, wealth with desire. The story revolves around a poor fisherman who, after releasing a fish, is unexpectedly shown the way to wealth by a fish fairy. In the face of opportunities, the fisherman's family met their demise from insatiable desires for wealth. The spell that the fisherman recites to open the gate to their fortune implies certain radical magic that brings opportunity and its fleeting and illusory nature.

The manic drive for wealth and absurd phenomena emerged out of the opportunities from the economic reforms in the 1990s inspired this series of works. By adopting symbolic ornaments and decorative textures from this period, Wang Xiaoqu allegorizes the phenomenon of "diving into the sea" to a vacation by the beach. Her works on canvas comprise snippets of television dramas, advertisements, and images of wealth and the high life in everyday spaces. The artist reorganizes specific quotidian scenes, conjuring seafood, steaks, marble, flowers, world clocks, decorative objects, and patterns. At the same time, dynamic images of people enjoy leisure and dining on their holidays. Their renditions appropriate old-fashioned calendar photography aesthetics (featuring specific lighting, rough collage, and composition for "display"). On the one hand, the figures' facial features are blurred and muted; on the other hand, their limbs are placed and modified, enhancing the objects' textures. As such, the richness of details and the intensity of their gestures become abstract and symbolic, expanding the meaning of these banal images. For instance, the patterns of marble or water resonate with the textures of meat; the pun in political slogans (such as "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice") takes form in erotically charged posters; and the human body morphs into food and furniture (leather sofas). These are new attempts in Wang's practice, she reconfigures relationships between figuration and abstraction, materiality and psyche on the canvases.

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About the artist

Born in 1987 in Guilin, Guangxi, China. She graduated from the Oil Painting Department of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute with MA in 2014, currently lives and works in Beijing, China.

Wang Xiaoqu records a chronicle of daily events and images on the canvases by using humorous narratives and exaggerated effects. Her paintings are influenced by the aesthetics of comics, however the pictorial senses of material and authenticity are enhanced through the techniques of brushstroke and chiaroscuro, making the pictures linger between the fiction and the simulation.

She deliberately attempts to establish a “thematic” image, but constantly dismantles these images in the process of painting, turning images into models without the desire of expression they ought to have. She expresses her understanding of the contradictory nature of painting as a medium through the theme of portrait paintings.

Her solo exhibitions include *'Open Stone Gate'*, AIKE, Shanghai, China, 2021; *'Condo Shanghai Personal Project'*, AIKE, Shanghai, China, 2018; *'The 11th China International Gallery Exposition Artists Nominate Artists Exhibition'*, Beijing, China, 2015. She has also participated in group exhibitions include *'Shadow Lover'*, OCAT, Xi'an, China, 2021; *'Golden Flow'*, CHAO Art Center, Beijing, China, 2020; *'Loading'*, Garry Culture Center, Art Power 100, Beijing, China, 2020; *'How Do We Begin?'*, X Museum, Beijing, China, 2020; *'Summer Fling'*, Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China, 2019; *'Scaffolds of Meaning'*, Mine Project, Hong Kong, China, 2019; *'Guangzhou Airport Biennale'*, Guangzhou, China, 2019; *'Land of the Lustrous'*, UCCA Dune, Qinhuangdao, China, 2019; *'Condo Shanghai'*, AIKE, Shanghai, China, 2018; *'Spiral Stairs'*, AIKE, Shanghai, China, 2018; *'The Latch'*, C-Space+Local, Beijing, China, 2017; *'Atmosphere'*, Inside-Out Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2015; *'Winter Group Show'*, AIKE, Shanghai, China, 2014; *'UP-YOUTH China Young Artists Exhibition'*, Time Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2014.