



*Variant of the Source* 泉的變體 (Detail | 局部), 2022. Oil on canvas | 佈面油畫. 120 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. | 圖片提供:藝術家與貝浩登

## XIE QI

### *Shame of Intimacy*

October 28 – December 2, 2023

The two decisive terms of Xie Qi's exhibition title, 'shame' and 'intimacy', are worth thinking about. They are at opposite ends of each other, although the ease with which Xie Qi has joined them, suggests otherwise. Intimacy, on the one hand, is something that arrives as an effect of a close familiarity or friendship. Whether it surfaces as a brief moment shared with oneself or as an extended attachment gained between friends, it is a private, organic thing, quiet, pulsing, enveloping us in warm light. Shame, on the other hand, projects onto the body or psyche as an alien force. Shame attacks us and, next to causing embarrassment, discomfort or guilt, it is a feeling that harms our sense of self-worth. Shame can afflict a whole nation, but at its core, it is an isolating force, separating us from each other, making each of us feel alone. In this situation, it is irrelevant, whether we have cause to feel ashamed or not. As the famous author Milan Kundera writes: "The basis of shame is not some personal mistake of ours, but the ignominy, the humiliation we feel that we must be what we are without any choice in the matter, and that this humiliation is to be seen by everyone."<sup>1</sup>

Milan Kundera is quite precise in describing the problem of shame as an effect of humiliation in three steps: 1. We recognize that must be what we are. 2. We recognize that we have no choice. 3. We recognize that there are witnesses to our indignity. It is never easy to take account of ourselves without delusion. If, as we all know, we need to do so from time to time, we all want to be able to do it on our own terms and in a

