

Already Dim, with the Yellow Fog | Ryo Ozeki

黄色い霧のためにもう薄暗い | 尾関諒

July 4 - August 1, 2026

18, Murata is pleased to present *Already Dim with the Yellow Fog*, a solo exhibition by Ryo Ozeki. This marks Ozeki's first exhibition with 18, Murata since participating in a group exhibition at its predecessor space, mumei.

Ozeki's paintings are populated by a variety of motifs—figures, animals, plants, fragments of landscape, and other disparate elements. Yet these motifs never converge into a singular theme or narrative. Instead, each remains within the pictorial field as an independent presence. Viewers may attempt to discover meanings or relationships among them, but Ozeki's paintings repeatedly suspend such efforts. Just as one begins to focus on a particular motif, the gaze is pushed back toward the painting as a whole.

Ozeki has found inspiration in the novels of Thomas Pynchon, where countless motifs and events coexist while continually relativizing one another, expanding the novel horizontally rather than converging toward a central subject. A similar sensibility can be found in Ozeki's paintings. The motifs function less as symbols than as catalysts that keep the pictorial field open and expansive. Each maintains its own presence while dispersing across the surface as part of a larger whole.

In recent years, Ozeki has shifted from oil paint to acrylic and from primed supports to untreated cotton fabric. His paintings have become increasingly characterized by faded marks, dry brushwork, and blurred edges, producing spaces and forms that are more ambiguous than before. Yet these changes were not guided by a predetermined concept. Rather, they emerged gradually through the process of making itself, as if the paintings were changing alongside transformations in the artist's own bodily sensibility.

An important point of reference in considering this development is *Early Spring* (1072), the celebrated Northern Song landscape painting by Guo Xi, which Ozeki encountered in Taiwan. The experience prompted him to reconsider ink painting not merely as a style, but as a question of the relationship between painting and the body. The faded and blurred surfaces that characterize his recent works appear less as references to ink painting than as manifestations of a relationship to painting that his own body has gradually arrived at.

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What recurs throughout Ozeki's practice is a continual dismantling of the frameworks that conventionally support painting: composition, subject matter, and narrative. Before these elements can function as organizing centers, they are repeatedly loosened and unraveled. What emerges from this process is not simply ambiguity of meaning, but a condition in which no single subject can be identified as the source of the painting's coherence.

One finds little in Ozeki's work that suggests an artist seeking to dominate the picture plane. The motifs and compositions do not appear arranged toward a predetermined conclusion. Yet neither do they drift aimlessly. Instead, they seem to move toward something that gradually takes shape through the relationship between painter and painting. What matters is not whether the artist guides the painting or the painting guides the artist, but the way this relationship itself propels the work forward.

The exhibition title, *Already Dim with the Yellow Fog*, is derived from a passage in a novel. Fog does not completely obscure vision. Rather, it softens contours, flattens distinctions of distance and hierarchy, and makes it difficult to determine what lies at the center and what remains at the periphery. Ozeki's paintings operate in a similar way. They do not conceal; they displace the center. Within them, motifs, meanings, and even the artist do not occupy privileged positions. They remain present, yet never fixed, continually shifting their place in relation to one another.

Ryo OZEKI

Born in Aichi, Japan, in 1986. Ozeki completed his MFA in Oil Painting at Tokyo University of the Arts in 2011. From 2011 to 2013, he studied at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design in Germany.

Selected solo exhibitions include *st a r l e s s* at CADAN Yurakucho, Tokyo (2025); *The Moon Rises on the Sleeve and Sea, Glasses...*, both at Sprout Curation, Tokyo (2022, 2020); and *Ryo Ozeki, Paintings* at Herrenhaus Edenkoben, Germany (2015).

Selected group exhibitions include *Itokai* at VOU, Kyoto (2026); *Itokai* at gallery TOH, Tokyo (2025); *Enotsuji* at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo (2023); *VOCA 2022* at The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo (2022); *The Shark* at the Goethe-Institut Tokyo (2021); *KRONO.PLY* at mumei, Tokyo (2019); *Ogawa no Mizukiri* at fresh, Saitama (2019); and *JPN_3* at Sprout Curation, Tokyo (2018).