



Lilou LI XIA *Eye Contact*

September 24 –October 29, 2022

“By enlarging small details, you may be able to see the truth.”

Yi Gallery is pleased to present a new body of work by Lilou (Li Xia). This is the France-based artist's first New York solo exhibition and her second exhibition with the gallery. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, September 24 from 3PM to 6PM. The opening will coincide with Industry City's second #ArtSaturday event.

Lilou's images, while clearly figurative, are not descriptive in any overt manner. She frames and blows up quotidian details in daily life. In her images, quiet moments of human interactions and scenes of domesticity, both realistic and imaginary, come alive: a mundane lamp, a grocery list, kissing lovers, a bite into a fresh strawberry, people sharing fruits, a tiny piece of tacky scotch tape... All seemingly insignificant details are magnified and explored with a warm touch of humor. Lilou's tableaux emanate from real life. Cinematically framing banal details, her work invites the viewer into vignettes that capture the tension of familiar and overlooked moments. “I think in images,” according to the artist, “I like painting moments that do not show cause and effect, before and after. They are in a state of flux.” Also on view are a new series of ceramic works, in dialogue with the watercolor and oil paintings, in the exhibition.

In *Eye Contact – Butterfly Kiss* (2022), a large oil on canvas painting and the show's titular work, Lilou depicts the tender moment when two kissing lovers' eyelashes gently touch, the two faces melting into each other. Here, subtly different colors are used to represent the skin tones of the two faces. As the artist states, “The color palette reminds me of Jiefangbei – People's Liberation Monument in my hometown, Chongqing. It's where the two rivers, Yangtze and Jialing, meet. The two rivers have different colors, yet when they merge, they do not change each other's colors.”

Lilou completed *Lovers (14 Février)*, an intimately-sized watercolor work mounted on wood panel, on Valentine's Day in 2021. It is a close-up of an intimate moment –two lovers' ears touching. Here, Lilou explores painting's full capacity to give fleeting moments, such as this one, a permanent visual representation. Close-ups are powerful, shortening the distance of viewing, making the experience dynamic and intimate. To Lilou, magnifying isolated frames leads her into a world similar to meditation.

We may find ourselves already familiar with Lilou's fictional subjects. To the artist, a character is only a signifier, and she intentionally leaves out representational details that may give away the gender, racial or social identity of her protagonists. The figures in her work do not look directly at the viewer. They look away. They are detached. It is very important for the artist that the objects and figures in her work remain in their most natural state. They don't pose for anyone. They are not being watched. This world is an open space that anyone can enter freely. In this world, bread dances, condensed milk speaks lover's discourse and objects shift through stages of personification.

Precise and sensual, these meticulously constructed scenes are imbued with a sense of tranquility and surreal humor. Though decidedly lacking a distinct plot in her narrative, Lilou leaves traces that suggest something has just happened. Lilou's pictures not only record events, they capture feelings – emotions buried deep in our consciousness. These neatly cropped-up scenes celebrate analog, delicious and, sometimes, forgotten moments in life. They act as a sort of visual fossil – evidence of our human existence – how we live, work and love.

Li Xia, also known as 绿李 Lilou Oh Yeah (b. 1991, Chongqing, China), lives and works in Rouen, France. Lilou attended the Université de Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne (MFA, 2021), l'École Supérieure d'Art et Design Le Havre-Rouen (ESADHaR) (MFA, 2020) and Sichuan Fine Arts Institute (BFA, 2014). She has exhibited internationally at venues such as the LONG Museum, Minsheng Art Museum, Bananafish Gallery in Shanghai, China, Villa des Arts in Paris, France and Rola Bola in Rouen, France.

YI GALLERY program features an international roster of emerging and mid-career artists. Started in 2018 as a curatorial project exhibiting in non-traditional settings, the gallery has expanded to include a collaborative exhibition space in Bushwick (2020 - 2021). The gallery continues to evolve with a new space inside Brooklyn's vibrant creative hub Industry City, launched in 2021. YI is committed to offering a platform for distinctive artistic voices, while enhancing the public's interaction with contemporary art.

For additional information, please contact Cecilia Zhang Jalboukh at cecilia@gallery-yi.com or call / text +1 (917) 617 - 6561.

Image: *Lovers (14 Février)*, 2021, Watercolor on paper, mounted on wood panel, 8 1/2 x 9 1/2 in 21.6 x 24.1 cm