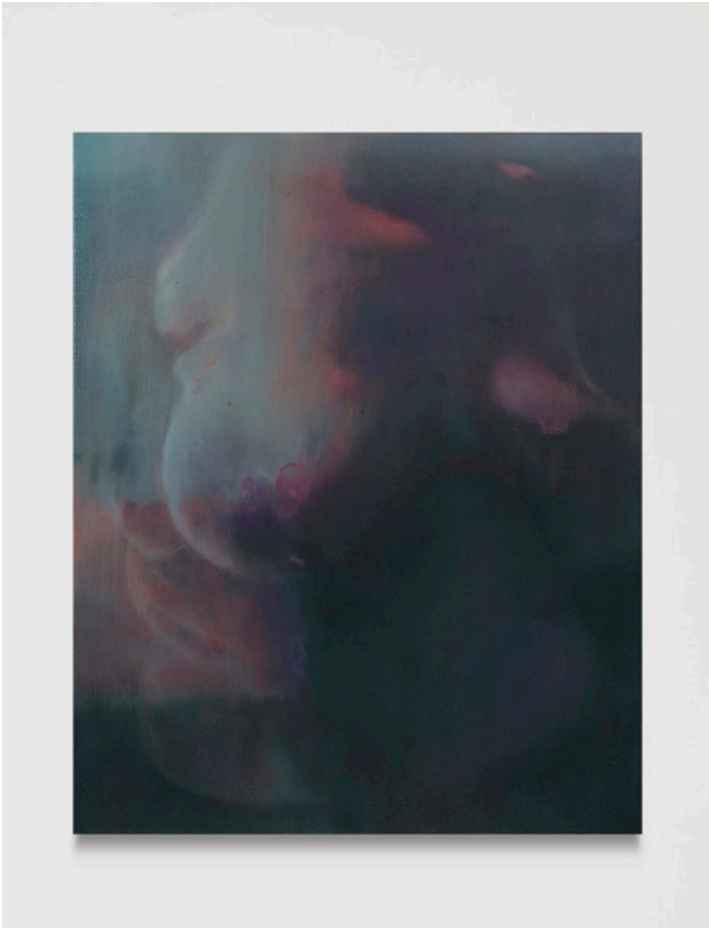
## 謝其

### 親密之恥

2023年10月28日-12月2日

“羞恥”和“親密”，構成謝其此次展覽名稱的兩個決定性的語彙耐人尋味。它們處於彼此對立的兩端，而謝其輕鬆地調度着它們，表明情況並非如此。一方面，“親密”是某種熟稔關係或友誼的結果。無論是作為與自己分享的短暫片刻，還是作為從朋友之間獲得的延伸的依戀，它都是一種私人的、有機的東西，它安靜地搏動，將我們包裹於溫暖的光線中。另一方面，“羞恥”作為一種外部力量投射於我們的身體或精神。羞恥感攻擊着我們，不僅會帶來尷尬、不適或內疚，甚至還會損害我們的自我價值。“羞恥”可以折磨整個國家，它的核心是一種孤立的力量，將人彼此隔離，讓我們每個人感到孤獨。在這種情況下，我們是否有理由感到“羞恥”都是無關緊要的。正如作家米蘭·昆德拉所寫的那樣：“羞恥不以我們可能犯下的過失，而是以我們無法選擇面對的處境而感到的屈辱作為基礎，而且有一種不可忍受的感覺，這種屈辱處處顯而易見。”<sup>[1]</sup>

米蘭·昆德拉通過三個步驟精確地將“羞恥”的問題描述為一種屈辱施加的影響：一.我們認識到我們必然如此。二.我們認識到我們別無選擇。三.我們承認，有人見證了我們的屈辱。不帶幻想地考慮自己從來都不是一件容易的事。如果我們需要不時地這樣做，那麼

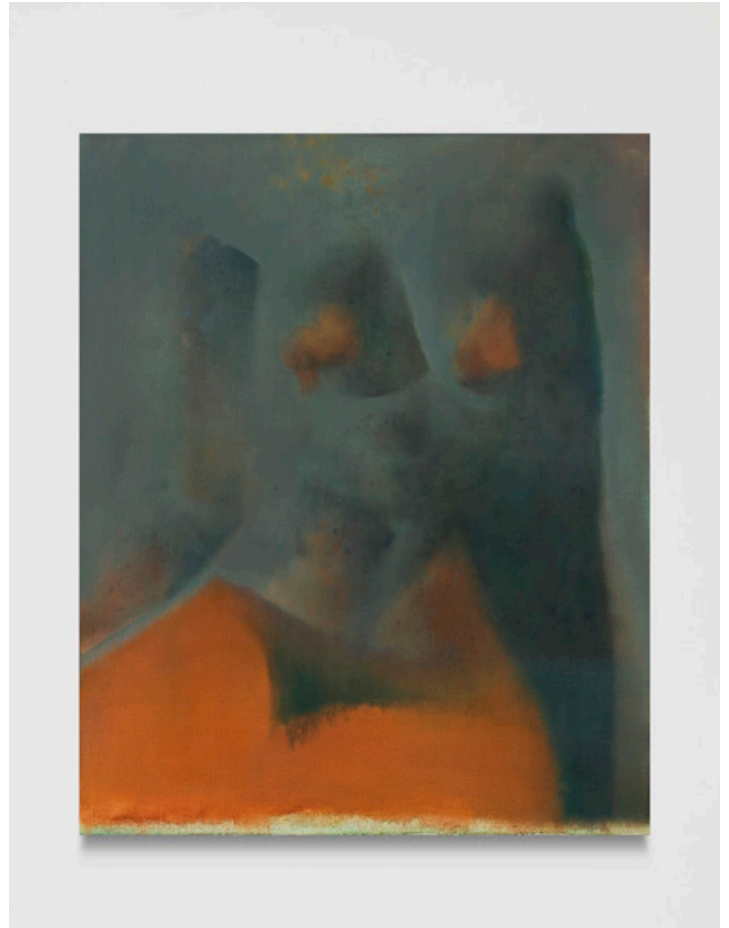


*The Day after the Last Day* 末日之後的一天, 2021. Oil on canvas | 佈面油畫. 80 x 65 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. | 圖片提供:藝術家與貝浩登

safe space. To be forced to reckon with ourselves, regardless of our wishes to stay ignorant to our own weaknesses, is one kind of thing. But to have the gaze of the others thrust upon our naked selves at this very moment of self-reckoning, is a kind of violence. Shame, then, does not result from intimacy, and not even from being seen naked, but from being vulnerable to the gaze. In the moment of shame, all intimacy is lost. The light turns from warm to cold, from dark to light, and what was before in privacy is now exposed.

