

威廉·赫曼：Amuse - Bouche 餐前小食

索卡艺术荣幸宣布，将于2024年11月16日在索卡艺术北京空间推出英国艺术家威廉·赫曼个展“Amuse - Bouche 餐前小食”，呈现其全新创作的十四件绘画作品。此次展览是威廉·赫曼继2023年索卡台南个展“自由边缘人”之后在中国的第二次个展，作品取材从熟悉的居住区域拓展到新的环境和场景，进一步解开艺术家与“英国性”（Britishness）之间的个人关系。展览由杨紫苑策划，将持续至2024年12月14日。

Amuse-Bouche 来源于法语，直译为“唤醒味蕾”，它指的是在西餐文化中，主菜上桌前提供给客人的开胃菜，目的是为等待主菜的食客带来一些娱乐和趣味。威廉的每件作品都像是令人期待的餐前小食，让观众愉悦，惊喜或皱眉，总之每一次“入口”都不寡淡。大胆的用色和夸张的人物面部表现，以一种“漫画式”的处理方式增强了视觉张力，使作品更具大众性和娱乐性。而统一的正方形尺寸画布让作品看起来似一个被切割的画面，聚焦大场所中的小角落，无限放大了戏剧冲突，也引起观众对画外场景的万千遐想，以此投射和反思他们自己的社会角色存在。

“我的每幅画都讽刺了我们看待彼此的方式、英国风俗、阶级结构、当代事务和消遣方式。”

威廉·赫曼的这一系列作品可以看作是他过去一年的回忆日记，记录了足球赛或赛马等活动或社会和政治分歧与丑闻背景下的打斗和抗议。威廉根据新闻中的画面以及自己的经历描绘了他眼中的现实世界，是其对生活经历或当天见闻的直接回应。那些自称“帝国卫士”的团体戴着头巾和十字勋章，上街举行所谓的和平抗议，但往往以酒精引发的暴力冲突收场；“女士日”上盛装打扮出门的淑女，都会在庆典结束时醉醺醺“失了姿态”，跌跌撞撞回家；意在亲近自然的“懒人漂流”只是人们换个地方寻欢作乐，河中美景均沦为烟酒的陪衬。这些道貌岸然的群体活动，披着正经严肃的外皮开场，又总是戏剧性地以闹剧结尾，如此荒诞，又如此符合人间现实。毕竟，这一切都无简单的对错之分，因为人类好像总能合理化他们所做的一切。

威廉·赫曼以“集体经历的哑剧”（pantomime of collective experience）这一理念作为其创作线索，尽管画作的叙述范围很广泛，其中一些可能涉及社会分歧和政治丑闻等更严肃的话题，但这些都已被他用独具个人特色的幽默感包裹起来，不让观者觉得过分激进，而是共感生活的多样性和不可预见性。例如作品《开胃菜 Hors D'oeuvres》描绘了一对上流社会的夫妇正在一家高级餐厅高贵地接受着三位侍者的服务，美酒不断，主菜是一枚看似简单的金蛋，但不难看出这一餐的价格可能相当昂贵。这幅画同时参考了詹姆斯·吉尔雷（James Gillray，英国19世纪漫画家）的社会讽刺作品、《弗尔蒂旅馆》（Fawlty Towers，20世纪70年代英国情景喜剧，讲述一家运转不良的酒店里的故事）以及《伊索寓言》中“下金蛋的鹅”的故事。三个作品虽载体不一，但内核都是一致的。威廉在这幅画中思考了“惯常事物是如何被抬高到偏离其原始性质的”。当人在不同的环境中游移生存时，事物的文化资本在起起落落，它的阶级象征也在发生变化。就像不起眼的鸡蛋，通常是早餐主食，当它在当地一家普通的咖啡厅供应时，它就成了一

