

## SKIRUA' s Future Paradise

2023.5.20 - 6.30

Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space

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Tang Contemporary Art is pleased to announce "SKIRUA's Future Paradise", starting on May 20 at Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space. Curated by Cui Cancan, a solo show focus on Guo Yuheng's works.

### Curatorial Fragments

Out of all my curatorial endeavors, my encounter with Guo Yuheng's works at Tang Contemporary Art three years ago stands out as a particularly captivating experience. The novelty, intricacy, and atmospheric quality of her works immediately drew me in and left a lasting impression on me. I realized I had stumbled upon a completely new world, unlike any I had ever experienced before. In comparison to other contemporary styles, Guo's work was neither boring nor superficial but had enough intensity, ambition, and intricate details as if predicting a new future. Perhaps it was a curator's sense of crisis or my pursuit of kitsch that led me to arrange an interview with Guo.

Before the interview, I felt anxious as I did not know much about Guo, who was born in 2003. I hesitated to judge her artwork based on my past experiences, as my lack of familiarity with her world and outdated knowledge may cause us to talk past each other during the interview; However, I was also reluctant to pursue a new trend and abandon the traditional understanding of art, the deep-seated paradigms of "profoundness," "classicism," and their perpetual relevance. During the interview, I was curious about her life and values and hoped to curate her next solo exhibition, which ultimately led to the exhibition we have today.

The theme of the exhibition, "SKIRUA's Future Paradise" comes from discussions between the artist and I. I use the term "discussion" generally, as it was more of a back-and-forth between the artist's rejection of my initial proposals and my subsequent attempts to capture the essence of her work. Initially, many options were under consideration with the hope to develop a popular and conceptualized definition that can be easily communicated and spread among the audience from other's perspectives. So, I called it "Millennial Queer,". "Millennial" refers to the time, the era that Guo was born into- a rapidly advancing period of the internet, the information society, cosmic wormholes, and significant changes in social and consumption patterns, which have shaped new social structures, living spaces, meanings and values. "Queer" points to Guo's identity as a digital native of the internet, living in a world of virtual reality, anime and manga. Also, her fan-fiction style life path, her non-binary gender identity, and among others. However, Guo rejected these "labeling" identifications, which made me rethink the role of a curator. Should a curator maintain a critical distance and provide an evaluation from the perspective of the previous generation, or empathize with the artist and view the world through the eyes of the artist?

Unlike other platforms such as WeChat and Weibo, QQ has become an integral part of Guo's social life. It allows her to easily connect with strangers and expand her social circle by meeting others who share similar interests. Guo's generation has a more innate sense of self, unlike the previous generation, who had to escape from the constraints of society or develop a unique style or language to assert their sense of self-expression., Her sense of self-identity is natural and confident without the need of acquiring new knowledge, just like she never thought of entering any art school to study. This has also allowed her to escape the fate of being a 'professional artist' and instead respond to the sequence of art history through inheritance or confrontation.

Guo spends six to seven hours a day on the internet, engaging in a significant amount of virtual fantasies, causing "reality" to gradually fade away. Many times, Guo finds it difficult to distinguish the boundary between "online" and "offline". The constant flood of information and news, in their overwhelming quantity and diversity, often triggers anxiety and distress in her. On the other hand, she weaves her own physical world in the virtual space, freeing herself from the cheap, attention-grabbing modes of online communication that this generation knows so well. The "virtual life" has replaced reality and become life itself, allowing her to constantly create more fantasies of herself.

"SKIRUA" is Guo's English name, which is not the main theme of her work, but rather one of her many "real and virtual" selves. The large number of dolls in the exhibition represents Guo's fantasy and fictional self, like a self-portrait or autobiographical expression. She escapes her own destiny and enjoyed life in different scenarios. The theme of "Fantasy World" in the exhibition stems from Guo's desire to build a castle. While every era has its own desired "fantasy world", this one is different from the past humanistic pursuits. It does not have a heavy underlying tone, nor is it a product of dissatisfaction with reality. This fantasy world of SKIRUA is a unique visual feast, filled with vibrant colors, unique textures, intricate structures and sequences, that are typical of the virtual space. There are thousands of pieces of information, dolls, stickers, and decorations scattered throughout this "innocent" castle. However, from the earliest sketches, this fantasy world has made it difficult for me to make judgments, and the rules of art content and form that are usually applied in curating exhibitions have gradually become invalid.

Therefore, unlike previous exhibitions, my curatorial approach in this exhibition is to abandon curation: using the exhibition name given by the artist, letting her decide the selection and presentation of the works, writing about fragments that cannot be called a discourse, and conducting an interview full of questions to deprioritize the viewer's perspective, the gaze of others, and my own experience, presenting an innovative and captivating fantasy world that is exclusive to SKIRUA. When it comes to interpreting Guo Yuheng's work, it is best not to categorize it into a specific style or draw from pre-existing experiences. Instead of attempting to define it, approach the work with a curious mindset and simply observe.

Curator: Cui Cancan  
May 4th, 2023

#### **About artist**

SKIRUA (Guo Yuheng) was born in Beijing in 2003.

Her artistic practice encompasses painting, installation, and film, 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. SKIRUA is a contradiction between reality, society, internet, and fantasy. "SKIRUA" is the name of Guo Yuheng's imaginary self, who travels through the timeline to become a mimic of different social phenomena, anime characters with different identities, and finally gets lost in herself. Guo Yu Heng has always aspired to become a fictional character, fall in love with a fictional anime character, get married to the dolls he incarnates, and finally divide her emotions, preferences, and soul into countless dolls. Each doll is its own "doppelganger", turning itself into a doll to wander and play in the fantasy world. Beauty, scars, and happiness are intertwined. Her imaginary world is a shelter of witches, sealing a myriad of intertwined feelings.

Solo Exhibition: "SKIRUA's Future Paradise", Tang Contemporary Art, 2023

"The Sky Today Is Really Too Blue", Tang Contemporary Art, 2020

Group Exhibition:

"Disconnected Generation", Song Art Museum, 2022

"Vertical Take-off", The Galaxy Museum of Contemporary Art, 2021

"Mind Force Field", Epoch Art Museum, 2021

#### **About curator**

Cui Cancan, the curator, writer.