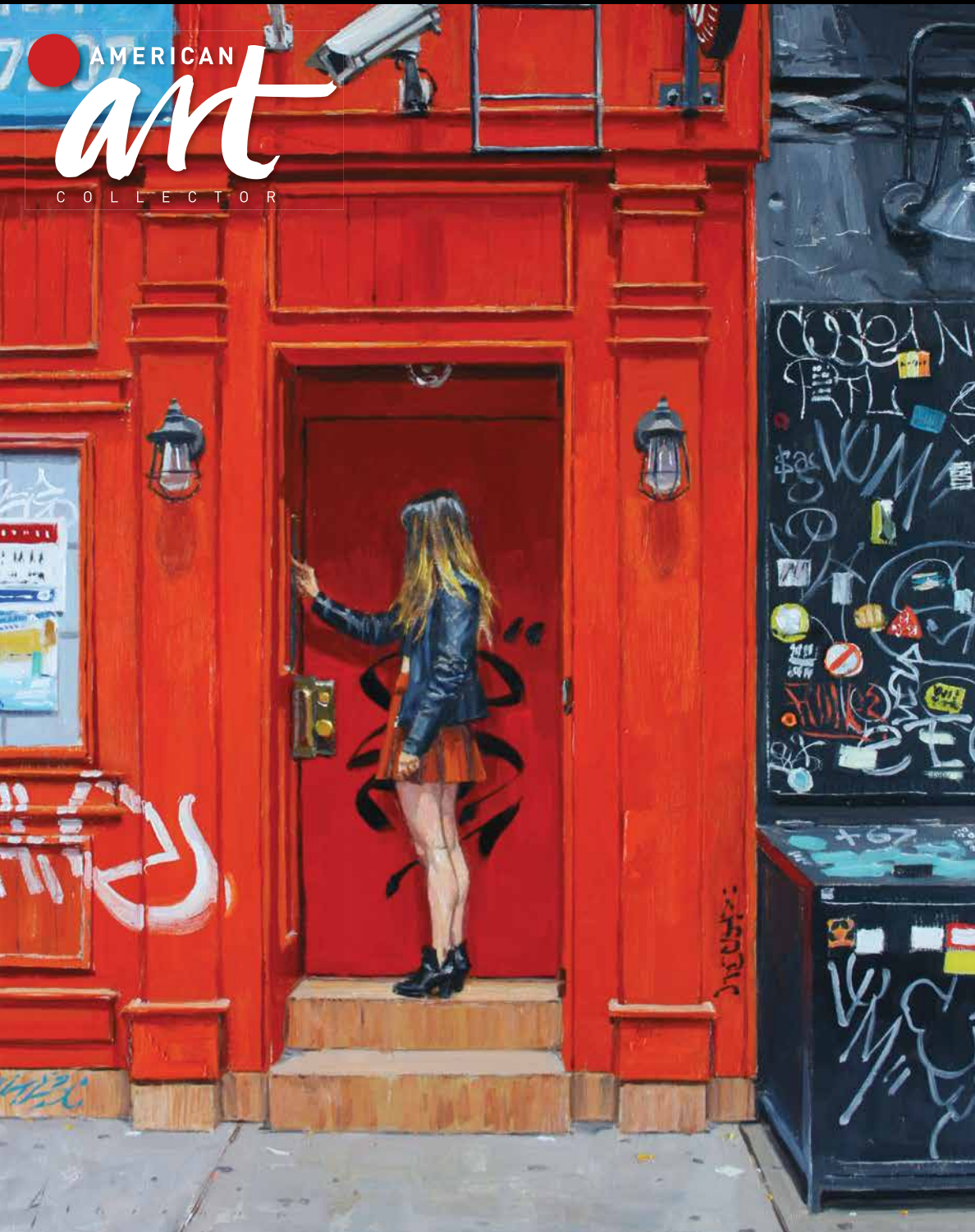


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BY VANESSA FRANÇOIS ROTHE

Vincent Xeus

A Contemporary Master of American Art

There are no secrets to success. It is often a combination of preparation, hard work, perseverance and determination. For the artist Vincent Xeus, it was all of these combined with a vivid imagination and a love of beauty and design that brought him where he is today—a renowned contemporary master of American art.

