

任小林: 艮岳
Ren Xiaolin: Genyue

策展人 | Curator: 夏小燕 | Xia Xiaoyan

艺术家 | Artist: 任小林 | Ren Xiaolin

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地点 | Venue: 蜂巢当代艺术中心 | Hive Center for Contemporary Art

地址 | Address: 北京市酒仙桥路 4 号 798 艺术区 E06 | E06, 798 Art District, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

蜂巢当代艺术中心荣幸宣布, 将于 2025 年 6 月 28 日在蜂巢北京 B、C 展厅推出艺术家任小林的最新个展“艮岳”。继 2019 年蜂巢北京的个展“模糊的末端”后, 此番新展将汇集任小林六年来的精选绘画二十余件。任小林以融合东方精神与现代感知的居间美学, 重构了绘画与世界、个体与历史之间的关系, 展现出一种独特的视觉思想性与文化深度, 探讨绘画的居间性美学路径。本次展览由夏小燕策划, 将持续至 2025 年 8 月 27 日。

任小林曾言, 艮岳启发了他的绘画实践。艮岳, 宋代皇家园林的最高代表, 始建于北宋政和七年(公元 1117 年), 占地面积超过五十万平方米, 历时六年, 初具规模。这座山水宫苑以情为立意, 以山水画为蓝本, 以画论指导造园, 造景意境含蓄, 首次把“移天缩地在君怀”的造园思想引入皇家园林的营造中。在宋徽宗眼中, 艮岳就是大中华江山的全部, 每个小山峰都有它的空间意义。艮岳的意涵远不止于皇家意志的物质化表征, 更是一种“居间”(Au milieu) 空间的建构。在哲学语境中, 居间并非两物之间的空隙, 而是一种存在的态势——一种拒绝确指与终点的状态, 它游离于自然与人造、秩序与逸出、意义与裂缝之间, 是边界未定、关系尚悬的生成场。任小林从艮岳中汲取的并非历史图像, 而是这座园林所蕴含的生命哲学——隐逸不再是逃离, 而是劳动性的再造; 人不再寻找庇护之地, 而是在劳作中构筑自己的可居之所。

任小林的绘画, 正是对这一“居间性”的艺术演绎。他的图像世界既不属于传统的笔墨山水, 也不归属于现代主义的造型逻辑, 而是在二者之间生成一种断裂却不失连续的视觉结构。画面中的钟表、书籍、鞋靴、佛像与罗马柱、可口可乐与器物、树木与果实等元素仿佛来自不同语境, 却又在同一空间内共存不悖, 像是一场被中断又被重新缝合的梦境。更确切地说, 这些作品并非描绘“一个世界”, 而是让观者身处于“多个世界”之间的张力场——一个时间、空间、感知逻辑均未完成分化的场所。这种并置策略并非讽刺拼贴, 而是一场神秘的物性召唤——每个物体都带有记忆、象征, 它们如同散落在潜意识之中的视觉碎片, 等待观者去编织意义。

在对现代世界的敏锐感知后, 任小林表现出一种强烈的隐逸冲动——不是向外逃逸, 而是向内退却。任小林选择的避难所, 正是自然和传统文人心中的书斋。这一时期, 他的画面被逐渐抽离出具象社会的结构, 被投射进一种经过艺术化处理的精神空间中。场景的描绘趋于简约: 远山、竹林、橱柜、鸟兽、僧侣、佛像, 这些具有高度文化意味的物象共同建构出一个典型的文人居所。画中人物也不再具有明确的身份指向, 他们更像是文人典型特征的蒙太奇集合——没有个体化的细

节，却传达出一种稳定的文化性格。这些人物在画中沉静坐立，凝视前方或自我沉思，仿佛来自一个更古老、更缓慢的时空维度。人物未必找到了真正的归宿，而是在一个试图成为归宿的空间中安顿自我。这种既逃离又悬置、既隐逸又未归的状态，正是任小林作品在这一阶段最本质的情绪内核。

任小林的“东方性”不仅是一种地理标签，也是一种视觉精神与美学品格。他深受中国传统艺术的影响，尤其是墓室、敦煌壁画的结构性、象征性与宗教性，书法的线条与文人画的意趣。他将这些东方文化不作為题材而是内化为构图法则与观看逻辑。线条不追求拟真，而追求气的流动与结构的生长，具有写意特质。构图非焦点透视，而是类似卷轴画的散点式布置，强调视觉时间感。色彩低沉、雅拙，带有水墨或矿物色般的沉积感，唤起古典的时间深度。这些图像语言如同对艮岳的再演——一个既具体又遥远、既人造又超验的精神空间。

