

For Immediate Release

## ORA-ORA AT ART BASEL HONG KONG 2022: WHERE THE HEART IS



Stephen Thorpe, *Imagination and Reverie*, 2022

Oil on canvas

180 x 158 cm

Courtesy of artist and Ora-Ora

**HONG KONG – May 11, 2022** Ora-Ora is pleased to announce an exciting line-up of artists for its forthcoming presence at Art Basel Hong Kong 2022 (**Booth 1D33**). The chosen artists are **Huang Dan, Peng Jian, Juri Markkula, Mai Miyake, Stephen Thorpe and Xiao Xu**. Art Basel Hong Kong will run from May 27-29, 2022 at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Titled ***Where the Heart Is***, Ora-Ora investigates the passions, yearnings and delusions which keep us creatively nourished. What are the heartening lies we tell ourselves, the unrequited hopes we cherish and the fervent promises we make to others? For many, our deepest craving is for the refuge of home, a utopia of understanding, security and warmth. For some, home is a place of family, for others it is a nostalgic call to a half-remembered sanctuary we carry in our hearts. Perhaps, the construct of home is where reality meets fiction, a tangle of joy and self-deception. There's no harm in fantasy and new, self-constructed realities. In the times we have all recently lived through, our illusions, daydreams and fictions helped carry us through. All of us became artists of the subconscious.

Partly inspired by a quotation from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1790 play "Torquato Tasso": "So klammert sich der Schiffer endlich noch, Am Felsen fest..." ("Finally the sailor may cling to the rock"), the show calls to mind how communities and families may reconcile and cling together in adversity, and how their desires and hopes hurtle forward in unison. These communal daydreams are often unspoken and little understood; but they exist. Rejecting prevailing premonitions of increased societal estrangement and alienation, ***Where the Heart Is*** nurtures connections and shared aspirations, seeking optimism, salvation and the embrace of a common ground.

Beijing-based **Huang Dan** introduces a new collection which simultaneously radiates the glimmering pathos of affection, family and life, whilst continuing on a path towards her humane form of emptiness and abstraction. Abdicating any claim on narratives of motivation, action and reaction, she allows animal forms simply to be and to feel. This existence presented in a gilded, yet simple outline is a sung hymn to the treasured and brilliantly precious nature of endangered, precarious lives. With auric echoes of iconography, she encourages searching observation as a first step to tolerance, appreciation and love.

Hangzhou-based **Peng Jian** channels the mischievous rigidity of his classically-inspired angular *jiehua* (boundary painting) forms into new directions, presenting works which display the flexibility that only mastery of technique can bring. Following the success of his first NFT artworks in 2021, he has been exploring new avenues of technique, underlining how “different materials present different results.” In so doing, the China Academy of Art-trained artist navigates tram-lined fantasy and regulated spontaneity, offering a version of freedom which simultaneously respects and abandons rules. His artworks incorporate a life which is partly in the here and now, and partly of yesterday.

At Art Basel Hong Kong 2022, Ora-Ora is thrilled to present **Juri Markkula’s** brand new series titled **Heaven**. Markkula creates each unique piece at his studio in Gotland, Sweden. Each of these new works in green, blue, pink and gold defies colour categorization, except to say that each is the fruit of a pursuit of complementary colour, illuminated and guided by experience and instinct. In Swedish, Heaven refers to the celestial – therefore both an eternal afterlife, and the atmosphere and skies above us. This series therefore incarnates a physical and a spiritual realm.



**Mai Miyake, See You Later, Alligator After A While, Crocodile, 2022**  
Mixed media, felt, silk fabric

128.5 x 41.5 cm

Image courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist

Kyoto-based Japanese interdisciplinary artist **Mai Miyake** will present a series of ink artworks which continue her exploration of fragility and her acceptance of the natural changing and evolution of objects. As a child, she lived in Australia, and the influence of this continent will be felt in her contribution, which is redolent of nostalgia and an international outlook of fellowship and community. Miyake rejoices in surprise, versatility and variety. Insisting that art is defined above all by quality, she resists an easy pursuit of the aesthetic. In the words of William Shakespeare's Macbeth: "Fair is foul, Foul is fair." In addition, we are delighted to announce that **Mai Miyake** has been selected by Art Basel, in partnership with Nowness, to discuss the importance of the artist's studio in a film titled "**Inner Worlds.**"

US-based British artist **Stephen Thorpe** investigates the nexus of metaphysical and tangible life. Atop the boundary of east and west, of psychology and physicality, of the 1980s and the present, he draws the viewer towards meeting places, corners and boundaries which elicit ineluctable choices. At Art Basel Hong Kong 2022, he draws inspiration from the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, specifically Bachelard's publication "On Poetic Imagination and Reverie" from 1971. "Reverie," according to Bachelard, "reconciles the world and the subject, the present and the past, solitude and communication."

