

Guanyu Xu  
*Resident Aliens*

October 30 – December 20, 2025



Yancey Richardson is proud to present *Resident Aliens*, an exhibition of new work by Guanyu Xu, the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. With an approach that deftly combines social practice, installation and photography, Xu's work has been defined by its expansive, multi-disciplinary approach to image-making. Building upon his previous body of work that examined the tension between his own queer identity and the normative prescriptions of his family through photography installations that were then turned into two-dimensional images, in his new series Xu examines the personal lives and domestic spaces of immigrants navigating the political demands of a changing world. Working with people of

different immigration statuses, Xu explores the relationship between the bureaucratic demands of the state and the subjective expression of the individual. The exhibition will be on view from October 30 through December 20, 2025. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, October 30 from 6–8PM.

Begun in 2019, shortly before it was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and then resumed in its wake and still ongoing to this day, the works in *Resident Aliens* have been made inside the homes of immigrants living in cities across the United States and China. In an ever-expanding list that includes Chicago, East Lansing, New York, Hong Kong, Beijing, Nanjing and Shanghai, Xu has sought out participants caught up in the administrative web of citizenship and legal status, a process requiring them to re-establish their identities through the careful selection of information, images and documentation. To create his large-scale color photographs, Xu first meets with the participants in their homes to learn about their lives, to understand their respective stories and photograph their spaces. He eventually asks them to select meaningful images from their personal photo albums that he then prints. On a subsequent visit, Xu constructs a temporary installation inside each participant's home, using both his own images and theirs to create a dense and layered arrangement before photographing it to produce a collage-like final image. Through recontextualizing archival photographs and merging multiple perspectives together, Xu's images not only trouble the distinction between authorship and reproduction, between what is intimate and what is social, but they also speak to the fragmented nature of the immigrant experience, one being made increasingly more fraught and precarious with each passing day.

Though intellectually rigorous and formally complex, the images in *Resident Aliens* are also visually rich and deeply engaging. Snapshots of sunsets and cityscapes live alongside revealing portraits and fleeting observations, all with their own inherent meaning that Xu makes newly contingent on the images he combines them with. The inseparability of personal significance from larger structures of meaning reflects the challenging and oftentimes intrusive nature of the state system itself, which requires visa applicants to prove their economic value and social importance and even, if in a relationship, to prove their bond of love as well. By asking his subjects to willingly select images and provide materials they

believe capture their identity or express the substance of their lives, Xu underscores the impossibility of such a process ever succeeding in the first place.

The movement between the personal and the political, a constant source of tension in Xu's work, is intensified in *Resident Aliens*, as the images demonstrate how both categories are informed by and intertwined with another. Within the seemingly protected space of home, Xu reveals what must be protected and what can still be taken away.

Guanyu Xu (b.1993 Beijing) is an artist currently based in Chicago and Beijing. Influenced by the production of hegemonic ideology in American visual culture and his upbringing in Beijing, his practice extends from examining the production of power in image culture to the question of personal freedom and its relationship to political regimes. Xu negotiates this from his perspective as a Chinese gay man and an immigrant in the US. In his work, he migrates between mediums like photography, new media, and installation. These movements operate similarly to his displaced and fractured identity. In Xu's art practice, he strives to understand the politics between the U.S. and China, on both personal and transnational levels. Xu proposes a transnational position for viewers to examine and negotiate the interconnected oppressions in this contemporary moment of supposed freedom.

He is the recipient of the Chicago DCASE Artist Grant, CENTER Development Grant, Hyères International Festival Prize, PHOTOFAIRS Shanghai Exposure Award, Philadelphia Photo Arts Center Annual Competition, and Kodak Film Photo Award. He has received artist residencies including ACRE (Steuben, WI), Light Work (Syracuse, NY), Latitude (Chicago, IL), Pioneer Works (New York, NY), and Swatch Art Peace Hotel (Shanghai, China).

His works have been exhibited and screened internationally including the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge; International Center of Photography, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; 36th Kasseler Dokfest, Germany, and others. His work can be found in public collections including San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Harvard Art Museums, Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, New Orleans Museum of Art, among others. His works have been featured in numerous publications including The New York Times, Phaidon, Thames & Hudson, ArtAsiaPacific, The New Yorker, Harper's Magazine, Dazed, and China Photographic Publishing House.

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