



Xiyao Wang, *Echoes of Lugano No. 4*, 2025. Oil stick, charcoal on canvas. 170 × 280 cm | 66 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 110 ¹/₄ inches. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

XIYAO WANG *THE DRIFTING ISLAND*

January 14 — February 28, 2026

Perrotin Dubai is pleased to present the solo exhibition *The Drifting Island* by Chinese-born, Berlin-based artist Xiyao Wang. Opening on January 14, 2026, and on view through February 28, 2026, this exhibition marks her first solo show in the Middle East.

In this new body of work, painting unfolds through notions of movement, tempo, and lived experience. Rather than representing gesture directly, Xiyao Wang explores the sensation of movement itself, its flow, rhythm, and impermanence. Time is not suspended; it drifts, like a river, like wind or clouds moving through a landscape, like the body in motion within the studio.

Over recent years, Xiyao Wang has gradually reduced both composition and color in her paintings, seeking to concentrate on what she considers essential: the line. Each phase of reduction is also accompanied by moments of addition. Through this ongoing process, her work reveals a deep commitment to precision. The charcoal lines, carefully drawn on the white canvas, are both powerful and restrained. They evoke calligraphy through their precision and control, while also echoing German

Expressionism and Neo Expressionism, which the artist encountered after leaving her native China when she studied in Germany. Color appears at a later stage, in subtle touches, reinforcing clarity and focus. Lines remain sparse, colors are carefully chosen, and space is deliberately preserved. White functions as silence, not as emptiness, but as a pause, a breath, a resonance.

The artist's practice is deeply informed by bodily disciplines such as yoga, dance, meditation, and the guqin, a traditional Chinese string instrument. These practices introduce varied tempos, ranging from intensity and speed to slowness and suspension, which translate directly into the treatment of line, color, and gesture. A line painted slowly does not carry the same energy as one drawn quickly. Each gesture records a specific rhythm, a moment of attention, a state of being.

Ultimately, these paintings exist between gesture and stillness. They do not seek to capture movement, but to retain its trace, a fleeting state, a moment of awareness. In front of the work, the viewer is invited to slow down, to sense the rhythm, and to enter a silent dialogue between inner landscape and outward perception.



Xiyao Wang, *If the Cherry Blossoms Bloom Again No. 1*, 2025. Oil stick, charcoal on canvas. 135 × 125 cm | 53 1/8 × 49 3/16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin



Xiyao Wang, *Rocket Vinyasa No. 3*, 2025. Oil stick, charcoal on canvas. 135 × 125 cm | 53 1/8 × 49 3/16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin

Interview with Xiyao Wang by curator and art critic Hou Hanru

Below are excerpts from the interview (Berlin, September 15, 2024)

Hou Hanru: *Could you walk me through your painting process? What informs the lines, movements, composition, and colors? Are your personal experiences and reading memories reflected concretely or abstractly in your work? Do they emerge spontaneously, or do you follow a particular plan?*

Xiyao Wang: For me, finding the most accurate expression is crucial. Sometimes, a figurative depiction does not feel accurate, as it can only convey a specific image. What I want to express is not just a fragment of space, but a fragment of time. When I try to express my experiences or memories from reading, the feelings themselves are often hard to concretize. Sensations of temperature, color, form, or the changing states of life often exist somewhere between the figurative and the abstract. The most accurate expression is the one you can capture in a fleeting moment, like the click of a camera shutter. In that instant, the world appears in a certain way, but even then, it is only a partial truth. What you capture is just a part of the world, a moment of that part, or a fragment of flowing time. That is how I feel when I paint—what I am trying to convey is the part of the present moment that moves me.

Hou Hanru: *Your process seems to involve a lot of movement and action. You also mentioned that music has a significant influence on you.*

Xiyao Wang: Yes, because there is a crucial element at play here: the passage of time. The perception of time is a fundamental aspect of my work. Movement and music both unfold along a timeline, and so does our bodily experience. Different movements, dances, and music have reshaped how I perceive time. In fact, traditional Chinese painting inherently contains a sense of time, especially in the form of scrolls. Viewing a scroll is a temporal experience. Even in Western medieval paintings, if you observe them from top to bottom, there is a sense of time embedded in the narrative, though it is not always a prominent focus. In my work, however, time is a central concern.