

# HIGH ART

Daisuke Fukunaga  
*Self-Meditation*  
11.05.2024 - 14.06.2024

What is it that is deserving of one's time? To which one focuses their inordinate amount of attention and labor upon? Four years ago in 2020, Daisuke Fukunaga painted a painting of himself in the midst of his day job as a Google mapper. The painting depicts Fukunaga caught in a brief and rare moment of enjoying his (supplemental) work, work that had to be done out of a necessity to survive. One can imagine the hours of labor the artist spent in the studio painting himself 'mapping Tokyo' during breaks from the hours of labor of actually 'mapping' Tokyo. The painting is called, 'Crawler in the city'.

Daisuke Fukunaga paints pictures of people who work. Perhaps as a means to ground his subjects in quotidian reality or perhaps to forge a connection to a history of modern painting. More specifically, the artist paints pictures of people in moments of break from work. Figures resting, in leisure, or caught in an instant of poignant grace. In a way, these moments exist in contrast to work itself, to the seemingly unending drive of production, progress, and speed that defines work today. They are pictures that are as mundane as they are fantastical, they depict the reality of the world in which we live in but imagine it in scenes of buoyancy, effervescence, sheer beauty, and calm.

In *Self-Meditation*, his inaugural exhibition at High Art in Paris, Fukunaga inhabits the gallery space with a coterie of beautiful labourers. Through these figures, one can gather not only the impression of these unremarkably remarkable moments, but one can trace the artist's own lived labor, experiences, and influences.

For additional insight, Fukunaga has provided his words on selected works:

## *A man and fragrant olive, 2023*

The inspiration for this work came from a postcard of Bonnard's bathroom painting that had previously been pasted on the wall of my studio, rotated 90 degrees from its original horizontal position, and pasted vertically. The image of this upside-down figure felt very natural to me. I wanted to free myself from the gravity of the image of the painting looking down from above (following Baselitz, of course) and have the feeling of being suspended in the air, falling upside down. As I was born in October, I am nostalgic for the sweet fragrance of olives blooming.

## *Stopping woman, 2024*

The Ukiyoe genre of Bijinga, or portraits of beautiful women, was one of the most popular genres of Ukiyoe in Japan in the 17th century, and among them is the gazing back Bijinga, which depicts a woman looking backward. In this painting a young cleaning lady in vivid work clothes briefly pauses in an underground station, capturing an arresting moment.

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## *Silent meeting (in front of Hundertwasser), 2023-24*

The buildings in the background of this painting are (Friedensreich) Hundertwasser's waste incineration plants in Osaka, Japan, the only two waste incineration plants of Hundertwasser's architectural design, one in Osaka and one in Vienna. I happened to see the building of Hundertwasser when I visited Vienna some years ago. It has remained in my memory for a long time, and I actually went to see the one in Osaka last year. His architecture is very decorative and dreamy, but I think the darkness of the night makes the industrial aspects of his work stand out and elicits a calm and eerie atmosphere.

## *Lying woman, 2023*

This landscape is quite specific and very close to my own home, which is my very favorite place. The buildings depicted in the back are a garbage incineration facility, a group of apartment complexes, and a very large vacant lot. It is a very empty and beautiful space. This landscape is like a vessel that allows me to recall the memories of when I used to work at a garbage incineration facility.

## *Falling asleep, 2024*

This painting depicts a construction site security guard taking a nap in a rest area. There are paintings of people sleeping all over the world, and this painting is also related to a modern Japanese painter named Tatsuo Takayama (1912-2007). I hear Takayama was strongly influenced by Gauguin when he was young, and I learned about this after the painting was completed. Modern Japanese painters are often heavily influenced by modern European painting. I, myself, have also been heavily influenced by such paintings. I have the impression that the construction site is decorated with decorative calendars, posters, and objects of good luck, perhaps in order to soften the rustic atmosphere. The postcard I chose for this work was a Gauguin postcard that I had been pasting in the bathroom for a long time because I somehow liked it. It was a very nice coincidence.

Daisuke Fukunaga was born in 1981 in Tokyo, Japan and continues to live and work in Tokyo, Japan. His recent solo exhibitions include: Antenna Space, Shanghai, China; Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, USA; Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo, Japan. His recent group exhibitions include: Hachioji, Tokyo, Japan; High Art, Arles, France; Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, USA; Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, USA; Sagamihara, Kanagawa, Japan; statements, Tokyo, Japan; XYZ collective, Tokyo, Japan; The Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu, Japan.

DAISUKE FUKUNAGA  
SELF MEDITATION  
11.05.2024 – 14.06.2024



1. *Lying man*, 2024

Oil on canvas  
194 × 130 cm / 76 3/8 × 51 1/4 in

2. *A man and fragrant olive*, 2023

Oil on canvas  
194 × 130 cm / 76 3/8 × 51 1/4 in

3. *Stopping woman*, 2024

Oil on canvas  
145.5 × 112 cm / 57 1/4 × 44 1/8 in

4. *Morning air*, 2023-2024

Oil on canvas  
41 × 41 cm / 16 1/8 × 16 1/8 in

5. *Three men*, 2024

Oil on canvas  
Top: 27 × 41 cm / 10 3/4 × 16 1/8 in  
Bottom: 80 × 130 cm / 31 5/8 × 51 1/4 in

6. *Silent meeting (in front of Hundertwasser)*, 2023-2024

Oil on canvas  
162 × 112 cm / 63 3/4 × 44 1/8 in

7. *Lost in thought*, 2023

Oil on canvas  
45.5 × 53 cm / 17 7/8 × 20 7/8 in

8. *Lying woman*, 2023

Oil on canvas  
194 × 259 cm / 76 3/8 × 102 in

9. *Falling asleep*, 2024

Oil on canvas  
130 × 194 cm / 51 1/4 × 76 3/8 in

10. *Closing eyes*, 2023-2024

Oil on canvas  
41 × 41 cm / 16 1/8 × 16 1/8 in