Why then, do Xie Qi's paintings of the naked bodies of her friends, often in denaturalised, contorted or slightly sexualised poses, not fill us with shame? Amongst the many answers to this question, an obvious one is that these paintings are not portraits per se; a fact which is underpinned by the lack of names in the titles of the paintings. Instead, Xie Qi's titles are imaginative and expressive, describing conditions, emotions or simply moments in time, as if they were heading poems. And yet, the bodies inhabiting Xie Qi's canvasses are recognizable as specific bodies. It is possible, at least for the initiated, to piece together a depiction of a particular body and a name. I can say so with certainty, because I recognize myself as one of these bodies. Some time ago, the artist had asked me to let her take a photograph and I had complied. Showing my naked body to her gaze was a bit embarrassing, but Xie Qi kept the act of photographing short, friendly, sober. It happened incidentally, in a bathroom of someone, and the event remained remarkably calm from both sides. A friend asks you for something and, naturally, if you can, you comply. You give it to her. What she does with this gift is really her own business.

Herein most probably lies the starting point of another answer to Xie Qi's conundrum of shame, or rather to its lack thereof: The dramaturgy of the recognition, representation and exposure of a body (or a self) deviates from the usual staging of power. Milan Kundera's description of shame does not apply here. Or, to be more precise, it does not fully apply here. Let's look a bit closer at what the artist does, let's look at



