Wang Xingyun: A Touch, A Flame
王行云：一触即燃

ZIAN Gallery
May 17 — June 30, 2025
Yard No.3, Jinhang East Road, Shunyi District, Beijing

ZIAN Gallery is pleased to present *Wang Xingyun: A Touch, A Flame*, opening on 17 May in Beijing. Featuring a new series of paintings and casts, the exhibition explores the intricate interplay between landscape, consciousness, the senses, desire, and the human body in Wang's practice. This marks her first solo exhibition at ZIAN Gallery, and coincides with a solo presentation at Booth G5, ART021 BEIJJING, on view from 22 to 25 May 2025.

Wang Xingyun approaches paper not merely as a surface but as an active material to be reprocessed, recycled, and transformed. When painting, she uses pigment, glue, sanders, and various tools to manipulate multiple layers of paper, fusing, breaking, and reshaping them into textured forms. These layers, once completed, become new surfaces for further exploration, revealing intricate flows and tensions - liquefied, hardened, twisted, and intertwined. *A Touch, A Flame* will debut a number of Wang's new works, including the artist's latest series of plaster and pulp casts, which merge landscape and biomorphic forms. Wang is drawn to how different materials transform the meaning of these forms — the softness and fragility of paper becoming sculptural through its transition into relief- like plaster. She extended the limitation between the painted surface and its frame, allowing the fluid contours of the body to extend beyond the canvas, as if caught in a state of endless flow.

Hands serve as a central and recurring image throughout Wang Xingyun's practice. When painting, the artist lays the paper flat on the ground, using her hands extensively as tools to directly engage with the materials – smearing, tearing, splashing paint, blending, and spreading. Watercolour and minerals inevitably stain her hands, leaving unrepeatable traces. The clenched hands carry a metaphor for attachment. In "Dwelling Places 9," two hands are hidden in a bloody chaos. On the left, slender knuckles resemble newly grown vines, breaking out of the flesh and blood; on the right, a thick hand is shaped like ancient clouds, surging and roaring. The moment they are about to touch awakens the earliest memory of connection in life, like an infant connected to the mother's flesh and blood through the umbilical cord. Wang explains: "During the creative process, I rationally analyse the subconscious traces of these abstract collages while simultaneously feeling the body—or rather, imaginatively sensing it. Because it's imaginative; it's not necessarily my own body; it could be that of a lover, or even a collective body. Ultimately, it's a freer exploration of inner emotions and perceptions." Hands not only symbolise motherhood and life- giving connection, but also engrave the imprint of individual experience. The lines of the hand weave a network of perception across the canvas, allowing Wang to sense the surrounding pulsations and channel them back into her work, documenting the secret dialogue between the individual and the world.

In Wang Xingyun's work, the hand appears not merely as a human limb, but as the very locus of artistic creation. The hand is not isolated as a passive object of representation, but transformed into an internal syntax of practice—an assertion of the hand's sovereignty over creation. In The Way II, hands etched with deep folds erupt across a surface fractured like crumbling stone, tearing through the fragile paper alongside the turmoil of inner emotion. Traffic lights, newspaper fragments, eyes, the sun— memories from the journey rise and fall like waves, all captured and depicted in the movement of the artist's fingers. The ancient Greek philosopher Anaxagoras believed that nous—mind, or intellect—was the source of all wisdom, yet it was the hand, he claimed, that made intelligence actionable. Wisdom does not merely arise from passive observa-

tion of nature, but through the willful shaping of it. The reflexivity of the hand—its ability to perceive both what it touches and the sensation of its own touch—creates a double awareness, elevating the artist's self-consciousness to a new dimension. In Wang's work, the fragility of paper and the violence of the imprint form a potent existential tension. The hand becomes a conduit between self and object, its gestures inscribing the awakening of subjectivity—the artist emerges as the sovereign agent of creation.

Wang's small-scale plaster casts construct a perceptual field through a delicate materiality. A mixture of pulp and plaster is wrapped in soft and flowing blocks of color. These pieces carve out a liminal space between landscape and flesh. The frame, meanwhile, functions as both container and constraint. Thread-like biomorphic forms and trembling organ-like images erupt, fracture, and dissolve—echoing the evolutionary processes of life and the pain that accompanies transformation. That very pain makes the body's boundaries more vivid and more precise. Through the autonomous act of tearing, agency is enacted; the wound, paradoxically, becomes the necessary passage through which one must encounter the essence of self. Importantly, the pain rendered in Wang's works resonates across multiple dimensions—it is not confined to flesh alone, but merges with emotional, psychic, and perceptual registers. This layered sensation becomes a catalyst for awakening deep perception and reconstructing the boundaries of identity. In leaving scars and impressions upon the surface, Wang inscribes thresholds in time—marking a "before" and "after"—and offers coordinates for locating the self amid numbness, anxiety, or transformation.

Within her textured compositions, Wang Xingyun weaves narratives that echo the aftermath of upheaval, where muted tones suggest both danger and resilience. Her surfaces are marked by paint drips, perforations, scraps of paper, embedded strands of hair, and shards of glass—materials that speak to the fragility of existence. Scarlet traces and bodily imprints emerge as quiet symbols of an enduring human spirit. Drawing on her personal experiences as a queer woman, Wang traces parallels between her own journey through fear and vulnerability, and the silent strength of her materials. Paper—fragile, supple, and endlessly adaptive—has, across cultures and centuries, borne witness to the vast continuum of human experience. In Wang's work, it becomes a vessel of memory and metamorphosis. Each piece stands as a testament to survival and renewal, inviting viewers into landscapes that hold stories of strength, sensitivity, and quiet defiance.

About Artist

Wang Xingyun

b. 1997, Beijing, China
Lives and works in New York, US

Wang Xingyun employs a meticulous, process-driven approach in her practice, layering pigmented glue and delicate sheets of paper onto heavy watercolor paper to create richly textured surfaces. Her works invite tactile engagement through visual means—breaking, fusing, hardening, and flowing—where the material properties interlace like tissues of thought. These layered landscapes evoke turbulence, fragility, and resilience, compelling viewers to reflect on the psychological and emotional states embedded in her large-scale fictional terrains.

Wang Xingyun's recent exhibitions include: "*I Grew Into Myself*" at ZIAN Gallery, Hangzhou, China (2025); "*Shake Rattle Roll Shine*" at ZIAN Gallery, Hangzhou, China (2024), "*Glitch*" at BROWNIE Project gallery, Shanghai, China (2024); "*The 4th Xinjiang International Arts Biennale*" at Xinjiang Museum, Urumqi, China (2024); "*Propagation: Suspended Roots*" at Studio 9D, Chelsea, New York (2024); "*Home is You, Right*

Now" at Ruby/Dakota Gallery, New York, New York (2024); "*A Journey From the Center of the Earth*" at Shanghai Bund Art Center, Shanghai, China(2024); "*Jianghu: The Discrete Center*" at ZIAN Gallery, Hangzhou, China (2024); "*Surfacing*" at 54 Stone St, New York NY (2023); "*Thank God Every Day That the Whole House Did Not Burn Down*" at Hunter College, NY, NY (2023); "*A Peek Behind the Curtain*" at Bob's Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2023); "*Terrible Terrible*" at 205 Hudson Gallery, NY, NY (2023); "*Pulp*" at Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2022); and "*Forbidden Fruit*" at Piano Craft Gallery, Boston, MA (2021). Wang studied at Bard College and received her BFA from SUNY Purchase in 2021. She completed her MFA at Hunter College, New York, in 2025.

Press

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