在传统与现代、东方与西方、现实与想象之间，任小林不断地调和、错位、重构。他常用低饱和度的色彩调性（如灰绿、米白、暗红、钴蓝），这种色彩策略使画面避免陷入情绪泛滥的戏剧性，转而营造出一种内敛、静默、近乎冥想的观画状态。这种色彩语言延续了中国古典绘画中的雅致传统，也与现代主义精神一脉相承，通过对色彩对比的克制，他更强调形体的构成关系与节奏。他的绘画节奏不是音乐性的，而是气息性的，是呼吸与凝视之间的节律。任小林的作品可被理解作为一种多重结构主义的绘画——它融合了视觉构成、感知心理、文化象征与叙事逻辑，使每一幅画既是视觉的造物又是生成的精神。

这一点，恰恰使人回想到艮岳。艮岳象征着古典美学中空间生成的方式——通过叠置、游移、隐喻与感知的层层推进，在“人造”与“自然”、“秩序”与“灵性”之间展开一场精妙的博弈。任小林的绘画也正是这样一种精神工程的延续：他在绘画中不断发掘、搭建与延宕空间的可能性。他像一位造园者，在绘画中设置路径、洞口、堆石与留白，引导观者在其中徘徊、驻足、感知。他的画面不提供终点，只提供通道，不回应确定性，而开启感知的游牧。这正是“居间”之所的真实形态——多义的、未完的、悬置的，一个永远在生成中的空间寓言。

Hive Center for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce Ren Xiaolin's latest solo exhibition, *Genyue*, opening on June 28, 2025, in Galleries B and C of Hive Beijing. This marks the artist's return to Hive following his 2019 solo exhibition *An End in Obscurity*. The new exhibition brings together 28 meticulously selected paintings created over the past six years. Through an interstitial aesthetic that merges Eastern philosophy with contemporary perception, Ren reconstructs the relationship between painting and the world, the individual and history—revealing a distinct visual philosophy and cultural depth. The exhibition, curated by Xia Xiaoyan, will remain on view through August 27, 2025.

This exhibition signifies a new departure for Ren Xiaolin. He has moved away from the bold wildness and densely layered imagery of his earlier work, shifting instead toward a visual language that is more restrained, spacious, and contemplative. After years of exploring themes of primal religion, bodily experience, and marginal cultures, Ren has transitioned from an observer of the world to an experiencer of life. His compositions no longer emphasize narrative and conflict but unfold within an interstitial, meditative structure. This shift is not merely formal or technical—it marks a deep transformation in his artistic consciousness. With greater lightness and certainty, he continues to excavate the depths of the Eastern visual experience, treating painting not as image reproduction, but as a mode of being. Between complexity and purity, rupture and continuity, Ren is constructing a contemporary visual language of Eastern-ness.

Ren has spoken of how *Genyue* inspired his painting practice. *Genyue*, the most sophisticated example of imperial gardens from the Song Dynasty, was established in 1117 during the seventh year of the Zhenghe reign, covering over 500,000 square meters and taking six years to complete. This garden-palace hybrid was conceived with emotion at its core, modeled after landscape painting and guided by painting theory. Its poetic and suggestive scenery was the first to embody the idea of “compressing heaven and earth into the emperor's bosom” in imperial garden design. To Emperor Huizong, *Genyue* represented the entire expanse of the Chinese empire, with each miniature mountain peak carrying symbolic spatial meaning.

More than a material expression of imperial will, *Genyue* represents the construction of an *interstitial (au milieu)* space. In philosophical terms, “interstitial” is not a void between two entities, but a mode of existence—a refusal of fixed meaning and endpoints, a space that drifts between the natural and the artificial, order and escape, meaning and fracture. It is a site of emergence where boundaries remain unsettled and relations unresolved. As a deliberately constructed, artificial nature, *Genyue* is not a preexisting paradise but a space built through labor, discipline, and ingenuity—situated in the tension between nature and system, aesthetics and power.

What Ren draws from *Genyue* is not its historical imagery, but its embedded philosophy of life—where reclusion is no longer an escape, but a reconstruction through labor; where one does not seek refuge, but builds a place of habitation through action.

