

Gabriel Hartley

“Mosslight”

August 26 (Sat) - September 23 (Sat), 2023

Wed - Sat 12:00-19:00 (Closed Sun, Mon, and Tue)



「Mosslight」 2023
ink pigment and binder on Tenjiku cotton, 190.5 x 280 cm

“The paintings are made horizontally, unstretched on the floor. Working in this way the largest two canvases take up almost the entirety of the artist’s studio space.

Traces can be seen of the tatami in the cotton; which read not only as small brush marks, but also as windows, raindrops, people. As one looks at the paintings, different elements, forms, and colours come in and out of focus. Comparable to remembering an event, or perhaps misremembering.

The paintings in this series all start from a drawing, or from one of the artist’s painted photographs of moments recorded in Tokyo; the shadows cast by telephone wires, a bridge in Shinjuku gardens, light hitting a moss garden, a person reclining at a sento, a balcony in a tower block, a group of pruned pine trees in a front garden.

The image is often lost, sometimes refound - other drawings and images are allowed to enter the arena as the painting progresses, most importantly though - the logic of the painting is allowed to take over. One layer/action/ decision takes its cue in relation to the last action/ layer. The painting is a balancing act between finding and following leads and turning back and remembering very particular observed moments. The black ink complements this thinking. Applied in different levels of opacity, it acts to simultaneously conceal and reveal previous moments in the painting. It is similar to being in a dark space where as your eye adjusts to the darkness more forms and colours reveal themselves.

To take ‘Mosslight’ as an example. The paint has been applied from both back and front of the canvas, seeping through the very thin Tenkuji cotton to leave a floating memory of the original marks. The flowing black line dissolves into the printed white marks derived from the tatami floor. As one’s eye adjusts the green and yellow forms start to become more and more visible. They are hard to name, but have the distinct presence of something looked at, something registered by the mind. It is almost impossible to decipher which layer was painted when during the process of making.

These paintings ask us to make decisions about where to look - which element to focus on - only to usher us quickly away along other paths.”

Gabriel Hartley:

Born in London, UK in 1981. He holds a BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Fine Art from the Royal Academy Schools, London. Selected exhibitions include “Skies”(solo) Seventeen (2022, London), “ [FIGUR] by HAGIWARA PROJECTS” CADAN Yurakucho (2022, Tokyo), “Postcards” (solo) im labor (2021, Tokyo), “Waterwood” (solo) Foxy Production (2019/2020, New York), “The Sleeping Procession” CASS Projects, Cass Sculpture Foundation (2018, Goodwood, England), “Landscapes” (solo) Seventeen (2018, London), “A Rose Without a 'why', It blooms because it blooms” Carl Freedman Gallery (2016, London) etc.