Katherina Olschbaur



塞壬 SIRENS











Katherina Olschbaur

塞壬 SIRENS

当下
艺术空间
DANGXIA
ART SPACE











晨间思 *Musings of the Morning Hour*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 210 × 200 × 5 cm each , 210 × 400 cm



《轻柔手足动乱》画稿 drawing for *A Tender Riot of Limbs*
纸上炭笔、油彩及铅笔 charcoal, oil, pencil on paper ←



轻柔手足动乱 *A Tender Riot of Limbs*
2023，布面油画 oil on linen，210 × 200 × 5 cm ↑



《一个艺术家的诞生》画稿 drawing for *The Birth of an Artist*
crayon, pencil on paper 纸上蜡笔及铅笔 ←



一个艺术家的诞生 *The Birth of an Artist*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 210 × 200 × 5 cm ↑



塞壬 *Sirens*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 240 × 200 cm each, 240 × 600 cm







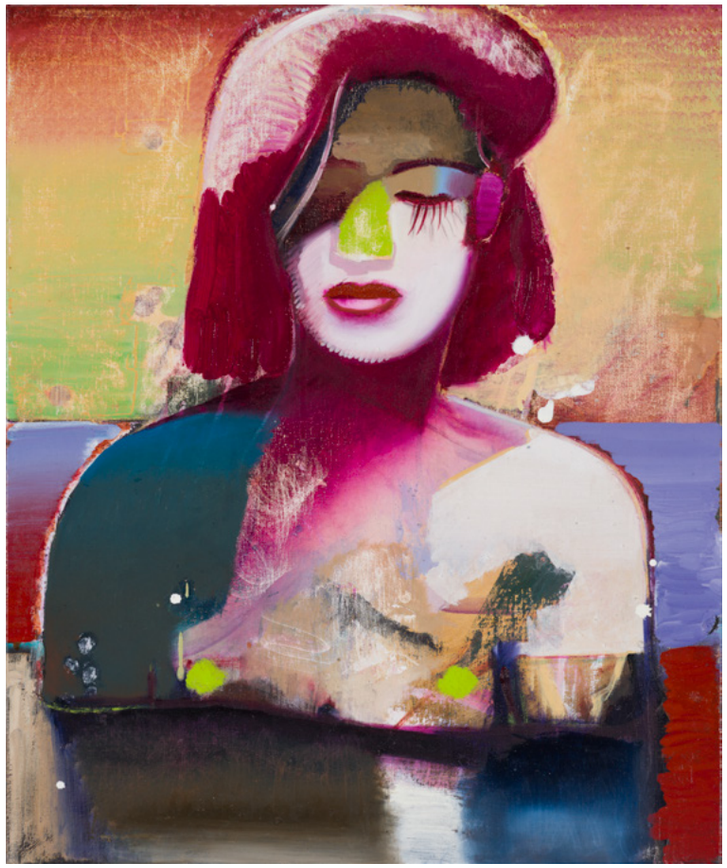
《夜游》画稿　drawing for *Nächtliche Reise*
纸上蜡笔、油彩及灰尘 crayon, oil, oil spill, dust on paper ←



夜游　*Nächtliche Reise*
2023，布面油画 oil on linen，210 × 200 × 5 cm ↑



女巫的特质 2　*The Qualities of Witches 2*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 210 × 200 × 5 cm



在水中 *At the Water*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 61 × 51 × 4 cm



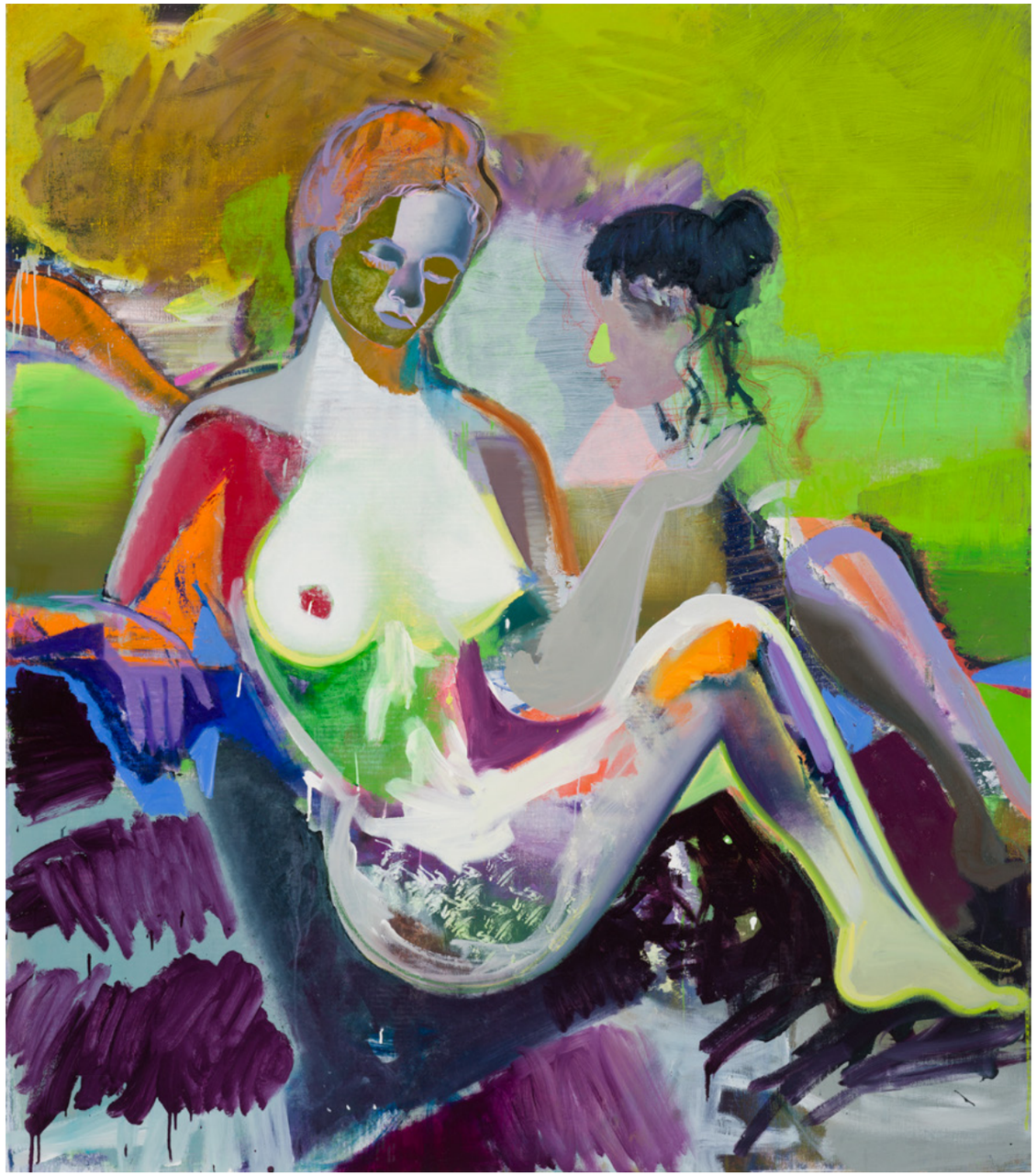
流紫 *Purple Spill*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 61 × 51 × 4 cm



