

acintya

Fu Xiaotong, Ni Youyu, Zhang Hua, Zhang Kaitong

Curated by Zhang Kaitong

Opening: June 05, 2026, 18:00 – 21:00

Exhibition: June 06, 2026 – July 04, 2026

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

Acintya is a term in Buddhist epistemology pointing to what conceptual thought cannot exhaust, suggesting the limits of reason in its attempt to grasp objects. In the exhibition *acintya*, the four artists Fu Xiaotong, Ni Youyu, Zhang Hua, and Zhang Kaitong approach this condition through distinct methods within their respective practices: images continually shift their relations to one another as they are read and reassembled, leaving perception unable to settle into any single interpretation, constituting the exhibition's underlying thread.

Fu Xiaotong's *NUN-2026* series revolves around the states that remain after language, knowledge, and ways of seeing reach their respective boundaries. *NUN-2026-1* and *NUN-2026-2* share old book pages and covers as their material. In the former, beeswax seals the Great Mother, an archetypal image predating written language. In the latter, eye-shaped voids are cut into an old book cover and are filled with plaster and epoxy resin, casting them into form, yet they still appear not fully fixed. In both works, the facing pages remain blank—the forms of reading and looking persist, but their referent is absent. In *NUN-2026-3*, the artist repeatedly pierces handmade Xuan paper with a needle; dense holes gradually accumulate across the surface to form a field constituted by void, sustaining its form in a state of threshold. Through the series, the works reach the boundaries of language, looking, and form, and beyond these limits something unnameable continues to emerge and has never ceased.

Ni Youyu's *Two-Faced Figure (Inspired by Ancient Portrait Collage Sculptures)* draws from the artist's own archive of small ancient Chinese porcelain figurines, cast in cement and cut into fragments that are reconfigured according to correspondences of feature and structure, connecting figures belonging to diverse periods, genders and identities into new entities that correspond to no specific individual. His photo-collage series *Freewheeling Trip* operates under a similar logic: extracting and splicing formally similar areas from old landscape photographs collected from around the world. This approach resonates with the traditional Chinese concept of *armchair traveling (Wo You, 卧游)*—Landscape does not originate from observation, but from the extraction and recombination of idealized commonalities; within this process, formal affinity becomes a common standard across cultures and time, generating syntheses that cannot be traced historically or geographically.

Zhang Hua, raised in Yunnan, employs copper, the region's most common metal, as a medium to deconstruct and translate folk symbols. The copper surface in *Fish Cave* is gradually formed into a layered surface through oxidation and treatment, presenting a texture and structure that fall between mineral, excavated artifact and geological profile; the edges of the central hole are stepped, enabling viewing to shift between surface and interior space. *Mountain and Wilderness Project / Spirit* arranges multiple abstract forms made of metal within the attic space, their forms derived from plants found in mountainous landscapes. Multiple individual entities are placed within the same spatial field, corresponding to the sculptural logic developed by late Qing artisan Li Guangxiu (黎广休) in his Five Hundred Arhats at Qiongzhu Temple (筇竹寺). In *Pine Forest*, Zhang turns regional mythological imagery into copper sheets through paper-cutting, removing them from their original symbolic functions and reconfiguring them as material forms within the exhibition space, where the relation between symbol and material surface is continuously reconfigured. Through recontextualization, ritual practice, folk belief, visual symbols, and natural elements are interwoven with material forms within the exhibition space.

Zhang Kaitong reworks historical image materials from his collection, with relations between image and knowledge persistently reconfigured through perception. *Washed by Time* depicts fragmented ancient mining scenes in silver lines that appear and disappear with the viewing angle; on the right side of the canvas, an encyclopedic sketch of vegetables appears. Mining scenes and botanical diagrams are placed within the same pictorial field, where different ways of producing knowledge remain in proximity. In *The Beginning of History – 2*, Greek frescoes, Chinese Northern Dynasties murals (5th–6th century), and traces of natural or deliberate damage are layered onto the same surface; areas of grey-white coverage and peeling become part of the pictorial structure, while the reflection of golden leaves varies with perspective. Across both works, images appear and disappear under changing angles of viewing, gaze, and movement, while meaning remains open and is continually reformed.

The four artists work through different strategies: fixing, reconfiguring, deconstructing, and layering. History, often treated as a stable frame of reference, is unfolded through shifting modes of looking. Reason reaches its limits in ongoing activity, and perception continues beyond its boundaries.

