



ELEPHANT

Philippe Weisbecker
Cristina De Middel
Ushio & Noriko Shinohara
Michael Najjar
Gert & Uwe Tobias

Artists in Space



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Sooner or Later, 2013, oil on canvas, 170 x 220cm

Xie Lei

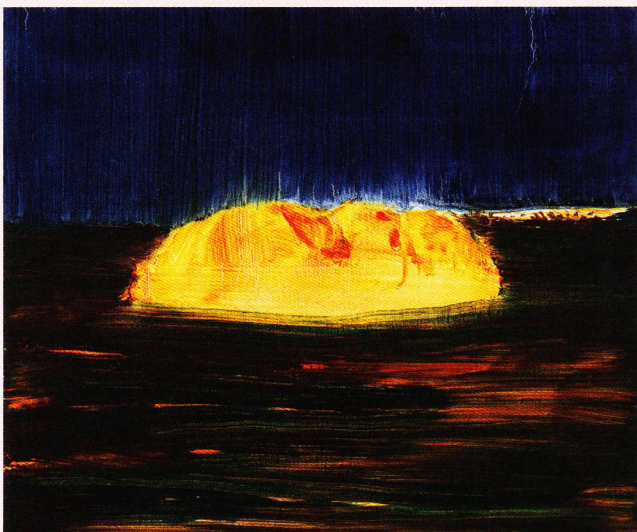
12 July–21 Sept

Château d'Ardelay, Les Herbiers, France
www.lesherbiers.fr

'Painting is an adventure and I live it as such,' Xie Lei has said. The adventure takes on a phantasmagoric, dreamlike quality in the Chinese-born, Paris-based artist's canvases, nocturnes realized in a palette dominated by shimmering purples, dark blues and blue-greens, and featuring ominously threatening walls of fire or all-engulfing waves.

'By entering into Xie Lei's dreamlike journey, we volunteer to lose our bearings, our sense of existence is transported, and we shed our skins of knowledge,' Philippe Koutouzis has commented; 'all that remains is looking and seeking, which leads to rediscovering and understanding what is beauty, and what is beautiful painting.'

Xie Lei's oneiric imagery betrays a fascination with nature and the fleeting quality of time. Henry-Claude Cousseau, the curator of this new show of Xie Lei's work to be displayed in the fifteenth-century medieval castle of Les Herbiers, has said of his style: 'It is the extension of the antique tradition of the fable that both China and the West share, a reflection of ancestral wisdom in which animals were readily substituted for men.' In these canvases, the human and animal worlds collide and coalesce. As French art historian François-René Martin says: 'Xie Lei's paintings explore uncharted territories. Sites that do not really resemble what usually defines a landscape. Heads that do not reveal individual traits; masked faces. Animals, grouped together, gathered for mysterious ceremonies... Scenes that immediately bring to mind easily identifiable subject matters but that they then instantaneously subvert... Mystifying timeframes – at times hinting at confined spaces, dark thickets, or nocturnal scenes. Or perhaps even more, at dreams or visions that conjure up the cover of night, and the bedazzlement of scenes suddenly remembered.'



Floater, 2013, oil on canvas, 116 x 55cm