如果你想继续了解我，可以不时给我打电话
If you want to keep knowing me, you can telephone me now and then
2022 - 2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 61×51×4 cm



紫夜 *Violet Night*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 155.5×142.5×5cm



哀叹 *Lamentation*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 210 × 200 × 5 cm



酸性翠绿梦境 *Acid Green Dream*
2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 170.75 × 150 × 4.5 cm

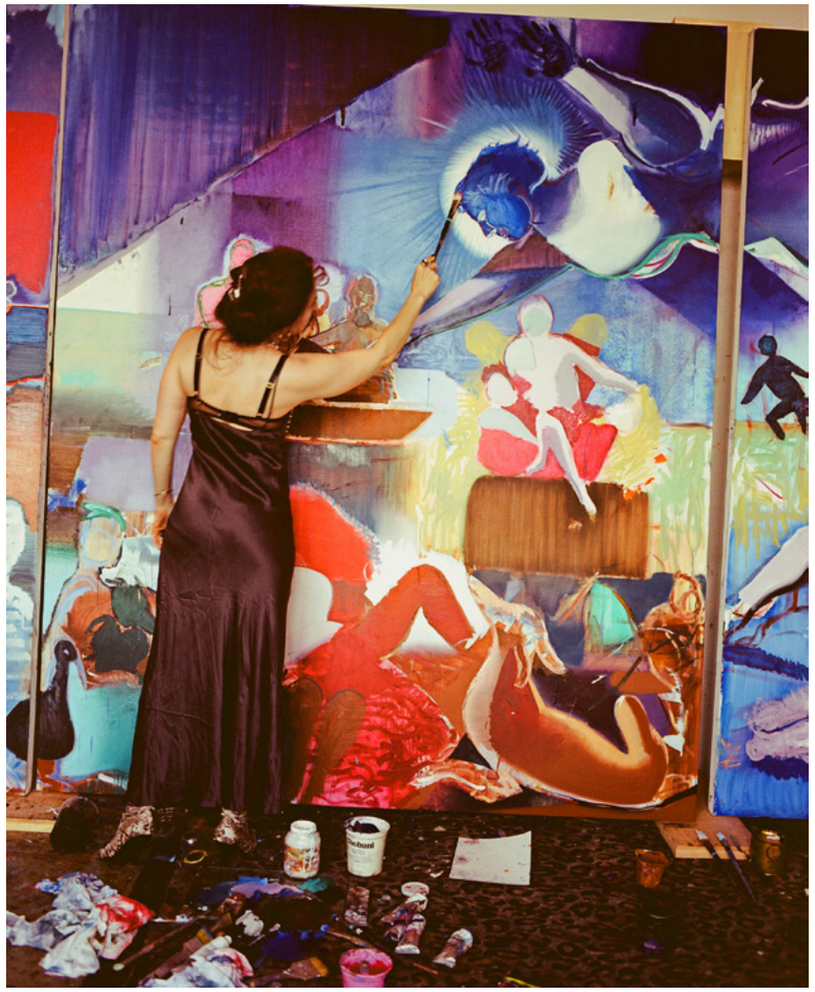




梦祈 *Anrufung meiner Träume*
2022 - 2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 155 × 150 × 5.5 cm



前奏曲和赋格 *Praludien un Fugen*
2022 - 2023, 布面油画 oil on linen, 155.5 × 150 × 5 cm



于当代绘制神话

展览标题是“塞壬”……
塞，壬
警报或尖厉嗓音的状态。

一个或多个，诱惑
一个……在旅途上的人。
从一处旅行至另一处的人群。
迁徙中的人群。

女人们，女人们的群体，
恐惧的状态。
多音调，合唱。呢喃声音。

在群体中出现的女人们。

萦绕着
引力——反引力——水。

撰文：贾雷 · 达斯博士

——截取自奥尔施鲍尔与本文作者
在 2023 年 8 月 2 日的电子邮件通信

凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔艺术实践的特征，是一种受历史、文学及个人意象充分影响的绘画式想象。在过去的十余年内，奥尔施鲍尔挑战了以下多个绘画艺术史叙事：占主导地位的男性霸权刻板印象化、固化再现女性形象的方式；以男性为中心描绘女性性别属性及其身体的方式。奥尔施鲍尔及克里斯蒂娜 · 夸尔斯、沙迪 · 阿 - 阿塔拉、米兰达 · 芙力斯特、米拉 · 丹西及伊兰娜 · 萨弗迪等同辈艺术家以各不相同的方式扭曲人类身体形象，蓄意描绘暧昧不清的肢体，描绘能够生成思辨空间的身体——她们以此触碰艺术史，干扰“裸体人物形象”这一独特的艺术门类，并消解所谓的“正常”图像。奥尔施鲍尔的绘画因其标志性的光、色彩和形象勾勒方式而为人所知；重要的是，色彩可被视作是表达一系列情感、感觉的工具，也允许艺术家重新解读经典绘画——尤其是文艺复兴、巴洛克及浪漫主义时期的经典绘画中——反复出现的神话及宗教意象。

