



李倩羽 Qianyu Li



## About the Artist

Qianyu Li (b.1995, Inner Mongolia) is currently doing a PhD at Faculdade de Belas-Artes da Universidade de Lisboa. She received her BFA from School of Visual Arts (New York, US) in 2020 and MFA from Slade School of Fine Art (London, UK) in 2022. Her art practice explores the connections and disconnections among things with the philosophic perspective of “three in one”, reflecting on the differences in perceptions of reality and its different dimensions arising from personal living experience in diverse geographical and cultural environments. Her work is mainly presented as diptych painting/ installation, the two-part format expands beyond the single picture plane of traditional painting, disrupting the painting space and narrative space. There is an increasing significance in the relationship between the two independent parts and their physical relationship with the viewer, enhancing the wholistic and interactive experience of the artwork, providing an open space for imagination and multi-perspective discussion.

Solo exhibition: Alchemy, Magician Space, Beijing, 2023.

Recent Group Shows: To the Public: Please Read the Exhibition the Way One Perceives the Woods (Part 1), Magician Space, Beijing, 2022; The Slade Postgraduate Degree Show, Gower Street, London, 2022; Chromaphilia/Chromophobia, SVA Chelsea Gallery, NY, 2020; The Haves and Have Nots, SVA Chelsea Gallery, NY, 2017.

MAGICIAN SPACE

魔金石空间



Love at first sight

2024

Acrylic, oil and pigment on linen

204 x 127cm/97 x 23cm



Image of the mind  
2024  
Distemper and oil on linen  
110 x 130cm/30 x 40cm





You and me

2024

Distemper and oil on linen

110 x 160cm/140 x 180cm









Rain mustache with twin moons

2023

Acrylic, oil and pigment on linen

70 x 90cm



Bear the light

2023

Acrylic, oil and pigment on linen

50 x 60cm [View](#)





The guard

2023

Acrylic, oil and pigment on linen

40 x 60cm



Qianyu Li: Alchemy

2023.03.17-05.13

1. Relocation: moving oneself, or moving things to another place. This is a key term that Qianyu Li has distilled for herself after living in Beijing, New York, and London. While people can easily imagine this kind of global migratory life nowadays, for those who have experienced it, it feels more like living in a divided and disparate world.

2. In this context, Li's painting is about relocation. Her diptychs contain landscapes that are disjointed and independent of each other, from many different places, but the key is always the things that have the potential to transform each other.

In order to explore the connections between different regions in her paintings, the whole process usually goes like this: images are picked from anywhere in her life, and after eliminating the limitations of time, space, and culture, the maximum potential for the human and objects figures in their narrative forms is retained. Thus, arbitrary associations sparked by individual shapes will correspond to another world at a certain moment. In this way, the artist will be able to summon a stage in the painting space, disregarding the laws of reality.

3. For a painter, this is actually a considerable degree of freedom. In other words, this is actually a fairly alchemical thing.

Throughout the history of alchemy, the core thesis that countless alchemists have paid attention to, whether it is the initial method of making gold or later psychological theories, has been reduced to the possibility of transformation in contemporary times. But no matter what era, the so-called transformation requires a pair of eyes that carefully read the world, and faith.

In this regard, a conjecture is: why can Paulo Coelho's story of a shepherd boy learning alchemy through travel spread all over the world in a world of divided lives? Perhaps because it tries to show that the fragments in life are omens. They can travel through different times and spaces. They are the starting point for reorganizing the world.