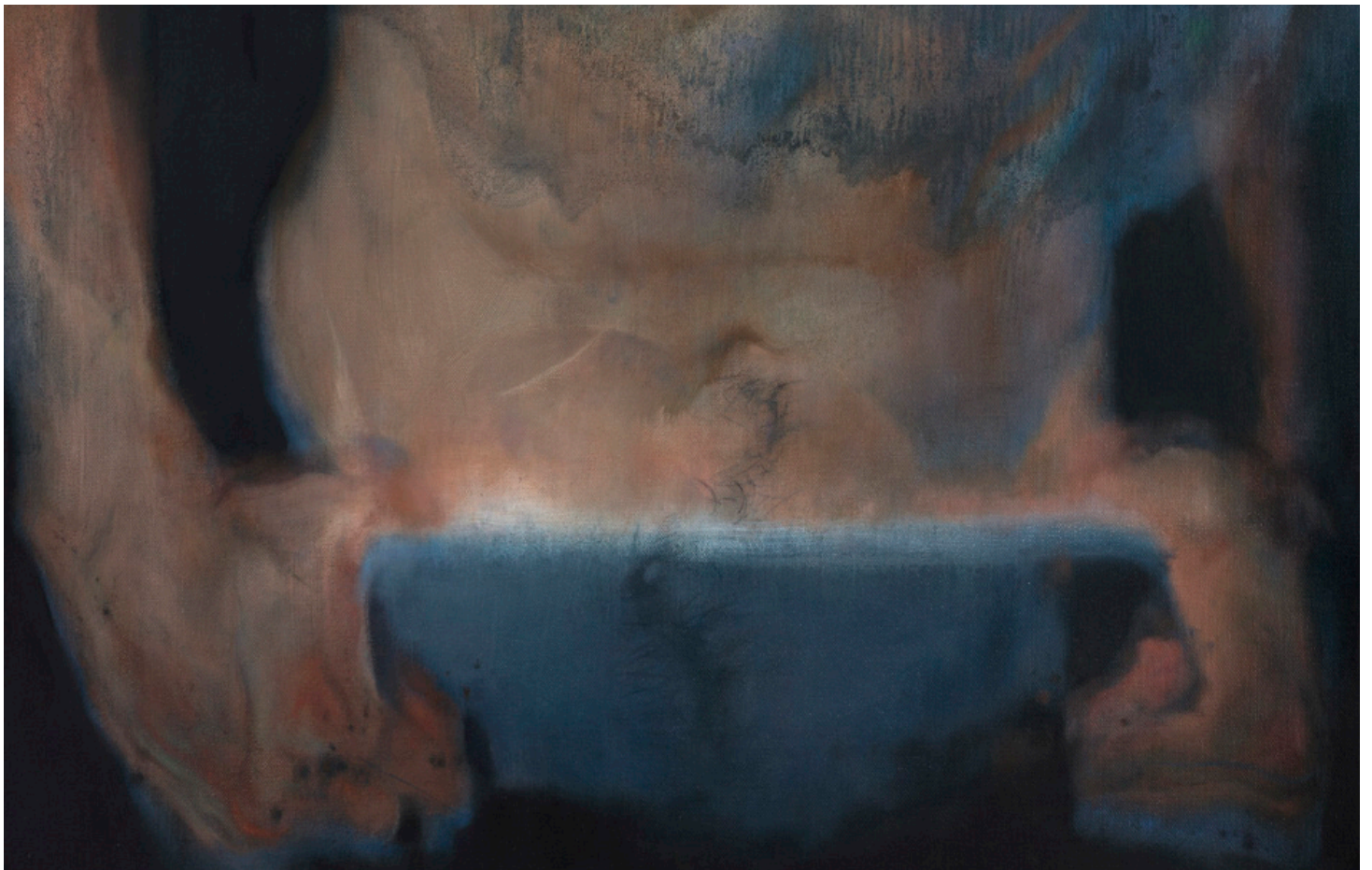
*Tentacle* 觸角, 2021. Oil on canvas | 佈面油畫. 80 x 65 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. | 圖片提供:藝術家與貝浩登

我們都希望能夠按照自己的方式在一個安全的空間裡這樣做。通常的情況是，即使被迫正視自己，也希望對自身的弱點保持無知。但在這個自我清查的時刻，讓別人的目光投向赤裸的自我，是一種暴力。因此，“羞恥”不是來自於親密關係，甚至不來自於裸露，而是來自於凝視下的脆弱。在羞恥的時刻，所有的親密都消散了。光線由暖轉冷，由暗轉亮，此前的隱密於當下暴露了出來。

那麼，為何謝其所描繪的朋友們的裸體——通常以去自然化的、扭曲的或略帶性意味的姿勢出現，而不會讓觀眾感到羞恥呢？在個問題的眾多答案中，顯而易見的是這些繪畫本身並非肖像，畫作名稱中缺少人物的姓名便是有力的佐證。相反，謝其使用的標題極具想象力和表現力，描述了時間中的境況、情感或只是某個片段，宛如詩歌。然而，棲居於謝其畫布上的身體被辨認為特定的身體。至少對初看者來說，這是有可能的，他們也許可以拼湊出一個特定的身體或一個名字。我也能夠如此肯定，因為我認出自己也是這些身體中的一員。前段時間，藝術家提出想要拍攝一張我的照片，我答應了。把自己的裸體展示給她有點尷尬，但謝其保持着簡短、友好、冷靜的工作行為。這件事是偶然的，發生在某個浴室裡，雙方都格外平靜。朋友向你索取一些東西，如果可以做到，你自然會答應。你給她。而她用這個禮物做什麼是她自己的事。

