



Early Spring - Early Summer



Spaghetti and Shitballs (large) (2015), oil on canvas, 185.42 × 167.64 cm
 Courtesy of The Artist

Early Spring - Early Summer

JEFFREY ROSEN
 23 JULY 2024

Auto Erotic Farts (2015), *Sunset and Clouds* (2020), *Happy Hemorrhoids* (2015-16), *Plum Blossoms* (2022), *Elevated Penis #6* (2016), *February 2023 (sunrise)*, *Spaghetti and Shit Balls* (2015), *Early Spring - Early Summer 2024 (Compilation)*... Trevor Shimizu is not a polite painter; there is, in fact, an incidental aspect to the inarguable beauty of his ongoing series of landscape paintings. A reasonable framework through which to consider Shimizu's past work is the theoretical art writing of Milwaukee based artist David Robbins. The early period of Shimizu's practice offers a near perfect picturing of Robbins' posited *Concrete*

Comedy; a practice in which material art production is at the service of a joke - where the success of a work may be measured in relation to how genuinely funny it is. A studio assistant and friend to American artist Dan Graham, Shimizu's practice also carries with it traces of practice from the period of US conceptualism with which Graham was associated, particularly a sense of the importance of conceptual conceit; also of note is the influence of Graham's anarchic commitment to humor and engagement with the sub-cultural - the band Sonic Youth, skate parks, etc.

Shimizu's fidelity to Graham's embrace of play served, surprisingly, as incubatory, allowing him to develop a natural talent for a painting of maximum effect with minimum effort. Painting unencumbered by fuss; if legible enough as to be funny, the paintings were a success. Ironically, the painterly vocabulary that naturally followed served

as a point of inspiration for Shimizu's more serious-minded contemporaries and a younger generation of painters alike.

Recent Shimizu landscapes, painted superimpositions of season layered upon season, directly reference an unrealized work by Graham *Double Exposure* (1995-1996). In this piece, a semi-transparent photographic image of the very same landscape in which one of Graham's signature two-way-mirror pavilions was to be sited, was to be incorporated into the wall of the pavilion itself - thus further complicating a viewer's perception of themselves in relation to the work and the surrounding landscape as the seasons changed. In keeping with the semi-autobiographical nature of Shimizu's practice, the related double-landscape paintings offer both a visual record of the layering and passing of time as well as a sort of psychological self-portrait.



Auto Erotic Farts (2015), oil on canvas, 130 × 97 cm
 Courtesy of MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo

The present exhibition marks a return to form for Shimizu, a re-emergence of the foregrounding of unskilled elements that is less backward glancing than circular, enriching his now familiarly beautiful landscapes with a new degree of complexity. There are two strands to this return - as there are two bodies of work in the gallery; the serial group of six mid-sized *Early Spring - Early Summer* paintings as well as the monumental *Early Spring - Early Summer (Compilation)*. Concerned with perceptual change, each painting in the group of six is marked with a haphazardly painted monochromatic composition in pearlescent blue, violet, red, green or teal; these streaks only visible under particular, direct lighting conditions. Not fully realized, this gestural element suggests possible reads as diverse as celestial light and indistinct animal form - or both - and hearkens back to the early challenging interpretive pleasure offered by Shimizu's casually rendered figurative work; the game of trying to decipher just what it was that he was trying to paint. Complimentarily, the assertive *Early Spring - Early Summer (Compilation)* unflinchingly lays bare the extent to which even the most layered of Shimizu's compositions is, in essence, a sketch. In this, though, the strength of his practice is emphasized; one could hardly refer to (Compilation) as bare - yet the relatively reduced mark making arguably accentuates the abstract quality of Shimizu's landscapes while articulating the boldness of his position.



Elevated Penis #6 (2016), oil on canvas, 81 × 81 cm
 Courtesy of The Green Gallery, Milwaukee

It has been argued that Shimizu's importance lies in the literally dumb yet innovative expression - within the media of painting - of a tautology. Into an equation is plugged landscape and the output is a strangely beautiful painting. In the present body of work, he has taken this process a step further - placing into the box not just landscape painting; but, rather, his own landscape painting - upping the ante by going meta; articulating the obvious - Trevor Shimizu's paintings are indeed paintings. But there is genuine mystery embedded in the literalness of a tautological expression; coupling this with this a further element of self-reference results in a uniquely masterful work, one comprised of just-realized parts, each of which asserts its simple distinctness while also, somehow, stubbornly insisting on being perceived as whole.

