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Press Release

SHINYA AZUMA
YOROSHIKU 夜露死苦

2 April - 6 May 2024

Galerie Marguo, 4 rue des Minimes, 75003 Paris



Galerie Marguo is pleased to announce the forthcoming exhibition YOROSHIKU 夜露死苦, an exhibition by Japanese artist Shinya Azuma. Opening on 2 April and on view through 11 May 2024, this exhibition marks Azuma's first solo show in Europe and with the gallery.

Featuring a suite of new paintings and wooden sculptures, the exhibition continues Shinya Azuma's exploration into the disorienting, desensitizing, and sometimes absurd reality of living in an endlessly connected world, mediated by screens and simultaneous virtual realities.

Born in the 1990s, Azuma is part of the hinge generation that grew up alongside the internet but still remembers a time before its total ubiquity. His practice probes the juxtaposition and tensions between the material and virtual, the particular and general, and the flattened hierarchy of images that sets depictions of violence and global tragedy alongside viral memes and puerile banality. Azuma culls his subjects from social media, video games, the news, as well as his own imagination and surroundings, rendering his compositions as drawings reminiscent of a dream journal before translating the selected sketches into paintings, shifting his focus to the creation of volumes and forms. Citing painters such as Pierre Bonnard and Philip Guston, who worked fluidly between abstraction and illustrative figuration, Azuma's application of pigment shifts between coarse brush strokes that only partially coat the surface and thick impasto, lending a strange materiality to the works evocative of the somatic experience of straddling the tangible and virtual.

Ranging in scale from medium formats to canvases over two meters long, these brightly colored tableaux unfurl like comic strips, or memes themselves, inducting us into a world of rogue humanoid

characters careening down roads, dragging poor victims by the hair, or brandishing medieval weapons. Humorous and at times self-deprecating, Azuma's subjects seem perpetually propelled in motion, imbuing the paintings with the blurred effect of endless scrolling, further and further down the feed. Indeed, screens and canvases become analogous in Azuma's visual language, the voyeurism of social media captured by the windows that populate so many of these worlds, such as in *Social Destroyer*, *Snoopys*, or *Flower Cutter* (all 2024). The blurriness is also indicative of a certain ambivalence or ambiguity in Azuma's works, which is further amplified by the symbolism of fire – an element, or technology that is both generative and destructive. Despite the cartoonish pathos that emanates from these characters, Azuma's faces remain anonymous. His illustrated and sculptural figures elide defined features, avoiding specificity to address more universal human experiences, impulses, desires and behaviors.

At certain moments, the pursuit of ambiguity in Azuma's works – as any judgement of our hyper-accelerated cybernetic reality is notably absent – lends itself to a haunting and oneiric impressionism. The more intimately sized portraits *Snow Day*, *Limbo*, and *Trivial Resistance* conjure some type of purgatorial psychological state. In the latter, background and foreground meld into a mottled blue-anthracite fog, undergirded by deep red tones. From the center of the canvas the ghostly apparition of a figure emerges holding a stem engulfed in flames, the suggestion of a chain clasped onto its ankle shackles it to the surrounding ether. Individuality and surroundings are challenged, made porous, raising age-old existential questions about human essence and individuality, in the context of algorithmic and networked systems that increasingly shape our desires, emotions, and senses of self. As the artist expressed in an interview, 'Although I say that I am my ultimate self, I don't actually exist, but I am created by the environment around me, the environments that make me.'

About the artist

Born in Osaka in 1994 where he still lives, Shinya Azuma is a Japanese artist who works in Kyoto, Japan. He holds a master's degree in Contemporary Art from the Kyoto University of Art and Design. Azuma makes a sketch of images inspired by the news programs or sceneries in daily life through his experience and remakes them on canvas with bold brush strokes. Azuma's simple paintings with peculiar color usage and dynamic texture of the medium have quirkiness somehow, and vigor which stops us to see the picture.

The themes of the works range from some well-timed serious issues such as wealth inequality or protests, to personal sexual experiences, but they all capture various aspects of humanity. Like memes on social media, the distinctive type of humor which can be both satire and self-deprecating sarcasm is one of the attractions of his works. From 2021, he has started to create sculpture made of wood and ceramics, expanding his range of expression beyond two-dimensional works.

Azuma's works have attracted the attention of collectors and art professionals in Japan as early as when he was a graduate student. His recent solo exhibitions include: 'Shame: Inevitable Man,' COHJU contemporary art (Kyoto, JP 2022); 'Throw a knuckleball from the jungle,' EUKARYOTE (Tokyo, JP 2021); 'Joint technique,' Seibu Shibuya Art Gallery (Tokyo, JP 2020); and 'Human. Human? Human!,' COHJU contemporary art (Kyoto, JP 2020). Azuma's work is held in the Takahashi Ryutaro Collection, Japan, sequence MIYASHITA PARK, Japan and Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Japan.

Press Inquiries

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Shinya Azuma
Snoopys, 2024
Oil on canvas
162 x 130.3 cm (63 3/4 x 51 1/4 in)