

# JELLY

## Artist: Lilou (Li Xia)

OCTOBER 12, 2022

For this month's feature, we chatted with France-based illustrator and visual artist, Lilou (Li Xia) (@lilou\_oh\_yeah on instagram). Lilou lives and works in Rouen, France. She 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.

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."

Lilou is currently exhibiting at Yi Gallery in Brooklyn, NY where we run JELLY. Along with her original works, we also house a small collection of [risograph prints](#) available through the JELLY online store.



Installation view: Lilou LI XIA, *Eye Contact*, YI GALLERY, New York, 2022

**Hi Lilou! We're big fans of your work. Can you talk to us a little bit more about your practice as an illustrator and a fine artist?**

Working as a fine artist feels freer for me. Once I have inspiration, I start immediately. Illustration is very interesting to me. It's a collaboration that the client provides a subject and I create within a limited time. Being a fine artist and being an illustrator are two creative modes with different rhythms. I really like working as an illustrator. It allows me to sometimes come out of my own world and discover unexpected possibilities.



Installation view: Lilou LI XIA, *Eye Contact*, YI GALLERY, New York, 2022

**Many people know you from your online handle, @lilou\_oh\_yeah. Where did the nickname 'Lilou' come from?**

It's an alias I named myself for my creative practice. Working is just part of me. I post my works under the Chinese name “绿李” (lv li). The French pronunciation of “Lilou” is exactly the same as the reverse pronunciation of “绿李” in the Chongqing dialect.

**In a lot of your recent work, including your current show at Yi Gallery in Brooklyn, NY, there are depictions of bread—personified and anthropomorphized. When did you first start drawing bread like this? Is there a story behind the bread that's come to life?**

I used to spend a minute with toasts every morning – watching them struggle out of the toaster. Then I had this idea of making a sculpture of an escaping bread. A bread cut in half looks like it is running. Painting has the ability to directly visualize the world that only exists in one's fantasy. I developed the image of the personified bread from my imagination.



**'Bread 3', Lilou LI XIA, *Eye Contact*, YI GALLERY, New York, 2022**

**Who is the girl in most of your work? Is it representative of how you see yourself?**

Since I was a kid, whenever I drew female figures, my friends would always ask, "Is this your self-portrait?" I would always say NO!

It's like the relationship between directors and actors in their movies, or writers and the characters in their novels. When we read a novel, we may have an image in our mind based on the writer's description of a character. The director will find an actor who fits the script to play a certain part. The figure in my work is also a pictorial representation of the image I have in my head. She is the figure as you see it in the painting. She is one possible portrayal of a "girl".

**Can you talk more on your transition from living and working in China to France, and how it has affected your artistic practice and you as an artist?**

I want to live in an unfamiliar environment, be a stranger, and exist as an outsider. The difference of living in France allowed me to reconnect with myself and everything around me. Because my work comes entirely from my experiences, memories and imagination, the transition from spicy noodles for breakfast to tartine, for example, directly influenced the content of my work.





**Lilou in her studio, 2022**

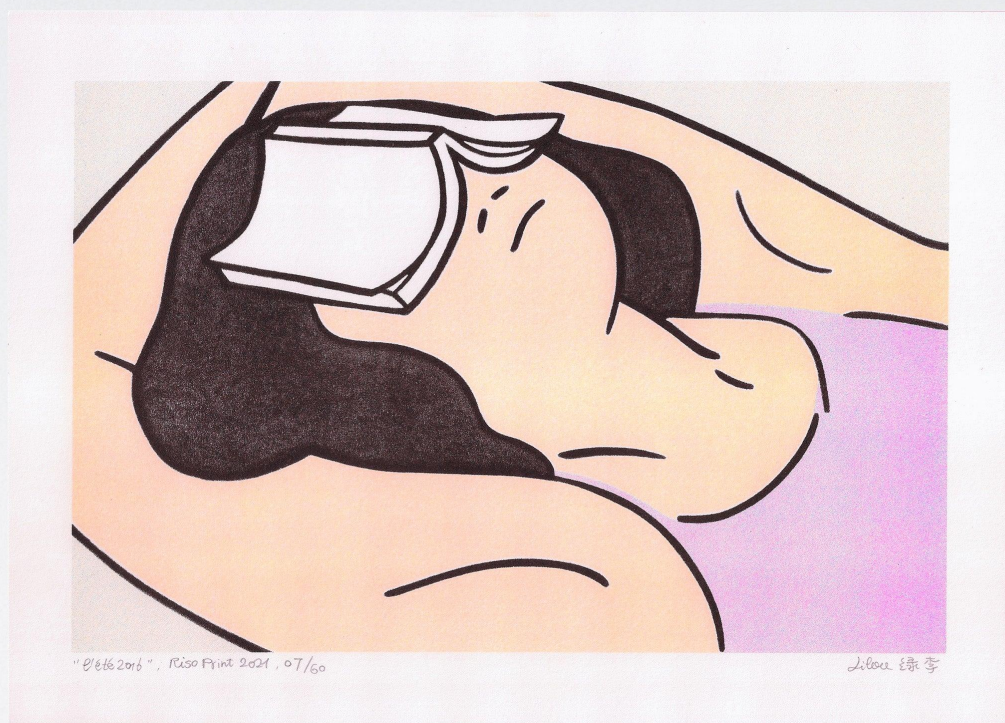
**What goals do you have for yourself as an artist?**

I don't really set goals for myself on the creative path.

I really enjoy working, because the activity brings me spiritual fulfillment.

View more of Lilou's work at [Yi Gallery](#), and shop her prints on [JELLY](#).





**L'été 2016 (Summer 2016) Risograph Print by Lilou**

Lilou: Eye Contact  
September 24 - October 29, 2022

YI GALLERY  
254 36th Street, B634  
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<https://jelly-books.com/blogs/spotlight/spotlight-lilou-li-xia>