ARTWORKS



Early Spring - Early Summer 2024 (Compilation)
2024
Oil on canvas
220.98 × 182.88 cm





Flowers and Weeds (1)
2024
Oil on canvas
101.60 × 134.62 cm

Early Spring - Early Summer 2024 (blue, green, red, violet, and teal)
2024
Oil on canvas
220.98 x 182.88 cm





Scrap Painting (Sunset)
2024
Oil on canvas
43.18 × 34.29 cm



Flowers and Weeds (2)
2024
Oil on canvas
101.60 × 134.62 cm

B. 1978, California, US
Lives and works in New York, US

Shimizu's practice is characterised by an impulsion; it's about quickly executing ideas that come to him in the most natural way possible. This impulsivity once took the form of autobiographical and sardonic works with an anti-painting bent, performances, or video paintings produced with lo-fi and off-the-shelf digital technologies at hand. The latter speaks to his dialogue with an earlier generation of video artists in New York, whose strategies he was directly exposed to during his tenure as a technical director at Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI). For the past five years, his interest in time-based media has informed a series of landscape paintings in which he reflects on the passing of time in his new situation in the Hudson River and its oscillations in light and scape.

With each work painted from memory, Trevor Shimizu's landscapes evoke contrast between the limitations of human recollection with the limitlessness of material possibility. Thin layers of colour present themselves with ambition through vast, expressive strokes that materialise representations of objects found in memory that still harbour potential to evolve into future existences. His gauzy images of flowers and leaves are the material reproduction of an imagination that leaves room to toy with an idea of a reality long gone. His technique aptly follows suit; his is an ambidextrous approach influenced by the performativity of abstract expressionism, coinciding with the choreographic and conceptual elements of the post-war period.

Trevor Shimizu's selected solo exhibitions include *2007-2017*, Christine Mayer, Munich, Germany (2024); *Past/Future*, Modern Art, London, United Kingdom (2024); *Cycles, 47 Canal*, New York, USA (2023); *Ying-Yang*, La Maison de Rendez-Vous, Brussels, Belgium (2022); *Trevor Shimizu: Performance Artist*, ICA Philadelphia at Kunsthalle, Lisbon, Portugal (2019); *Trevor Shimizu*, Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich, Germany (2017); and *Gas*, Misako & Rosen, Tokyo, Japan (2015). Group exhibitions include *Toward the Celestial: ICA Miami's Collection at 10 Years*, Miami (2024); *The Moth and the Thunderclap* at Stuart Shave Modern Art, London (2023); *Minimalism-Maximalism-Mechanissmmm* at Art Sonje Center, Seoul,

South Korea (2022); *Crumple*, curated by Emily Watlington at Vin Vin Gallery, Vienna (2020); *Condo Shanghai 2019* at AIKE, Shanghai (2019); *Downtown Painting*, presented by Alex Katz at Peter Freeman Inc., New York (2019); *Tiger-Poems and Songs for Hurricanes*, curated by Andrés González, Travesía Cuatro at Guadalajara, Mexico (2018); Whitney Biennial at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014); *New Western Art*, curated by Frank Stuermer at Halele Timco, Temeswar, Romania (2013); *The First Show, II: David Berezin, Michael Guidetti, Trevor Shimizu* at Jancar Jones Gallery, LA, California (2011); and *Here's Why Patterns* at MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan (2008). His work is part of the public collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida, amongst others.

B. 1978, Texas, US
Lives and works in Tokyo, Japan

Texas born, Japan-based, Jeffrey Ian Rosen is co-founder, together with his wife, Misako, of MISAKO & ROSEN, a contemporary art gallery located in Tokyo, Japan. Rosen is co-president of the board of NADA (New Art Dealers Alliance), a member of the IGA (International Galleries Alliance) as well as a board member of Contemporary Art Library. Together with Tokyo-based artist run space, XYZ Collective, Rosen's gallery co-organized two editions of Onsen Confidential, a Tokyo-based international gallery-share and hot spring retreat. Following the motto, "art is not a competition," Rosen believes in the need to develop alternative, commercially viable models to counter a profit-driven approach to the distribution of contemporary art within Japan and abroad.

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TREVOR SHIMIZU