

I am pleased to present *Wishful Thinking*, a solo exhibition of 12 new paintings by Brooklyn-based artist Leon Xu. The foggy, dreamlike paintings combine soft layers of airbrush and acrylic to create an offering into a world simultaneously strange and deeply familiar.

Leon Xu's sceneries are not representations of reality but reflections of feelings and moments. In a post-impressionistic sense, the works exaggerate colors, distort perspectives, and suggest movements in search for a perceptible expression of a memory. The first-person viewpoints transport us into Leon Xu's driving seat, observing the world through his eyes, and accessing detached fragments of his past. The misty scenes capture the overlooked beauty of urban existence, drawing attention to subtle instants which otherwise our brain is so well-trained to fade out to focus on the everyday duties. Places and situations that we frequently pass by yet could not necessarily remember or find if we tried, a sparke in the rearview mirror, the afternoon sun glitter, a neon sign shimmering at night... Leon is mindful and attentive for these "brain tingles", as he describes them, signals that intuitively make him capture and remember a certain moment to reflect on it later by making paintings about them, for himself and to share with the world to see and feel. They trigger our memory database, searching for fractal reminiscences of moments we have lived through. Memory becomes an emotional imprint rather than a reproduction of a structured series of events.

Leon Xu's new body of work is marked by recent experiences of vulnerability, learning and loss. Most of the scenes in the exhibitions are soft, melancholic, sentimental- they are peaceful moments of being fully present. As a Chinese born immigrant in the US, Leon describes dealing with a deeply embedded "immigrant mentality", a compulsive mindset of restless working which requires Leon to actively learn to calm down and to establish the capacity to process feelings and incidents.

*Wishful Thinking* is Leon Xu's first solo exhibition in Europe. The artist is represented by Helena Anrather in New York. Leon Xu was born in 1995 in Zongshan, China. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from University of Pennsylvania, and a certificate in Painting from Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Xu was included in Issue 134 of *New American Paintings*, in 2018.

Henri Gisler  
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