

## Atsushi Kaga

While I am touching the sleeping cat, I feel as if I know you were there

April 18 - July 1, 2024



Atsushi Kaga "While I am touching the sleeping cat, I feel as if I know you were there"

2024, Acrylic, imitation gold leaf on canvas, 180 x 130cm, 6 panels

MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY will be holding a third solo exhibition of works by Atsushi Kaga from April 18 to June 1, 2024.

The exhibition consists of a series of six paintings on canvas arranged around a square framework of natural wooden pillars and a floor of tatami mats. Unlike Kaga's previous solo exhibitions, the paintings will not be displayed individually on the gallery walls, since the artist has designed them to be assembled as components of an interior space to create a distinct pictorial world. Kaga says that this installation-like concept was inspired by Ito Jakuchu's wall painting Grapes and Small Birds, which is on permanent display in the Shokoku-ji Jotenkaku Museum in Kyoto. Covering a single wall that incorporates staggered shelves and an alcove, Jakuchu's painting looks almost like an installation artwork. It was this aspect that caught Kaga's eye, and when planning this exhibition, he arranged his canvases similarly, as architectural elements. He also took into account that such wall paintings or screens would have originally been viewed from a lower eye level, and has adjusted the accent and position of the elements in these six new works to give them a lower center of gravity than typical Western paintings.

Kaga calls this lower perspective the "Ozu eye level," paying homage to the distinctive camera work of the renowned film director Yasujiro Ozu. An integral and natural outcome of the traditional floor-based Japanese lifestyle, this perspective is one of the elements of formal aesthetics that are gradually being shed in present-day Japan.

"One of my aims with this exhibition was to create an artwork that becomes one with the living space by lowering the viewer's eye level," says Kaga. "I figured that this would enable my work to break free from the bounds of Western art history and instead be appreciated from the perspective of the history of Japanese art. I hope that this exhibition will offer a very different viewing experience — physically, sensorially, and also intellectually — from that of paintings hung on a white wall."

Looking at the series as a whole, Kaga has loosely scattered a multitude of enchanting elements — exquisitely rendered seasonal flowers and foliage, allegorical animals, hints of a gentle breeze — across a free-flowing landscape encompassing spring and summer. The two canvases on the left feature a black cat and a fox looking up at the sky in spring-like scenery bathed in light imparted by a background coating of brass leaf. The two middle canvases are populated by cats floating in mid-air and camellias in full bloom, while the two canvases on the right feature two deer howling into a pitch black night, with the mysterious fox that puts in frequent appearances in Kaga's recent works reappearing here too before disappearing into the night. The way the animals gaze upward hints at a boundless universe stretching out beyond, while seated on the ground just shy of the center of the installation, the artist's rabbit character, Usachi, quietly looks out onto the passing world with a deadpan expression as if absorbed in the colors and beauty of the nature therein. While the world depicted in the work projects a universality imbued with a sense of peace and plenty, the various mystical elements contrive to tell a quiet tale tinged with both intimacy and sadness.

The title of this exhibition, While I am touching the sleeping cat, I feel as if I know you were there, also hints at yet another mystery, the warmth of a cat to the touch evoking thoughts of someone dear to you but currently beyond your reach. The radiance and fragrant breezes of spring and early summer make this an ideal time to experience the very special pictorial space presented here by Atsushi Kaga.



Atsushi Kaga While I am touching the sleeping cat, I feel as if I know you were there (detail)

#### <Exhibition Overview >

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April 18 - June 1, 2024

Closed on SUN, MON and National Holidays

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#### Atsushi Kaga

1978 Born in Tokyo, Japan

2001 Diploma at Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, Cork

2005 BA in Fine Art, National College of Art and Design (NCAD), Dublin

#### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2024 "While I am touching the sleeping cat, I feel as if I know you were there" MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY

2023 "Here I am" mother's tankstation, Dublin

2023 "Things Will Carry Us Through" Tanya Leighton, Berlin

2022 "your memorabilia floats in the air" mother's tankstation, London

2021 "It always comes; a solace in the cat." MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY

2020 "Melancholy with vegetables surrounded by miracles" mother's tankstation, Dublin

2018 "The Search For Languorous Magic" MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY, Tokyo

2015 "I am here with you" Jack Hanley Gallery, New York