

Beneath the Punchline

Ruoyu Gong Solo Exhibition

April 10-23, 2025

Opening Reception on Thursday, April 10, 2025, 6 - 8 PM

A Space Gallery, 13 Grattan St, #402, Brooklyn, NY 11206

A Space Gallery is proud to present *Beneath the Punchline*, a solo exhibition by New York-based artist Ruoyu Gong. Using monotype printmaking as his primary medium, Gong embarks on a visual practice that weaves together psychological excavation, improvisational mark-making, and a sharply self-deprecating sense of humor.

At the heart of Gong's practice lies the lasting influence of Xiangsheng, a form of traditional Chinese comedic dialogue. Known for its puns, rhythmically mismatched exchanges, and exaggerated gestures, Xiangsheng becomes, in Gong's hands, a visual strategy: absurd scenes, neurotic characters, and emotional tension smuggled beneath the laughter. "I laugh at their ridiculousness," Gong writes, "but in my dream, I weep with them."

Trained in traditional oil painting, Ruoyu Gong took an alternative path—using printmaking as a point of departure to reorient his approach to painting, discovering within discipline and control a space for spontaneity and freedom. What began as peripheral experiments soon evolved into a parallel painterly practice—intimate, fast, imperfect, and deeply alive.

Ruoyu Gong centers his practice on monotype and trace monotype. His images do not emerge from structure but from intuition—chaotic yet sincere, like slips of the tongue. He describes these works as "a language that begins in error," a process of pursuing meaning through misalignment and interruption. For example, in *Whisper Louder*, he scrapes into layers of acrylic on acetate, transfers the image onto paper, then collages in scraps from his palette—fragments that refuse containment and spill rebelliously beyond the edge. In *Untitled (oh my brother!)*, pencil drawings made on the back of the sheet are pressed into metallic ink, leaving behind faint, shimmering traces that partially fade during wet mounting—like half-remembered scenes dissolving into dreams. These modest-sized prints carry intensity far beyond their scale. Charged with speed, doubt, absurdity, and emotion, they reveal a world caught between contradiction and collapse. Gong returns to recurring motifs—hunched figures, averted eyes, awkward limbs—as if repeating an old joke. They provoke laughter, yes—but a laughter that lands closer to grief.

In *Beneath the Punchline*, Gong reorganizes the logic of painting, using printmaking to destabilize oil, error to dismantle control, and humor to wrestle with fear. Through this unrepeatable, irrecoverable process, he presses into the paper a tender and jagged record of psychic tension. Every impression is a contradiction. Every laugh is a question mark.