

Exhibition Review CRITICS' PICKS

Xie Nanxing, "Adverb Command" exhibition view, 2022.

New York

Xie Nanxing

PETZEL GALLERY
456 West 18th Street
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Hiding objects and leaving only traces is the impression that Xie Nanxing's paintings have always given people. As the artist's first solo exhibition in New York, the title of "Adverb Command" aptly suggests the above impression: the subject (i.e. image) is suppressed, blocking people's desire to seek narrative from the picture; the adverb (That is, the traces and indications of repression) remain, but what drives the operation of the object is an unstable and irrational structure.

In Xie Nanxing's two previous solo exhibitions ("Spice" at UCCA in 2018 and "Rolling Dice" at Galerie Urs Meile in 2020), his main method of hiding objects and obtaining traces was to rely on paint between papers or canvases permeation of. In this exhibition, light spots and mosaics become two other means of hiding and depicting objects, which are reflected in the two series "Dwarf's Refrain" (2019-2020) and "Shadows of Painting" (2020-2021) respectively. Of course, these "methods" are in no particular order and have been throughout Xie Nanxing's long-term practice. They all serve the same quest, which we might call how to identify a subject by its appendages. The prototype image of the "Dwarf's Refrain" series is a children's painting style illustration that Xie Nanxing invited his father to make. The artist placed them in front of a strong backlight and photographed them, resulting in photos that left some light spots and blurry development, and then used these photos as objects for painting. The "Shadows of Painting" series uses a mosaic grid-like structure to hide or reveal the base image. The point-like and vague "mosaics" in Xie Nanxing's earlier works are given a clear block shape here, and the orientation towards image consumption and censorship is further strengthened. However, whether it is a spot of light or a mosaic, the ultimate goal of Xie Nanxing's methods of interrupting the narrative and suppressing the "subject word" in the picture is to direct the viewer's gaze from a specific object to its motivation and operating mechanism.

Despite this, the works in this exhibition do not feel calm and neutral, but instead convey strong depression and anger. The most intuitive manifestation is the use of high-saturation colors and the appearance of abrupt lines and contours. For example, in "Chorus of the Dwarves #1", the large area of bright red and the violent and twisted black lines like barbed wire create an uneasy atmosphere between the gathering and breaking of the image, especially when we learn that the "base" of a series is a children's style illustration, it seems even darker. The fake harmony is torn apart, and the evil of banality overflows. In the largest exhibition room, two paintings reflect each other: in "Shadows of Painting No. 4" (2021), a mass of black spiral lines lies on the background of dark blue and black and gray mosaic blocks that bite and erode each other. , the spiral is traversed by a bright yellow band, with the Chinese word "loneliness" repeatedly written on it; opposite is "The Shadow of Painting No. 3" (2021), the Dürer print "Melancholy" as the prototype of the base map has been The gray and white squares are so obscured that they cannot be distinguished. The few wisps of blue, purple and scarlet that appear in the middle of the square array are like a technical glitch in the picture, which is reminiscent of the weeds growing under the squeeze of the cracks in the brick wall and its uncontrollable force. vitality. Relating to the time when these works were created, they are obviously closely related to the governance technology and life experience under the new coronavirus epidemic. Therefore, they inevitably contain the artist's personal feelings, which also makes them more able to trigger specific emotions and emotional awareness in the viewer. .

Text/ Chen Li