

César Piette

Render

Nov 6, 2024 — Feb 16, 2025 | Shanghai chi K11, China

Shanghai chi K11 art museum is pleased to present French artist César Piette's first solo museum exhibition in China, titled *Render*, featuring more than twenty newly created paintings and sculptures. This project is part of the *Shanghai Art Week, France is In!* program organized by the French Embassy in China, in partnership with the Institut Français (Paris), to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of France-China diplomatic relations and the Franco-Chinese Year of Cultural Tourism.

The term “photorealism” was coined by American art dealer Louis Meisel in 1968. Originally it referred to the art of making a painting from a photo and the resulting painting looked exactly like a photograph. Decades later and with the rise of virtual reality, 3D software - like an image-making machine - nowadays can vividly recreate realistic scenes. Moreover, rendering technology of the software makes it possible for precise adjustments to shadows, highlights, colors and perspectives which are difficult to achieve through traditional photography. Artist César Piette creates images through computer rendering and then either transfer them by hand removing any painting marks or prints them onto canvas, attempting to explore the subtle lines between photographs, digital production and painting by hand, and guiding viewers to unfold real vision through “representation” as a way of viewing. As a result, the illusions experienced by viewers while looking at his work subvert their visual experience.

According to Martin Heidegger, man's notion is the measure of all things, which considers the world as image to comprehend. César wants the subject matters of his work to be rooted in the times they live in, abandoning the notion of portrayal of subject matters as purpose. Instead, he resorts to traditional genres such as portrait, landscape and still life inspired from painting history as it allows him to focus more on the process of creation. This idea is particularly evident in the five new pieces in this exhibition, including *Pierrot in Late Afternoon*. The artist has never ceased his practice of painting and managed to find ways to integrate digital printing and painting techniques, simulating the subtle interplay between painting and the digital. However, if we take a closer look into his work, we'd realize the flaws directed by the artist. As they permeate the illusionary images that seem to have been generated by AI, it pushes viewers to explore what's behind the material world.

“Rendering” in the field of computer graphic refers to the process of generating an image by means of a computer program; and in the field of painting in traditional sense, it refers to applying colors to enhance the shading effect of image. Leonardo Da Vinci suggested to use a mirror when painting, which has influenced western art for over 2,000 years, believing that it was not just tool for reflecting images but also instrument for deepening our comprehension of the world around us. Techniques adopted along the painting process are also for this purpose. So is rendering. César's painting approach sits somewhere between hyper-realist and hyper-artificial, creating a parallel world beyond realism. While capturing the essence of the digital aesthetics and its seductive power within these sleek, frictionless candy-colored cute animals and human figures evoking digital apps, softwares, digital avatars or emoticons, viewers perceive not only the tension between man-made objects and reality but also the artist's reinvention of the tradition of figurative art and his statement on the times:

In the end, I'd like to resort to ChatGPT to "render" a conclusion: Through this exhibition, we hope that the audience can not only appreciate César's exquisite craftsmanship but also discover reflections on the future of humanity within his unique artistic language. This is a dialogue with oneself and the world, encouraging us to deeply contemplate the era we live in while enjoying beauty.

— Cynthia Jiang, curator