

XIYADIE 西亚蝶

b. 1963 Heyang County, Shaanxi Province, China

Xiyadie is a self-taught traditional Chinese papercut artist who started creating works with homoerotic themes to tell his narrative of transformation. Xiyadie means Siberian Butterfly, a name he chose after his move to Beijing as a migrant worker in the early 2000s, 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.

In the late 1980s, his native Shaanxi Province was a centre for the preservation of folk arts including papercutting, which originates in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE). Xiyadie subverts this historical form by depicting scenes of queer eroticism, where human beings are fused with nature and gay virility combines with the fertility of gardens and animal life. Due to the thinness of Chinese rice paper traditionally used for this craft, each work is made in editions, though the artist also works with materials like newspaper and silk, intricately cut and dyed by hand.

Xiyadie was educated at the Special Arts and Crafts School in Heyang County, and worked in the crafts department of the Xi'an Film Studio. His works were first exhibited at the Beijing LGBT Center. He was a participating artist in Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now (2017) at Taipei MOCA, marking the largest exhibition of its kind in Asia. His works have also been shown at Para Site, Hong Kong (2017); Galerie Verbeeck – Van Dyck, Antwerp (2015); Topenmuseum, Amsterdam (2015); Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg (2013); Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm (2012); and Flazh!Alley Art Studio, San Pedro, USA (2012). Xiyadie has been profiled by Hyperallergic, BBC News, Los Angeles Times, Global Times, Shaanxi TV, Dragon TV, CCTV, et alors? and Advocate. He is a member of the China Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art, as well as the Shaanxi Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art.

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EXHIBITIONS

- “Crack Up – Crack Down”, The 33rd Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, Tivoli Mansion, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2019
“Cut Sleeve, Split Peach”, NOME, Berlin, 2018
“Imagined Borders”, The 12th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea, 2018
“Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now”, Taipei MOCA, 2017
“In Search of Miss Ruthless”, Para Site, Hong Kong, 2017
“Antwerp Queer Arts Festival”Galerie Verbeeck – Van Dyck, Antwerp, 2015
“Secret Love”, Topenmuseum, Amsterdam, 2015 / Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, 2013 / Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, 2012
“Metamorphosis of a Butterfly: A Kaleidoscope Vision of Life by a Gay Chinese Artist”, Flazh! Alley Art Studio, San Pedro, US, 2012
- Shaanxi Folk Art Excellent Works, 2004

SELECTED PRESS

- “Xiyadie Escapes Traditional Chinese Society with Paper-Cuts” Berlin Art Link, 18 June 2018.
- “The gay Chinese farmer and his cutting edge art”, *BBC News*, 2017
“Gay Life Portrayed in Traditional Chinese Paper-cuts”, *Hyperallergic*, 2012.
- “Artist Spotlight Xiyadie”, *Advocate*, 2012.
“Cultural Exchange: Xiyadie depicts homosexual love in Chinese paper-cuts”, *LA Times*, 2012.
- Artist profile, *et alors?*, 2012.
“Secret Love: Sexual Diversity in China”, Canan Marasligil Blog, 2015.
“Xiyadie”, Varldskultur Museerna, 2015.

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