奥尔施鲍尔的作品首先是以预示了人物形象的狂乱素描形式出现在纸面上的。她用炭笔、铅笔、蜡笔、墨水笔及其他笔类绘制形象；前期素描作品从未以正式作品的形式参加展览，但它们代表了一种规划构图姿态的模式，并将在接下来的创作阶段为正式的油画作品塑造情景。观察奥尔施鲍尔在前期素描阶段编织构图的过程，是一个有催眠意味的体验，这因为她以非常迅捷的方式不间断地素描，把线条组成形式，以此考虑人物形象的构图结构。她的绘画风格介于抽象与具象之间；与其迅速、充满激情的素描过程不同，其油画创作过程是很缓慢的，一张作品往往需要数月乃至数年的时间才可完成——她要在此期间挖掘艺术史及现实经验，将光（自然光及人造光）、色彩、形式及意义聚拢合一。

最终呈现的作品，是由柔和的单人肖像或多人群像组成的清晰可感的视觉语言。艺术家用精湛技艺融合了具象和抽象的形式，重新想象了历史悠久的多个绘画艺术类别，探索了广义的奉献、服从、爱恋、崇拜及宗教等反复出现的主题。艺术家处理绘画的方式要求她挖掘历史，以理解当下。加利福尼亚大学尔湾分校美术馆“脏元素”（2020）展览的陈述文字如此写到：“对于奥尔施鲍尔来说，艺术史技法像是衣物一样被挪用——在每一幅作品不断变化、变动的过程中或穿或脱。”[1]

奥尔施鲍尔的艺术实践植根于神话、宗教及历史绘画，也植根于 S/M 亚文化及电影。她拥抱乔治　巴塔耶“无形”的概念，渲染有挑衅和情欲意味的情景，画面时而幽默，时而让人感到不安。“脏元素”展览的策展人艾莉森　伍兹克在讨论该次展览时指出：“如果我们就像无法逃离语言一样无法逃离父权，女性必须持续挑战、颠覆这些角色和神话。”[2]奥尔施鲍尔尤其在绘画实践中拓展探索S/M亚文化，将酷儿 BDSM 实践及宗教叙事并置，同时考虑将这种层叠关系转译至绘画中去的可能性，其绘画行动本身便是不断地与颜料媒介及绘画过程进行统治—被统治斗争的过程。

奥尔施鲍尔曾明确指出，任何对宗教性的探索都要通过世俗视角的滤镜来进行，而这就是从情欲或狂喜角度理解宗教的方法之一。奥尔施鲍尔在奥地利康士坦斯湖畔布雷根茨市长大，她是一名牧师的女儿，但她长久以来抗拒并批评任何形式的有组织宗教。生长于奥地利，又有此种家庭背景，这意味着奥尔施鲍尔十分熟悉宗教意象及相关图像，但她在十七岁时离开家，前往维也纳应用艺术大学学习绘画。

在维也纳度过的时光，对于塑造奥尔施鲍尔的批判性思考能力来说至关重要。她在那时深入探索电影艺术及剧场美术领域。与她产生共鸣的电影工作者及艺术家包括赖纳 · 维尔纳 · 法斯宾德、哈伦 · 法洛基、黑特 · 史德耶尔及乌尔丽克 · 奥汀格。她也指出，戏剧和表演、奥地利先锋运动的失败发展、女性主义以及奥地利行动主义运动等理念体系均揭示了大男子主义和做法的存在，却也都在尝试超越父权阶级结构时溃败，并进一步巩固了此种结构。奥尔施鲍尔解释道：“我曾批判地考虑女性在与当权者（也就是父权主义）的亲密距离中所扮演的同谋身份。我感到困惑，不知在此种框架中有什么进行绘画实践的可能性，但尽管我感到这是不可能为之的事情，我仍然发展出了一种固执态度，并持续在画画。我总是要在抵抗的空间及地下情景中、在夜间俱乐部和酒吧里寻找更多的自由，去考虑怪诞及黑暗的事物干扰体制的方式，去考虑在这些情景中邂逅的亲密瞬间。”

奥尔施鲍尔总抱有一种强烈的好奇心，有着突破奥地利传统生活方式及刻板视角的欲望。她并非是艺术世家的后代，家庭背景也不富有；她也曾生活拮据，但总是积极地在世界各地旅行，培养全球属性的艺术实践，尝试感受不同的生活方式，了解不同地域的文化及人。她曾在 2021 年参加塞内加尔达喀尔当地由凯欣德 · 威利发起的黑岩艺术家驻留项目，以及 2017 年北京的红门国际驻地项目等，这些活动让其得以进行跨文化交流，获得有跨国意义的世界理解方式。奥尔施鲍尔现生活工作于洛杉矶——她是其家族中首个远离奥地利并定居他国的人。频繁的旅行持续影响了她的观看视角及绘画方式，让她得以从内部、从女性视角颠覆顽固的艺术史叙事。

时间、场址及空间的交错给养是具有深厚的文化、智性及美学意义的，尽管奥尔施鲍尔的艺术倾向可被解读为对其宗教家庭背景及欧洲国家背景（奥地利是古典艺术、奢华宫殿及深厚音乐传统最为富足的国家之一）的背离或反叛，更为准确的解读则必须要将艺术家本人在世界各地的旅行生活纳入考虑范围——这为奥尔施鲍尔制造了深入反思自我、反思既有观看方式及存在方式的契机，让她得以在自身及原生语境间建立批判性的距离。

奥尔施鲍尔受那些关注绘画行动、非正式姿态及即兴姿态的艺术流派所影响；她的作品可从超现实主义的角度来理解。超现实主义以大量各异的光源来描绘艺术理念——无论是黎明时分的光、日落前的光，或是最黑暗夜晚中的漆黑等——他们用此来创造怪诞、梦境般的艺术作品。超现实主义者，尤其是凯伊 · 赛琪、里奥

1
展览文章，《凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔：脏元素》，加利福尼亚大学尔湾分校美术馆 https://uag.arts.uci.edu/exhibit/dirty-elements-katherina-olschbaur.

