

Rebekka Steiger

Nightly Encounter

Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing
November 1, 2025 – January 18, 2026
Opening: Saturday, November 1, 2025; 4 – 6pm
The artist will be present

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce *Nightly Encounter*, a solo exhibition by the Swiss artist Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993). The exhibition presents a series of works created during her recent and ongoing residencies in Beijing. Through the integration of diverse cultural motifs and experimental materials, the artist constructs a distinctive visual language that unfolds layered narratives, reflecting on the complex interplay between nature and humanity.

As both a painter and a storyteller, Steiger is obsessed with symbolically charged imagery that encompasses a wide spectrum of cultural implications. Her practice allows viewers to glimpse histories, classical mythology, and folklore spanning Europe and Asia, which she transforms into inspiration for her stories. For example, in her work *一夜邂逅 II* (2025, tempera and acrylic ink on canvas, 145 × 200 cm), she links the fox to the East Asian fox spirit—a seductive, supernatural figure embodied by characters such as Tamamo no Mae from the court of Emperor Toba and Daji, consort of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty. Traditionally unmasked as fox spirits, these mythological figures resonate with the witch hunts of early modern Europe, when countless women were persecuted amid widespread superstition and fear of marginalized individuals from the social and imperial systems. Meanwhile, the fox, as an animal, is also associated with nature. By linking the fox to both mythological figures and the histories of marginalised groups, Steiger examines the tension between the structured human world and the inexorable forces of nature.

This thematic tension is further reinforced in her imagery of the rider and the flower. The rider is an amalgamation of historical and literary figures like Don Quixote and Genghis Khan, as well as a representation of the artist's personal expression. Traditionally they are associated with conquest, violence and chaos, as they frequently appear in the wars of the ancient world, while flowers usually symbolized fragility and latent threat. In *verheddert* (2025, acrylic on canvas, 200 × 150 cm), a rider in the background is rushing towards intertwined flowers, sword in hand, to clear a path through the floral mass. However, from the audience's perspective, the flowers in the foreground transform into a predatory creature, poised to capture the prey at the back. The dynamically rendered horse with three heads and the obscured face of the rider heighten the sense of movement and ambiguity. The rider and the flower, the predator and the prey, conquest and fragility—these pairs of contradicting yet reciprocal images in Steiger's painting emblemize the intertwined yet conflicted relationship between humanity and the natural world. Rendered in similar colours and brushstrokes, the two images fuse into a single visual entity, dissolving the boundary between humanity and nature. Steiger does not confine herself to retelling traditional tales, but instead creates protean figures that originate from different cultures to illustrate her own stories.

Steiger's travel experiences through Asian countries have profoundly influenced her material choices and thematic explorations. "I would say that the Chinese mindset here is quite inspiring. Generally speaking, I have certain feelings here that are very different from those in Switzerland. There's always a strange enough and open feeling," she notes. *腾格里* (2024, tempera and oil on canvas, 140 × 200 cm) draws inspiration from her trip to the Tengger Desert in Inner Mongolia last year. With her unique techniques and compositions, Steiger transforms the desert into a dreamlike realm that transcends the real world.

Through her layered imagery and diverse conceptual approaches, in *Nightly Encounter*, Steiger challenges fixed interpretations and destabilises the conventional binary between humanity and the natural world. She reveals that, nature is an ever-shifting construct that encompasses, rather than opposes, human existence.

About the Artist

Rebekka Steiger (b. 1993, Zurich, Switzerland) is a Swiss painter known for her expressive, large-scale works that blend abstraction with figurative elements. Working primarily with oil and acrylic, she creates vibrant, emotionally charged compositions that often depict animals, landscapes, and mythological figures in dreamlike environments. A graduate of the Lucerne School of Art and Design, Steiger has developed a distinctive visual language marked by bold color contrasts, gestural brushwork, and psychological depth. Her work explores themes of transformation, instinct, and the subconscious.

Her time as an artist-in-residence in Beijing (2018–2019, 2024, 2025) and later in Ho Chi Minh City (2022–2023) significantly influenced her style, incorporating new materials and references. Inspired by East Asian aesthetics and calligraphic fluidity, Steiger began experimenting with ink and more fluid forms of markmaking.

Steiger has exhibited widely in Europe and Asia, with works in private and institutional collections. Her latest institutional show took place at Kunstmuseum Thun in Switzerland.