這很可能是謝其拆解“羞恥”之謎的另一個答案，或者說恰恰詮釋了這一謎題之中“羞恥”的缺失：以對身體（或自我）的承認、表現和暴露的戲劇性手法，來偏離了通常的權力舞台。米蘭·昆德拉對羞恥的描述在這裡並不適用。或者更準確地說並不完全適用。讓我們仔細研究謝其是怎麼做的，讓我們看看她的過程：一個朋友的身





*Shame of Intimacy* 親密之恥 (Detail | 局部), 2022. Oil on canvas | 佈面油畫. 120 × 120 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. | 圖片提供:藝術家與貝浩登

her process. Moved by a friend's body and soul, which fill her with curiosity and interest, Xie Qi decides to take a photograph. To her mind, this is an intimate event, and I would add, that this is less about the kind of intimacy we associate with corporeality and more a form of closeness that is the result of an act of friendship. I choose how to pose and what to show of my nakedness and what to leave covered and Xie Qi receives. She might be in control of framing the shot, but since this is not a studio setting, a more adequate description would be that this is a documentary shot, an impression, something that Xie Qi might associate with a "vera icon", despite the intentionality of the photographic act. Contrary to a selfie, this image does not get shared. I remain clueless as to how the photograph of my body looks. This is not a moment of self-discovery. And Xie Qi herself lets the image rest, stores it away, sometimes for months, until she is ready to paint.

And then she paints. The artist herself claims that this is the moment where she assumes a rather "grim gaze".<sup>2</sup> Layer upon layer, she gradually composes, constructs, fragments and recomposes a new body from the original photograph, working on several canvasses at once, "until the picture feels like a plant organic growth together". I call this "a new body", because despite Xie Qi's self-described "conflict between caring and not caring about the personal characteristics of the model", alternating between fascination and detachment, – and despite the fact that I do recognize my own body in her work – her paintings are no similes. Xie Qi's canvasses are, ultimately, balancing acts between veracity and painterly performance. As to the "grim gaze", I would assume that this is Xie Qi's way of owning up to the fact that her artistic vision will supersede considerations born out of the intimacy of friendship. Her depictions do not enhance bodily beauty, indeed, in the way they are fragmented and denatured in colour, the bodies are depersonalised, rendered simply as flesh. Whatever intimacy might present itself, it is the intimacy of the painterly gaze. The eroticism that these paintings speak of is the eroticism between the artist herself and her canvas.

體、靈魂觸動了她，讓她充滿好奇和興趣，她決定拍攝一張照片。在她看來，這是一個親密的事件。我想補充一點，這不是與肉體聯繫起來的那種親密，更多來自於熟悉的感受，是友誼行為的結果。我選擇該擺出何種姿勢，對於我的身體，我決定展示什麼，掩蓋什麼，謝其接受這一切。她可能控制着鏡頭取景，但由於雙方並非身處於攝影棚，所以更恰當的描述應該是，這是一個紀實的拍攝，類似於一種印跡，謝其也許會把它與“聖維洛妮婭的面紗”<sup>[2]</sup>相聯繫，儘管攝影行為是有意為之。與自拍不同，這張照片不會被分享。我至今仍不知道我身體的照片是什麼樣的。這不是自我探索的時刻。而謝其讓照片暫時休眠，她將它塵封起來，有時長達好幾個月，直到她準備好。

然後謝其開始作畫。藝術家聲稱，此時此刻，她將投注一種相當“冷峻的凝視”。<sup>[3]</sup> 謝其從原來的照片中逐漸整理、拼湊、構造，重新組合出一個新的身體，並且同時在幾幅畫布上工作，一層又一層，“直到感覺畫面像一株植物般有機地生長在一起”。我稱其為“新的身體”，因為儘管謝其坦言“對模特的個人特徵關心與否存在衝突”——即着迷與超然之間存在衝突——儘管我在謝其的作品中認出了自己的身體，但她的畫並不是明喻。這些創作最終是在真實性和繪畫表現之間的平衡。至於“冷峻的凝視”，我認為這是謝其承認她的藝術視野終將取代出於親密友誼而作的思考的方式。事實上，她的描繪並沒有增強身體的美，它們在色彩上被分割和去自然化了，身體被去人格化，被單純地呈現為肉體。無論親密如何表達自身，那都是在繪畫性的凝視下的親密。這些畫作所言說的情色，是藝術家本人和她的畫布之間的情色。