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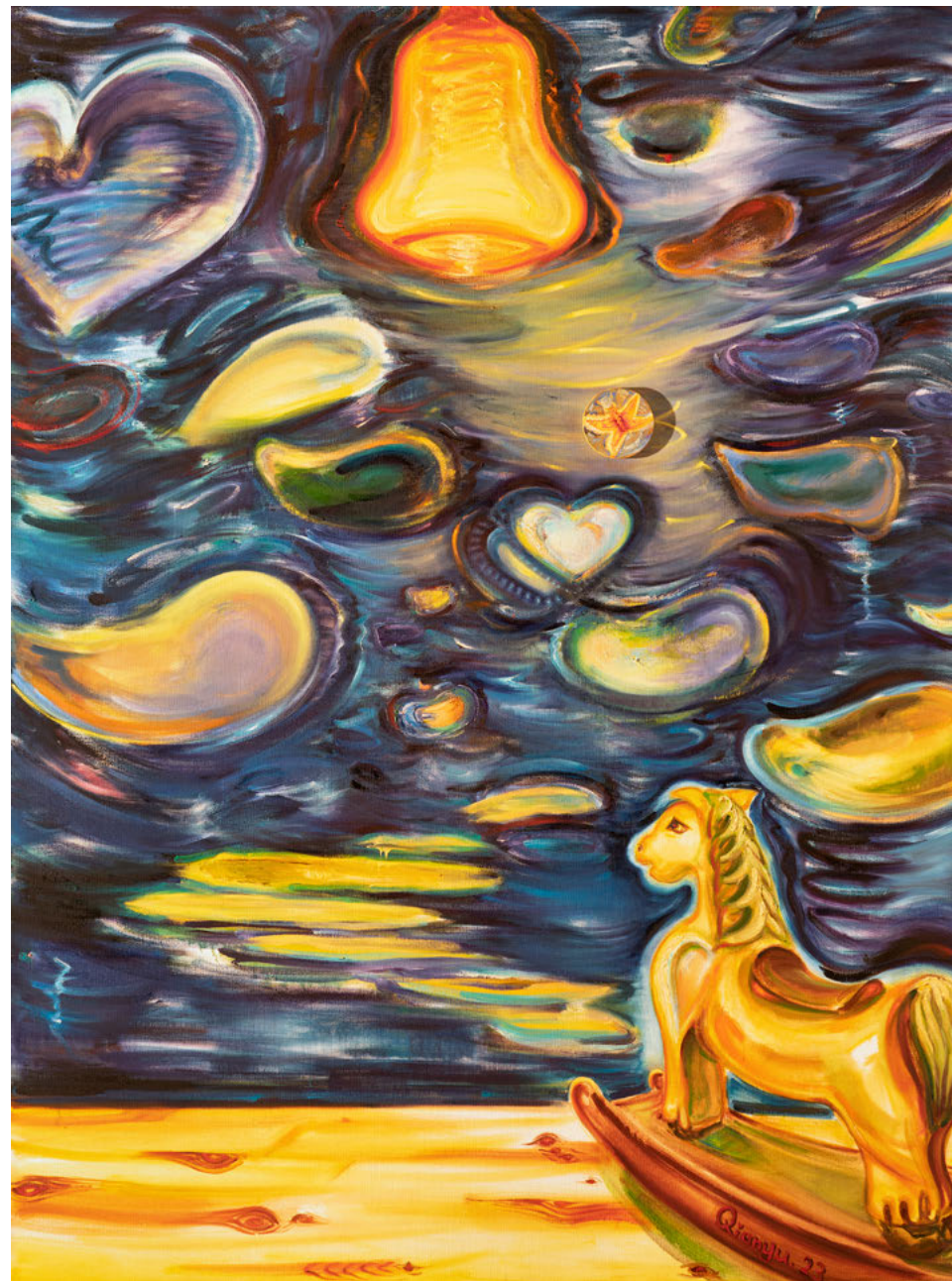
魔金石空间

Wait and See

2023

Oil on linen/Oil on panel

163 x 220cm / 10 x 10 x 1.5cm







Ed.

