Time Out of Joint

Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing
October 31 – December 13, 2026
Opening: Saturday, October 31, 2026; 4pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is pleased to present *Time Out of Joint*, a group exhibition featuring six artists who have been in ongoing dialogue with the gallery over the past few years. These conversations and reflections are condensed into the exhibition. Using excavation as a metaphor for time, the exhibition explores a suspended state in which linear chronology breaks down and past, present, and future overlap. Familiar frames of reference are beginning to shift, but a new order has yet to emerge. Following three pairs of parallel, interconnected paths, the six artists converge on this unsettled present.

Drawing on classical traditions, Wendi Yan and Zhou Jiangnan rework materials from the past to tell stories about the present. Yan studies the history of science, uncovering forgotten strands of knowledge and using digital media to construct speculative systems of understanding. Zhou returns to classical imagery, removing it from its original context and reinterpreting it for contemporary audiences. By loosening the ties between images, historical records, and the contexts that once defined them, both artists turn motifs from the past into compelling contemporary narratives, unsettling the idea of time as a linear progression.

Through fictional narratives, Chen Sixin and Meng Zhou explore relationships between human and nonhuman beings in imagined worlds. Chen envisions possibilities beyond the present, drawing on the visual language of vintage comics and science-fiction covers. In his vivid imagery, Chen explores a fractured sense of self and inner turmoil and imagines ways to break free from existing systems. Meng turns inward to examine the self, consciousness, and existence, expanding the boundaries of inner experience. Both artists leave their narratives open-ended, letting questions emerge through images and situations shaped by fantasy and speculation.

Turning from imagined worlds to life and perception, Qin Shanjun and Liu Shunjia each probe vitality in distinct ways. Qin creates installations using succulents, volcanic rock, and ceramic planters to evoke life held in suspension. With their roots exposed, as they would be in transit, the plants rest on volcanic stones; the plants and stones are then packed together in courier bags. The plants retain their instinct to grow, but have no soil in which to put down roots. As they move through networks of commerce, living things are packaged, shipped, and repeatedly displaced, never quite able to settle. They reach upward, yet have nowhere to anchor themselves. Liu Shunjia, by contrast, works primarily with lacquer, drawing on the material's own vitality and its cultural resonance in East Asia. Reflections on the course of life and insights gained through personal experience inform her work. Rather than depicting particular plants, she evokes the ways life unfolds in nature as a means of turning perception inward.

These distinct lines of inquiry—past and future, inward and outward, life and perception—converge here. Together, the six artists ask: when time is no longer defined by inherited frameworks, how might we rethink our relationships with ourselves, with the things around us, and with our environment? In this interval of uncertainty, the exhibition opens up new ways of perceiving and reflecting on the present.

About the Artists

Chen Sixin (b. 1995, Guangzhou; lives and works in Chongqing) focuses on posthumanism, combining surrealist elements from early comics and science-fiction covers. His practice centers on animals and alien forms, depicting imaginations of ecology and the environment, extraterrestrial life, and the end times.

Liu Shunjia (b. 1995, Ziyang; lives and works in Chongqing) graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Her choice of natural lacquer as her medium stems from a concern with the relationship between life and materiality. She seeks to involve the material itself in the generation of the work, allowing images, the body, nature, and time to together constitute a continually shifting field of perception.

Qin Shanjun (b. 1976; lives and works in Beijing) formerly worked in environmental art and design. Over the past decade, he has turned to the cultivation, breeding, and research of Mammillaria (Cactaceae). In this very slow process, the relationship between soil and plants has shaped the artist's reflective framework on bodily perception. He began making ceramic art in 2024.

Wendi Yan (b. 1999, Beijing; lives and works in New York) constructs speculative epistemologies through research-driven worldbuilding and metafictional simulation, using CGI, game engines, and documentary practices to probe and play with the artifice of knowledge. Her work examines the embodied challenges of facing alien epistemic systems across time. She collaborates frequently with scientists and engineers, from synthetic biology to astrophysics, to explore the frontier between science and entertainment, between imaging and imagining.

Zhou Jiangnan (b. 2000, with family roots in Changsha, Hunan, and moved to Suzhou as a child; lives and works in Beijing) graduated from the School of Chinese Painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), completing his undergraduate studies in bird-and-flower painting in 2023 and his master's studies in landscape painting in 2026. His close study of classical imagery informs his work, which brings a contemporary perspective to traditional Chinese painting. Using rich colors and rigorous brushwork, Zhou responds to the world around him.

Meng Zhou (b. 1992, Shaoxing; lives and works in Shanghai) is a cross-media artist whose practice includes installation, moving image, painting, sculpture, and poetry. He graduated from Camberwell College of Arts, London, in 2016 and received an MA in Moving Image from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2018. His practice stems from curiosity about nature and the material world, continuously exploring the dialectical relationships between ecology and human legacy, life and death, and existence and nothingness.