

Group Exhibition *sky*

October 7 - November 5, 2023

12:00-19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National Holidays

Yutaka Kikutake Gallery is pleased to present *sky*, a group show featuring works by Kouichi Tabata, Kisho Mwkaiyama, Reina Mikame, Nerhol, and Takashi Kunitani. Since ancient times people have turned to the sky as an outlet for poetic expression and sentiment, while its constantly shifting qualities have continued to inspire various fields of human endeavors including art, literature, and music.

Through “shifts” in his surfaces, Kouichi Tabata has been experimenting with ways to introduce dynamic elements to his paintings. For this exhibition, we are presenting three new paintings which depict a brilliant summer sky. This subject marks a soaring, expansive shift in the artist’s perspective when compared to his usual focus on everyday objects such as cups, cutlery, fruit, or cheese. Against a blue backdrop, the white clouds of these paintings straddle two surfaces, allowing the viewer to consider various “shifts” in time, sight, and consciousness.

Reina Mikame’s work, which investigates the relationship between perception and image using various elements such as line, color, light, and temperature, also addresses painterly expressions of the sky. This exhibition features two paintings from a series of recent work. The first, *Enduring Surface of Water* (2023), further explores ideas from the artist’s most recent solo exhibition at Yutaka Kikutake Gallery entitled *Embracing the Light*. The second painting, *Back to Front* (2023), is made with an awareness of the possibility of perceiving the landscape in three dimensions. These new paintings, characterized by the sky and surrounding scenery reflected in puddles and glass surfaces, further emphasize the switching that occurs between formal surfaces in Mikame’s work. This awareness of issues regarding all aspects of a given landscape, including the spaces above, below, and around, is also connected to the experiment conducted in *Side of the landscape* (2019).

Nerhol’s *water surface* (2022) is, as the title suggests, a piece about perceiving the surface of water. Nerhol, an artist duo formed in 2007 by Ryuta Iida and Yoshihisa Tanaka, have presented works made by carving into numerous, overlapping layers of printed images taken from videos. In recent years, the duo has made use of sandpaper and other tools to expand ways of working into these surfaces. The piece displayed for *sky* creates a uniquely appealing balance between materiality and image by using the act of carving to amorously integrate the texture of the paper with the printed reflection of the sky in the surface of the water.

On the gallery floor, visitors can find a blue neon sculpture entitled *Spaceless Space: UPSIDE DOWN* (2023). This sculptural piece is by Takashi Kunitani, an artist working in a wide range of visual expression who adopts materials commonly found in our daily lives to create both flat and three-dimensional work, as well as installations that use

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neon and mirrors. With a thematic focus on the relationship between people and spaces, Kunitani uses his own breath to form the neon tubes in his work, and believes that both the viewer and the space in which a piece is placed mutually influence each other. The embodied experience of place evoked by his work in fact contributes to its completion, and reflects the inclusive perspective Kunitani has of his practice.

Kisho Mwkaiyama's canvases, with their striking colors that seem to blur the light, bring a multifaceted perspective to this exhibition. Mwkaiyama spent his childhood on Mt. Koya, a place lined with esoteric Buddhist temples. His experiences with the tranquil surroundings and its Buddhist art has formed the basis of his work. This exhibition features a painting with round shapes of shifting hues that wax and wane and recall the moon in the nighttime sky. Other work in this exhibition is characterized by the distinct pale tones of the canvas, which, along with its delicate surface that seems to shift depending on the viewer's angle, evoke a peaceful sensation of staring at the sky.

Using the sky as a thematic focus, we have organized an exhibition of outstanding work by five artists represented by Yutaka Kikutake Gallery, including brand new work by Tabata, Mikame, and Kunitani. From the sky above our heads, to concepts of open space and emptiness, we encourage you to see for yourself the ways in which these contemporary artists have responded to this timeless subject.