

For Immediate Release

Art Basel Paris 2025

24 – 26 October 2025

Booth: 1.M28 | Emergence Sector

Venue: Grand Palais, Paris, France

Blindspot Gallery is pleased to present for its first-time participation in Art Basel Paris 2025 (**Booth 1.M28**) the solo exhibition of Chinese papercut artist **Xiyadie** in the fair's Emergence Sector. The booth features his newest large-scale papercuts and a group of never-before-seen works, many of which were made in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Xiyadie grew up learning the traditional folk craft of Chinese papercutting from his mother and elderly women in his village, using the ancient art form to narrate his journey coming out of rural China as a homosexual person. His works are part memoir part fantasy, every sheet a vignette that tells the story of homosexual relationships. In 2010, Xiyadie had his first solo exhibition in Beijing's now-defunct LGBT Center, introducing his works to the art public. Nonetheless, he continued to stand within the fringes of the art circle, making a living as a migrant worker in Beijing. It was not until 2018 that his works were exhibited for the first time in a commercial gallery, marking the gradual recognition of him as an artist. Xiyadie had his first institutional solo exhibition in New York at The Drawing Center in 2023, and in 2024, he was invited to participate in the Main Exhibition of the 60th Venice Biennale, further propelling him onto the international art stage. "In spite of recent attention, because he is self-taught and his papercuts were produced outside mechanisms of the contemporary art world, his work (had) not been adequately contextualized in the contemporary art discourse," remarked Rosario Güiraldes, co-curator of his Drawing Center solo.



Xiyadie had never received formal art academy training. His visual sensibility partly stems from his grandfather's garden during his formative years, where he found himself surrounded by flowers and butterflies. After attending a middle school, he went to work in the fields, harvesting apples, wheat, sweet potatoes and corn. Despite recognition as an artist, he still refers to himself as a farmer, a man of the yellow earth. His sense of belonging remains tied to the yellow soil land, this yearning permeating his creations.

Xiyadie's newest works continue to use traditional Chinese symbols to mirror his life experiences and internal musings, projecting his desires and turmoils, possessing a diaristic quality. In his autobiographical work **Torn** (2025), Xiyadie expresses his conflicted sentiments, torn between the desire to attain sanctity and become a monk, and his inability to let go of worldly passions, as expressed through the fire that blazes beneath him. His head oscillates between the statue

of Buddha sitting on the mountaintop, and his lover by his side, metamorphosed as a butterfly. Dual-facing figures are a common feature in Xiyadie's works, disrupting traditional visual storytelling in Chinese papercutting, by using multiple views to illustrate a character's movement through space and time. The pagoda perched on the mountaintop depicts the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda¹ in Shaanxi Province; it becomes an emblem for Xiyadie's pursuit of Buddhism while embodying memories from his youth. When the artist was working in Xi'an, Chunxiao Garden near the pagoda was a public cruising ground he frequented.

To avoid public gaze in broad daylight, gay couples would meet in the park in the dark of night. Xiyadie's **Rendezvous at the Pavilion** (2025) portrays a pair of lovers uniting beneath the moonlight in the pavilion, looking tenderly into each other's eyes as their fingers intertwine, as if they are playing the game of cat's cradle², or clipping each other's nails. "When you love someone, it seems that no matter how many pairs of hands you have, you cannot get enough of one another," remarks the artist. The work derives its title from the Shaanxi Qinqiang opera of the same name (《花亭相會》), which is set in Song Dynasty, telling the story of two lovers who were separated due to persecution by those in authority,

¹ The Giant Wild Goose Pagoda houses the Buddhist scriptures brought back to Xi'an via the Silk Road by the Tang dynasty pilgrim Xuanzang. His story serves as the inspiration for the iconic Chinese folklore *Journey to the West*.

² Cat's cradle is a string game involving two people using their fingers to stretch, hook, lift, and flip the string in order to create various complex patterns.

before reuniting in the flower pavilion after a long separation. In Xiyadie's restaging of the opera, the pavilion is reimagined as a secret meeting place for gay lovers, where they can freely express their unspoken affections.

