

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wu Yiming – B-Side Ink

398 West Street, New York, NY 10014

March 8, 2025 – May 17, 2025

Opening reception: Saturday, March 8, 2025 | 6-8 PM

Eli Klein Gallery is pleased to present *B-Side Ink*, Wu Yiming's first solo show at the gallery, as well as in New York. This exhibition will showcase the artist's latest works, marking a significant evolution in his exploration of ink. Featuring works on paper, cardboard, and with collaged elements, Wu's ability to bring the underlying cultural and societal significance of media and material into discourse with tradition and contemporary life is highlighted in the exhibition, which will run until May 17, 2025.

Wu's move from Shanghai to New York in 2020 introduced a stark shift that has profoundly influenced his work. A master technician and scholar of ink painting, Wu has used his virtuosity to navigate the complex and entrenched cultural landscape of American Pop Art and to juxtapose it with his own lived, cultural experience.

Ink's demand for precision, its indelible nature, and its unforgiving tonality seem to be at odds with American Pop, whose raison d'être is to proliferate and duplicate, to become a commodity in the same moment that it deconstructs commodity. Ink demands urgency, a sense of intense presence where one folds themselves into the moment of strike. Pop requires a different urgency, to produce multiples in order to maintain relevance in a constantly evolving and global world. Wu blends the conflicting and dual nature of these discursive forces without ever yielding to either tradition or Pop.

B-Side Ink blurs the boundary between Eastern and Western traditions, particularly in portraiture, where Wu has drawn upon the Mona Lisa, who, like the Buddha, smiles softly in an eternal gesture of generosity to onlookers. In *Flower Sermon*, a series of four works which are featured in the exhibition, the Mona Lisa of Wu's mind merges with the eponymous Buddhist gesture and virtuosic painting to form images of ambivalence, teetering between reverence and parody, yet always remaining profoundly sincere. Silhouetted by halos, Wu's portraits scramble origin and cultural identity.



Gallery, and ShanghART Gallery © Wu Yiming

Alongside Wu's portraits, depictions of mortal flora and beings of immemorial existence coalesce into a

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cohesive vision of cultural perception. Wu's *Banana* series is featured prominently in the show, done on cardboard and painted as if in motion, tossed up in the air. Yet the bananas also seem stationary, resting on the ground. The chosen materials at the core of the series reflect Wu's tongue-in-cheek response to life in New York. Banana peels and cardboard are the discarded shells of what has now been removed.



Wu Yiming, *Banana No. 9*, 2020. Ink and color on cardboard, 32 1/4 x 12 5/8 inches (82 x 32 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Eli Klein Gallery, and ShanghART Gallery © Wu Yiming.

These materials are also products of consumption that proliferate on sidewalks, in alleys, and burst from the tops of garbage cans anywhere one might go in the city. This imagery is remarkably Pop in a way that recalls and challenges Duchamp's readymade. The readymade's symbolic power lies in its elevation beyond commodity, even though the object remains the same. Yet Wu pushes this further, where the readymade is also engaged with as a waste object, something that in itself bares a reflexivity toward consumer culture, or an ability to self-critique through its own existence. The subjects recollect visions of unseemly metropolitan waste, and highlight Wu's protean ability to adapt and respond with astounding clarity to his surroundings as both symbolic and literal, one never far behind the other. In his work, whether in response to subjects of vaunted status, consecrated religion and history, or phantoms of consumption, Wu is always in keen discourse with tradition, environment, and contemporary life.

About Wu Yiming:

Wu Yiming was born in 1966 in Shanghai, China. He received his B.A. from the Fine Arts Department of East China Normal University in 1992. Wu was part of a generation of Chinese artists put to the task of reconciling the various conflicts between Chinese artistic tradition and Western influence and pressure. Through his perennial relationship with ink painting, he has both embraced and defied his cultural heritage and the challenges against it, existing both as a contemporary literatus and as a maverick.

Since relocating to New York in 2020, Wu's work has undergone significant evolution, revealing that his sensitivity to environment was never conditional upon globalizing changes but that it was and is an innate trait vital to his oeuvre. In particular, his keen understanding of materiality has provided an exciting backdrop for the continuing evolution of his work.

Wu Yiming's solo exhibitions include Interior Landscape of Ink: Poetry, Calligraphy, Painting and Seal Carving, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China (2025); Being and Nothingness, Mind Set Art Center, Taipei (2024); Wu Yiming: Painting the Banal, ShanghART, Shanghai (2018); Wu Yiming: Light in the Dark, Mind Set Art Center, Taipei (2017); Wu Yiming: Self-defined Border, New Calligraphy Works by Wu Yiming, Ding Yi Hui, ShanghART, Shanghai (2016); Wu Yiming Recent Works, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing (2015); The Beginning of Good Life, Mind Set Art Center, Taipei (2014); The Other Side of Time-WU Yiming Solo Exhibition, ShanghART, Shanghai (2012); Focus: Wu Yiming's Works on Paper and Sculptures, ShanghART, Shanghai (2006); Wu Yiming: Time Ex., UMA Gallery, Hong Kong (2005); Wu Yiming: Paper Works, Jusu Gallery 55, Bangkok, Thailand (2004); Wu Yiming: Too Dark, ShanghART Fuxing Park, Shanghai (2002); Wu Yiming: It's Looking Beautiful, Second Performance, Galerie Waldburger, Berlin (2002); Wu Yiming: Works on Paper 98-99, ShanghART Fuxing Park, Shanghai (1999); Wu Yiming: New Works, ShanghART Portman, Shanghai (1997).

Wu Yiming's work has been featured in renowned institutions worldwide including Künstlerhaus, Vienna, Austria (2002); Lehmbrock Museum, Duisburg, Germany (2015); Kunst(Zeug)Haus, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland (2012); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2004); Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, Bologna, Italy (2005); Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany (2006); University at Buffalo Art Galleries, Buffalo, NY [itinerary: Millennium Art Museum, Beijing] (2003); Long Museum, Shanghai (2014); Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2013); Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2023); Powerlong Museum, Shanghai (2017); Mingyuan Art Museum, Shanghai (2023); Zhu Qizhan Art Museum, Shanghai (2020, 2022); Art Museum of SPSI, Shanghai (2017); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2016); Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai (2015); Jinji Lake Art Museum, Suzhou, China (2015); Zhangjiang Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2008); Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai (2001); Liu Haisu Art Museum, Shanghai (1999, 2000); Consulate General of Switzerland, Shanghai (2002); Jinmao Podium Building, Shanghai (1999); Baiziting Art Center, Nanjing, China (2020); BANBO Art Center, Shanghai (2019); UNArt Center, Shanghai (2019); Alioth Art Center, Shanghai (2016); Cloud Art Center, Shanghai (2015); Huafu Art Space, Shanghai (2013); Pan Shanghai Art Center, Shanghai (2012); Guangda Exhibition Center, Shanghai (2003); Changning Culture and Art Center, Shanghai (2000); Golden Center Club, Shanghai (2014). Wu Yiming's works are included in important private and museum collections worldwide such as the DSL Collection, Pacific Asia Museum at the University of Southern California, Shanghai Art Museum, and Yuz Foundation, among others.

Wu Yiming currently lives and works in New York.

Inquiries:

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