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PRESS RELEASE

KOTARO NUKAGA

Exploring the Ambiguous Relationship Between Humans and Nature. Exhibiting Thirty Latest Works from Yuichi Hirako.



Yuichi Hirako, *Gift 01*, 2020 © Yuichi Hirako

Kotaro Nukaga is pleased to announce “GIFT” by Yuichi Hirako from January 23 through February 27, his first solo show at our space.

Using a wide range of media—mainly painting alongside drawing, sculpture, installation, sound performance and more—Hirako explores the boundaries between mankind and nature in modern society. His work has received accolades in Japan and internationally, particularly from Europe and Asia. In this exhibition he will be showing over 30 new paintings and sculptures.

Hirako was born in Okayama, a prefecture with a rich natural environment. Upon moving to London and finding its citizens’ preference for artificial nature to be at odds with his own, the theme of his work shifted to mankind’s relationship with nature. Seeking psychological comfort, we line our streets with trees, build parks and decorate our homes with potted plants, yet these are only patches being passed off as nature. What’s more, they require our care to survive, a far cry from their original state. According to Hirako, “I treat people, plants, nature and man-made objects as coequal. In human spaces, plants are kept under control and thrown away once they’ve lost their use. By having everything coexist on a level playing field, however, I’m intentionally blurring the boundaries between plant and human, the internal and the external.”

Hirako chose the title *GIFT* to emphasize the importance of shifting our values to reflect the unceasingly changing environment. For example, when we are gifted with beautiful flowers we display them proudly and give them water everyday to maintain their beauty. Yet once they’ve begun to wilt they’re discarded. Consider how we designate certain ancient trees as divine and enshrine them while selecting others for consumption based on our own experience of time and self-serving values. This concept is personified by the tree/man amalgams often found in his paintings. These characters embody the notion that sometime during development we all, regardless of race or gender, become professional judges, deciding “we need flowers because they make us happy” or “we don’t need weeds because they encumber the flowers.” These

seemingly cute and funny characters represent the human ego itself. It says something when even beautiful flowers, strategically evolved to spread their seeds and flourish, are fated to be cut down in their prime and disposed of when they no longer please us.

At first glance Hirako's paintings appear to depict impossible situations. Trees crawl freely around a living room, people's heads have been replaced with trees, and day is indiscernible from night. What may seem like a dreamscape completely divorced from reality is in fact an extension of our world as Hirako sees it, with fact and fiction bridged by aspects underlying our relationship with nature. Through this use of allegory, we are encouraged to rethink our lopsided values concerning the environment.

■Exhibition

Yuichi Hirako *GIFT*

Dates: January 23 – February 27

Open Hours: 12:00-18:00 ※Closed on Sun, Mon and National Holidays

※Dates and times are subject to change.

■Venue

KOTARO NUKAGA

TERRADA Art Complex 3F, 1-33-10 Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 140-0002, Japan

Access:8 - minutes walk from Tokyo Waterfront Area Rapid Transit Rinkai Line "Tennoz Isle Station" B Exit
10 - minutes walk from Tokyo Monorail Haneda Airport Line "Tennoz Isle Station" South Exit / 8 - minutes walk from Keikyu Line "Shinbanba Station" North Exit

■Profile

Yuichi Hirako (1982, Okayama) graduated from Wimbledon College of Art, UK, with a Fine Arts degree in painting. The central theme of his artistic practice is about the coexistence of plants, nature, and humans and the ambiguity and questions arising from the relationship. Deriving from a sense of strangeness felt from the concept of humans controlling plants to create "nature", as seen in indoor plants and street trees, he explores the boundaries between nature and humans in modern society through his works.

Hirako primarily paints, but his works vary in a wide range of mediums such as drawing, sculpture, installation, sound performance, and more. He has been actively exhibiting in Japan and internationally, including shows in Denmark, the Netherlands, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea.

■Works



Yuichi Hirako, *Seeding 01*, 2020, ©Yuichi Hirako



Yuichi Hirako, *Anchor 01*, 2020, ©Yuichi Hirako



Yuichi Hirako, *Nonchooser 01*, 2020, ©Yuichi Hirako



Yuichi Hirako, *Tree ring 01*, 2020, ©Yuichi Hirako



Yuichi Hirako, *Soil 01*, 2020, ©Yuichi Hirako

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