

**KISUNG KOH**  
**WAY OF LIFE II**

February 2 - February 23, 2019

**(Los Angeles, CA) - Thinkspace** is pleased to present new works by Southern Korean, Toronto-based artist and illustrator Kisung Koh in *Way of Life II*, the artist's first solo exhibition in the gallery's main space. Koh creates an allegorical universe through which to explore human loss and longing. The animal subjects in his paintings are laden, haunted, in a way, by a parabolic significance beyond their nature. Hyper-realistically rendered but staged in abstracted or imagined spaces, these creatures become emissaries of a spiritual dimension. Inexplicably prescient as both surrogates and revenants, they're split between past and present tenses, animated by memory, the insatiable pining of nostalgia, and the impossible projections of fantasy. In search of the spiritual in nature, Koh's emotionally heightened naturalism stages the animal as a manifest vehicle of the inexpressibly human.

Born in South Korea, Koh moved to Canada in 2006. His earliest childhood memories are of exploring rural settings where he grew up in Korea, a place that has fostered his lifelong love and attachment to nature. Koh studied illustration at Sheridan College in Toronto, Canada, graduating with a BAA in 2012, and works professionally as an illustrator in tandem with his fine art practice. He has exhibited extensively in group shows internationally, though *Way of Life II* is only Koh's third solo exhibition to date. Inspired by the intersection of nature, memory, and dream, his world of imagery is an extended metaphor for the personal and intrapsychic struggles in which our modern humanity is mired.

The artist describes an early experience of witnessing a family of deer at close distance in the wild, and the inexplicable 'presence' of the spiritual harbored within nature, often thought to be an ingress or gateway to the spectral or supernatural. The animal world attentively and lovingly brought to life by Koh, is steeped in this inscrutable magic. He accesses an ancient and collective impulse towards the enigmatic displacement of the human onto the animal found in myth and archetype; a storytelling convention and psychic tool shared, since time immemorial, across multiple locations of culture and place, perhaps due in part to the animal exemption from language and its self-conscious legacy of human bondage. Koh projects affect onto the creature threshold, dramatizing a world of animal proxies to explore mortal fear, loss, hate, dislocation, isolation, mercy, and love, in the absence of any divisive human ideologies of belonging.

In Koh's works, the inexpressible elisions of language are given a tangible, universally approachable guise in animal form. In previous bodies of work, he has explored elephants, deer, fox, owls, tigers, and has even dedicated an entire series of peaceful portraits to the itinerant polar bear, personally moved by the tragedy of his forced nomadism and rapidly receding habitats. Hoping to inspire pause, appreciation, and an increased awareness of our responsibility to protect the nature in our midsts, Koh's dramatically high contrast and yet simultaneously diffuse and dreamlike works in oil, oscillate between the idyllic and the unsettling.

In *Way of Life II*, Koh considers the necessity of interrelationships, and the fundamental exclusions and reciprocities established between creatures in wild coexistence to survive. Koh hopes to encourage the viewer to question the basis of these exchanges and to think about how we occupy its propositions. Are we aggressors and predators, or hapless victims? Or, as is more generally and imperfectly the case, a complex and unreconciled embodiment of the two.

**JANA & JS**

***NO BROKEN PROMISES***

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Concurrently on view in the Thinkspace project room is *No Broken Promises*, featuring new stencil and acrylic spray paint works by husband and wife duo Jana & JS. The French/Austrian pair, collaborating since 2007, has developed a stylized stenciling practice, often using site-specificity and portrait-based interventions into a city's architecture to produce unexpected encounters. Working with existing structures and found materials, the pair explores the relational tension between past and present, new and old, static and variable.

Based on their photography, these images often stage emotionally jarring or poignant figurative compositions, capturing unexpected moments of intimacy, disclosure, or tenderness in impossible or unlikely contexts. With the help of dramatic shifts in scale and contrast, the superimposition of these disarmingly vulnerable narratives onto the structurally immovable or permanent alters our perception of place. Ultimately, the pair modifies the reception of context by colonizing it with the meaningful assertions of personal experience. Jana & JS explore the position of the individual within the homogenizing expanse of the urban landscape and consider how that subjectivity must find a way to exist in spite of the potentially negating and impersonal nature of life in the modern city.

Concise and impactful, Jana & JS' works are bold, chromatic, and graphically circumscribed, recalling a quality of line essential to the language of print. Their insertion of the personal and emotive into the public domain disrupts its fundamental disavowal there, perhaps in the hopes of reassuring its continued expression and visualizing a politics of empathy.