2
艾莉森 · 伍兹克，《出淤泥》，收录于《Katherina Olschbaur: Dirty Elements》，由艾莉森 · 伍兹克编辑，加利福尼亚大学尔湾分校美术馆 © 2020

诺拉 · 加灵顿、李弥迪奥斯 · 瓦罗、多萝西 · 谭宁及托延等女性艺术家，全都是以一种让人晕眩的、内省的、带有集中沉思气氛的方式进行创作。[3] 策展人塞西莉亚 阿莱玛尼曾将女性超现实主义艺术家对艺术史的贡献恰如其分地描述为："她们对此种可能抱有桀骜不驯的信念：创造自我的行动能够营造一个奇妙的世界；在那世界中，身体与身份都是不断变化着的，随变迁及解放的欲求所变化。"[4] 同样重要的是，这些女性艺术家也致力于反抗性别特定角色行为，常在作品中为自身塑造难分性别的特征，或是采用不寻常的角色伪装。奥尔施鲍尔半具象半抽象的绘画让超现实主义的艺术遗产重现于当下，而她新近创作的作品也呈现了一种独特的女性形象，将其笼罩在奇异的、难以确定源头的光线之下。对于具象绘画来说，光是一个探索性工具，而光可能是季节或时间变换的结果，或是当代生活环境中室内人造光源制造的结果——夜店中闪烁的霓虹灯招牌、街灯，甚至是照亮了面孔和身体的移动设备屏幕光等等。奥尔施鲍尔曾解释："我感兴趣于在绘画中找到一种语法……在绘画行动中、在绘画领域重叠并累积声音和噪音的过程中。我对这些使我们困惑、唤起我们向往的领域感兴趣。"[5]

在 2023 年贝浩登香港举办的"流夜"展览（2023 年 3 月 19 日至 4 月 22 日）中，奥尔施鲍尔在与写作者王璐琦的沟通中首次了解到了"幻月"的概念，并将其作为展览的出发点。幻月在民俗文化中象征了即将袭来的暴风雨或恶劣天气，但事实上这仅是月亮身侧出现光点和光弧的罕见大气现象而已。这种现象提供了一个感性而敏锐的框架，供艺术家探索柔软、冷酷、感情及沉默的共情关系。[6] 在展览的十余张肖像作品中，大部分人物形象是女性 / 认同女性身份的人，另有一些单独或成群出现的男人。有些人物是以奥尔施鲍尔朋友的形象绘制的，另有一些则是艺术家自画像的扭曲版本，因此画作在真实与想象之间树立了矛盾关系。然而，作品也因艺术家在画面上渲染的炫目却克制的光而制造了与幻想息息相关的空间。其中一幅作品描绘了一位带有非二元对立身份的艺术家（《土星环边》）；几幅自画像也模糊了性别对立；《寂静午后》的双人肖像中出现了一个男人和一个女人；《汉娜的画像》则呈现了另一个雌雄难辨、神情惆怅的人物（以上几件作品的创作时间均为 2022 年至 2023 年）。画作中的自然光及人造光源均采用了艺术史经典技法——阴影、光影反差、浅影、重影等，但奥尔施鲍尔的线条和色彩为画面中的角色带来了前所未有的性张力和主观能动性。作品中的男性形象往往是被动的、带有混杂属性的或富有女性气息的；奥尔施鲍尔的所有人物形象均带有部分神话气息、部分混杂身份的特质——他们像是半人半异世的存在。

在奥尔施鲍尔的过往作品中，女性解放主题常伴有处于被动姿态的、雌雄难辨的男性形象；她在北京当下艺术空间的"塞壬"展览则持续发展了艺术家对这一实践的关注：模糊性别，模糊人物形象的女性及男性特质。性别的意义在抽象画面中得以拓展，也在奥尔施鲍尔的人物关系之间制造了张力，被视作是演示推拉动态的方式，展示了入侵与穿透的往返姿态。性别的态势继而被柔软、轻柔、安然或暴力的笔触所环绕，其画面上也可见倾撒与擦拭颜料的行动。艺术家在邮件中提及：

3
同为二战侨民的李弥迪奥斯 · 瓦罗曾与里奥诺拉 · 加灵顿一同在墨西哥生活；再加上凯蒂 · 奥尔纳，这三位女性常被称作"三女巫"，以极为个人化且独特的女性精神性为养分，获得力量并颠覆父权。

4
赫提 · 优达尔，《威尼斯双年展上被忘却的女性超现实主义者》，"意见"栏目，弗里兹杂志，2022 年 4 月 13 日，https://www.frieze.com/article/venice-biennales-forgotten-female-surrealists

5
凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔与贾雷 · 达斯在 Zoom 上的对谈，2023 年 6 月 26 日

6
对幻月现象的描述以及对奥尔施鲍尔画作中的光的讨论，在"流夜"展览文章中有进一步的拓展："当月光经由云层中的六角形冰晶两番折射后，月球同一高度的夜幕 中会抛出两个神秘的光点，一并环出一道鸢尾色的光弧。这一现象在大气光学中极为罕见，人们将它命名为'幻月'。"凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔，"流夜"，贝浩登香港（2023 年 3 月 19 日至 4 月 22 日），https://leaflet.perrotin.com/view/464/midnight-spill

7
凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔与本文作者的电子邮件通信，2023 年 9 月 1 日。

8
Ibid.

9
汀道尔 - 吉布森，安妮 · 露丝，《艺术、音乐及文学中的塞壬》，*International Journal of Asian Social Science Research* (2021): n. pag. Print

"我们生活在一个暴力不断侵扰身体、干扰身体界限的时代。当被侵扰的身体是女性身体时，我们能够指认男性霸权；但是在这个时代中，也有许多暴力是朝向展现了敏感性、多愁善感性或模糊性别属性的男性身体发起进攻的。在我的画里，这种现象同样重要。"[7] 她补充："我不把画里的身体视作是完全'女性'的身体。有些时候，它们既是男性也是女性，然而我想要所有女性形象明确地带有强壮、肌肉线条明晰的特质，但画面中也可见非常阴柔的男性。"[8]

