



Michael Gao (b. 2002, Beijing, China) is a painter living and working in London. He explores social dynamics, identity, violence and desire, placing these themes in the ever-changing context of contemporary visual culture. Gao casts domesticated animals as a counterpoint to human tension – a figure of primal detachment amid socially coded behaviour. He uses fine airbrush techniques combined with loose oil brushstrokes to create realistic yet surreal compositions, flattening the space to evoke a sense of claustrophobia. With the subtle staging of dominance, threat, or exclusion, he subverts the expectation of violence and instead uses the animal as a strange mirror: instinctively present, yet curiously disconnected from the drama we choreograph around it.

Using animal and human imagery, Gao reimagines carnival as a post-internet space. This setting further deepens the contrast between reality and fantasy, the familiar and the alien. In this series of works, the carnival world becomes a lens to explore how desire has become performative and ritualistic in the Internet age - it can both connect people and isolate them, both elevate and constrain them.

EDUCATION

- 2025 MA Painting, Royal College of Art, London
- 2023 BA (Hon) Painting in Edinburgh College of Art

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2026 *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Nan Ke Gallery, Shanghai
- 2026 ArtSG with Mandy Zhang Art
- 2025 *Full Moons*, Tuesday to Friday Gallery, Valencia, Spain (Solo Exhibition)