

# Kunsthalle Wien

## Press release

### Guan Xiao: TEENAGER

#### 8 October 2025–11 January 2026

Kunsthalle Wien presents the first solo exhibition in Austria by Guan Xiao (b. 1983, Chongqing, China). Comprising an entirely new body of sculpture and painting, it takes what Guan Xiao describes as the ‘ambiguous life stage’ of the Teenager as a starting point for works that reflect upon the currents, conflicts and absurdities of a society impacted by the values of capitalism and liberalism:

*A teenager is typically thought to be impulsive, led by their intuition and open to possibilities, changes and uncertainty. They can be dramatic, riven with self-doubt. I see them as both challenging and conquering reality and these ideas echo through this body of work which has a lot to do with this conflicted state of change and uncertainty.*

Guan Xiao

A large, furry, A-Frame structure bisects the space, creating a tunnel at the centre of the exhibition. Animated by light and smoke, it harbours a collection of cast aluminium objects including scaled-up items of cutlery, a moka pot and a series of enlarged eggs. Outside are a series of gnarled tree roots cast in brass, painted and appended with motorcycle parts and cartoon-like clouds of scribble. These anthropomorphic sculptures with mesh plates or antennae-like wands populate the space like a cast of characters. Two modular columns extend respectively pink and blue arms from aluminium, claw-like bases that resemble oversized bunches of bananas. On the walls, a triptych of panels simulates large, palette-shaped windows covered in a thick layer of paint.

Guan Xiao originally trained as a filmmaker before becoming known for creating sculpture that triggers an impulse for us to create our own narratives and tell stories about what we see. Earlier works resembled museological displays or photography studios that appeared to unite an eclectic selection of objects and images in one scheme. More recent sculpture refers to the Chinese custom of displaying polished tree roots in domestic settings. The practice of root carving dates back to the Warring States Period (474–221 BC), preserving the natural, given form of the wood. Its popularity over the centuries made it a symbol of economic wealth, while becoming a worn-out cultural cliché, denoting a lack of sophistication. In Guan Xiao’s work, the tree root becomes the basis of a singular, mythical creature in an ever-growing multitude of animal or human-like figures. Working with an array of elements – some meticulously hand-crafted, others mass produced – she references a broad range of cultural material that is defamiliarized and uncoupled from its associations to create an ambiguous, semi-fictional space and time.

Teenager returns to fundamental subjects such as food, clothing and shelter to address questions of progress and civilisation, tradition and spirituality that are central to the multi-faceted, playful and poetic work of Guan Xiao. The ‘conflicted state’ of the teenager is used as a metaphor for a society that the artist perceives to be suspended between ‘devotion and restraint’, needs and desires and ancient, philosophical, social and ethical values that are ‘in direct opposition’ to the economic system of capitalism:

*China’s imperial history and Confucianism praise restraint and suppress individuality. Yet subcultures, independent cultures throughout history emphasise individuality... this contradiction is fundamentally between the philosophical systems of Asia and the*

*economic system of capitalism – a conflict between two modes of thought... You might say capitalism is about 'construction', while Asian philosophy is about 'deconstruction.'*  
Guan Xiao

### Biography

Guan Xiao (b. 1983, Chongqing, China) has held solo exhibitions at Bonner Kunstverein; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (both 2019); Kunsthalle Winterthur (2018); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2016); K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai and ICA, London (both 2016). Her works have been presented within group surveys at Start Museum, Shanghai (2024); Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (2023 and 2021); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2023); Mercedes-Benz Museum, Stuttgart; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (both 2022); the 34th Bienal de São Paulo; 58th October Salon, Belgrade Biennale (both 2021); X Museum Triennial; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Sharjah Art Foundation (all 2020); Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach; Honolulu Biennial; Migros Museum, Zurich (all 2019); the 57th Venice Biennale; Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin; M HKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (all 2017); 9th Berlin Biennale; ZKM, Karlsruhe (both 2016) and the 13th Biennale de Lyon (2015). Her public art commissions include works for Skulpturenpark Köln (2020); Anyang Public Art Project (2019) and High Line, New York (2017). Guan Xiao lives and works in Beijing.

### Publication

The exhibition catalogue will also be the first publication on Guan Xiao's work. Published in German and English, it will feature an extensive interview with Guan Xiao by Michelle Cotton as well as essays by Chelsea Qianxi Liu and Sarah Johanna Theurer.

### Limited Edition

Guan Xiao has created a limited-edition sculpture as part of a new series of artists' editions produced in support of Kunsthalle Wien's programme. *Soda* takes the form of a large green apple, cast in brass and painted with a pearlescent, high gloss finish.

Guan Xiao

*Soda*, 2025

Edition of 15 + 1 AP

20 x 18,5 x 18,3 cm

Brass, acrylic paint

Certificate of origin, numbered and signed

€ 1000

Kunsthalle Wien's editions are available from the shops at Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier and Karlsplatz as well as online: <https://kunsthallewien.at/shop>. Sales proceeds support Kunsthalle Wien's programme.

### Notes to Editors

Guan Xiao: Teenager

8 October–11 January 2026

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

Press conference: 7 October 2025, 10 am

Exhibition opening: 7 October 2025, 7 pm

Press conference and exhibition opening in conjunction with Sophie von Hellermann: *Get Your Head Around It* (Kunsthalle Wien Vitrine).

Press images for download and further information:

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/exhibition/guan-xiao/press>

### Artist Talk

Prior to the opening of the exhibition, Guan Xiao will be in conversation with Sarah Johanna Theurer, Curator Haus der Kunst, Munich.

7 October 2025, 6 pm

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

All dates for guided tours and the programme are available online at:

<https://kunsthallewien.at/en/programme>

### About Kunsthalle Wien

Kunsthalle Wien is the City of Vienna's primary institution for contemporary art. At its locations in the Museumsquartier and on Karlsplatz, it presents an annual programme of exhibitions alongside public and educational programming that seeks to engage diverse publics. We provide a platform for artists, commissioning new works and partnering with individuals and institutions, both local and international, to develop exhibitions and publications based on original research. Kunsthalle Wien is committed to providing an inclusive space for exchange and debate and furthering the discourse on contemporary art in all its forms.

### Kunsthalle Wien Thanks

Guan Xiao: *Teenager* is generously supported by LEAP Art Foundation. Kunsthalle Wien is financed by Magistratsabteilung Kultur der Stadt Wien (MA 7). The artistic programme is also supported by the members and patrons of the Kunsthalle Wien Club.

### Address and Information

Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier

Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna

[www.kunsthallewien.at](http://www.kunsthallewien.at)

+43-1-52189-0

[office@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:office@kunsthallewien.at)

#GuanXiao

#KunsthalleWien

@KunsthalleWien

### Opening Hours

Tuesday–Sunday: 10:00–18:00

Thursday: 10:00–20:00

### Press Contact

Iseult Grandjean

+43-1-52189-221

[presse@kunsthallewien.at](mailto:presse@kunsthallewien.at)