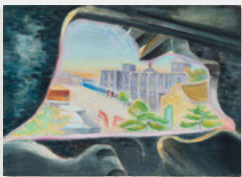
2023

Oil on two canvases

193 x 184cm / 21 x 29cm







Peek

2022

Oil and tempera on two canvases

25 x 35cm/183 x 122cm



Full Circle  
2022

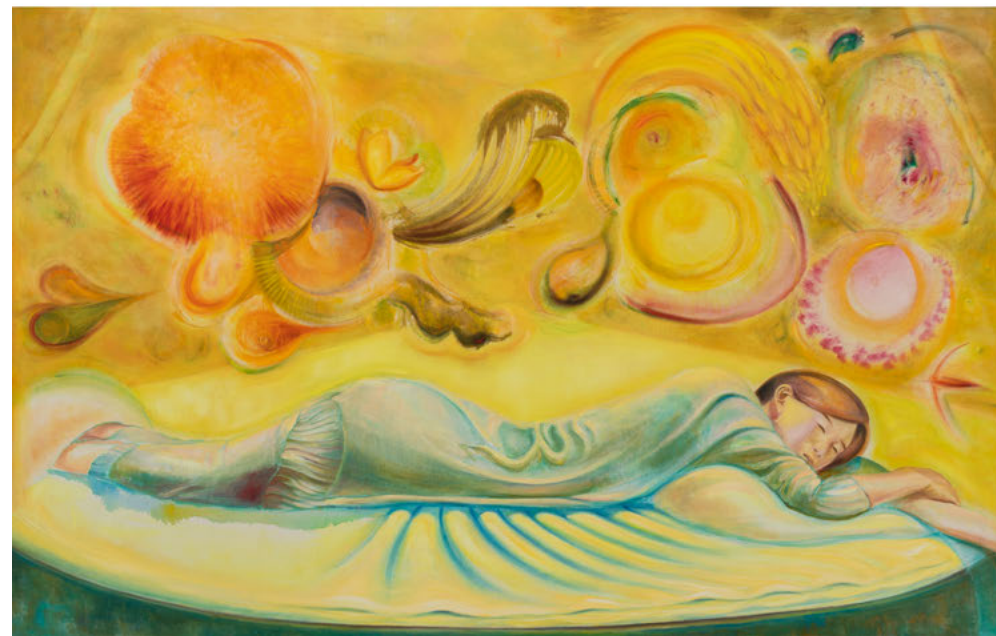
Oil on two canvas  
220 x 140cm / 183 x 138cm







Sleeping Girl Under Luffa Vines  
2022  
Oil and tempera on two canvases  
140 x 220cm / 140 x 220cm











