

## Huidi Xiang

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By Hindley Wang   May 21, 2025   Critics' Picks   Buffalo



Huidi Xiang, *maxim tomato: a soft landing*, 2025, stainless steel, pink onyx, resin, 14 1/8 x 14 7/8 x 5 1/4". Courtesy the artist and Yve Yang Gallery, New York

"The maxim of the tomato," Brooklyn-based artist Huidi Xiang's first institutional solo presentation, opens onto a sparse arrangement of the titular fruits, rendered in black.

A "maxim tomato" is a digital item from the Nintendo universe—something that provides instant recovery to injured or depleted characters in games series such as "Kirby" (1992–). This plump, gleaming red fruit—an extension of Kirby himself, who is also a bit zaftig but pink—functions like a Lacanian objet petit a. Several dark, stainless-steel versions of the berry rest low on the gallery's unleveled and weathered concrete floor, each one its own somber fortress of solitude.

In acts of quiet, comical violence, black pins held by disembodied hands pierce a number of Xiang's metallic comestibles, modeled after a common pincushion design. In *maxim tomato: a soft landing* (all works 2025), the fruit is sliced open, revealing a hollow interior. Inside is a Kirby-like creature, carved from pink onyx, with two white teardrops attached to its head. He does not appear injured by the needle cutting through his home, but exposed, vulnerable—like a chick freshly hatched from an egg. A series of bloodred washers securing the wall-mounted frieze *maxim tomato: genuine connection* seem to indicate harm. As does a huge bite is taken out of a tomato's stylized body—the residual tooth marks resemble tiny, sharklike fangs, turning the partially eaten object into something vaguely sinister.

Every puncture that materializes in Xiang's tomatoes has been scrupulously crafted, reifying a desire for healing and optimization. With a dose of gallows humor and a palpable tenderness, Xiang has transformed this seemingly ersatz symbol into one of great psychic complexity and care, giving it the kind of second life it provides to the characters throughout the digital realms it occupies.