

VACANCY

The solo project, *Threshold* by artist Alexandre Zhu (b. 1993, Paris, France), brings together four large-formatted charcoal drawings on canvas, that are related in their technical intricacy and expressive power to map and unveil the Asian diaspora experience. Citing his childhood memories shared between Paris and Shanghai and captured photographs, Zhu inflates what is ephemeral and fleeting into a monumental scale and frozen eternity in his work. Through combinations, fragmentations and appropriations, Zhu's work arcs one's mitigating journey in search of identity and belonging between his motherlands—culturally and ethnically—amidst a sense of lost time and orientation.

As a pictorial realist, Zhu primarily works with photographic captures of scenes and sightings through his own camera lens; these static moments are then decontextualized from their previous reality into narratives in his drawings. Each drawing, while grand in detail, remains deliberately fragmented, delivering only part of the story and suspending the viewer in a state where recollection is muffled and momentarily far away. Zhu relieves himself from color in preference of a black and white universe and favors the use of charcoal for its fluidity and expressive range. Through percussive strikes and varying degrees of saturation, he builds gradients of light that convey depth and texture, imbuing his works with intensity and a precarious, almost fleeting presence.

Echoing Zhu's personal experience, the works become an escape from neither reality nor hallucination; a liminal space where the strange meets the familiar; the denied meets the inclusive, and the personal meets the collective. His perspective places pulse and breath in ethereal moments: the shoulder that belongs to a woman affectionately called, *Ma* (2024); or the sharp, blinding instant in *Please turn off all electronic devices* (2024) when one peers toward a light pole consigned in dark peripheries. Others are attuned to the wondrous matter of the world, filling one with the meditative sound of waves or the grainy texture of rocks.

His work illuminates temporal fragments that escape our full perception in the stream of consciousness. And it is through the onerous labor of the artist's hand that they materialize as markings, becoming part of a continuum of time. In a world dominated by immediacy, separation and loss, Zhu's static drawings meander between modest moments of proximity to years beyond the reach of waiting, summoning narratives and sensations of movement in a layered and allegorical way.