Girl Wearing Red Boots Crossing Tower Bridge Alone

2022

Oil and tempera on canvas

920 x 127cm





Dislocation  
2022  
Oil on two canvases  
140 x 220cm / 140 x 220cm





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Daydreaming

2022

Oil on two canvases

140 x140cm / 30 x 30cm









20 x 25cm / 167 x 212cm





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Gold Squash

2022

Oil and tempera on two canvases

183 x 183cm / 40 x 30cm











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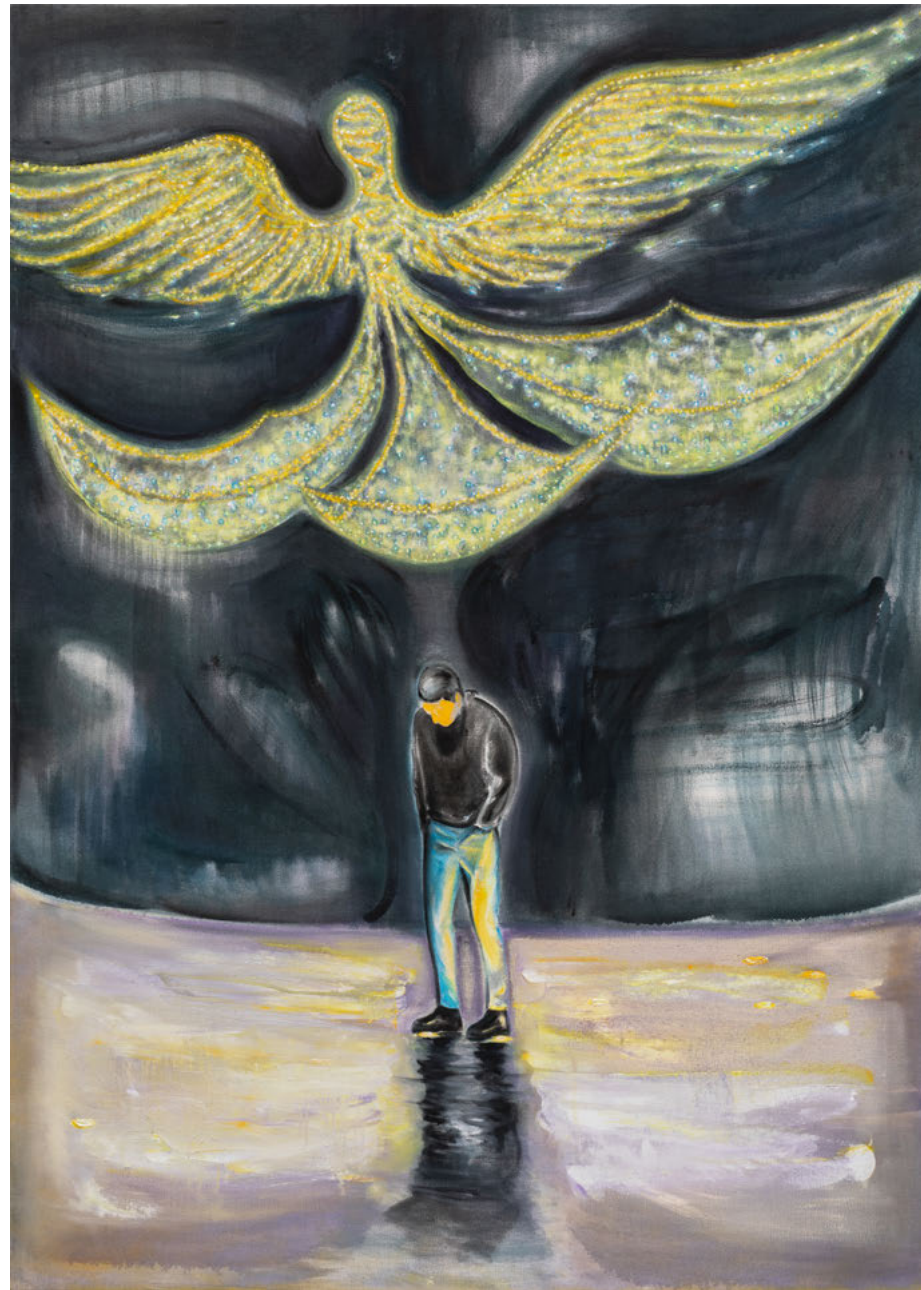
魔金石空间

Pau Under Angel Light

2022

Oil on canvas

40 x 30 cm







Anyway Door

2023

Oil and tempera on canvas

92 x 127cm







Involved with one foot (1CM)

2022

Oil on two canvases

183 x 138cm / 183 x 138cm

## Dialogue

Qianyu Li=L

Magician Space=M

**M:** The images in the picture bring a sense of familiarity, as if overlapping with some fragments of one's memory. Is the starting point of these images based on your personal experiences?

**L:** Most of the visual elements in my works come from my surroundings—the squash vines [rack] that my grandma built in her yard; the various pumpkins harvested in autumn; being photographed by a friend when I relax in a cafe; the hoop game vendor at the night market .....

But at the same time, studying abroad for the past few years has made me feel like a cultural nomad. In particular, living in New York for four years made me realize that every visual element has its own cultural context. I broke the specificity of time and space when I interweave these images from different contexts. This multi-layered painting space is closer to my understanding of the real: we do not live in a shared reality. Our understanding and perception of reality is on different layers of cloud. What I do is to present the experiences and feelings of living in different cultures.

I enjoy Sang-soo Hong's and Jia Zhangke's films. For me, the creation from personal experience is the sincerest. I only feel anchored when I paint people and things that are related to my own reality. I do not want to create as a spectator, but to be faithful to my own experiences, to provide an independent individual perspective.

