

SHAFEI XIA

(1989, ShaoXing, CN

- lives and works in Bologna, IT)

Irreverent, amusing, impertinent, erotic, but extremely refined. The painting of Shafei Xia is elegant and refined, like that of the Japanese shunga or the Chinese erotic paintings of the 1800s, though it also reminds us of the cultured narcissism of Luigi Ontani, with its citations and oriental overtones.

The main theme of this series of recent works, made with a very particular technique – all watercolors on sandalwood paper stretched on canvas and ceramic– is love, experienced as desire, jealousy and violence, represented explicitly or symbolically, depending on the case, as an omnipresent feature of the work of Shafei. The artist often represents herself as a tiger, a symbol of power and instinctive force, which in Chinese alchemy indicates the active principle, energy as opposed to the passive principle. An ironic swapping of roles between men and women and between human beings and animals.

There is nothing boring or ordinary in Shafei Xia's painting: the artist inserts something unexpected in her colorful depictions, forcing us the peer behind the curtains or to look carefully into porcelain plates, where beside tomatoes and grapes (which symbolize sexuality, fertility and abundance) we find fish bones, a sign of danger, while a couple joins in a tender embrace. It is told that Picasso, in 1945, said to Brassai, showing him the erotic prints of Utamaro: "Art is never chaste. Where it is chaste, it is not art," remarking on how the sexual organs were clearly visible, yet stripped of any vulgarity. The same can be said for the works of Shafei Xia, which though speaking of sexual desire and appetites, never lose their delicacy in the treatment of faces, in the description of nude bodies, in the movements and poses of animals and the representation of settings. Because, as Shafei told regarding a work where she painted a concert scene: "when everyone plays seriously, I am the tiger, but I am also the orchestra conductor who creates problems. To break the boredom."

text by Maura Pozzati

Shafei Xia was born in ShaoXing, China, in 1989. After graduating in set design from ChongQing University, in 2013 she turned down a steady job in her native city to move to Shanghai, where after various experiences her first sale of a work enabled her to "catch the scent of freedom in the air," as she writes. She moved to Bologna and earned a degree at the Fine Arts Academy in 2020. In 2019 she won the Talent Prize of Fondazione Zucchelli per l'Arte.

Ongoing exhibitions

I Licked It, It's Mine, Museum of Sex, New York, NY, US (2024); *The Infinite Woman*, La Fondation Carmignac, Hyères, FR (2024).

Recent exhibitions

Embracing the languages given to me, BACO (Base Arte Contemporanea Odierna), Palazzo della Misericordia, Bergamo, IT (2024); *Italia 70 - I nuovi mostri*, Fondazione Trussardi, various venues, Milano, IT (2024); *I Am Still Me*, NEVVEN, Göteborg, SE (solo, 2023); *Terra Cognita: A Ceramic Story*, Mariane Ibrahim, Chicago, IL, US (2023); *Paper Cuts*, Keteleer Gallery, Antwerp, BE (2023); *Blue Blush*, Tokyo Gendai 2023 / LINSEED Projects, Tokyo, JP (duo, 2023); *Swallow Mountain, Drain Sea*, LINSEED Projects, Shanghai, CN (2023); *The Fores Project*, London, UK (solo, 2022); *Mutaforma. Mutazioni ceramiche del codice CZ*, Alchemilla, Bologna, IT (2022); *Per una nuova scultura. Sperimentazioni e traiettorie lungo la via Emilia*, Festa de l'Unità provinciale di Modena, Ponte Alto, Modena, IT (2022); *It is Better to be Cats than be Loved*, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Passando davanti alla mia finestra*, P420, Bologna, IT (solo, 2022); *quel jour sommes-nous?*, Tokonoma, Kassel,