奥尔施鲍尔在北京当下艺术空间举办的展览以古希腊神话中的塞壬为核心。塞壬常被描绘为半鸟半人的生物；希腊人畏惧塞壬，因为他们普遍相信，这些神话生物能够用美妙的歌喉诱惑水手，吸引他们驶上不归路。美貌、反叛、性吸引力及女性群体等概念在人类历史中常带来恐惧和恐慌。挑战了男性权力的女性常被指控为女巫；女性也常被猜疑在性方面品行不端。所谓猎巫行动的本质，就是对女性行动的社会性管控方式，旨在将女性行动导入某种能够被广泛接受的模式之中去。"貌美的女人从来就被视作是强大的、危险的，因此，几千年来，女人都被视作是男人的威胁——尤其是那些貌似无法被控制的女性，或是貌似能够控制男人心智的女性。"[9]"塞壬"展览中的几幅作品反映了这一与性别身份有关的历史问题（这些画作大部分以女性为主角，但也有男性形象在其中扮演了角色）；艺术家也以独特色域——占有统治性地位的红色、蓝色或是紫色——表达了这一整体叙事主题。这些色彩在捕捉情感及光影具象实验两种作用之间来回波动。具体来说，红色是一个内涵极为丰富的颜色，在画面中召唤了一系列不同的意义：它可被解读为战争的颜色；共产主义的颜色；诱惑的颜色；警示的颜色；甚至是幸运的颜色。在奥尔施鲍尔看来，红色拒人于千里之外，却又完全将人吸收于其中。红色也可揭示幽默、多愁善感等多种不同的感觉和情感。《女巫的特质 2》（2023）就是一幅通体赤红的画作，画中抽象化了的坐姿人物形象身边有袅袅青烟、拱起后腿伸懒腰的猫、骑着飞马的人、状如树木的结构、孤零零的棕榈树，和乘着小船划过的人。这是不同形象处理方式、人物肖像和动物肖像在奇幻情景中的杂糅集结。

奥尔施鲍尔迄今为止最大的作品《塞壬》（2023）是一件三联张画作，在其中占据了画面主体的蓝色和紫色颜料与红色、褐色和绿色的线条相间。几近三米高的画面邀请观众进入扭转了性别角色、消解了父权并充满了女性主观能动性的沉思世界。《塞壬》蔚为壮观的画面各处分布了姿态不一的人物，或坐，或站，或卧，或孤身一人，或三两成群。部分人物神色沉静，另一些人物则毫不展露任何表情，或干脆被完全抽象化。右侧画面中的两个细小人物手牵着手奔跑；有一个人物被鸟类所环绕，另有一只狗温顺地坐在卧者脚边。画面右上角就是作品中最主要的形象——一个通体蓝色的、如天使一般从天堂降临的形象，一只手指下，另一只手侧张。这角色让人想起意大利文艺复兴绘画及圣经故事插图里的天使形象。圣经叙事中常有天使降临的描述，这些天使要不然是来宣告好坏消息的，要不然是来实行救赎或审判的。奥尔施鲍尔解释道："这蓝色的三联张作品的灵感来源，是徘徊在失眠与忧郁间的矛盾关系。它捕捉了日夜交替的间隙、轻盈与重力的关系，以

及转变的意义。”她还补充到：“画中展现了水边一景；天使是来到这岸边指引、谴责还是降临的？我们不知道。”[10] 这种“不知道”，指向了画中情景的暧昧。这是粗暴的唾弃行动，还是沉思行动？观众要自行为目前的景象创造意义。

展览中的另一件作品《晨间思》(2023) 与《塞壬》直接相对。这幅二联张画作中满是配有兔耳或兽角的女性人物，作品描绘了夜生活情景，源于奥尔施鲍尔曾参加的一次狂欢派对。画作的核心人物以淡紫色、白色和绿褐色绘制而成的，背对观众，手放在臀部两侧，以充满诱惑力的眼神直视观众。右手边有两个依靠彼此起舞的女性，另有亲密拥抱的裸体形象，以及大量抽象化了的、混合了人类和动物外貌特质的角色形象。作品里没有任何元素是表里合一的。在《晨间思》与《塞壬》的视觉语言互动中，奥尔施鲍尔以精湛的技艺展示了从不同观看视角的意义，其虚构式的情绪也为画中世界平添了一种动物性冲动。

在悠长的人类历史中，人们总是尝试通过神话去理解世界。在历史发展中，在重塑和重述的过程中，配有视觉形象的神话故事既得以延续又不断产生变化。长久以来，艺术家也把神话叙事视作是其美学语言的重要组成部分，而现当代艺术家形成了在创作中不断探索、重新解读神话的传统。奥尔施鲍尔以大胆、富有表现意义、色彩明亮的油画代表了描绘古典神话的当代努力，代表了她在不断演变的虚构世界中建立具象艺术宇宙体系的愿望。她的画作不断质询主观经验的关联性；提醒我们不可过分片面相信任何单一视角。奥尔施鲍尔在其创作中呈现了大量纷杂的观看方式，让画面中的每种事物的示人及行事之道都显得特立独行。

10
凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔与贾雷 · 达斯在Zoom上的对谈，2023年6月26日

Painting Mythologies in Contemporary Times

The show's title will be Sirens…
sirEns
a state of alarm or Voices.

One or many, who seduce
a person (...) on a journey.
Groups of people travelling from one place to another.
in transition.

women, groups of women,
women - BiRDS - who seduce
A state of fear.
multi-tonality, a choRus. whispered voices.

women who appear in groups.

Lingering
GRAViTY - Antigravity - water.

essay by Dr. Jareh Das

- Extract from an email exchange between the artist and the writer on 2 August 2023

A painterly imagination informed by historical, literary and personal references characterises Katherina Olschbaur's paintings. For over a decade, Olschbaur has challenged art historical accounts in painting that have made dominant patriarchal stereotyping of female representation, male-centric characterisations of female sexuality, and in turn, their bodies. Olschbaur and her contemporaries including Christina Quarles, Shadi Al-Atallah, Miranda Forrester, Mira Dancy and Ilana Savdic - all in their individual ways contort and deliberately paint ambiguous images of bodies or rather bodies that present spaces for the speculative and reach through history, trouble categories of the 'the nude figure' and unseat normativity. Her paintings are now recognisable for their signatory explorations of light, colour and figuration; importantly, colour also serves as a tool for expressing a range of emotions and feelings whilst allowing the artist to reinterpret history of paintings' recurring use of mythological and religious iconographies, notably from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic periods.

