

# LAFAYETTE ANTICIPATIONS

Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette



Press Release

**Exhibition**

**Xinyi Cheng, *Seen through others***

23 March > 28 May 2022

9 rue du Plâtre  
F-75004 Paris

# PRESS RELEASE

**Xinyi Cheng, *Seen through others***  
**23 March - 28 May 2022**

The constellation of subjects and scenes captured in Xinyi Cheng's evocative paintings are drawn from her encounters. From a tiny dog called Monroe staring at a bone on a red carpet to a man in leopard-print boxer shorts on a sofa speaking on the phone, her works unravel complex emotions, desires, and dynamics that permeate contemporary life. Cheng's expressive use of light and colour help conjure feelings, reveries, and impulses that reside within our everyday experiences of being in the world. In an often enigmatic atmosphere of dreams and solitude, the characters depicted by the artist sound like unexpected tributes to the moderns such as Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas or Caillebotte.

For Cheng's first major institutional exhibition in France, the presentation brings together over thirty existing works from 2016 to 2021 spread across the whole building.

Shown in unfamiliar groupings, they open up novel correlations and understandings within her oeuvre.

The exhibition starts with a sequence of interior and nocturnal situations, continuing upstairs to include works that progressively explore our metaphysical relationship to the world through animals and natural forces. On the top floor, Cheng's latest tableaux of characters—humans and dogs outdoors—appear against the backdrop of the vast windows looking out over the skyline.

Beyond a false softness, these new works represent her reflection not only on what it means for us to co-exist with one another, but on what it means to be human. Through her coruscating colour treatments on canvas, Cheng offers her insights to a baffling world, revealing enigmatic images.

**Curator:** Christina Li



# EXCERPTS

## Christina Li, *We are all gestures*

How is intimacy embodied and established between bodies? The manifestations of intimacy are a cornerstone of Cheng's painting practice. Nocturnal social scenes are often depicted in her earlier paintings, where young carousers, or paramours-to-be, attempt to mingle and flirt over food, drinks, or cigarettes (*For a Light II*, 2020). Under the guise of the pursuit of worldly desires in our hurried, cosmopolitan life, these figures remain undisturbed amidst the interactions and distractions that surround them. There is an air of solitude enshrouding Cheng's characters who happen to be in these transient occasions of proximity, and once the instant is over, will carry on with their own train of thought. (...)

In recent years, Cheng has begun to turn her observations outside of urban life to nature. Her scenarios stretch beyond fiery umbral interiors and streetscapes after dark, to include lucent, open-air landscapes.

Continuing her inquiry of the human condition, these works are fully subsumed by sublime forces, revealing vulnerability in the face of the natural world. In *To be Titled (Spiral)* (2021), *Gust* (2019), and *Red Kayak* (2020), bodies are rendered defenceless to the tumultuous might of water and wind, thrashed and upended in the suspended moment. Cheng links these atmospheric elements to the fraught existential struggles of contemporary society. Are these representations of drowning or diving, soaring or plunging? Deliberately open-ended and ambivalent, the wind- and water-swept paintings allow space for viewers to discern and feel these profound sensations.



# EXCERPTS

## Kirsty Bell, *The illogic of colour*

Although they are most often paintings of people (or the occasional animal) they are not strictly portraits. There is a lack of specificity in which the finely observed details of gesture, expression, light, or clothing are skewed through the twin filters of imagination and desire. What kind of light is this? Where are these bodies? Rather than straightforward depictions of people, place, or event, each painting is a distillation of affect, an investigation of relations, a symptomatic moment or an analysis of looking and being looked at. Where more than one individual is depicted, tension and emotion fill the space between them, expressed through gesture, touch, proximity, or the direction of their gaze. There is a palpable appreciation of male bodies, chest hair, and musculature; a fascination with genitalia. The question of the nature of flesh arises in a painting depicting a bare-chested man carving a hunk of meat with a sharp knife. The situations Cheng depicts do not resolve neatly. Ambiguity or imbalance remain.



# CATALOGUE

## **Xinyi Cheng, *Seen through others***

This first monograph by the artist is published by Lafayette Anticipations on the occasion of the exhibition.

A series of texts by international art critics question the artist's practice, her taste for portraits and bodies. In addition to reproductions of the works, there are five original postcard-sized photographs by Xinyi Cheng, thrown in the book randomly.

Authors: Kirsty Bell, Alvin Li, Christina Li, Mi You

Graphic Design: Charles Villa

Format: 24 x 24 cm, 150 pages

40 ill. coulour, 20 ill. n&b

French - English

Released on 23 March 2022

Price: 25 € TTC

Xinyi Cheng

Seen Through Others



# BIOGRAPHIES



**Xinyi Cheng, born in 1989 in Wuhan, China. She lives and works currently in Paris.**

Cheng studied at the Academy of Arts & Design at Tsinghua University, Maryland Institute College of Art. From 2016 to 2017, she participated in the Rijksakademie Residency in the Netherlands, and in 2019 she was the recipient of Art Basel's Baloise Art Prize. She was the subject of a major solo exhibition at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2020) and she has also participated in recent group exhibitions at the Renaissance Society, Chicago (2021); 13th Shanghai Biennale at Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2021); Bourse de Commerce, Paris (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020); Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands (2018), among others.



**Christina Li is a curator and writer working between Hong Kong and Amsterdam.**

She was the Curator-at-Large at Spring Workshop, Hong Kong, where she served as the Director between 2015 and 2017. She was named curator of Pilvi Takala's solo presentation at the Pavilion of Finland at the *59th Venice Biennale* (2022).





# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## Opening hours

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday,  
Sunday: 11 AM - 7 PM  
Thursday: 11 AM - 9 PM  
Closed on Tuesday

## Access

9, rue du Plâtre - 75004 Paris  
44, rue Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie -  
75004 Paris

## Metro

Rambuteau: line 11  
Hôtel de Ville: lines 1 & 11  
Châtelet - Les Halles: lines 4, 7, 11, 14 & RER  
A, B & D

## Bus

Archives - Rambuteau: 29 & 75  
Centre Georges Pompidou: 38, 47, 75 N12,  
N13, N14 & N23  
Hôtel de Ville: 67, 69, 76, 96, N11 & N16

## Parking

31, rue Beaubourg  
41-47, rue Rambuteau  
4, place Baudoyer

## Admission

**Exhibitions** : free entry  
**Events** : special rates

## Captions

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### ***Where do the noses go?, 2021***

Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist, Antenna  
Space, Shanghai et Balice Hertling, Paris

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### ***Resolutions, 2020***

Oil on canvas. Pinault Collection, Courtesy  
Balice Hertling, Paris

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### ***The Smoker, 2021***

Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist

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### ***Monroe, 2020***

Oil on canvas. Private Collection

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### ***Swimmers, 2021***

Oil on canvas. Private collection, Hong Kong

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### ***Red Kayak, 2020***

Oil on canvas. Private collection, Paris

Photo : Aurélien Mole

# TEAM

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Press material is available on our [website](#)

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#expoXinyiCheng