DE (2022); *Il giardino dell'arte. Opere, collezioni*, Centro Pecci per l'Arte Contemporanea, Prato, IT (2022); *Fiaba d'autunno*, Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza, IT (solo, 2021); *Shafei Xia - Assolo #1*, Francesca Antonini arte contemporanea, Roma, IT (solo, 2021); *Principessa Shafei*, Palazzo Borromeo, Milano, IT (solo, 2021); *DANAE REVISITED*, Fondazione Francesco Fabbri, Pieve di Soligo (TV), IT (2021); *Welcome*

to my show, P420² – Project room (solo, 2020); *Abitiamo il mondo*, Lunetta11, Mombarcaro (CN), IT (2020); *Decadent gaming*, Linseed, Shanghai, CH (2020); *Rifugio*, Nelumbo Open Project, Bologna, IT (2020); *Sedimenti #2*, Sala del torrione, Castelnuovo Rangone (MO), IT (2020); *L'oro d'Oriente. Fusioni, migrazioni, contaminazioni*, Crete piece unique, Bologna, IT (2020); *Arte fiera*, Fondazione Zucchelli stand, Bologna, IT (2020).

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EXHIBITIONS

2024

Embracing the languages given to me, curated by Matteo Binci, BACO (Base Arte Contemporanea Odierna), Palazzo della Misericordia, Bergamo, IT

I Licked It, It's Mine, curated by Amanda Assaf and Ariel Plotek, Museum of Sex, New York, NY, US

The Infinite Woman, curated by Alona Pardo, La Fondation Carmignac, Hyères, FR

Italia 70 - I nuovi mostri, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Fondazione Trussardi, various venues, Milano, IT

2023

I Am Still Me, NEVVEN, Göteborg, SE (solo)

Terra Cognita: A Ceramic Story, Mariane Ibrahim, Chicago, IL, US

Paper Cuts, Keteleer Gallery, Antwerp, BE

Blue Blush, Tokyo Gendai 2023 / LINSEED Projects, Tokyo, JP (duo)

Swallow Mountain, Drain Sea, LINSEED Projects, Shanghai, CN

2022

The Fores Project, London, UK (solo)

Mutaforma. Mutazioni ceramiche del codice CZ, curated by Collettivo NN, Alchemilla, Bologna, IT

Per una nuova scultura, Sperimentazioni e traiettorie lungo la via Emilia, curated by Andrea Capucci and Alessandro Mescoli, Festa de l'Unità provinciale di Modena, Ponte Alto, Modena, IT

It is Better to be Cats than be Loved, curated by Yisi Li, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London, UK

Passando davanti alla mia finestra, P420, Bologna, IT (solo)

quel jour sommes-nous?, Tokonoma, Kassel, DE

Il giardino dell'arte. Opere, collezioni, curated by Stefano Collicelli Cagol, Centro Pecci per l'Arte Contemporanea, Prato, IT

2021

Fiaba d'autunno, Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza, IT (solo)

Shafei Xia – Assolo #1, Francesca Antonini arte contemporanea, Roma, IT (solo)

Principessa Shafei, Palazzo Borromeo, Milano, IT (solo)

DANAE REVISITED, curated by Carlo Sala, Fondazione Francesco Fabbri, Pieve di Soligo (TV), IT

2020

Welcome to my show, P420² – Project Room, Bologna, IT (solo)

Abitiamo il mondo, Lunetta11, Mombarcaro (CN), IT

Decadent gaming, Linseed, Shanghai, CH

Rifugio, Nelumbo Open Project, Bologna, IT

Sedimenti #2, Sala del torrione, Castelnuovo Rangone (MO), IT

Loro d'Oriente. Fusioni, migrazioni, contaminazioni, Crete piece unique, Bologna, IT

Arte fiera, Fondazione Zucchelli stand, Bologna, IT

2019

Habitat. Dialoghi tra arte e natura a Palazzo Magnani, Palazzo Magnani, Bologna, IT

La natura delle cose, Mtn\Museo Temporaneo Navile, Bologna, IT

PRIZES

2024

Winner of the Club GAMeC Prize 2024, 8th Edition, Bergamo, IT

2019

Winner of the Art Up Prize, Award of Critics and Collectors, Opentour, Bologna, IT

Talent Prize of Fondazione Zucchelli per l'Arte, Bologna, IT

STUDIES

2017 — 2020

Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna, Arti Visive, Bologna, IT

2008 — 2012

City college of science and technology, ChongQing University, ChongQing, CH
(degree in scenography)