Thus, in the end, what gets exposed in Xie Qi's work, is not a body-to-be-shamed, but the intimacy of the creative act. As spectators, we might feel embarrassed by this, because this intimacy is almost too strong, too close up in our faces. But there is no shame here, at least not in my mind, for Xie Qi is in control of what she gives us to see, even if she lays herself bare. And it is our choice to receive these paintings with a loving eye. It is our choice to receive these gifts.

Text by Ruth Noack

### **About the artist**

Xie Qi was born in 1974 in Chongqing, China, now lives and works in Beijing, China. The body and portraits have long been important motifs in Xie Qi's painting, appearing throughout her various creative periods. Drawing on a sweeping imagination and rich perceptions, Xie Qi bestows on these shifting figures the warmth of emotion, the tension of desire, and tones of gloom. She sources her subjects of depiction from friends, everyday objects (portrait-bearing banknotes, plants resembling human organs), candid photographs and classic themes, capturing and depicting them in an approach akin to "psychological profiling"—the artist refines the components of the image through observation and perception, adding or removing details, destroying and reconstituting whole forms, restoring the figure to magnify parts and moments filled with dramatic tension. Xie Qi's depiction takes place between recollection and creation. The concealed brushstrokes, blurred boundaries and phantom colors of the pictures often radiate with a mysterious air from a past time.

**More information about the exhibition >>>**

1. Milan Kundera, *Immortality* (1988), transl. Peter Kussi, Faber and Faber, New York 1991, Part 5 – Chance, page unknown. See: <https://nehaputta45.medium.com/under-linings-from-milan-kunderas-immortality-f80c808e8230>, last accessed Sept.23, 2023.

2. This and all other quotes by the artist are from emails to the author in September 2023.

因此，最終從謝其的作品中暴露出來的，並不是一具蒙羞的身體，而是創作製造的親密。作為旁觀者，我們可能會為此感到尷尬，因為這種親密太強烈，太逼近我們。但其中並無羞恥感，至少在我看來是這樣，因為謝其控制着她給我們觀看的東西，即便她如此袒露自身。我們選擇以愛的目光接受這些畫作。接受這些禮物是我們的選擇。

撰文：Ruth Noack

### **關於藝術家**

謝其1974年生於中國重慶，目前工作生活於中國北京。長期以來，身體及肖像作為謝其繪畫的重要母題，始終貫穿於她不同時期的創作之中。通過運用廣闊的想象力與豐富的感知，謝其不斷賦予這些變化的形象以情緒的溫度、慾望的張力與幽暗的色彩。她的描摹對象源於熟悉的友人、日常物（帶有肖像的貨幣、如同人體器官的植物）、生活快照以及古典題材等，而藝術家對於這些繪畫對象的捕捉方式接近於“心理側寫”——在觀察與感受之中，藝術家推敲畫面圖像的構成，增加或去除細節，通過對於完整形體的破壞與重構，還原式的再現形象本身，放大充滿戲劇張力的局部與瞬間。謝其的描摹發生於追憶與創造之間，其畫面之中隱匿的筆觸、模糊的邊界以及魅影式的色彩，也往往散發來自舊日時光的神秘氣息。

**更多展覽資訊 >>>**

[1] 摘自米蘭·昆德拉，《不朽》，上海譯文出版社2003年出版，王振孫/鄭克魯譯。

[2] 基督教故事中，耶穌前往受難地的路上，圍觀的信徒聖維洛妮婭將面紗獻予他擦拭血汗，後來發現面紗上留有了耶穌的面容。——譯者注

[3] 文中引用皆來自藝術家於2023年九月發送給筆者的電子郵件。