Olschbaur's paintings begin their life as fervent sketches or outlines on paper that are suggestive of figures. Depicting these forms with charcoals, pencils, crayons, inks and pens, her preparatory drawings are never exhibited as finished works yet they have come to represent a way for mapping out compositional gestures that later inform scenes in future paintings. To witness Olschbaur begin compositions in this way is hypnotic, as she sketches very quickly and in succession, rendering lines into forms as a way to think through formal compositions of figures. Her painting style is situated somewhere between abstraction and figuration, yet in contrast to the fastness and fervour of her drawings, her painterly process is much slower, taking a few months to years as she brings together a coalescence of light (natural and man-made), colour, form and meanings from both an excavation of art histories and lived experiences.

What results now is a identifiable vernacular of tender portraits of single/groups of figures that expertly blending figuration and abstraction, but reimagining these age-old art historical genres anew, alongside exploring recurring themes of devotion, submission, adoration, worship and religion in a broad sense. The artist's approach to painting entails a process of excavating the past to make sense of the present. As the exhibition text for *Dirty Elements* (2020) at the University Art Galleries, UC Irvine states, "For Olschbaur, art historical tropes are appropriated and used like garments, worn and cast aside in a process that is ever-changing and moving within each work." [1]

Olschbaur's practice takes root in mythology, religious and historical paintings, the subcultures of S/M, and film. Embracing Georges Bataille's concept of the formless, provocative and erotically charged scenes that are at times humorous and disturbing. Writing about Olschbaur' s exhibition *Dirty Elements*, curator Alison Unzicker states: "If we cannot escape patriarchy as we cannot escape language, women must continually challenge and subvert these roles and myths" [2] The subcultures of S/M, in particular, is something Olschbaur continues to expand on in her painterly practice by juxtaposing queer BDSM and religious narratives, whilst considering this overlap as transferable to painting, which in itself involves continual acts of dominating and submitting to the medium of paint and processes of painting.

The artist has previously stated and made explicit that any explorations of religiosity are through a secular lens, and this serves as an approach to understanding religion from an erotic or ecstatic point of view. Olschbaur has long rejected and criticised any form of organised religion even though she grew up as the daughter of a pastor in the city of Bregenz near Lake Constance in Austria. Whilst her upbringing and formative years growing up in Austria mean she is familiar with religious motifs and their accompanying iconographies, Olschbaur left home at the age of seventeen to study painting at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna.

Vienna proved a critical time for shaping Olschbaur's critical thinking as she engaged deeply with film and theatre design which she studied at the time. Filmmakers and artists working with moving images she resonated with were Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, and Ulrike Ottinger. She also cites theatre and performance, the aftermath of the failures of the Austrian avant-garde, feminism, and the Viennese actionists as schools of thought that exposed machoism and gestures that initially tried to overcome but eventually reinforced patriarchal hierarchical structures. She explains: "I was thinking critically about the complicity of women in proximity to those in power and the patriarchy. I wondered how it is even possible to paint within these frameworks - I felt it was almost impossible, but I developed a kind of stubbornness and I just kept on painting. I was always looking for more freedom in spaces of resistance and underground scenes, in nightclubs and bars, considering how the weird and dark disrupts, and the intimacy of certain moments in such encounters.

Olschbaur is informed by a sense of curiosity and desired to shift from the rigidity and formalities of Austrian life. She was not born into an art aristocracy or wealthy background and once worked on a low budget, but she found ways to be able to travel to many countries and cultivate a global practice to experience other ways of living and learning about different cultures and people. Recent residencies as part of Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock residency in Dakar, Senegal in 2021 and Red Gate Residency, Beijing, China in 2017 have allowed moments of cross-cultural exchanges and a transnational understanding of the world we live in. Olschbaur now resides in Los Angeles and is the first member of her family who have migrated abroad. Travel does continue to shape her perspective and approach to painting in a style that implodes the rigidity of art history from a female perspective.

1
Exhibition text, *Katherina Olschbaur: Dirty Elements*, University Art Galleries, UC Irvine https://uag.arts.uci.edu/exhibit/dirty-elements-katherina-olschbaur.

2
Allyson Unzicker, 'Petals in the Mud'. in *Katherina Olschbaur: Dirty Elements*, ed. Allyson Unzicker, University Art Galleries, UC Irvine © 2020.

These cross-fertilisations across time, place and space are profoundly cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic in their nature, and whilst this approach might be read as a pushback or rebellion against growing up in a religious household, and in a wider context of one of Europe's most quintessential countries full of classical art, opulent palaces and rich musical heritage, a more astute reading of the artist would attend to how travelling and living across different geographies creates a profound reassessment of the self, familiar ways of seeing and being in the world, allowing for a critical distance to what was given and known.

Influenced by art movements that celebrate the gestural, informal and spontaneous, Olschbaur's paintings can be read through the lens of surrealism, particularly the movement's use of an array of light sources to illustrate ideas - the light at dawn, pre-sunset, or the dark of the darkest night to achieve strange and dreamlike works. Surrealists, particularly female artists from the movement including Kay Sage, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, Dorothea Tanning and Toyen, all worked in a manner that was disorienting, introspective and with a highly contemplative air.[3] Curator, Cecelia Alemani has aptly described these women surrealists' contribution to art histories as 'having a defiant faith in the possibility of self-invention to summon a domain of the marvellous where anatomies and identities can shift and change, following the desire for transformation and emancipation'.[4] Importantly, these women artists also rebelled against gender-specific role behaviour and often represented themselves with strikingly androgynous features or in unusual roles or disguises. Part-figurative, part-abstract paintings that bring legacies of surrealism to the present, Olschbaur's most recent work also offers a perspective on female figures depicted with an uncanny use of light from a source that is never quite clear or easily discernible. Light is an explorative tool for figuration: whether it is from the changes in seasons/at times of day; or the dominance of artificial light from a range of courses in contemporary life — neon signs to strobe lighting in night clubs; street lights and even screens from devices illuminating faces and bodies. In her own words, she explains: "I'm interested in finding a syntax in painting…in the gestures, overlapping, an accumulation of voices and noises in the painterly zones. I' m interested in those areas that confuse us, causing a soft sense of longing."[5]

