

Interview with  
Sophie Varin

Sophie Varin 專訪



## About the Artist

### 關於藝術家

Sophie Varin (b. 1993, France) delves into the intricate interplay between human consciousness and the fabric of reality in her miniature paintings and sculptures of enlarged figurations. Engendering nuanced negotiation between the yearning to behold and the inclination to obscure, her paintings and sculptures manifest seemingly mundane vignettes that embody a mesmerizing sense of ambiguity. Often situating tiny characters within intimate, serene landscapes, Varin's works construct a world of mimicry, inviting active inquiry and investigation into possible narratives and plots. In bestowing much importance upon the perceptive faculties of the beholder, she focuses on how curiosity, desire, and fantasy could fabricate and modulate ways of seeing.

Varin received her DNAP from École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2015, her BFA from Hunter College School of Fine Arts in New York in 2016, and her MFA from Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam in 2018. Apart from her art practice, she also writes detective stories starring a fictional persona J.P. Gutti.

The artist currently lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Sophie Varin (生於 1993 年 · 法國) 在她的微縮繪畫和放大的人物雕塑中 · 深入研究人類意識與現實本質之間錯綜複雜的相互關係。她的繪畫和雕塑微妙地游走於觀看與隱蔽之間 · 呈現出看似平凡的場景 · 並體現出一種引人入勝的曖昧之感。Varin 經常將微小人物置於親密寧靜風景中 · 構建一個仿真世界 · 邀請觀者積極探索和調查可能存在的敘事和情節。在強調觀察者的感知能力中 · 她關注好奇心、慾望和幻想如何影響並調整視覺方式。

Varin 於 2015 年獲得巴黎國立高等美術學院國家造型藝術文憑 · 於 2016 年獲得紐約亨特學院純藝學士學位 · 並於 2018 年獲得鹿特丹皮特·茲沃特學院純藝碩士學位。在她的藝術實踐之外 · 她還以虛構人物 J.P. Gutti 為主角撰寫偵探小說。

藝術家目前生活和工作於比利時布魯塞爾。



Artist Portrait

藝術家肖像



Sophie Varin : 低清成像  
2024年2月3日至3月9日

Sophie Varin: Low Resolution  
February 3-March 9, 2024

On the occasion of Sophie Varin's solo exhibition "Low Resolution," the gallery team had an in-depth discussion with the artist, highlighting the thoughts and concepts behind her art practice. The exhibition opened at MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong on February 3, 2024. Featuring a most recent selection of miniature paintings that capture mesmerizing landscapes and uncanny characters as well as two human-sized puppet-like sculptures that serve as custodians to the gallery space, the exhibition beckons viewers on a journey of curiosity and investigation. The exhibition's title, "Low Resolution," carries a symbolism that extends beyond its literal meaning of pixelated or indistinct imagery. It encompasses the notion of modest expectations and a departure from elevated standards by hinting at the absence of resolutions or outcomes. Lingering between fiction, dreamland, and simulacrum, the exhibition presents a world both familiar and unfamiliar. It constructs a space where the boundaries of reality and imagination merge, where the viewer becomes an active participant in the generation of meanings.

值 Sophie Varin 個展「低清成像」之際，畫廊團隊與藝術家進行了一次深入的探討，談及了藝術家的創作理念以及創作過程中的所見所想。展覽於 2024 年 2 月 3 日在 MOU PROJECTS 香港空間開幕。展覽呈現藝術家最新作品，包括一系列描繪風景和袖珍人物的微縮繪畫及兩個守護着展覽空間的人形布偶雕塑，在交錯的景色之間，徐徐展開一場奇異的調查之旅。展覽的標題「低清成像」帶有一種象徵意義，不僅在字面上指代像素化或是模糊的圖像，還蘊含一種適度期望的態度和毋需高標準的概念。展覽在虛構、夢境和擬像之間徘徊，呈現了一個既熟悉又陌生的世界，構建了一個現實與想象交融的空間。



Installation views of "Low Resolution"

「低清成像」現場圖

## MOU PROJECTS (MP):

What led you to discover and choose miniature painting as your artistic medium? What initially motivated you to create artwork on such a small scale?

Sophie Varin (Varin):

When I was studying in art school, I was mostly making sculptures; they were more or less human-sized and often revolved around the themes of daily life, theatricality, and storytelling. At the end of my MFA, I had to write a thesis, and I chose fiction as the format, ending up writing a short detective story. In writing, I have to develop plausible situations and plots, with characters and hints leading me to a much more figurative visual practice. That is how I began to paint as a way to deliver scribbles for scenarios.

