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Beyond the Endgame Nine Artists From Paris

A group show curated by Martina Köppel-Yang featuring work by nine, Chinese artists living and working in Paris, France

September 26, 2026 – November 14, 2026

AUGUST 14, 2026 (Palo Alto, CA) - Qualia Contemporary Art is pleased to present *Beyond the Endgame*, a group exhibition curated by Martina Köppel-Yang bringing together a cross-generational group of nine Paris-based artists of Chinese heritage: An Xiaotong, Du Zhenjun, Ru Xiaofan, Wang Du, Yang Jiechang, Celine Shen, Chen Zhen, and the artist duo Armando Milano and Felicitas Yang. Spanning a range of mediums including painting, sculpture, and video, the exhibition considers the artists' capacity to create in times of change, going beyond endpoint scenarios to freely imagine systemic, harmonious, and deeply human alternatives to counter existential crises. An opening reception will be held on September 26, 2026 from 4pm - 6pm and the exhibition will be on view through November 14, 2026. For more information, please visit www.qualiagallery.com

Staged in Silicon Valley, a global center of automation, artificial intelligence, digitalization, and concentrated capital, the presentation of *Beyond the Endgame* creates a strong geographic and cultural tension. Against a contemporary landscape increasingly defined by technological acceleration, ecological crisis, and social upheaval, these artists create from a place that refuses binary thinking, creating through crisis rather than depicting it. The teleological concept of the "endgame" assumes that events move toward a predictable conclusion precluded by preceding events. The work in "Beyond the Endgame" suggests an optimistic refusal to accept such predetermined outcomes.

Organized around three interconnected concepts: Optimistic Collapse, Post-Humanism & AI, and Rebirth from Fragments & Hybridity, the exhibition brings together artists of disparate generations. Chen Zhen, Du Zhenjun, Ru Xiaofan, Wang Du, and Yang Jiechang were born in China in the 1950s and 1960s and moved to France amid decades of profound political and

social transformation. An Xiaotong represents a middle generation shaped increasingly by digital culture, while Celine Shen and the duo Felicitas Yang and Armando Milano came of age in a millennium marked by ecological instability, technological disruption, and new forms of social interaction.

Chen Zhen's video *Juechang – Fifty Strokes to Each* (1998) records a performance centered on a massive percussion instrument that Chen assembled from more than a hundred chairs and beds collected from different parts of the world. Inspired by the Zen Buddhist practice of *banghe*, visitors hit this unusual drum using tools and weapon parts, creating a synergetic resonance. Chen Zhen proposes synergy as a cure for the handicaps of our contemporary world, seeing conflict and collapse as a passage: a state of transition where old structures decay and new forms emerge.

In Yang Jiechang's *These Are Still Flowers* (2010 - 2013), the artist creates copies of flower paintings made by a young Adolf Hitler before World War I juxtaposed with paintings rendered in the meticulous style of Northern Song Emperor Huizong. Without ignoring the horrors committed by the reviled dictator, Yang suspends history's foregone conclusions. Rejecting teleology, Yang moves backwards from the endpoint and returns to a moment when the future was not yet determined.

Constructed from Lego bricks and referencing the pixelated aesthetics of the video game, *Undertale*, An Xiaotong's piece, *Superheroes* (2022), explores agency within closed systems and the societal archetypes of the hero and villain as reflected in the game. Like pixels or AI algorithms, Lego bricks can be combined in infinite variations despite the limitations of their fixed nature. An's work proposes that the system doesn't define the action within it, similar to contemporary societal phenomena.

In Wang Du's *Hand – One Finger Zen* (2025), the artist depicts a hand making the "F-gesture"; the middle finger stripped down to bare bone. Here, Wang subverts digital media to create a striking image of defiance and resilience. Utilising the still-imperfect processes of 3D scanning and 3D printing, he purposefully incorporates the mistakes and glitches that occurred during the production process within the final work. By giving physical form to those aspects of digital three-dimensional rendering, Wang investigates the shifting boundaries of the artistic process in the digital age and reaffirms the human role in the creative process.

Du Zhenjun's work, *Ligne sensible* (2024) and *Déplacement* (2026) interrogate the relationship between human creativity and artificial intelligence. Du develops his paintings through an ongoing exchange with AI, feeding the system images from his practice, transforming its responses, and returning those altered images to an evolving visual feedback loop. The final compositions are then rendered in paint resembling projections of fleeting images and evoking representations from the collective unconscious.

Ru Xiaofan pays homage to Old Masters such as Velázquez in oil paintings that subvert reality, interjecting them with historical symbols and motifs that are remixed rather than reproduced. In *Las Meninas Studies* (2022–2025), the artist depicts bodies merged with flowers, fruit, and vegetables. Flowers are a central part of Ru's practice going back to his "100 Flowers" series, which reflects on the cultural memory of Mao Zedong's Hundred Flowers campaign. Historical fragments are hybridized rather than returned to their original form, expressing the understanding that identity is constructed through confluence.

The exhibition's younger artists move fluidly between physical and digital realms. Celine Shen's video triptych *Nebula N°1, 2, 3* (2023), made in collaboration with Washmachine, explores the transformation of materials, while Felicitas Yang and Armando Milano's experimental film *There Is No Why* (2024) uses nonlinear time to imagine cyclical renewal and resilience.

Together with the work of the other artists included in "Beyond the Endgame," these works propose optimistic alternatives to crisis. To go beyond the endgame isn't to imagine what comes after, but to refuse the inevitability of the ending itself.

About Martina Köppel-Yang

Martina Köppel-Yang is an independent art historian and curator living in between Paris and Heidelberg, Germany. She focuses on the subject of contemporary art from China since the mid-1980s and has written extensively on the subject. Her PhD thesis entitled *Semiotic Warfare - The Chinese Avant-garde 1979 - 1989. A Semiotic Analysis* (Hong Kong: timezone 8, 2003) is a reference book on the Chinese Avantgarde of the 1980s. Köppel-Yang curated numerous exhibitions around the globe and also realised virtual exhibitions since more than a decade. Her exhibitions include: *Ink-Life-Taste* of the *5th Shenzhen International Ink Painting Biennale* (Shenzhen, 2006), *Becoming Intense, Becoming Animal, Becoming ...* (Heidelberg University 2009), *Advance through Retreat* (Rockbund Museum of Art, Shanghai 2014), *The Writings of Today are a Promise for Tomorrow - Yangjiang Group* (Palazzo Morosini, Venice, 2015), *3 Souls 7 Spirits -Yang Jiechang*, Shanghai Minsheng Museum (Shanghai, 2019), *Carte Blanche à Yang Jiechang* (Musée Guimet, Paris, 2022), *The Writings of Today are a Promise for Tomorrow* (SAMOCA, Riyadh SA, 2024), *Like a Wheel Within a Wheel*, virtual museum on the metaverse (with DSL collection, AIKA/Ecole des Mines, Paris 2023 and Musée Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil, 2024/25)

About Qualia Contemporary Art

Located in downtown Palo Alto, the heart of Silicon Valley, Qualia Contemporary Art is dedicated to showcasing outstanding established and emerging artists working in a variety of media. The gallery is committed to building lasting relationships with artists, collectors, curators, and scholars nationally and internationally, and providing a vital platform for dialogues on contemporary art and culture in the Bay Area and beyond.

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