

ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI | 阿拉里奥上海  
XU Bacheng | *Island of Immortality*

徐跋骋 | “永生之岛”



ARARIO GALLERY SHANGHAI is pleased to announce that the opening of solo exhibition of XU **Bacheng**, *Island of Immortality*, on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**Duration:** 2019.7.27 (Sat.) – 2019.10.13 (Sun.)

**Opening:** 2019.8.25 (Sat.), 4 - 6: 30 pm

**Address:** Arario Gallery Shanghai A1, 1F, No. 2879 Longteng Avenue, Xuhui District, Shanghai

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## About the Exhibition

Arario Shanghai is honored to present XU Bacheng's solo exhibition, *Island of Immortality* in the Shanghai gallery, from July 27 to October 13, 2019.

As an extension and a step forward from his 2015 solo exhibition, *Energy Factory - XU Bacheng's solo exhibition*, the works on view will not only include large-dimension oil paintings, but also Goya-esque drawings, as well as a roster of artistic mediums including installations, video, and sculpture. The artist has adopted sophisticated classical painting techniques into his contemporary art practice. Furthermore, his system of work methodology and chronology over the last decade will be presented in its entirety.

The title of the exhibition draws from an eponymous work, *Island of Immortality*, an oil painting measuring 12 meters long by 3 meters high, in which he depicted 360 figures morphed from his own image. These figures range from astronauts to butcher, fisherman to hunter, surveyors to diviners, figures engaged in picnicking by the river to casting spells on each other, from looking out to the oceans to lamenting of what's insight. Here, no trace of industrial civilization is to be found, but a seemingly self-contained world. As it is mentioned in the curator Du Xiyun's text, "The information overload accelerated our realization on the darkness of the human condition and the chaos of the world. In emphasizing the cultural ground for collectivism, XU Bacheng realized the value of the individual. Like the processor of a digital device, he openly collects various dark and desolate information, and by putting them through his software, optimistic and proactive energy is engendered to stimulate an individual's creativity. The large dimensional painting *Island of Immortality* is a sensitive representation of his worldview. This overall system is akin to an experimental site, where every self-action can be metaphorically construed as a stimulant for "spiritual energy".

How eternal is the *Island of Immortality*? The artist embarked on the experiment to

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convert and regenerate "energy" on the tableau. This process includes steps such as collecting, transferring, distributing, consuming, ones are not necessarily adopted from industrial production, but are alternative possibilities to achieve "energy conversion" through the studies of painting.

Looking across this painting, the artist departs from the "metaphors" of an individual's various actions such as, biting on one's nails, dancing with the wolves or screaming while waving flags, these absurd behaviors associated with arbitrary narrative details span from practical survival need to the pursuit of spiritual reforms. At the same time, different types of "self-organization" are alienated into "community" on an isolated island. The artist hopes to re-address the phenomenon of the "cultural desert" to the viewers, and the complex issues embedded in it. At the same time, the staged "architectures" on the tableau serve as a draft for the installations in this exhibition. Xu imagines a theater about an island. Many of the figurative elements in the painting are translated as installations or known as "installation of painting". As such, the paintings resonate with the installations to conjure an overall notion of "site". In a sense, XU Bacheng has successfully translated the dimensions of spatiality into the length of temporality, allowing the work to contain its traces of self-growth, as well as expanding in the exhibition venue, that would be transported between the quotidian and art, artist and viewers.

Looking back at XU Bacheng's previous presentations, his complex, sophisticated installations have always left viewers with compelling impressions. From *Castle without Sky*, *Art Museum on the Move*, to *Sanlitun in One Thousand Years*, *Magical Theatre* to the latest *Island of Immortality*, his practice has always focused on translating artistic language to everyday linguistic system, as well as maintaining sharp thoughts and passionate interests in spatial notions, without losing acute observations of social environment and cultural life. He captures those implicit essence from the vicissitudes of multiple realities, with which to unfurl reflections and outlooks between the present the future, the individual and the collective.

The video of the same title portrays XU Bacheng's discovery of an island, where he enacts an absurd surrealist life and the phenomenon of "cultural desert" has always

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existed. On this island, people's state of living has an inherent magnetic field of the "cultural desert", stripped of conventional behaviors, the relationship between man and nature is brought closer. In the video, the egret represents the sacred spirit, and as it spreads its wings to circle above the land of the free, the protagonist arduously drags a yellow kayak as his body swings with every treacherous step he takes, who appears insignificant and nihilistic in the whitewashed marsh. The video affords a slight sense of fables, as its music and audio carried on an *adagio non-troppo* rhythm. The image of more than three hundred egrets flying off awakes our sense of eternal nature, for us to realize that the "Island of Immortality" has always been stationed in our heart and mind.

### About the Artist



**XU Bacheng** (born in 1988 in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province) as one of the most representative new media artists in China after 80s, he continues to focus on the diverse expressions of different media. He feels that there is a building in his heart, and sometimes he feels the process of making works is like dividing a lot of space in this building, and each space has its specific meaning. This is a

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very laborious task, and each space is very specific. As he grows in age and experience, his space will grow, the more compartments there will be, the more things will be in these compartments. The purpose of life is happiness, but only one path take him to the happiness. That is fulfilling and realizing his imagination.

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XU Bacheng 's works have participated in exhibitions of many major institutions in China and abroad, including: *Remembering or Forgetting*, ARARIO GALLERY, Seoul, South Korea, 2018; *Seeing the Eyes- Chinese New Painting*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan, 2018; *Shanghai Biennale – Social Factory*, Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China, 2014; *Most Potential Young Artists Tour Exhibition*, Hamburg Art Museum, Hamburg, Germany, 2014. His works have been collected by major museums and institutions in China, New York, Denmark, and Germany.