

SKIRUA: The Sky Today Is Really Too Blue

2020.9.12-10.18

Opening : 9:12 - 4pm

Tang Contemporary Art Beijing VIP room

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of the first solo show for young artist SKIRUA on September 12 in the first Beijing space's second-floor VIP room. SKIRUA belongs to Gen Z, the first generation who were born and grew up as digital natives. The exhibition will present nine works created over the last two years. Her artistic practice encompasses painting and sculpture. Using a visual language of cute, anime figures, she presents to the world the inner selves of her generation--how the internet and social media, products of this information age they inhabit, have molded their views of self and the society, as well as the relationship between the society and the selves.

In SKIRUA's paintings, the main figures are expressions of herself. Fusing Superflat, Surrealism, and collective narrative forms, the figures do not have any external source—they come from the artist's imagination. The creation by Skirua are portraits of her psychological self, expression of a complex desire to communicate with both herself and the world she lives in. In her work, SKIRUA imitates cartoons and uses rich narratives to convey her desire for self-expression and communication. Her paintings are both manifestos delivered in monologue and a young woman's whispers to herself.

As a digital native, SKIRUA weaves the digital and the traditional medium together effortlessly. She usually starts her work on an iPad and then transfers the framework of her art onto canvas, where she develops the piece in full, adding rich and delicate details. She interprets pop-cultures and sub-cultures that have made an impact on her life with vivid imageries, which leave a unique impression of a world that is both utopian and dystopian, where harmonic chaos is common and innocent absurdity prevails. Through her sustained dialogue with herself, she expresses young people's thoughts about the collisions and struggles that take place in their social lives.

The exhibition begins with a felt-tip pen work entitled *I Was Born From the Uterus, and I Will Die By the Uterus*. The black-and-white lines delineate an upside-down uterus in the form of a monument, is an expression of the infinity of life and death. The idea for *Welcome to the Milk Cow Nail Salon* came from an episode in China's *Mega Projects*, a documentary series. In order to improve the quality of the milk at the featured production facility, the workers tended to the cows' hooves, calling them "manicures." Combining images of milk cows and a nail salon, SKIRUA depicts the exploitation and objectification of the test-based system of education, wherein people feel like spare parts in the social machine. The painting depicts her experiences in public education institutions, considering how the fixed input of personal and mechanized resistance can produce unrestricted outputs. In *Not a Guide: How to Become a Contemporary Beauty*, a young woman is dismembered and then pieced back together according to the pop definition of "beauty," a concept shaped by mass beliefs. Here, Skirua voiced her doubts: how do we find a voice of our own in a world crowded to the brink with chatters of technology and symbols of our own making?

Beginning in primary school, SKIRUA had romantic feelings about fictional characters in anime, from liking the characters to collecting large numbers of figurines and dolls. "*Tai Tai*" reflects a conversation with herself: the black-haired young woman represents Skirua herself and the green haired one a virtual character but also her alter ego. This piece is about the journey of the young artist is taking to explore her inner self through fantasies, negative comparisons, and love. The young woman's fantasies are reflected in images with a dose of Freudian narcissism. In *I Kissed a Sea Snail Via a LCD*, a young woman and sea snail have a fantastical kiss that seems to be separated by a social media screen—they are close yet still apart. A chaotic sense of peeling and dizziness seems to characterize the lines on the snail's body. People are rapidly receiving information; they are drowning into the endless swirls, as if pulled in by the tide, then transforming into sea snails, unfettered yet very dangerous.

Innocent and self-aware, light-hearted yet melancholy, SKIRUA's works are always sensitive and introspective. In *The Sky Today Is Really Too Blue*, the seemingly bright blue sky and ever-changing icebergs are backdrop of truncated pieces of young woman, echoing the current uncertainty. That blue sky and the younger generation remind me of Dickens' opening to *The Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times [...] it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity."

Lu Xiangyi

August 15, 2020

Guo Yuheng (SKIRUA) was born in Beijing in 2003. She is currently studying at the International School of Beijing, and she participated in the Rhode Island School of Design Summer Program in 2019. Her artistic practice encompasses painting and sculpture, with a focus on the cultural shifts and conflicts inspired by the internet, social media, and other products of the information age. In particular, she is interested in how the generation born after the year 2000 understand and envision life, the future, and popular culture.