Besides pavilions, gates, walls, caves and other architectural elements reappear in his works. Xiyadie often juxtaposes man-made structures with nature in his papercuts, forming a world where one can escape from reality and unleash inner desires. In his piece **Backyard** (2025), two lovers hold a multi-colored umbrella, emerging from a moon gate and strolling leisurely through the garden under the sun. The scene captures a romance previously kept in secrecy unfolding in broad daylight. The couple is surrounded by lush dancing stems bursting with peonies, where animals frolic around them, all bearing witness to their relationship. The papercut unravels the artist's utopian vision, in which love flourishes in the open.

Farming (2025) is an imagination of a historical pastoral scene, where a cattle leads the plow and two naked men sow seeds behind it. A towering tree provides shade, its tendrils overflowing with peonies, pomegranates and falling wheat. Peonies symbolize prosperity, while pomegranates are emblematic of fertility, with wheat signifying the abundance of harvest. Here, Xiyadie returns to his roots as a farmer, expressing a heartfelt desire to reconnect with nature, embracing the primordial conditions of life, rooted in simplicity and freedom.

"Papercutting brings me to a place of beauty, embodying my ideals and dreams—where there is no pain nor discrimination. In these imageries, flowers burst forth and birds serenade the air with their melodies," Xiyadie often remarks. Under his scissors, all living beings are conceived on the same sheet of paper, coexisting and interconnected. He uses a farmer's perspective to illustrate a utopian vision which resonates with the Confucianist, Daoist, and Buddhist notions of "uniting heaven and humanity" (天人合一), calling for the respect for nature and staying true to one's essence, thereby achieving inner peace and harmony among all sentient beings.



Images:

[1] Xiyadie, *Torn*, 2025, Papercut with water based dye and Chinese pigments on Xuan paper, wooden frame, 157 x 157 x 5 cm (framed size)

[2] Xiyadie, *Rendezvous at the Pavilion*, 2025, Papercut with water based dye and Chinese pigments on Xuan paper, wooden frame, 157 x 157 x 5 cm (framed size)

[3] Xiyadie, *Backyard*, 2025, Papercut with water based dye and Chinese pigments on Xuan paper, wooden frame, 157 x 157 x 5 cm (framed size)

(Images courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery)

About Xiyadie

Xiyadie (b. 1963, Weinan, Shaanxi Province, China) is a self-taught traditional Chinese papercut artist whose works narrate his journey of transformation and homoerotic fantasies. Xiyadie means Siberian Butterfly, a name he chose after his move to Beijing as a migrant worker in 2005, where he found an accepting community in the burgeoning gay subcultural scene. As he relates, the Siberian Butterfly is a northern creature. Surviving in the harshest conditions, it maintains its vanity and pursuit of freedom in an environment that does not lend political agency or representation to queer-identifying people. Xiyadie presented his works in the Main Exhibition of the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, entitled "Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere". His solo exhibitions were shown at Blindspot Gallery (Hong Kong, 2024), The Drawing Center (New York, 2023), Flazh!Alley Art Studio (Los Angeles, 2012), and Beijing LGBT Center (2010), among others. Xiyadie's works have also been shown in group exhibitions at Museu de Arte de São Paulo (2024), Para Site (Hong Kong, 2024&2017), Macalline Center of Art (Beijing, 2024), ICA NYU Shanghai (2023), Kunsthal Gent (2023), Tai Kwun Contemporary (Hong Kong, 2022), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, 2022), Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art (Warsaw, 2020), Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (2019), Taipei MOCA (2019), and Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Stockholm, 2012), among others. Xiyadie has also participated in the 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (Ljubljana, 2019) and the 12th Gwangju Biennale (Gwangju, 2018). His work is in the collection of KADIST (France & USA), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (USA), Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Sweden), Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Brazil), Spencer Museum of Art in the University of Kansas (USA), Sunpride Foundation (Hong Kong), and Tate Modern (UK), among others. Xiyadie currently lives and works in Shaanxi province, China.

About Blindspot Gallery

Set up in 2010, Blindspot Gallery is a contemporary art gallery based in Hong Kong. The gallery features diverse contemporary art practices, by emerging, established, and diasporic artists mainly from Asia and beyond. The gallery is committed to connecting its represented artists with an international platform and fostering global dialogues in the art community through its exhibition program and institutional collaborations.

Interviews with the artist are welcome. For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Helena Halim at +852 2517 6238 or helena@blindspotgallery.com.