

ALMA PEARL

NAI-JEN YANG, XINRAN LIU

Pacing the Void

26 April – 18 May 2024

Private view: Thursday, 25 April 2024, 6 - 8 PM

Unit T, Reliance Wharf
2-10 Hertford Rd
London N1 5ET

Wednesday–Saturday, 12-6pm

Alma Pearl is pleased to present 'Pacing the Void', a two-person exhibition showcasing recent work by Nai-Jen Yang (b. 1996, Taiwan) and Xinran Liu (b. 1998, China). In their culturally hybrid practices, each artist has developed a unique painterly vocabulary rooted in Asian philosophical and religious traditions—Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism—while combining Eastern and Western modes of abstraction.

The exhibition takes its title from Wu Yün's 'Cantos of Pacing the Void'. These T'ang-dynasty writings refer to a celestial journey beyond the outer reaches of the heavens. Evoking a similar sense of alternative temporality and ethereal presence, the works in 'Pacing the Void' explore a slower approach to making and viewing. While not directly dealing with technological concerns, these paintings challenge the fast-paced consumption of images and ask us to slow our tempos of bodily and experiential perception.

The paintings of Nai-Jen Yang explore connections to nature and personal experience while also maintaining a conceptual and spiritual approach to painting which is reminiscent of the Korean movement of the Dansaekhwa. Yang's repetitive, meditative, and process-based approach to mark-making reveals a preoccupation with both surface and support, which remains strongly rooted in physical and psychological experiences of the natural world. In this new body of work, Yang pushes forward her investigation, generating a near merger of painterly material with the support. Her titles, for example *Mist and Puddles*, are references to this *presence-cum-absence* and speak to elements real and present yet ineffable and ungraspable, perhaps best captured in our worldly experience. The ethereal, soft-tone monochromes serve to cleanse the mind of forces imposed by the speed of the digital in our moment.

Xinran Liu's paintings draw on her personal experiences and moments spent with friends and family members. Her canvases function as a diary or sketchbook where she assembles moments of collaged memory attached to a menagerie of materials and objects. While reminiscent of Western practices associated with Surrealist automatism as well as the modern still-life, Liu's paintings embody acts of reduction, where memories are recalled through an absence rather than presence of form. In *A footnote of June 12th, 2023*, scribbles and other shapes appear on canvas in an attempt to crystallise a moment before it becomes language. Here, different tempos materialise in the opposition between the impulsive mark and the slow perception of the work required as painterly elements both emerge and dissolve from view.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NAI-JEN YANG

Nai-Jen Yang (b.1996, Taipei) is a Taiwanese artist based in London. Nai-Jen works primarily in painting, but her practice also extends to photography, print, and installation. After receiving a BFA and an MFA in Fine Art from Taipei National University of the Arts, Nai-Jen completed her MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in London in 2023. Nai-Jen's recent exhibitions include 'Positions, part two', Alma Pearl, London and 'Paris, Texas', Soka Art, Beijing, China (both 2023) and the solo exhibition '(a long) way to go', Carp Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan in 2022.

XINRAN LIU

Xinran Liu (b. 1998, Chengdu) is a Chinese artist who lives and works in London. Xinran holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and earned her MA in painting at the Royal College of Art. The artist was shortlisted for the Chadwell Award in 2023. Recent exhibitions include 'Paris, Texas', Soka Art, Beijing, China; Alma Pearl (Online); 'Imagined States: Chapter 2 "Intrinsicality"', WOAW Gallery, Hong Kong (all 2023), among others.