**M:** Your work is based on the principle of diptych, which usually embody a whole or a possibility of mutual transformation. But you also add a sense of independence and confrontation to it, how do you deal with these two contradictory relationships?



**L:** My diptychs are two parts with physical distance, and the contents are independent. For example, in the work “Kui”, the viewer’s body perception is completely opposite. The left diptych is an open space connected to the outside, while the right diptych is looking out from a cramped space. But the content is connected: the donkey’s head is buried deeply into the darkness, almost connected to the space of the right diptych. I hope to give a viewing experience that presents both contradictory and plausible illusions. The misplaced left panel points to the inside and the interior, while the right panel points to the outside and nature. Looking closely at the content of the painting, the light sprinkles like rain of substance from the sky, the background behind the man in the right panel also seems like an illusion of light, and the concrete depiction of the stone begins to disintegrate. I want to turn the perceptual experience of the painting space upside down, with the left panel becoming the exterior view, and the right panel transforming into the man’s mental space, where independence and transformation go hand in hand.

What attracted me at first is the way to read the Chinese album pages. The blankness of the album page provides the viewer a space for independent and unrestrained imagination. The counterpart of poetry and water and ink is like a dialogue between the different touches of the two. The meaning extended by the poems provides a fictional space through specific time and space. This is very much like what I understand the painting space to be: composed of specific and accessible elements that point to a complex and multi-layered chaotic space. The diptych in the Western tradition comes from a system of empirical and logical thoughts, and the content between the diptychs is generally specific and identifiable. Both the earliest religious altar diptychs and the secular diptychs that became popular in the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries were primarily narrative or documentary in nature.

I wanted to combine the two—on the surface is image in contrast to image, but inside is correlative empirical thinking. Now I am freer with the external presentation and content of the diptych form, and the physical relationship of the diptych is more variable. It is not only a visual contrast, but also an increasing consideration of the overall experience and spatial interaction. I explore the new painting experience within the diptych form.

**M:** What is the relationship between the seen reality and the reconstructed reality in your paintings?

**L:** Such intersection derived from my question about the so-called “real.” There is a “real” reality in the picture, a space of painting that is based on something other than our perception of three-dimensional space. My creation spans a long period of time. When I left the reality of that time and that place and experienced it in another city, the experience naturally changed. I just want to reconstruct the feelings I want to express on the canvas as a reality of painting. The specific visual elements in works can have different expressions in the category of painting. What is interesting to me about painting is how to use limited and definite material pigments to express rich emotion, different ways of being, and even qi and energy. I care about how to paint “bubbles,” “vines” and “lines” and how pigments’ colors, textures and different ways of painting affect volume, weight and gravity. For me, the ideal painting space seems unreal, but I can experience rich reality in paintings.

**M:** Do you consciously guide the rhythm and viewing logic presented in the

exhibition site?

**L:** The size of the completed work is immutable, but the physical relationship between the diptychs and with the viewer can be adjusted according to the space. The size and position of the two parts of one work are part of the expression. For example, the work “chan yi jiao”(1 cm), the two parts can be interchanged, and the man and woman in the picture can be back-to-back. The work “yuan man” is almost mirror-flipped, and the Chinese character “shen (body)” hides my interest of the origin of word from image; the size difference between “tao quan you xi” and “jin gua” is relatively large. While the small frame of the former attracts the viewer, the high hanging small frame of the latter is like a projector, which intensifies the unrealistic feeling of the pile of golden squashes below. In the work “kui”, I hang the left panel of the work relatively low to give the viewer the illusion of an extended real space when looking at the painting.

I see a diptych as two art objects, considering the connection between materiality and physical space, hoping to get different interpretations and experiences in a limited combination. By changing the size of works, I want to introduce the subconscious physical perception to the viewer in the physical location and spatial relationship.



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magician.space  
info@magician-space.com  
+86 01 59789635  
D, 798 Art Zone, Beijing  
北京, 798 艺术区, D