Early Years

From his early years growing up in China, Xeus was drawn to shapes and colors in children's books even before he took his first step. Later, he was enthralled with the set designs and cinematography of foreign films. He started taking after-school art classes in preschool, drawing characters from his favorite cartoons, and soon joined a disciplined art school. The technical training he gained there helped him remove fear and cultivate his curiosity. "One of the things I learned and still rely on today is pattern recognition, which has helped me not just in art, but in all aspects of the things I set out to learn," he says. Xeus was also

fortunate to have many influential family and friends ranging from sculptors to novelists. Affirmation from his teachers instilled a sense of pride and conviction that continues to push him forward to this day.

At 16, Xeus entered an exchange program in Virginia, and soon after, moved to California where he graduated from University of California, Berkeley, with an undergraduate degree in architecture. He continued to develop professionally when he dove into real world projects that included exhibition pavilions that explored relationships with form and mixed-use residential properties forging integrated post-industrial communities. It was an exciting new canvas for Xeus. "From Christopher Alexander's iconic research on pattern, to Jean Nouvel's materialization of otherworldly artistic visions, all the avant-garde practitioners and scholars inspired me to develop my own voice and process," he says. "My East-West cultural mix also began to cultivate my unique appreciation for dichotomy, which would later translate into both my visual and spatial creations."

"We know little about our existence beyond the various invented belief systems. Art makes up but a fraction of it. The compass for fighting for what we believe in results from invariably doing so with the highest standards while relentlessly abandoning all judgment. In our pursuit of purpose and navigating life, finding clarity is equally important as finding answers."

— Vincent Xeus



A Case Of Man, 2013,
oil on linen, 16 x 12"

The Artist, The Work

Xeus is a quintessential Asian American artist in the age of globalization. When asked about his influences and how he started in the professional world of art, Xeus notes the importance of social media and a kind of underground culture that fostered an environment for artists to share and learn. He spent years researching historic and living artists from Gerhard Richter to Vermeer, and started to share his own work online. At art conferences he met influential people and was able to break into the art world. "I have tremendous gratitude for a long line of people I met through college, social media, conferences and art fairs for helping me develop as a professional artist," he says. Xeus worked at first as both a professional architect and a fine artist living in Napa Valley. He was first discovered by galleries in Los Angeles and Denmark via social media. The contacts he made at conferences and art fairs furthered his exposure to audiences across the world. He received various awards for his early representational work, which put him on the map as a talented contemporary artist. With the help of positive press and critic reviews, he was picked up by notable contemporary art galleries and was on his way to becoming a successful fine artist.

Xeus' vast array of subjects range from abstracted old master appropriations, still life, landscape and the semi-abstract, but he is most recognized for his figurative work. Built on the foundation of realism, the works also convey a keen sense of conceptualization and abstraction. He explains, "I became fascinated as an adult by the different possibilities of interpreting the human form—mimicking life perhaps. I saw the three-dimensionality of painting and felt compelled to explore painting as an extension of mind and body." His early paintings stemmed from observations on interiority and some audiences described the work as haunting or timeless.

His next phase of work drew from his childhood, combining visual influences of Western cinema and pop culture and a framework of social realism, in which he was trained during his youth. "This type of conflicting exposures were in fact channeling an entire society's transformation," says Xeus. "My memories of that special time inspired me to explore the relationship between identity and cultural image, straddling a realism foundation and heart on abstraction and conceptual development."

More recently, his works have become



Harper In Snow, 2014, oil on linen, 30 x 20"

increasingly open to both subject and technique. He feels a sense of conviction to explore the integral role of art-making in society as well as the materiality of the painting process. "My multicultural backgrounds framed up tough questions on identity and values, defined by the different systems I was raised and later educated in. My current creative process confronts some of these dichotomies from a spiritual as well as technical standpoint. I don't know if absolute freedom can be obtained in art making, but it's a strong quest to find the harmony of it in my current creative process," he says.