In my previous experience writing and making sculptures, I already developed an interest in the dynamics of curiosity, witnessing, hiding, and desire. Making small colorful objects seems to trigger these interactions. That's why I'm painting on such a small scale—the works function as lures. There is also a kind of modesty in small works that is very interesting to work with.

MP:

While you typically work in miniature for your paintings, your sculptures tend to be life-size or even larger. How do you find that your practices in painting and sculpture inform and influence one another?

Varin:

Paintings are part of my daily practice, while sculptures have now become props or scenography for specific exhibitions. The life-size figures I create function as sculptural or installation elements that integrate the viewer's scale and movement; they trigger a back-and-forth dynamic between the characters in the painted scenes and the viewers in the exhibition space.

## MOU PROJECTS (MP):

你是如何發現並選擇微縮繪畫作為你的藝術媒介的？最初是什麼促使你創作如此小尺寸的作品？

Sophie Varin (Varin):

在藝術院校學習時，我主要進行雕塑的創作。這些雕塑通常是真人大小的尺寸，圍繞着日常生活、戲劇性和故事性等主題展開。在碩士畢業前，我需要寫一篇畢業論文，於是我選擇了小說的形式，產出了一篇短篇偵探小說。在寫作時，我必須構想出合理的場景和情節，而其中的人物和線索將我引向了更加具象的視覺實踐。由此，我便開始為小說中的場景配上一些塗鴉，並因此開始了我的繪畫創作。在我以往的寫作和雕塑實踐中，我已經對好奇心、觀看方式、躲藏和欲望之間的互動產生了興趣，而這些色彩斑斕的微縮作品似乎更能觸發這些互動。這就是我為什麼要創作如此小尺寸的畫作——它們起到了引誘觀者的作用。微縮作品中還暗藏着一種謙遜的態度，這在創作中也十分有趣。

MP:

儘管你的繪畫作品通常是非常小幅的，你的雕塑作品往往卻是真人大小，甚至是更大的。你認為的你的繪畫和雕塑實踐是如何相互影響的？

Varin:

繪畫是我日常創作的一部分，而雕塑現已成為特定展覽的道具或背景。作為雕塑或裝置元素，我創作的真人大小的人物將觀者帶入展覽中，使繪畫作品中的人物和展覽空間中的觀者有了一種相互呼應的關係。

MP:

展覽中的長幅橫向作品，以其延展的形式和抽象的元素，令人聯想到傳統山水美學的寧靜。你是如何萌生在畫布上創作全景圖像的想法的？



Wait for It 1, 2023  
Oil on velvet  
7 × 5 cm

《等待之時 1》· 2023  
絨緞布面油畫  
7 × 5 cm



Low Resolution, 2023  
Oil on cotton  
7 × 60 cm

《低清成像》· 2023  
棉布油畫  
7 × 60 cm

MP:

The long horizontal landscape paintings in the exhibition evoke feelings of tranquility and a traditional shanshui aesthetic thanks to their expansive format and gestural elements. How did you develop the idea to create panoramic views on canvases?

Varin:

I usually paint in portrait format. However, most of the gallery walls at MOU PROJECTS are longer than they are high, which renders a strong sense of horizontality. I often paint landscapes and try to depict various situations of observation. For me, this exhibition gives me the perfect opportunity to focus on the horizons.

I generally like to foster ambiguous moments. This time, I'm interested in sightseeing at mountain tops. These horizontal landscape paintings radiate meditative and quiet feelings but also deliver a sense of helplessness or emptiness. In reality, you can't really see panoramic sights in one glimpse; you must turn your head to have the full view. Yet, in the painting, you have it all in one shot. That's how I began questioning the duality of expectation and satisfaction in these panoramas. Hiking can put you in a particular mental and physical state—sometimes reaching the top is a reward, an accessible fantasy. In my works, the painted sights are enigmatic in their stillness and lack of resolution: you are unsure whether your expectations can be fulfilled or not.

MP:

In this exhibition, you showcase a series of bronze reliefs that have never been shown before. Could you share the challenges you encountered while working with bronze? Additionally, how did you benefit from experimenting with this particular material?

