

In the Eyes of a Lover, We Are Always Beautiful
Wenjie Ding

In the Eyes of a Lover, We Are Always Beautiful is curated by Tommaso Speretta, with exhibition design by Giovanni de Francesco and graphic design by Edoardo Ferrari.

Concurrently with the exhibition, a first drop of caps and tees by Jouissance—a project by Tommaso Speretta and Edoardo Ferrari—is also presented.

For more info, DM @jouissance_enterprise.

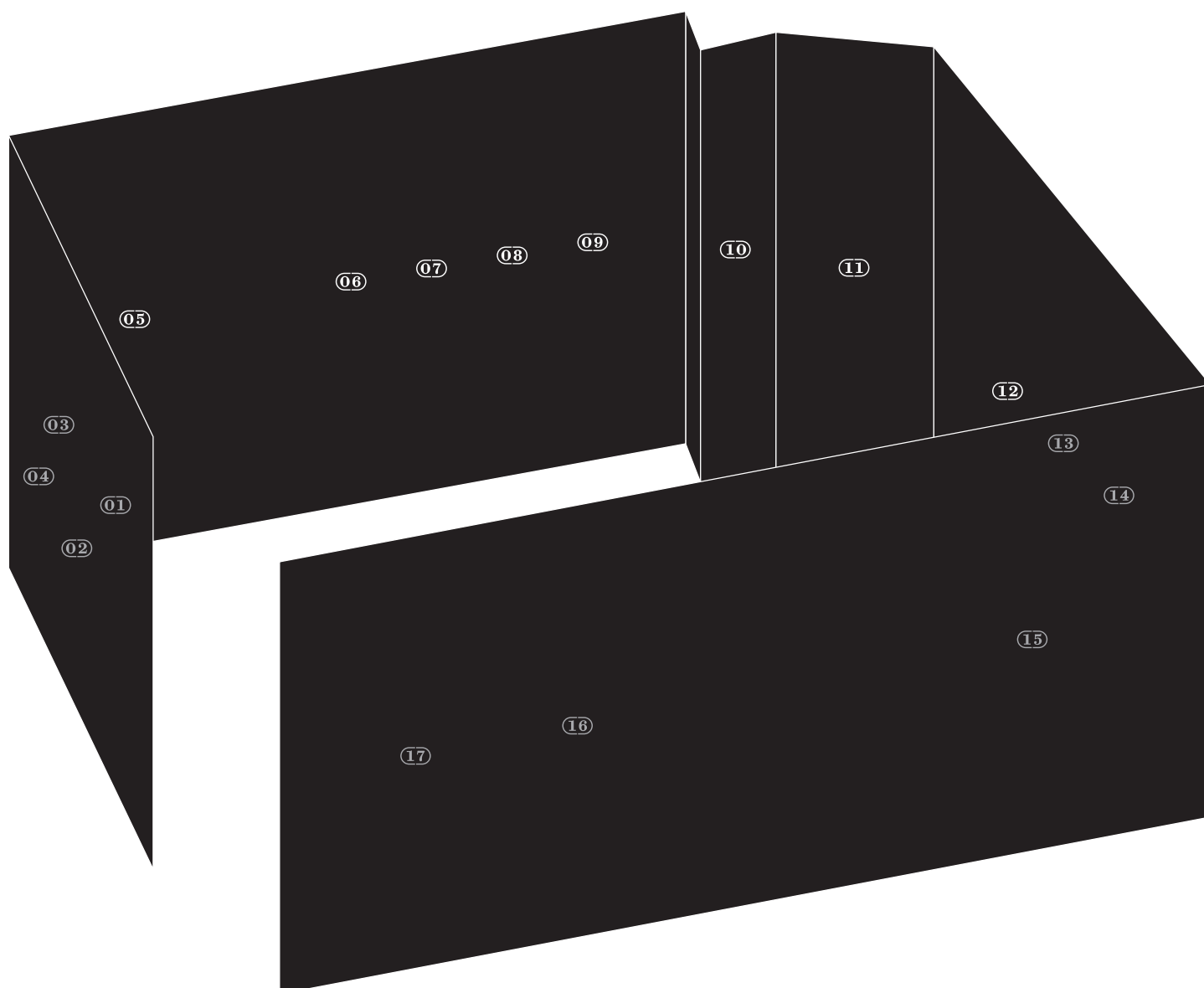
The exhibition is open by appointment only.

