

Petzel

TOMOO GOKITA

September 14 – October 21, 2023
520 West 25th Street

Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Tokyo-based artist Tomoo Gokita, in his debut solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from September 14 to October 21, 2023 at Petzel's Chelsea location. Works included mark a new era for Gokita, as he expands his practice toward innovative techniques and striking color palettes. Internationally renowned for pushing the boundaries of figuration, particularly in his high-contrast grayscale paintings, Gokita has shifted toward novel source imagery and materials.

The artist was struck by a booklet found near his studio of simple illustrations of everyday objects. Created for patients with dementia, these objects are used in an exercise that puts forward the question, "What is this?". Gokita has developed this imagery to create colorful, fresh compositions. Influenced by Pop Art, kitsch aesthetics, and music, Gokita's crafted canvases are covered with multiple layers of paper for the first time, including paper sleeves of various vinyl records into the layers of his paintings. In doing so, the artist connects his latest series of paintings to a natural fluidity that underscores his versatile drawing practice. The hand-made ethos of his layered canvases also reflects Gokita's longstanding affinity for vintage magazines and pulpy, printed ephemera, with his own Neo-expressionist, abstracted twist.

Across this suite of recent paintings, Gokita appropriates this mnemonic exercise, in which elderly patients with dementia are asked to recall the name of an object with the image, just as children often are. In this way, the artist bridges the chasm between the signifier and the signified in these vibrant, evocative creations while playing with varying levels of contact: the physicality of layered paper on canvas, the familiarity of his subjects, and the foundations of signification itself. Approaching these paintings, the viewer brushes the moment of discovery, akin to Gokita's chance encounter outside his studio, through engagement with his refined, exuberant impressions. Through both high and low, legible and concealed references, Gokita invites the audience to explore this liminal space and to ask themselves, "What is this?".

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About Tomoo Gokita

Tomoo Gokita was born in 1969 in Tokyo, where he is based. His drawings made with pencil, charcoal and ink on paper first began to receive attention in the late 1990s. His popularity expanded domestically and internationally after the publication of *Lingerie Wrestling*, a collection of his works to date, in 2000.

His style and technique continue to evolve as he perennially pushes his practice in new directions. Although he is best known for his black and white works, he has in fact employed a rich array of visual vocabulary to produce a variety of pieces including series of blue paintings, stenciled works, collages, and sculptures. From the start of 2020, Gokita return to color paintings; his solo exhibition held in Italy in March and Taka Ishii Gallery in August consisted exclusively of color works. Gokita uses soft tones and a unique palette to address a diverse array of subjects. The paintings combine seemingly effortless expression and rich textures to suggest a new evolutionary step in the artist's oeuvre. The fruitful transformations that Gokita gracefully achieves by altering material and process also highlight the unwavering essence of his practice. Gokita has absorbed an extraordinarily wide range of elements from various styles in his own way. These include Cubism, Surrealism, Symbolism, Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and Simulationism, as well as styles from the fields of commercial design, commercial photography, illustration and typography. Gokita continues to brilliantly refine all of these influences. His unique attitude towards art production straightforwardly communicates the pleasure he takes in painting.

In 2012, his work was featured in “The Unseen Relationship: Form and Abstraction” at the Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art. In 2014, “THE GREAT CIRCUS,” a solo exhibition, was held at the same museum. In April 2018, “PEEKABOO” was held at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery followed by “Get Down” held at Dallas Contemporary, Texas in June 2021. His first solo exhibition with Taka Ishii Gallery was held in 2008, followed by “Variety Show” (2012), “Holy Cow” (2017), “MOO” (2020), and “Diary” (2022).

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquires, please contact Ricky Lee at ricky@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.