



Fluffing the foliage

An exhibition of paintings by Xingzi Gu

CLEARING New York

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CLEARING is pleased to present *Fluffing the foliage*, an exhibition of five new paintings by Xingzi Gu.

Working with diluted acrylic and oil-based pigment, Gu captures fleeting moments of intimacy — such as a pair of youths enjoying a nap in a polka-dotted hammock in *Light sleeper* (all works 2025), or the blurry figure of two uniformed girls cutting across *Pinwheel* on a berry-colored bicycle.

Fluffing the foliage takes inspiration from a range of references — including screenshots from coming-of-age films, 1000-year old paintings of animals by the Northern Song dynasty-era artist Yuanyi Yi, portraits by the Americans Florine Stettheimer and Elizabeth Peyton, and a 1926 work by the Tokyo-born artist Tsuguharu Foujita, who emigrated to Paris and interpreted traditional Japanese figuration using techniques typically associated with canonical European styles of painting.

Adopting a more fluid approach than Foujita, Gu tempers their intense pastel and jewel-toned palette with a strong sense of realism and perspective. In *Dropping needle* (all works 2025), for example, a young man feeds a large amount of fabric through a sewing machine while another observes. There is a similar tension in *Lend me a light*, where a man and a woman hold the tips of their cigarettes together in the light of an ignited match — a common motif in Gu's oeuvre, somewhere between a handshake and a kiss.

Exceptionally, the young women in *Untitled (moon and cherry)* — who are wearing matching going-out jackets over their vibrant clubwear and heels, and gaze out from the canvas as if posing for an imaginary camera, or the real-life viewer, or for Gu — are the only subjects depicted engaging beyond their immediate surroundings.

The innocent phrase — “fluffing the foliage” — refers to an exaggerated experience of the quotidian here and now.