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Artists:

Fu Xiaotong was born in 1976, Shanxi Province, China. She obtained a BA from the School of Oil Painting at Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts in 2000, and a MA from the School of Experimental Art at China Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2013. Fu currently lives in Beijing / Berlin and teaches at the School of Arts at North China University of Science and Technology. Fu explores two different realms in her artistic practice: pinpricks on paper and installations that investigate temporal-spatial relationships. Fu's pinpricks on paper are created based on the use of traditional Chinese handcraft of Xuan paper, together with the embroidery craftsmanship made by Chinese women, and further developed upon in her exploration of the cultural cohesion of Xuan paper, brushstrokes, and needle and thread. Responding to the archaeological social structures as well as the spiritual pursuit of ancient people, Fu's installation, sculptures, and performance work videos are in dialogue with ancient civilization, and are named after the ancient Egyptian God of Chaos – NUN. Fu was awarded the Asian Female Artist prize, jointly issued by Hong Kong SOVEREIGN Asian Art Foundation and Vogue Hong Kong in 2019. Fu's works have been acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Harvard Art Museums, the Dallas Museum of Art, the White Rabbit Art Museum in Australia, Johnson Art Museum in Cornell University, Los Angeles County Art Museum, Fidelity Art Investment in the United States, Zhejiang Art Museum in China and other institutions.

Ni Youyu, born in 1984, is an artist based in Shanghai and the recipient of the CCAA Best Young Artist Award in 2014. Since 2005, Ni has been involved in curating contemporary art exhibitions and writing critical essays on individual artists in Shanghai. He has worked as an independent artist since 2007. Ni has been invited to present solo exhibitions at numerous major museums and galleries, including Shanghai Art Museum (2012), Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (2015), Kunstverein Konstanz (2017), Orange County Museum of Art (2018), Yuz Museum (2019), He Art Museum (2022), and Powerlong Museum (2024). His works are held in the collections of many internationally renowned institutions, including the Brooklyn Museum (New York, USA), Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), M+, Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hongkong, China), Yuz Museum (Shanghai, China), He Art Museum (Shunde, China), White Rabbit Gallery (Sydney, Australia), Arario Museum (Seoul/Jeju, South Korea), me Collectors Room Berlin (Berlin, Germany), By Art Matters Art (Hangzhou, China), Powerlong Museum (Shanghai, China), Architect Model Museum (Shanghai/Guangzhou, China), Shanghai Library East (Shanghai, China), the Sigg Collection (Switzerland), the Pinault Collection (Paris, France), DSL Collection (Paris, France), Ghisla Art Collection Foundation (Locarno, Switzerland), and Shanghai Center of Photography (Shanghai, China).

ZHANG Hua, 1979 born in Pu'er, Yunnan Province. He graduated from the Sculpture Department of Yunnan Art Insti-

tute, now he lives and works in Kunming. Zhang Hua has held solo exhibitions and participated in important exhibitions at home and abroad, and his works have been collected by art museums, public spaces and other institutions. He explores the attributes and characteristics of Yunnan's folk culture, and explores the connection between nature's divinity, spirituality and humanity. Main exhibitions include: The Harmony of the Four Realms – Southwest China New Art Observations 2026, Guizhou Art Museum, Guiyang (2026); A Short History of Sculpture: Time Deposits, Wind H Art Center, Beijing(2025); Nature Through a Glass, REFLEXION, Beijing (2025); Big Hammer Thin Sound OFOT Gallery, Shanghai (2022); Zhang Hua's Yard, Elephant Bookstore, Kunming (2020); Secret Stone, OFOT, All Photography Gallery, Shanghai (2014); Stone to Run, Moss Gallery, Kunming (2013); Metarhsis, Different Art, Hong Kong (2008). Main group exhibitions include: Gaze and Journey, Dazhi Idle Artists Invitational Exhibition, Yunnan (2023); Landscape After Landscape, Kunming Museum of Contemporary Art, Kunming (2022); In the Wild, Yunnan Architectural Traditions Research Exhibition, Kunming Museum of Contemporary Art, Kunming (2022) etc.

Kaitong Zhang (b. 1991) graduated from North China University of Science and Technology and the Kunsthochschule Kassel in Germany. He currently lives and works between Berlin, Athens, and Beijing. Moving between different cultural contexts and maintaining a long-term engagement with the collection and study of ancient art, Zhang has developed a practice centered on observation and analysis. In his work, painting functions as a process of thinking activated through viewing. Images become interfaces to vanished worlds, continually acquiring new positions and meanings across different times and cultures. From 2018 to 2024, Zhang studied Fine Arts at the Kunsthochschule Kassel under Prof. Andrea Büttner and completed the Meisterschüler program. He has held solo exhibitions at Double Double Gallery (Beijing), Nanotte Gallery (Nanjing), and Grains Project Space (Cologne). His work has also been presented in group exhibitions at Museum Wiesbaden (Wiesbaden), Documenta Halle (Kassel), Tang Contemporary Art (Beijing), Absent Gallery (Guangzhou), Blunt Society (Shanghai), The Blanc (New York), and Spoiler Project Space (Berlin), among other institutions and exhibition spaces.