In *Midnight Spill* held recently at Perrotin, Hong Kong (19 March - 22 April 2023), Olschbaur took as her point of departure, the lunar spectacle of 'Moon dog' which she first encountered through an exchange with the writer, Lili Luqi Wang. Moon dog, according to folklore, represents signs of approaching storms or bad weather, but in actuality, they are distinct bright spots attached to a halo around the moon' s left or right side. This phenomenon of light allowed for an astute overarching framework for exploring recurring themes of tenderness, coldness, affection, and silent commiseration.[6] Over a dozen portraits mostly depicted women/female-identifying, some men individually or in groups, some based on friends, others a distortion of the artist's self-portrait posit a contradiction between the real and imagined, fact and fiction; yet they also create spaces that allude to the imaginary due to the artist' s use of light as both a dazzling and subdued force. *Saturn Revers* is a portrait of an artist who is non-binary, other self-portraits blurring gender binaries, a double portrait with a man and a woman (*Silent Afternoon*) and an androgynous melancholic figure Bildnis Hannah (all works from 2022-2023). Natural and man-made light sources draw from art historical techniques including shading, chiaroscuro, sfumato, or tenebrism, yet her use of line and colour gives her characters unprecedented sexual prowess and agency. When men appear, they are often depicted as passive, hybrid or feminine yet all her characters imbue a sense of being part mystical and part hybrid, half human and half otherworldly.

Whereas in the previous work, this female emancipation has been at times depicted alongside male figures that are rendered passive and androgynous, for her current exhibition *Sirens* at DANGXIA Art Space, Beijing, Olschbaur continues with concerns of blurring gender and of blurring feminine and masculine attributes of figures. Gender is expanded through abstraction, and it creates tension in Olschbaur's figures painted in what the artist sees as a way to demonstrate a push and pull; a back and forth of gestures of intrusion and of penetration, alongside and receiving areas of tenderness, gentleness, rest and of violent marks; spills and erasures. As the artist explained in an email conversation: "We live in a time of so much violations of bodies and boundaries are happening. When those are female bodies, we see misogyny easily, but there is also violence towards men who show sensitivity, melancholy or androgyny. These are equally important in my paintings," she explains.[7] "I don't see the bodies as entirely 'female' bodies, sometimes they are men and woman in one, yet I definitely want all female figures to appear very strong and muscular, but there are very feminine men as well," she adds.[8]

This current exhibition centres on the figure of the siren in Greek mythology which is often depicted as a bird-human hybrid and feared by the Greeks due to the dominant belief that these otherworldly creatures lured sailors to their deaths with their beautiful singing voices. Throughout history, beauty, rebellion, the sexual prowess and the idea of women appearing in groups have long been a source of fear and panic. Women who challenged male authority also garnered accusations of witchcraft, as could women suspected of sexual immorality. Witch-hunting functioned as a method of social control that sought to channel female behaviour into certain acceptable moulds. "Beautiful women have always been considered powerful and dangerous, so for many thousands of years, women have been viewed as a danger to men, especially women who could not be seemingly controlled or had the potential ability to control the minds of men."[9] Several of the paintings on view mediate this notion or feeling of women (and at times men) congregating as dangerous and distinct colour fields express this overarching theme. A dominance of reds, blues or purples also fluctuate in-between, capturing

3
Living and working closely with Leonora Carrington in Mexico was fellow World War II expatriate Remedios Varo. With the addition of Surreal occultist Kati Horna, these three women were often referred to as "the three witches," tapping into their individual and distinctly feminine spiritualities as a source of power and a way to subvert the patriarchy.

4
Hettie Judah, 'The Venice Biennale's Forgotten Female Surrealists', Opinion, *Frieze*, 13 April 2022, online, https://www.frieze.com/article/venice-biennales-forgotten-female-surrealists

5
Katherina Olschbaur in conversation with Jareh Das via Zoom, 26 June 2023.

6
This description of mood dog is expanded upon in the exhibition text of the light illuminating Olschbaur's paintings that were on view at *Midnight Spill* that states, "When moonlight refracts off hexagonal ice crystals in cirrus clouds, a pair of elusive, bright spots will appear in the inky sky at the same altitude as the moon, followed by an iris-coloured arc of light. Dubbed 'moon dogs', this lunar spectacle is a rare sight in atmospheric optics." Katherina Olschbaur, *Midnight Spill*, Perrotin, Hong Kong (19 March - 22 April 2023), https://leaflet.perrotin.com/view/464/midnight-spill.

7
Katherina Olschbaur in an email exchange with the writer, 1 September 2023.

8
Ibid.

9
Tindall-Gibson, Annie Rose. "Sirens In Art, Music, and Literature." International Journal of Asian Social Science Research (2021): n. pag. Print.

emotions and experiments with light and figuration. Red, in particular, is a highly-charged colour that conjures a range of meanings as it can be read as either the colour of war, the colour of communism, the colour of seduction, the colour of warning, or the colour of luck. For Olschbaur, red is the colour that doesn't let you enter but at the same time completely absorbs. It can also reveal humour, melancholy, different feelings and emotions. One such red-colour-filed painting is *The Qualities of Witches 2* (2023), featuring sitting abstracted figures and smoke. A cat is stretched on its hind legs, a figure rides a flying horse and there are some treelike structures, a distinct palm tree and a boat with people sailing by. This work shows a medley of figure studies, and portraits of people and animals are in a phantasmagorical scene.