Varin:

I have been attempting to make bas-reliefs for a while now, as a way to give shapes

Varin:

我通常以縱向格式繪畫，但是 MOU PROJECTS 的牆壁大多都較為開闊卻並不高，因此有一種強烈的水平感。我經常畫風景畫，並嘗試描繪出我觀察到的各種情景。對我來說，是次展覽是一次專注於這些全景風景圖像的絕佳機會。我通常喜歡營造模糊的瞬間，這一次，我對在山頂觀景很感興趣。這些水平方向的風景畫營造出冥想和寧靜的氛圍，但也傳遞出一種無助或空虛的感覺。在現實生活中，你不可能一眼就看到真正的全景，你必須轉動視角才能將捕捉全部圖像。然而，在畫中，你卻能將它盡收眼底。就這樣，我開始質疑全景圖中期待和滿足的雙重性。徒步會讓人處於一種特殊的精神和身體狀態——有時到達山頂是一種獎勵，是一種觸手可及的幻想。在我的作品中，畫中的景物因其靜止和模糊的呈現方式而顯得神秘莫測：你無法確定自己的期望是否能夠被實現。

MP:

在是次展覽中，你呈現了一系列從未展出過的青銅浮雕油畫。你能否分享一下創作這一系列作品時遇到的挑戰？此外，你是如何從這種材料和形式的實驗中獲益的？

Varin:

我嘗試製作浮雕已經有一段時間了，這是一種賦予繪畫立體形態的方式，也是一種深入研究故事重述的方式。我的一個朋友在他家中開了一個小型鑄造坊，由此我有了製作青銅浮雕的機會。我也很想嘗試在青銅器上體現油畫顏料的透明度和光澤度。製作這些作品的經歷很愉快，今後我也會更多地嘗試這種形式。

MP:

展覽空間內有兩個暖色調的房間，仿佛將觀者帶入了另一個維度。你為何選擇這樣的環境設置呢？它又暗示了何種敘事呢？





to paintings and delve into the material's history of retelling tales. A friend of mine put up a small foundry in his home, and that's how I got the opportunity to do it. I was also curious to try oil paint on bronze to work with transparency and shininess. It was a pleasure to make them, and I will do it more often in the future.

MP:

The exhibition features two warmly lit rooms that seem to transport viewers to another dimension. What inspired this choice of setting and what narrative possibilities does it suggest?

Varin:

This decision was partially defined by the architectural property of the space—two rooms facing each other across the main gallery space. I want the paintings to be infused with a warm heaviness as if one wakes up from a nap that went on for too long or amid a hot summer that leaves you in a dreamy state of slumber. The two warmly lit rooms represent stages of sleep, interrupted by the bright gallery space in between. The color of the lights also strongly impacts how one experiences the colors of the paintings.

MP:

The exhibition has implied narratives that do not appear to provide a clear resolution or storyline. This sense of ambiguity is consistent throughout your body of work. Could you please elaborate on the thought process behind this intentional approach?

Varin:

I like to play around with the state of ambiguity in my work. Although it is often considered an uncertain situation or a dilemma, I try to embrace ambiguity as a space to inhabit. Rather than seeking polarized and conclusive outcomes, I intentionally construct scenarios that invite questioning of truth, definitive answers, and

Varin:

這一部分的設計是由畫廊空間的建築特性決定的——這兩個房間面對面出現在主空間的兩側。同時，我希望這兩個房間內的畫作呈現一種溫暖而沈重的感覺，給人一種仿佛從歷時很久的小憩中醒來的錯覺，或是身處一個讓人昏昏欲睡的炎熱閉日。兩個燈光溫暖的房間代表了睡夢的階段，而中間明亮的畫廊空間則打破了這種睡眠。燈光的顏色也強烈影響着觀者對畫作色彩的感受。

MP:

展覽中似乎有許多隱晦的敘事，卻沒有明確的故事情節。這種模稜兩可的感覺在你的作品中始終如一。你能否闡釋一下這種有意的做法背後的思考過程？

Varin:

我喜歡在作品中玩弄模糊的狀態，雖然它通常被認為是一種難以抉擇的情況或進退兩難的境地，但我卻嘗試將它作為一種可以自在棲息的狀態。我並不追求兩極的、確定的結果，而是有意構建情景，邀請人們對真理、明確答案和現有的準則提出質疑。我喜歡把我的畫作看作是摒棄了固有的寓意和道德說教的寓言故事，從而給觀者留下自由解讀和思考的空間。

MP:

你的藝術實踐與小說創作有着緊密的聯繫，這從你對創造令人好奇和探究的場景的興趣中可見一斑。在你看來，視覺藝術與文學之間的內在聯繫是什麼？另外，你可以分享一部你最近讀過的有趣的小說嗎？

Varin:

也許我的繪畫創作在很大程度上要歸功於我的寫作經歷。事實上，正是通過寫小說，我找到了將我的視覺創作建立在簡化的、能產生共鳴的具象表現和提煉的動作基礎上的動力，而不是一下子



Accessible Refuge, 2023  
Oil on cotton  
7 × 10 cm

《世內桃源》，2023  
棉布油畫  
7 × 10 cm





Welcome Welcome 1, 2024  
Found clothing, foam, fishing baits  
170 × 60 × 40 cm

《歡迎歡迎 1》, 2024  
回收衣物、泡沫橡膠、魚餌  
170 × 60 × 40 cm

prescriptive guidelines. I like to think of my paintings as enchanting fables that eschew a fixed moral, leaving room for interpretation and playful contemplation.

