

Yu Nishimura

Scene of beholder

16.10.20 — 21.11.20

In Yu Nishimura's first exhibition at the gallery, which is also his first exhibition in Europe, there are thirteen paintings, all produced in 2020. The smallest one, *Arts and Crafts* measures 27.3 × 22 cm, and the largest *Thicket*, 259 × 182 cm. What immediately comes across is an effect of superimposition of several layers, which provokes a slight misalignment. This shift that occurs in his painting (literally) blurs the frontiers between realism (related to photographic mimesis) and abstraction (the universe inherent to an image), between the foreground and the background, and between the different points of view from which the spectator looks at the painting. Though we are looking at flat pieces, hung on the wall, the space in the centre is not empty; it is animated by what is at work in the paintings and between the paintings. The demarcation zone between the inside and the outside is here intentionally ambiguous.

Talking about his painting, he wrote: "It is an entrance; I cannot move forward unless a dog is more than a dog, or a cat is more than a cat." An entrance is a starting point, the place where an action begins. In the theatre, it is also the moment when an actor enters the stage. When Nishimura is asked about his pictorial influences, he cites Takuma Nakahira, the Japanese photographer and photographic critic (1938-2005), who wrote the radically revolutionary book *For a Language to Come*, which contains, without any logic, a succession of blurred cityscapes, fragments of streets and passers-by. He defines his style as *are*, *bure*, *boke* (raw, blurred, unfocused).

It may be remembered that a convention in Japanese painting, at least until the 17th century, was a form of perspective called "bird flight", in other words from on high and slightly diagonally. This is the technique of *fukinaki yatai* (literally "roofless"). Houses without roofs were painted so as to make visible what was happening inside. This implies ambiguous compositions between the interior and the exterior, and between the foreground and the background. Progressively, under western influence, central (linear) perspective gained ground, while in western painting "Japanism" abolished any fixed point of view, which gave the spectator a "face-on" position to the canvas. And it also abolished the background. For Nishimura, this synthesis is disturbing, and it emphasises the effect of empathy which is brought into play, with these landscapes, animals and portraits. Because he has also associated the history of perspectives, like any individual in our digital age, with an image in motion. Perhaps he is putting us on the track of a "post-image", so that we cannot know if it triggers in us a depiction, a memory, an appearance or a disappearance. The title of Yu Nishimura's exhibition is *Scene of Beholder*. It is also a promise of his pictorial narrative.