

YOSUKE UENO

BUT BEAUTIFUL

August 4, 2018 - August 25, 2018

(LOS ANGELES, CA) - Thinkspace is pleased to present new works by Japanese artist Yosuke Ueno in *But Beautiful*. A self-taught painter based out of Tokyo, Ueno is known for his imaginative, character-driven worlds created in symbolic pursuit of innocence, hope, and positivity. These loosely narrative-based paintings evolve intuitively, the artist's approach to his compositions seldom premeditated, preferring instead to embrace the creative tangents of his subconscious. By allowing the process of painting to dictate the outcome, the works host a recurring cast of playful creatures, hybrids, and psychotropic fantasies. The artist, amidst these playful gestures, emerges as an inventor of psychedelic metaphor and cultural pastiche, freely combining references to everything from Japanese culture, ancient Greek mythology, Tokyo Street fashion and video games to Disney animation and the Western canon of art history. Driven by a genuine desire to capture our philosophical interconnectivity through art, Ueno's multicultural references coalesce through the unpretentious spontaneity of his imagination and a fundamental belief in the universality of a shared condition.

Thematically, Ueno's works are inspired by several influences, including the polytheistic tradition of Japanese Shinto, an ancient Japanese religion with a symbolic tradition of personifying the sacred energies of every living and inanimate thing as individual deities. According to this worldview, the universe is a complex amalgam of sacred, interdependent energies and personalities, and the tangible vessels of this plane, inhabited by the spectral presence of spirits and ancestry. The multiplicity of this theistic framework posits the coexistence of complex symbolic worlds on an infinite level, with entire microcosms existing in endlessly divided parts of the whole: an infinite precondition necessary to the surreal.

Other major influences apparent in Ueno's works include Japanese Animé, specifically Manga and Studio Ghibli, particularly the works of artist and filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, and theatrical pictorial conventions borrowed from art history, like the memento mori typical of the Baroque or the Northern Renaissance's penchant for *Vanitas*, both devices prophetic heralds emphasizing the inevitability of human mortality. Ueno has been known to appropriate classical works of art as well, directly reinterpreting them through the cast of his aesthetic; Johannes Vermeer's mid-seventeenth century, *The Milkmaid*, and Manet's Impressionist masterpiece, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, for instance, have both made appearances in Ueno's current repertoire.

Unexpected juxtapositions and cleverly contradictory elements emerge and interact within Ueno's worlds, while a surreal freedom conflates the ordinary restrictions of time and space in support of its fantasies. The ancient and the contemporary are continually recombined, existing on a timeless plane through the simultaneous referencing of the traditional and pop-cultural. The unexpected poetry of these alliances, much like the paintings themselves, reveal complex accretions of cultural sediment, the result of an unimpeded admixture of worlds. Anchored by the concept of Yin and Yang and the elemental balance of the light and dark forces it implies, Ueno's works strive to capture the plasticity and flux of these energetic constellations as they vie for poetic balance and positive resolve.

ALEX GARANT

VOYAGE OF THE INSOMNIAC

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(LOS ANGELES, CA) - Thinkspace is pleased to present *Voyage of The Insomniac*, featuring new works by Toronto-based, Canadian, Québécois artist Alex Garant. A painter known for her hyper-realistically rendered Op art portraits in which the faces and eyes of her subjects seem to skip their registers through image redoubling and superimposition, Garant is in search of the frenetic internal life of the sitter.

Not unlike the fugitive flicker of a screen or the spectral layering of multiple film exposures, her portraits reveal an unsettling multiplicity, shifting beneath the subject's surface. Garant creates faces that challenge the optics of identity and the reductive way in which it is perceived, with a visual gimmick that quite literally dislodges and displaces its coherence to produce skittering psychological images of fracture and ricochet.

Garant has long been fascinated by the interaction of patterns and symmetry, and the resulting optics of their graphic repetition and layering. Her portraits begin with a series of superimposed drawings based on her sitters, actual individuals, and muses from her life, and pushes the familiar confines of portraiture to a newly strange and re-sensitized place of sensory confusion. Her subjects and their energy seem to erupt from within, testing the tensile seams of the skin, the body, as always, an insufficient vessel for the incongruous experience within.

The artist's labor-intensive oil paintings are meticulously executed, often incorporating patterning or other graphic elements and motifs to produce reverberating visual effects. Her color palette ranges from the subtlety of realistic flesh tones to hyper-colored gradients, saturated pastels, and translucent gem-like washes of color. Her stylizations of these vertiginous portraits thrive in surreal kitsch to interrupt the apprehension of the subject, activating a process of invested viewing, that is of trying to "see" the person amidst the trappings of hallucinatory visual interference. The compelling and somewhat unsuccessful process of attempting to stabilize the image produces a fundamental feeling of perceptual instability, one that intensifies our stolen communion with an evasive subject.

TIKTOY

TIMEWARP

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Concurrently on view in the Thinkspace Project Room is *Timewarp*, featuring new works by Netherlandish artist TikToy in the artist's first solo project with the gallery. An anonymous street artist based out of Holland, TikToy creates playfully surreal character clocks, sculptures recalling psychedelic cuckoo fixtures. Inspired by the aesthetic freedom of street art, pop surrealism, and graffiti, his cartoon-inspired, sculptural interventions are staged throughout cities worldwide in unexpected recesses and its less-traveled nooks.

Recurring motifs and elements appear throughout TikToy's playful public sculptural practice, including the use of kinetic moving parts, often activated by external elements like wind, sun, and rain, and the presence of recurring characters. The artist has a preference for bright, high contrast, primary color based, graphic palettes, while a single looming eye tends to personify the clocks in a vaguely apotropaic way. The profusion of directional arrows, a motif TikToy had explored in earlier paintings, contributes to the inherent sense of referential chaos present in the handcrafted, wood objects themselves.

Fascinated by the inner workings of mechanical clocks since his youth, Tiktoy's timepieces are cleverly irreverent and existential. Like absurd reminders of time's inevitable passing, they range in feeling from celebratory trophy to confrontational marker, and even in extreme iterations as grotesque talisman. TikToy revels in the poignancy of a simple extended, object-based metaphor.