

Ulala Imai

## ARCADIA

October 30 - December 21, 2024

Nonaka-Hill is proud to present *ARCADIA*, an exhibition of new paintings by Ulala Imai, to inaugurate our new gallery space located in the Gion district of Kyoto, Japan.

For her second solo exhibition with Nonaka-Hill, Ulala Imai embraces an illustrative term connected to Classical idealism. Imai's *ARCADIA* honors the garden of her suburban Tokyo studio as a site of genesis, wonder and bucolic satisfaction, though not detached from eventualities of an evermore complex world:

*I enjoy the view of the garden at different times of the day... glittering with sparkling morning dew...the contrasting beauty of the garden's landscaping, glowing gold in the afternoon sun...blue plants illuminated by car headlights and moonlight. I even stare at the plants blowing in the squall from the car. Every day I see extreme news that reminds me that there is no eternal utopia in this world. We live in a moment where anything can happen at any time, and I want to reflect that in my work, knowing that one day this place will become a lost Arcadia.*

Ulala Imai is renowned for her observational paintings of food, stuffed animals and popular toy characters, situated either in familiar domestic settings or varied landscapes (gardens, parks, forests or the Japanese coastline), depicted either alone or as ensemble tableaux. While Imai's works pay homage to centuries old painting genres - the still-life, the heroic portrait, the bucolic landscape - rather than serving these (mostly) Western, art historical tropes, she upends the visual narrative through dramatic shifts of scale and subtle suggestion. In her paintings, Imai often pushes nature morte into a hybrid subgenre of her own making; less concerned with vanitas and its regular preoccupation with death and transience, but rather breathing life into static objects. Through her mastery of medium and technique, Imai's works often appear luminescent, animating humble plates of food and well-worn playthings into a living theater, lionizing the imagery of her everyday life. The resultant paintings take on themes of proxied self-portraiture and portraiture, family and romantic relationships, harrowing adventure and existential bliss.

Ulala Imai was born in Kanagawa prefecture, Japan in 1982, where she continues to live and work. Ulala Imai's artworks are included in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; The High Museum, Atlanta, GA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Booth School of Business, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA; He Art Museum, Guangdong Province, China, Space K, Seoul, Korea and The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan



WORK LIST

# Ulala Imai

## Biography

- 1982 Born in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan  
Lives & works in Kanagawa, Japan
- 2009 Doctoral Program, Tama Art University, Tokyo, Japan
- 2004 Faculty of Art and Design, Tama Art University, Tokyo, Japan

## Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *ARCADIA*, Nonaka-Hill, Kyoto, Japan
- 2023 *MEMORY*, Xavier Hufkens, Brussels  
*A Lover's Discourse*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, USA
- 2022 *THE SCENE*, Karma, New York, NY, USA  
*Reminiscence*, Union Pacific, London, United Kingdom
- 2021 *Hola Strangers*, Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico  
*MELODY*, Parco Museum, Tokyo, Japan  
*AMAZING*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*LOVERS*, Wacoal Study Hall Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan
- 2020 *AMAZING*, Shinjuku Takashimaya Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
*LOVERS*, Union Pacific, London, United Kingdom  
*MARCH*, OIL by Bijutsutecho, PARCO, Tokyo, Japan  
*REVELATION*, nidi gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
*MICROCOSM*, RC HOTEL Kyoto Yasaka, Kyoto, Japan  
Project N. 78, Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2019 *THE GRADUATE*, boy Attic, Tokyo, Japan  
*LOVERS*, XYZ Collective, Tokyo, Japan  
Umeda Tsutaya Bookstore, Umeda, Osaka, Japan  
READAN DEAT, Hiroshima, Japan
- 2018 *Cooking in 3min*, Merry-Go-Round Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan  
*GATHERING*, nidi gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
*Hello Stranger*, Shinjuku Takashimaya Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
Gallery Enfer, Keibunsha Ichijoji, Kyoto, Japan  
Merry-go-round, Kyoto Shijo Kawaramachi, Kyoto, Japan  
IN THE KITCHEN, Keibunsha Ichijoji Store, Gallery Enfer, Kyoto, Japan
- 2017 NICHE GALLERY, Tokyo, Japan  
*Doskoi Kitchen*, XYZ Collective, Tokyo, Japan  
NICHE GALLERY, Tokyo, Japan  
The Steak House DOSKOI, Sugamo, Tokyo, Japan  
Daikanyama Tsutaya Bookstore, Tokyo, Japan  
greenpoint books & things, Kanagawa, Yokohama, Japan

# Ulala Imai

- Selected Group Exhibitions
- 2024 *Mon Ours En Peluche*, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, France  
*I'm Not Afraid Of Ghosts*, Palazzo Tiepolo Passi, Venice, Italy
- 2023 *He Said/She Said: Contemporary Women Artists Interject*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX  
*A Lover's Discourse*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA  
*Blue Wind*, High Art, Arles, France  
*PUBLIC PRIVATE, Pond Society*, Shanghai, China  
*The Postmodern Child*, Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Korea  
*"Close" curated by Russell Tovey*, GRIMM, London, United Kingdom
- 2022 *La proie et l'ombre*, Crèvecœur, Paris, France  
*Bodyland*, Max Hetzler, Berlin, Germany  
*A Minor Constellation*, Chris Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2021 VOCA 2021, Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan  
*STILL TIME*, Fitzpatrick Gallery, Paris, France  
*Natsuyasumi: In the Beginning Was Love*, Nonaka-Hill, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
*SHINING IN THE LOW TIDE*, Uncle Brother, New York, NY, USA  
*Nature Morte*, The Hole, New York, NY, USA
- 2020 *Without Stopping*, Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA, USA  
*The Sentimental Organization of the World*, Crèvecœur, Paris, France  
*Echoes of Monologues*, Anomaly, Tokyo, Japan  
*New Intimacies*, Soda, Kyoto, Japan  
*Contemporary Local Tales 7: Between Meals (Taberu no Aida)*, Susaki Machikado Gallery, Kochi, Japan
- 2019 *The Scenery Beyond*, Art 369 Festival, Nasushiobara City, Tochigi Pref., Japan
- 2018 *CONDO 2018*, Union Pacific, London, United Kingdom  
*Location of beauty*, Kuraoka-do Gallery, Kyoto, Japan
- 2017 *My room My Style, My Life vol.2*, Shinjuku Takashimaya Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
Ulala Imai/ Fumihiko Ohga/ Tomoyuki Yoshida, Zokyudo Gallery, Kyoto, Japan
- 2014 Shell Art Award Artist Selection 2014, The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan

## Museum and Public Collections

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA  
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, USA  
Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, USA  
The High Museum, Atlanta, GA, USA  
SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia, USA  
Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
He Art Museum, Guangdong Province, China  
Space K/ Kolon Museum, Seoul, Korea  
The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan

# Ulala Imai

Awards                      2012    Shell Art Award: Kunio Motoe Jury Encouragement Award

Publications                2023    *Close curated by Russell Tovey, GRIMM*  
                                       *The Scene, Karma Books*  
                                       2022    *Andrew Cranston, Reggie Burrows Hodges, Ulala Imai, Nathaniel Oliver, Karma*  
                                       2021    *Gathering, Baci Books, Japan*  
    *Melody, Parco Publishing, Japan*  
                                       2018    *Gathering, Baci*