Camera Doppia, Milan

September 5th — October 10th, 2024

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- ① Portrait of Tony, 2017
- ② Passion at the seaside, 2024
- ③ Electric massage, 2024
- ④ Mountains and flowing water, 2024

- ⑤ Three pieces of joy, 2019
- ⑥ Untitled, 2019
- ⑦ Tony amusing himself, 2017
- ⑧ Portrait of a man, 2016
- ⑨ Loneliness is unbearable, 2024

- ⑩ Love in the water, 2018
- ⑪ Male head, 2016
- ⑫ Untitled, 2016
- ⑬ Love in the water, 2015
- ⑭ Seeking Love, 2016
- ⑮ Two brothers, 2018

- ⑯ Tony in a bottle, 2018
- ⑰ Portrait of a man, 2017

Wenjie Ding's first solo exhibition in Italy, *In the Eyes of a Lover, We Are Always Beautiful*, presents a collection of 17 drawings spanning from 2015 to 2024. These works immerse the viewer in a world where humor intertwines with tender, at times dreamlike homoeroticism, creating a vivid dialogue between fantasy and the rural realities of China, where the artist resides and draws inspiration for his models. Despite depicting scenes that might be perceived as pornographic, Ding's drawings transcend mere eroticism, instead portraying moments of connection, brotherhood, and complicity.

Ding's portrayals of hyper-masculinized male figures bridge the gap between the tradition of Chinese erotic drawings and a distinctly Westernized, Tom of Finland-esque aesthetic. In a post-colonial context, his drawings subtly address the Western gaze that has historically exoticized and objectified Asian bodies. His muscled and sensuous models—countryside men transformed into objects of desire—embody a cross-cultural exchange that redefines the gaze on male (gay) sexuality.

The artist's depiction of male sexuality is both joyous and unapologetically candid, inviting viewers to confront their own desires. His drawings are characterized by a playful yet tender exploration of gay porn iconography—reminiscent of bikers, cowboys, after-gym sweat, and other archetypal figures—rendered with affectionate self-awareness. These figures, often celebrated for their virility, are recontextualized in Ding's work not as symbols of Western-centric tropes, but as conduits for a broader, more inclusive narrative of masculinity, intimacy, and love. The relationships between the men in his works are left ambiguous—whether they are couples, fleeting encounters, or scenes of cruising remains unclear, adding an extra layer of celebration for the representation of sexuality, pornography, and sex positivity.

The exhibition also features a selection of portraits depicting young men in contemplative poses, revealing the vulnerability that often lies beneath the surface of Ding's more overtly erotic works. These portraits offer a counterbalance to the bold scenes of gay erotica, highlighting the emotional depth and complexity of his subjects.

Wenjie Ding's work is a celebration of male sexuality, love, and brotherhood, framed through the lens of a Chinese artist navigating the intersection of tradition and modernity, East and West. His drawings reveal beauty in the unguarded moments of desire, capturing the humor, humanity, and intimacy inherent in eroticism and casual sexual encounters between men—encounters that, while casual, are deeply intimate and emotional, reflecting a connection built on unspoken and undeclared feelings shared through the commonalities of our queer subjectivities.

Wenjie Ding (b. 1967, Shanghai, China) currently lives and works in Dali, in the Yunnan province of China. Prior to focusing on painting, Ding worked in the fashion design industry in Beijing.