**Xiao Xu**, based in Beijing, is inspired by the forced change of circumstances and personal activity as a result of the global pandemic. He investigates home and our immediate surroundings. At a time of physical inactivity, the psychological journey becomes of greater importance. Home turns into a philosophical as well as a material construct, and his depictions involve the amorphous and intangible as much as the real. Blowing bubbles is an activity the artist witnesses in the park, as parents interact with their children. Bubbles appear to alter our perspective, not quite

material and not quite invisible. Similarly, vortices in the artist's work add to a sense of the enormous and varied forces in society, particularly at a time of asymmetric flows of information, or distortions in our world view.

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#### About Ora-Ora

Ora-Ora began in Hong Kong in 2006 and quickly established itself as a force and catalyst for innovation and openness of expression. Academically rigorous and philosophically-minded, our artists embody a fresh spirit of curiosity and enquiry. By interpreting and re-evaluating established frameworks of thought, they pursue unforeseen perspectives on the world around us. Ora-Ora believes in the power of eschewing boundaries and limitations, and combines an esteem for ancient traditions with a passion for the most contemporary and ground-breaking artistic media. Long recognized for our successful development of Asian creative talent, we have grown to represent artists from Asia, Europe and the US. Restlessly broadening our horizons, we continue to develop alliances and partnerships with institutions worldwide to enable discovery of our artists in new environments.

Dr. Henrietta Tsui-Leung, co-founder of Ora-Ora, is also co-founder of the Hong Kong Art Gallery Association, which has played a lead role in nurturing the diverse and thriving art ecosystem in the city.

#### About Huang Dan

Huang Dan was born in Guanxi, China, in 1979. She graduated with a BA from the Department of Traditional Chinese Painting at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2001. In 2004, she was awarded an MA from the same institution. She lives and works in Beijing.

Huang Dan is spurred on by an impressionist instinct of stripping away extraneity, reducing colours, moods and forms to focus on the essentials. She asserts her bold yet harmonious vision of the past, presenting forward movement from her inspirations rather than a radical schism. Significant and recurring motifs within her works include young children, horses and acrobats – all take part in a journey “from much, to half, to less... to none.” Her new series in gold at Art Basel Hong Kong 2022 demonstrates her ability to take her work into new directions while still on a trajectory towards simplicity. Recent exhibitions have included “Inspirations” (2018) and “Lagom” (2020) at Ora-Ora, Taipei Dangdai (2019) and several exhibitions with Ora-Ora at Art Basel Hong Kong.

#### About Peng Jian

Peng Jian was born in Yueyang, Hunan Province in 1982. He graduated with an MFA from the China Academy of Art at Hangzhou in 2013, where he continues to reside.

Peng Jian harnesses the classical Chinese architectural style of *jiehua* to form grids and interlocking blocks of colour and shape. A shift has emerged in recent years, where the angularity of Rubik's cubes and books has yielded ground to voluptuous objects including glass bottles, cogs, wheels and balls. Interested in glass blowing since 2006, Peng Jian observes the crossroads between western and eastern perspectives: “the bottle in the painting, although it is not a classic form, embodies the pureness and simplicity of contemporary art, while incorporating the refined atmosphere of traditional Chinese Song painting.” Peng Jian is an artist who both recognizes debts to the past, and the impetus of innovation and metamorphosis that the present brings. With that ethos in mind, he created his first NFT series, which was presented at Art Basel Hong Kong 2021. He is now diversifying his practice to canvas, expanding his Harmony series into this medium. This marks the beginning of a new chapter in his journey, one where “different materials present different results.” In his own words, “Whether it be ink on paper or animation, the expression is paramount. I'm always willing to try more ways to express my ideas.”

Peng Jian's works are collected by the Today Art Museum and the Liu Haisu Art Museum among other institutions. Recent solo shows include “Hard Edge” (2020), “Harmony” (2019) at Ora-Ora, and “Ten Miles Away” (2017) at Hong

Kong's Liang Yi Museum. He regularly forms part of Ora-Ora's Art Basel Hong Kong exhibitions, including from 2016 to 2019 and in 2021.

### **About Mai Miyake**

Mai Miyake graduated from École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (Paris, France) and was appointed Professor of Art & Design at Kyoto University in 2017. She currently lives and works in Kyoto.

Mai Miyake's practice fuses traditional media with emergent technologies (including artificial intelligence), asserting the perspective that they are all objects made by the hands of man and are thus on the same plane. Her work creates feelings of nostalgia and pathos, which not infrequently give way to touches of humour, mischief and subtle disorientation. She has shown herself to be exceptionally versatile and fluid in her creative expression, able to harness elemental, man-made and technological forms to apply the most subtle and flexible meanings to her work. This chameleon-like flexibility of approach brings antiques, craftwork, contemporary art, design, product making, and literature into her sway.