When asked about what genre he feels his work falls into, Xeus—who dreads the idea of being categorized with "isms,"—

suggests abstraction and contemporary realism as the technical pillars of his current vein of work. "I try to investigate superficial bounds through my painting," he notes. "My current works explore issues on identity and cultural current and heritage. My cultural experiences from both the East and West forged my visual system. A juxtaposition of abstraction and representation, synthesizing centuries of art practices, has been a key instrument to my artistic language in my fusion of identity and multi-disciplinary practice." Xeus' paintings blur genre and style boundaries. The abstract and representational, foreground and background, constantly shift roles, creating spatial ambiguities that resonate



Show Business, 2014, oil on linen, 32 x 48"



Jewel, 2018, oil on linen, 18 x 14"

in a complex juxtaposition of senses.

There is a recent untitled artwork that Xeus was particularly pleased with. Painted in his spacious New York studio in west Chelsea, Xeus says that with this work he was able to finally, "strike the balance between intuitional and authorial. I was moved by how the painting captured the spiritual sublime of what was externally and internally driving my painting process. The painting took several years of revisits. All together it presents, through the surface, a holistic transformation of observed history and current in an instant of self-discovery. The ambiguous surface, dimensionalized by repeated tension and release, held some of the key questions in my painting at the moment."

Life as a Professional Artist

While living in New York, Xeus completed another aspect of his life goals, graduating with an MBA from Columbia University. Xeus hoped to broaden his horizons through the diverse curriculum, experiences and a close-knit network of the most forward-thinking leaders in fashion, film, architecture and arts. Xeus believes that today's visionary creatives have the power to underscore social issues, transform old economies and integrate technological breakthroughs into meaningful human experiences.

One such crossover was Xeus's collaboration with Budweiser, China, to design a concept club to market new drinks and merchandise which opened in Shenzhen, China, in 2020. Here, Xeus was able to meld architecture with visual art to derive a concept authentic to Budweiser's core brand identities. He led a team of architects and operation specialists to materialize his vision of creating an

Untitled, 2019, oil on linen, 60 x 48"





Mc2, 2022, oil on linen, 48 x 36"



Xeus surrounded by current work in progress in the studio, Kennedy collection

immersive cultural experience by effectively merging the senses.

Xeus fondly remembers how staying up late to complete a body of work for exhibitions provides a unique satisfaction, but also how that was quickly replaced after the show by a sense of frustration and urgency to grow. "Over time I realized that I didn't pick up a brush to be happy," he says. "Quite the opposite, meaningful creation happens through pain and self-critical pursuits. The effective result of that creation becomes transformative and spiritual." Exhibits, expounds Xeus, help set goals which translate to deadlines and executions. These deadlines often help artists to focus their work towards a goal and a new body of work. "This is helpful when artists work on things with no definitive right or wrong answers," says Xeus. "Exhibits can be a double edge sword, especially for artists who value growth. It's the artists' job to navigate a path by staying true to a clear compass. While the galleries' primary concern is, understandably, market success, I've been fortunate to work with some galleries that respected my values. Delivering both builds confidence. I do remind myself that the game is always changing. Only the pursuit is constant."

Artists, writers, filmmakers, poets and creatives often need to have many references to pull from to create their works. Real life experiences provide visual and emotional inspiration. Xeus travels frequently to gain balance and perspective. As it does for many artists and

creatives, travel refuels his curiosity and sheds light on new ways of transforming his ideas. His piece *Thinking Bodhisattva* was inspired by the Buddhist murals at Mogao Caves in Jiuquan, China, which date back to the 3rd century A.D., as a homage to humankind's spirit of perseverance and ingenuity.

Current Work

Xeus is currently collaborating with members of the Kennedy family on a series that explores the critical voices and international impact of female members in the iconic American family who rejected the cultural limitations imposed on their gender and adhered to a universal belief in human dignity. Twenty large format oil paintings, collectively titled *Better Angels*, will be presented in a solo exhibition when the works are completed and dates and venues have been established.

From a young child with talent and disciplined art training, to life as a dynamic and influential architect, while exhibiting his paintings globally and in America's top galleries and institutions, Vincent Xeus has undoubtedly made his mark in the world of art. ●

Vanessa Françoise Rothe is a curator, editor/writer, art dealer and fine artist who has had the pleasure of recognizing his talent and working with Vincent since 2012. Rothe was honored to write about his life and career and his exciting future as a contemporary master artist.