

Oscar yi Hou
Nightcrawling
Sep 11–Oct 24, 2026
52 White St, New York

James Fuentes is pleased to announce Oscar yi Hou, *Nightcrawling* in New York, the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery. At the core of his practice, yi Hou takes figuration and the genre of portraiture as fields in which identity, relation, and milieu are continuously negotiated and reconfigured. Fugitive notions of subjectivity and personhood form the contours of this enquiry. In the new body of work comprising *Nightcrawling*, the artist turns toward underground nightlife and its afterglows as charged sites of being—at intervals both intimate and unknowable.

Across yi Hou's paintings, figures and their environments compose a single, undulating locus. Limbs, hair, features, and silhouettes flicker through vaporous marks, drips, and hazes. Their surfaces register qualities of light sooner than they disclose identities. Sightlines and gestures circulate across the canvas like currents, folding the viewer into a humid image-world. In this setting, the "problem" of the Other—that perennial philosophical puzzle of how one subject encounters another—is embraced as a condition of feeling. The crowd becomes its own weather system; a blur of color joining distorted beat, light beam, and breath.

"You feel, all at once, unitary, flickering, shared, and reciprocal," yi Hou described of this thick, collective terrain several years ago. Then, the artist used a dry-brush application of paint in loose blocks to establish a kind of irregular patchwork describing physiognomy and setting. Appearing in a more still, frontal capacity, the sitter in earlier works was bordered by distinct—if at times illegible—symbolology and text that literally coded the buffer zone between artist and subject. Yi Hou's new works perform a kind of breakthrough inversion. Equally overfull, dripping washes of paint form loose, atmospheric grounds for liveness felt in flux rather than posed in place. Small floating icons still occasionally appear, as if drifting forward from those prior margins, but the image's perimeter now dissolves.

As the new paintings move closer in, yi Hou exchanges the composed distance of his earlier portraits for an embeddedness within the scene itself. In many works, a direct, desiring gaze links subject and beholder, while washes of warm and cool light saturate these charged moments of reprieve. Erotic tension saturates this ever-elastic now. Hours of communion stretch and spiral, structured by a sense of endurance through which the quality of time thickens, loops, and drags. *Nightcrawling* thus registers collapse as well as ecstasy, freedom alongside fatigue. As yi Hou writes in the project's accompanying publication: "Pleasure may

be temporary. It is also transformative."

Accompanying the exhibition is *Nightcrawling: More Life*, a print publication featuring new writing and poetry from the artist, alongside texts by Juliana Huxtable (co-founder and resident of Shock Value); Jesús Hilario-Reyes (MORENXXX, resident of Nowadays and TUNNEL), hannah baer (author of *trans girl suicide museum*, 2019; and *The Life of the Party*, forthcoming) John Arthur Peetz (Movement Research Performance Journal), and Kay Gabriel (author of *Perverts*, 2025). The project is designed by Daniel Leyva (Word of Command, founder and resident of FIST) and edited by Adnan Qiblawi and Morgan Becker.

Artist Bio

Oscar yi Hou (b. 1998, Liverpool, United Kingdom) lives and works in New York City. He received his BA from Columbia University and has presented solo exhibitions at institutions and galleries including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; James Fuentes, New York; and T293 Gallery, Rome. His work has been presented in group exhibitions at PACE Gallery, Hong Kong; New-York Historical Society, New York; Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate; and Asia Society, New York. Yi Hou's work is held in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, ICA Miami, New-York Historical Society, Columbus Museum of Art, Cantor Arts Center, and M+ Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Art Bridges Foundation, among others.