Mai Miyake is a writer, artist and educator. Her fourth book, entitled "Everybody's Girl is Nobody's Girl" was published in 2017. Awards include the Terrada Art Award in 2015, and the Bulgari Aurora Award of 2016. Her works are in the collection of BEAM Japan, the Pola Museum of Art in Kanagawa, Japan, the Luciano Benetton Collection and the Umi-Mori Art Museum in Hiroshima, Japan. Recent exhibitions include Ora-Ora's "Unlimited" exhibition at Art Basel Hong Kong (2021), "Christmas Smile" at the Pola Museum Annexe in Tokyo (2020), Mai Miyake x Kasetsu Exhibition: "The Shapes of Words, The Words of Shapes" at Kanagawa Kemnин Hall Gallery (2020) and "The Salt of the Earth" at Shibuya Kuroda Touen in Tokyo (2018). She also took part in the Osaka Kansai International Art Festival 2022.

### **About Juri Markkula**

Juri Markkula was born in 1970 in Turku, Finland. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Arts in Stockholm in 2002, and now lives on the island of Gotland, Sweden.

In his signature RGB works, Markkula navigates the trilemma of industrial, artistic and digital, applying a 360-degree high-resolution scanning process and a custom-built digital sculpting system to celebrate the brittle beauty of the ground in rural Sweden. He creates an amplified representation of nature, with the *disjecta membra* of trees synthetically emboldened and digitally maximized. In so doing, he heightens and augments colour to create a deepened, altered reality which simultaneously attests to the power of nature and of abstraction. His *Interference* series both mirrors and exceeds reality, forming contrasts and alliances of tone and shade which react with guided spontaneity to the co-existing forces of light, mood and perception. This realism is a matter of oscillation and vicissitude. Like a diamond, *Interference* offers carats and facets – surfaces which rise to meet reality separately and with intensity. Major projects include the vast tiled glass plane at the entrance to Stockholm City Station, entitled "La Divina Commedia," and the transformation of the Knivsta Centrum för Idrott och Kultur ("CIK"), known in English as the Knivsta Centre for Sports and Culture, in Knivsta, Sweden in 2019. His exhibitions with Ora-Ora include "Interaction" in 2020, a solo presentation at Taipei Dangdai (also 2020) and several showings at Art Basel Hong Kong. Other exhibitions include "Best of Forsblom" at Galerie Forsblom, Stockholm (2020) and "Ekfras" at Bror Hjorths Hus, Uppsala, Sweden (2019).

### **About Stephen Thorpe**

Stephen Thorpe was born in Margate, England in 1981. He graduated with an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in London and is currently a Professor of Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). He is based in Atlanta, GA.

Stephen Thorpe is known for his colourful, interior-based paintings, which often include everyday objects from the 1980s or 1990s. The works are a visual manifestation of an ongoing and in-depth self-analysis of the personal and collective unconscious mind – what Carl Jung termed "individuation." In basic terms, the rooms are the mind. Thorpe's work presents a rich tapestry of fragmented imagery. As he notes, "both processes – the process of individuation and

the process of painting – are aimed at unveiling a deeper truth and understanding of oneself."

He has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the Basil H. Alkazzi Foundation Scholarship, Saatchi's Showdown Prize and the Royal Scottish Academy's The Skinny Award. His work is included in prominent private and museum collections and has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Saatchi Gallery, Denny Dimin Gallery, Copeland Gallery, Summerhall and the Royal Scottish Academy, among others.

### About Xiao Xu

Xiao Xu was born in Chongqing in 1983. He lives and works in Beijing.

Xiao Xu's paintings harness the media (brush, ink and paper) and language (rocks, mist, water) of classical times, imbued with an atmosphere of mystery, dreams and fantasy. His work is characterized by dark shades, the roaming of unexpected beasts and the juxtaposition of modern, symbolic components such as the chain-link fence. As Luo Ma writes on Xiao Xu's use of colour: "His pictures have always been shrouded in thick blackness, with only the... central images radiating a faint light... He sets out a sustained meditation and linguistic exploration of the predicaments of fantasy and reality, nature and life." Xiao Xu's inspirations are literary (including Franz Kafka, Henry Thoreau and Italo Calvino) as well as artistic and historic. Recently, since the pandemic, the artist has deepened his investigation of the nature of home, and the immediate domestic surroundings of everyday life. Bubbles and vortices appear in his works as fluid, amorphous harbingers of protection, isolation and societal forces applied.

Solo shows have included "Streams of Eventide" at Galerie Ora-Ora in Hong Kong in 2018, and "Envisioning the Immortal Island" at MOCA Studio Taipei. He has regularly shown with Ora-Ora at Art Basel Hong Kong.

### Art Basel Hong Kong 2022

#### Private View (by invitation only):

Wednesday, May 25, 12pm to 8pm

Thursday, May 26, 12pm to 8pm

Friday, May 27, 12pm to 2pm

Saturday, May 28, 12pm to 2pm

Sunday, May 29, 11am to 12pm

#### Vernissage:

Friday, May 27, 2pm to 8pm

#### Show Hours:

Saturday, May 28, 2pm to 8pm

Sunday, May 29, 12pm to 6pm

#### Location:

Ora-Ora: Booth 1D33

Art Basel Hong Kong 2022

Convention & Exhibition Centre

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