

Kai Matsumiya

Stephen Felton

Midnight Sun | Sun Worshipper

February 6th – March 15th

Opening Reception: Friday, February 6th (6-8pm)

Kai Matsumiya presents *Midnight Sun | Sun Worshipper*, a new body of work by Stephen Felton, created in collaboration with Paul-Aymar Mourgue d'Algue. The exhibition brings together four large-scale paintings and one smaller work that explore cycles of illumination and obscurity, devotion and excess, endurance and exposure.

Felton's practice has long been concerned with how symbolic systems embed themselves in material and, often, primitivist form. In *Midnight Sun | Sun Worshipper*, these concerns are pushed toward a cosmological register. The works oscillate between reverence and exhaustion. The sun appears not only as a source of life and orientation, but as an object of fixation, submission, and relentless demand.

Developed through an ongoing dialogue with Mourgue d'Algue, the exhibition resists a singular narrative. Instead, it stages a series of propositions, formal, conceptual, and affective, concerning orientation toward an absolute light. Light is treated not as clarity but as pressure; duration becomes both devotional and cautionary.

The "midnight sun," a phenomenon in which daylight refuses to recede, functions here less as a metaphor for abundance than as a condition of suspension. Rest, closure, and shadow are indefinitely deferred. Across the works, solar forms are positioned asymmetrically, oriented toward the visual left, upper left, center, and lower right, and so on, each skewed within its own horizon.

Antonin Artaud's writings on the *Theatre of Cruelty* are instructive here. Artaud argued that forces of mediation, and especially text, deny action, advancing instead a theater in which meaning is felt rather than read. Protesting the interpolated title cards of the silent film era, he pointed to Kabuki theater as a counter-model, where a sequence of visual impressions moves nonlinearly from stage to stage, like a succession of disembodied shots. Felton's insistence on the visual image, stripped to contour and oriented across differing horizons, operates in a similar register: the image functions not as description, but as action, or moving operations.

Felton's works do not resolve these tensions. They hold them in place, between attraction and refusal, visibility and overexposure, asking how belief persists when its object no longer offers relief. In doing so, *Midnight Sun | Sun Worshipper* teases contemporary modes of commitment, productivity, and faith, where illumination itself becomes an instrument of strain. In the long run the sun still shines every day except when it doesn't.

During the exhibition, the gallery will host a screening of a film by Jia Zhangke, foregrounding temporal drift and disembodied narration, in which time itself becomes a point of departure within a collapsed present. That, and a cautious reading group of Emile Cioran's aphorisms in the *Trouble of Being Born*, i.e. "Amid your most intense activities, pause a moment to 'consider' your mind" -- this advice is surely not offered to those who 'consider' their minds night and day, and who thereby have no need to suspend their activities, for the good reason that they engage in none", "In order not to have to resolve them, I have turned all my practical difficulties into theoretical ones. Faced with the Insoluble, I breathe at last . . ."

KAI MATSUMIYA

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Bio: Stephen Felton is a Brooklyn-based painter whose long-standing studio practice approaches painting as an act of activation rather than execution, exploring how a minimal gesture can carry intensity while resisting mastery and resolution. His paintings have been presented in solo exhibitions at institutions including the Centre d'art Pasquart (Biel/Bienne, CH), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Confort Moderne (Poitiers, FR) and the MAMCO – Musée d'art moderne et contemporain (Geneva, CH), and in gallery contexts in Europe and the United States. Following his recent exhibitions Bugaboo Voodoo at the Centre d'art Pasquart (Biel/Bienne, CH) and Villa du Parc, (Annemasse, FR), a monograph on his work is currently in preparation, with contributions by Andrew Berardini and Paul Bove. His work is held in public collections including FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (FR), Centre Pompidou, and MAMCO.

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