Her largest work to date, a triptych titled *Sirens* (2023) is dominated by boldly expressive painted hues of blues and purples interspersed with reds, browns and green. Measuring almost three metres in height, the work invites the viewer into a contemplative world of female agency, reverses gender roles and dismantles patriarchy. *Sirens* is a scene inhabited by multiple figures in an array of poses with some reclining alone or in pairs, while others are standing up or sitting leisurely. Some of the figures have serene facial expressions whilst others are devoid of expression and are completely abstracted. Two small figures in the right panel are running side-by-side holding hands. Another is flanked by birds and a dog sits obediently at the foot of a reclining figure. At the top right corner of the painting is the most prominent figure, blue-hued and like an angel descending from the heavens with one hand pointing downwards, and the other outstretched. This figure brings to mind depictions of angels in Italian Renaissance paintings and renderings of biblical tales focused on the subject of angels and angelic communication: announcing good or bad news, signalling redemption or judgement. Olschbaur explained in this work: "The blue triptych was inspired by contradictions of insomnia and feeling blue. It also captures the day and night hours, lightness and gravity, as well as the transitions in-between." "It is set in a landscape close to water, a shore with an angel. Is this angel guiding or damning or just arriving? We don' t know," she adds.[10] This not-knowing speaks to an ambiguity of the scene depicted. Is it one of the reckless abandon, or one of the contemplation? The viewer is left to make meaning of the scene unfolding before their eyes.

Conversely, for *Musings of the Morning Hour* (2023), a diptych populated by female figures — some of them are with rabbit ears, others are with horns. This work draws on nightlife and a scene of revelry based on a party attended by the artist. The central figure is composed of hues of mauve, white, and greenish brown. Her back is turned with hands on her hip and her gaze is direct yet seductive. Nearby to the right, two women are grinding against each other alongside nude figures in intimate embraces, and abstracted hybrid animal-human figures populate the painting. Nothing is what it seems, and these two works expertly demonstrate different perspectives as they exist in relation to one another. A subjunctive mood also gives this world its animist pulse.

Throughout history, humankind has sought to make sense of the world through myths. These stories, often taking visual forms, have been both preserved and transformed over the years as they have been recaptured and retold. Artists have long considered mythology part of their aesthetic language, a tradition continued by modern and contemporary artists who address and reinterpret mythologies in their works. Olschbaur's boldly expressive, brightly coloured oil paintings represent contemporary depictions of classical mythologies, the artist's own imaginary cosmologies for figuration that exist in an ever-evolving fictional world. In her paintings, the articulation of subjective experience is consistently called into question, and she is motivated by the perils of trusting too much in any one perspective and offers instead a dizzying array of ways of looking at things, yet everything looks, and acts, like something else.



10
Katherina Olschbaur in conversation with Jarch Das via Zoom, 26 June 2023.

凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔 (Katherina Olschbaur)，1983 年生于奥地利布列根茨康斯坦茨湖，于维也纳生活 16 年后，在 2017 年移居洛杉矶。这段移居经历，加之在北京红门国际驻地项目及塞内加尔的达喀尔黑石驻地项目经历，极大地影响了奥尔施鲍尔的创作，激发她以突破性的创作技法去探索和表现和抽象的复杂关系，创造出其作品中极具标志性的独特视角。

近期重要个展包括："塞壬"，当下艺术空间，北京(2023)；" Dak'Art: African Contemporary Art Biennale "，达喀尔(2022)；" Dirty Elements "，Contemporary Arts Center Gallery，加利福尼亚大学尔湾分校，尔湾，美国(2020)。

奥尔施鲍尔的作品已被众多公共和私人艺术机构收藏，包括：美景宫 21 当代艺术博物馆，奥地利，维也纳；ICA 迈阿密，美国；台湾国巨基金会；余德耀美术馆，上海。

Katherina Olschbaur, born in 1983 in Bregenz, Lake Constance, Austria, lived in Vienna for 16 years before relocating to Los Angeles in 2017. The move to LA, coupled with residencies at Red Gate in Beijing, China and Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock in Dakar, Senegal, profoundly transformed Olschbaur's painting practice, emboldening her to push the boundaries in exploring the tenuous relationship between representation and abstraction, creating the distinct viewpoint in her work for which she is recognized.

Recent noteworthy exhibitions include her solo show *Sirens* at Dangxia Art Space (2023); the 14th Biennial of Contemporary African Art (Dak'Art) in Dakar, Senegal (2022); and her solo show *Dirty Elements*, curated by Allyson Unzicker, at Contemporary Arts Center Gallery, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, Irvine, USA (2020).

Olschbaur's work is in the collections of public and private institutions including Belvedere 21 Museum of Contemporary Art in Vienna, Austria; the Institute of Contemporary, Miami, USA; Yageo Foundation in New Taipei City, Taiwan; and Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China.

Katherina Olschbaur
塞壬

本画册由当下艺术空间出品

特别致谢
霓凯典画廊、张恺镕、张畅、刘麟瑶、
Christian J. Voss、伊琳娜 · 斯塔克

编辑
贾雷 · 达斯博士、彭忆欧、高子鹭

设计
on paper

摄影
Georgianna Chiang、杨灏

由衷感谢
艺术家凯瑟琳娜 · 奥尔施鲍尔

© 2024 当下艺术空间
所有艺术作品及其图像 © Katherina Olschbaur

版权所有者保留所有相关权利。未经出版方及艺术家本人事先书面许可，不得以任何形式或通过任何电子或机械手段，影印、录制或借其他信息存储和检索系统，复制或传播本出版物的任何部分。

当下艺术空间与常驻洛杉矶的艺术顾问
伊琳娜 · 斯塔克合作组织此次展览。

当下艺术空间
北京市顺义区金航东路 3 号院 D7 楼 6 层

Katherina Olschbaur
SIRENS

DANGXIA Art Space Presents

Special thanks to
Nicodim Gallery, Kairong Zhang, Chang Zhang,
Linyao Kiki Liu, Christian J. Voss, Irina Stark

Editors
Dr. Jared Das, Penny Peng, Zilu Gao

Design by
on paper

Photographer
Georgianna Chiang, Yang Hao

Acknowledgements
Katherina Olschbaur

© 2024 DANGXIA Art Space
All artworks © Katherina Olschbaur

all rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or other information storage and retrieval systems, without prior permission, writing from the publishers.

This exhibition has been organized in collaboration with Los Angeles-based art consultant, Irina Stark.

DANGXIA Art Space
6F, Building D7, Yard No. 3 Jinhang East Road,
Shunyi District, Beijing, China










当下
艺术空间
DANGXIA
ART SPACE