MP:

Your artistic practice is strongly interconnected with fiction writing, as evidenced by your interest in creating scenes of inquiry and moments of curiosity. What, in your opinion, is the underlying connection between visual arts and literature? Additionally, could you tell me about a novel that you have recently read and found interesting?

Varin:

Perhaps my journey into painting can be largely attributed to my writing. In fact, it was through writing fiction that I found the impetus to ground my visual art in simplified and relatable figurative representation and distilled action—a departure from the inclination to convey everything all at once. In both writing and painting, I try to generate dynamics one can follow through and get attracted. Both mediums enable me to meld the generic and the specific, the recognizable and the strange. Yet they require very different methods, making it hard for me to work on both simultaneously. I am currently reading *The Peregrine* by J. A. Baker. The book is more like a diary than a novel, following the writer's obsessive account of peregrine falcons' whereabouts in eastern England. Upon the book's initial publication, there arose doubt as to whether J. A. Baker had truly witnessed the sights he vividly describes or if he had merely indulged in fantastical imaginings. That's what I like about the book.

MP:

Which artists have had a significant impact on your painting and sculptural practices?

將所有要表達的東西傳達出來。在寫作和繪畫中，我都努力創造出可以吸引着人們探究下去的情節。這兩種媒介都能讓我將一般與特別、熟悉與陌生融為一體。然而，寫作和繪畫所需要的方法卻截然不同，因此我很難同時進行這兩種創作。我目前正在閱讀 J. A. Baker 的《遊隼》。這本書與其說是小說，倒不如說是一本日記，作者執著地記錄了遊隼在英格蘭東部的行蹤。該書最初出版時，人們懷疑 J. A. Baker 是否真的親眼目睹了他生動描述的景象，還是只是沉浸在天馬行空的想象中，而這正是我喜歡這本書的原因。

MP:

哪些藝術家影響了你的繪畫和雕塑創作呢？

Varin:

如果只能提一位藝術家的話，那可能是意大利畫家 Stefano di Giovanni (約 1392–1450)。不過，我傾向於將各方面的影響融合在一起，從文藝復興時期的繪畫和中世紀禱書中的微型畫，到九十年代的電子遊戲和動畫片，甚至是吳宇森的電影中透過鄰居窗戶「偷窺」的景象。

MP:

你可以分享一下你未來的藝術創作計劃嗎？

Varin:

在是次充實的展覽結束後，我將專注於接下來的小說寫作和展覽項目。我計劃寫一本偽日記，記錄我創造的業余偵探形象 J.P. Gutti 的自我放縱、質疑人生的經歷。這本書將以第一人稱視角繪製新的插畫，並由 The Steidz 出版。這本書與我即將於 9 月在巴黎 Galerie Sultana 舉辦的展覽相輔相成，展覽將圍繞關於歡聚、盛宴、饑餓和勇敢的集體故事展開。在此之前，「Out Run」將於 5 月在那不勒斯的 Solito 畫廊開幕，這是我與 Antoine Carbonne 共同創作的虛構藝術家 Jean-Michel 的個人展覽。

Varin:

If I were to name one, it could be the Italian Renaissance painter Stefano di Giovanni (c. 1392–1450). However, I tend to blend influences from a variety of sources, ranging from Italian Renaissance paintings and medieval miniatures found in books of hours, to landscapes from 90's video games and cartoons or even the zoomed-in glimpses into neighboring apartments reminiscent of John Woo's Hong Kong movies.

MP:

Could you elaborate on your plans for your future artistic endeavors?

Varin:

After this incredible and fulfilling exhibition, I will focus on the upcoming book and exhibition projects. I plan to write a fake diary of J.P Gutti, an amateur detective I invented, as he goes through a self-indulgent, life-questioning meditation. The book will be illustrated by new paintings showing first-person points of view and will be published by The Steidz. It complements my upcoming exhibition at Galerie Sultana in Paris, slated to open in September, revolving around the theme of collective tales of conviviality, feast, hunger, and courage. Before that, "Out Run" will open in May at Solito in Napoli. It is a solo exhibition of paintings by Jean-Michel—an avatar artist created through my collaboration with the artist Antoine Carbonne.



*Poaching*, 2023  
Oil on bronze relief  
10 × 7 × 1 cm

《竊取》, 2023  
青銅浮雕油畫  
10 × 7 × 1 cm





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MOU PROJECTS

202, The Factory, 1 Yip Fat Street,

Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong

[mouprojects.com](http://mouprojects.com)

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