件商品，而当它在米其林餐厅的精致银盘上供应时，它又升级为一件附带贴心服务的高额商品。这些都与阶级、地位和象征有关，“金蛋”便是贪婪和不知节制的象征。正所谓欲壑难填，威廉·赫曼的作品揭露了一幕幕现实的隐喻，如同连接人类欲望的藤蔓，无尽滋长和缠绕。

Will Harman: Amuse – Bouche

Soka Art is pleased to announce that British artist William Harman's solo exhibition *Amuse–Bouche* will be presented at Soka Art Beijing Space on November 16, 2024, featuring fourteen new paintings, this exhibition is William Harman's second solo exhibition in China after his solo exhibition *Freedom From The Suburbs* in Soka Tainan in 2023. The works are drawn from his familiar surrounding areas to more new environments and settings, further unpicking the artist's personal relationship to Britishness. The exhibition is curated by Yuana and will last until December 14, 2024.

Amuse-Bouche is a French word that directly translates to “mouth amuser”, which refers to the appetizers offered to guests before the main course is served in Western culinary culture, with the purpose of bringing some amusement and fun to the diners waiting for the main course. Each of Will's works is like an Amuse-Bouche, which makes the audience happy, surprised or frowned, each “bite” is anything but bland. The bold use of colors and exaggerated facial expressions of characters enhance the visual tension in a "comic-like" way, making the work more popular and entertaining. The uniform square size of the canvas makes the work look like a cut picture, focusing on the small corners in the large venue, infinitely magnifying the dramatic conflict and arousing the audience's imagination of the scene outside the canvas, also projecting and reflecting on their own social role roles.

“Each of my paintings is poking fun at the way we perceive each other; British customs, class structures, contemporary affairs and pastimes.”

This series of works by Will Harman can be seen as his memoir diary of the past year, recording events such as football matches or horse races, or fights and protests in the context of social and political divisions and scandals. Will depicts the real world in his eyes based on the images in the news and his own experiences, which is a direct response to his life or what he saw that day.

The Group of self-proclaimed “defenders of the realm” wearing headscarves and crosses and took to the streets for so-called peaceful protests, but often ended in violent conflicts caused by alcohol; The ladies who dressed up to go out on “Ladies Day” would be drunk and “lose their elegance” at the end of the celebration and stumble home; “Lazy River” intended to get close to nature is just a place for people to have fun, the beautiful scenery in the river became a foil for cigarettes and alcohol. These moralistic group activities start with a serious appearance and always end dramatically with farce, so absurd, but so in line with the reality of the world. After all, there is no simple right or wrong in any of this, because humans always seem to rationalize everything they do.

Will Harman takes the idea of the “pantomime of collective experience” as a clue in his work, although the paintings cover a wide range of narratives, some of which may involve more serious topics such as social divisions and political scandals, they are all wrapped up in Will’s unique sense of humor, which does not make viewers feel overly radical but sympathize with the diversity and unpredictability of life. For example, the work *Hors D’oeuvres* depicts an upper-class couple nobly served by three waiters in a fine dining restaurant, with a flow of wines, and a seemingly simple golden egg for the main course, but it's easy to see how the meal could be quite expensive. The painting draws on references from the social satire of James Gillray (British 19th C caricaturists), *Fawlty Towers* (a 1970s British sitcom about a dysfunctional hotel), and the story of *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg* from *Aesop’s Fables*. The three works have different carriers, but all have the same core. In this painting, Will contemplates “how ordinary things are elevated to the point of deviating from their original nature”. As people move through different environments, the cultural capital of a thing rises and falls, and its class signifier changes. Like the humble egg, usually a breakfast staple, it becomes a commodity when it is served at a local cafe, and when it is served on an exquisite silver platter at a Michelin restaurant, it is upgraded to a high-dollar commodity that comes with attentive service. It is all about class, status and symbols, and the “golden egg” is a symbol of greed and excess. As the saying goes, desire can never be filled. Will Harman's work exposes metaphors of reality that grow and twine endlessly like a vine connecting human desires.