Ren's paintings are a visual interpretation of this interstitial condition. His imagery does not belong to the tradition of ink landscape painting, nor to the logic of modernist form. Instead, it unfolds a fractured yet continuous visual structure between the two. Clocks, books, boots, Buddhas, Roman columns, Coca-Cola cans, miscellaneous objects, trees, and fruits coexist within the same space, though they seem drawn from different semantic worlds—like a dream interrupted and then sutured together. More precisely, these works do not portray *one world*, but place viewers in a field of tension between *multiple worlds*—a realm where time, space, and perception remain undifferentiated. This strategy of juxtaposition is not ironic collage, but a mystical summoning of material presence—each object carries memory and symbolism, scattered like fragments of the subconscious, waiting for viewers to weave them into meaning.

Within this logic of perception and expression, Ren has developed a distinctive painting method. He never begins with a predetermined composition. Instead, he starts with a perceived detail—an ear, a shaft of light, the edge of an object—which becomes a “center of interest.” From there, forms naturally unfold through the advance of brushwork, growing organically from point to field. This unplanned, uncomposed process is less a technique than a way of being: painting, observing, and thinking happen simultaneously. Such parallel perception reconfigures modern sensory structures, becoming a bodily enactment of the interstitial condition—not the depiction of a known image, but the emergence of an unknown world between perception and action.

Following this acute sensitivity to the modern world, Ren exhibits a strong reclusive impulse—not an escape outward, but a retreat inward. His sanctuary becomes nature and the studio-space cherished by traditional literati. During this phase, his images retreat from representational structures of society into an aestheticized spiritual realm. The scenes become pared down: distant mountains, bamboo groves, cabinets, birds and beasts, monks and Buddhas—highly symbolic objects that together construct a classical scholar's dwelling. The figures lose specific identity and become montages of literati archetypes—lacking individualized features but conveying a steady cultural temperament. They sit quietly, gazing ahead or in contemplation, as if drawn from an older, slower temporal dimension. These figures may not have found their true dwelling, but instead have settled into a space that aspires to be one. This state—both escape and suspension, both retreat and not yet return—is the emotional core of Ren's paintings at this stage.

In recent years, Ren's compositions and formal language have grown more defined and complex. His current notion of "reclusion" is no longer a romantic return to pastoral life but a pursuit of an interstitial space between reality and ideal. He constructs a world suspended between the real and the imagined, between history and dream. The new sanctuary is not the forest or a scholar's retreat, but *Genyue*—an imperial landscape engineered by the Song court. Ren has realized that just as *Genyue*'s artifice dismantled the ancient binary of nature and culture, the inner tensions of the self must also be lived through. The true self must integrate with the totality of the world.

Ren's "Eastern-ness" is not a geographic label but a visual spirit and aesthetic sensibility. Deeply influenced by Chinese traditional art—especially the structural, symbolic, and religious nature of tomb and Dunhuang murals, the line of calligraphy, and the poetic intent of literati painting—he does not treat these as subject matter but as principles of composition and perception. His lines are expressive rather than representational, pursuing the flow of *qi* and the organic growth of structure. His compositions avoid linear perspective, instead unfolding through scattered perspectives akin to scroll painting, emphasizing temporal movement through space. His palette is subdued and elegant, evoking the sedimented feel of ink or mineral pigment and conjuring a sense of historical depth. These visual strategies echo *Genyue*—a spiritual space at once tangible and distant, artificial and transcendent.

Between tradition and modernity, East and West, reality and imagination, Ren continually reconciles, displaces, and reconfigures. He frequently uses unsaturated color tones—ash green, ivory, brick red, cobalt blue—which avoid emotional excess and theatricality, instead generating a quiet, restrained, almost meditative viewing experience. This color language continues the refined tradition of classical Chinese painting while resonating with a modernist spirit. Through restrained contrast, Ren emphasizes compositional relationships and rhythm. His visual rhythm is not musical but breath-like—structured by intervals of inhalation and gaze. His paintings can be understood as multi-structuralist: fusing visual composition, perceptual psychology, cultural symbolism, and narrative logic, each painting becomes not only a visual creation but a generative spirit.

In this way, Ren's work recalls *Genyue*, symbolizing a classical aesthetic mode of spatial emergence—layered, shifting, metaphorical, advancing through perception-- staging a delicate game between artifice and nature, order and spirituality. Ren's paintings extend this spiritual project: continually exploring, constructing, and deferring the possibilities of space. Like a garden designer, he lays out paths, openings, stones, and empty spaces—inviting the viewer to wander, pause, and sense. His paintings do not offer conclusions but portals—not certainty but a nomadic invitation to perceive.

This is the true form of the interstitial: multiple, unfinished, suspended—a space always in the process of becoming.