

Yuichi Hirako
Number of Trees
The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane
14th March – 21st May 2025
Preview: Thursday 13th March 2025, 6 – 8pm

Yuichi Hirako presents a large-scale installation comprising acrylic paintings and wooden sculptures across Aird's Lane and the Bricks Space, asking for a reconsideration of our relationship to nature and offering a subtle allegory for current global environmental issues, expressed in his joyful aesthetic language. A questioning of our awareness of the greenery around us formed the impetus for the new works: the shapes of leaves on houseplants; the plantings, arrangement of flower beds and topiary in local parks; the attractive but unsettlingly wild masses of tree species that constitute a forest. Hirako asks us to look at situations where nature enters our world, disguised and interspersed with human creations and technologies.

Hirako's vivid figurative style is rich in metaphor and his installation comprises a diverse community of things – books, cats, vases, fruit – as well as his 'tree man'. The larger paintings are expansive, offering filmic vistas and interior scenes incorporating multiple objects, while other smaller compositions depict singular items or animals – a snake, an amplifier, a pair of shoes. Hung together in a precise geometric arrangement the effect is maximalist, with man and nature sitting in close proximity. The sculptural installations mimic this atmosphere, creating a *mise en scène* for his various 'tree men'. A self-portrait of sorts, this magical figure has a human body and a fir or pine tree head replete with antlers. It evolved in part from Hirako's personal experiences and research into Shinto thought and the Japanese folklore tradition of mountain worship. He also draws inspiration from related traditions and practices that have long existed in other countries and regions.

For Hirako, the 'tree-man' is contemplative, a kind of *rückenfigur*, with which the viewer can identify – imagining themselves in the same situation. His bronze work *Yggdrasill / Books*, 2023, installed in the green space at the front of the gallery serves as introduction to this character and the themes at play in the show – in essence, the questioning of an anthropocentric view of the world. The word *Yggdrasill* refers to the sacred tree which forms the central point of the cosmos outlined in Norse mythology, it is the place from which all life stems. This relates to Hirako's emphasis on coexistence with nature, rather than its domination, and his consistent philosophical centering of it in his work.

Yuichi Hirako (b. 1982, Okayama, Japan) lives and works in Tokyo. Selected solo exhibitions include: 'New Home', Gallery Baton, Seoul, (2024); 'Journey', Space K, Seoul (2023); 'The Nature', The Modern Institute, Bricks Space, Glasgow (2023); 'inheritance, metamorphosis, rebirth', Nerima Art Museum, Tokyo (2022); 'Mount Mariana', Gallery Baton, Seoul (2021); 'Project N 71', Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo (2018); 'Bark Feeder', Dai-ichi Life Gallery, Tokyo (2015); 'Memories of My Garden: Song', Tokyo Wonder Site Hongo, Tokyo (2011). Selected group exhibitions include: Powerlong Museum, Shanghai (2021), Bijutsutecho Gallery, Tokyo (2020); Sakura City Museum of Art, Chiba (2019); Dai-ichi Life Gallery, Tokyo (2015); Kashiwa Public Gallery, Chiba (2014); Nagi Museum Of Contemporary, Okayama (2013); Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo (2013); Museum of Modern Art, Gunma (2010).

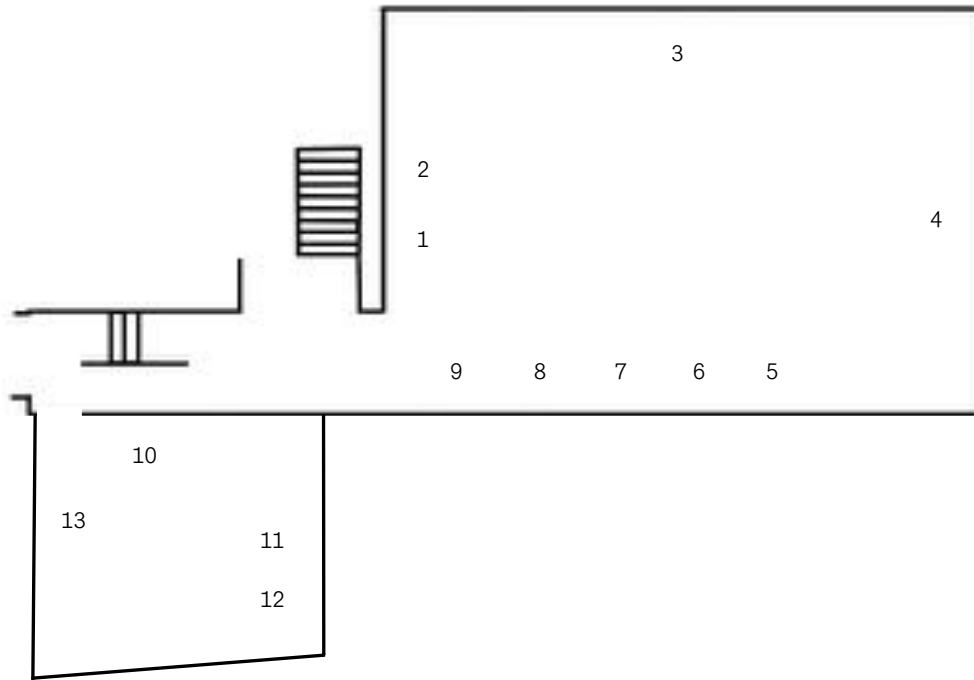
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|----|---|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | <i>Green Master 110</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.4 x 50.5 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 7/8 x 3/4 in | 2 | <i>Green Master 108</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.4 x 50.2 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 3/4 in | 3 | <i>Number of Trees</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
400 x 700 cm
157 1/2 x 275 5/8 in |
| 4 | <i>Lost in Thought 224</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
180.1 x 160.2 x 3.6 cm
70 7/8 x 63 1/8 x 1 3/8 in | 5 | <i>Green Master 112</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.2 x 50.5 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 7/8 x 3/4 in | 6 | <i>Green Master 113</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.4 x 50.3 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 3/4 in |
| 7 | <i>Green Master 107</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.2 x 50.2 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 3/4 x 3/4 in | 8 | <i>Green Master 109</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60.2 x 50.6 x 2 cm
23 3/4 x 19 7/8 x 3/4 in | 9 | <i>Green Master 111</i> , 2025
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 50 x 2 cm
23 5/8 x 19 3/4 x 3/4 in |
| 10 | <i>Wooden Wood 98 (black radio)</i> , 2025
Wood, acrylic paint
100 x 80 x 17 cm
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 x 6 3/4 in | 11 | <i>Wooden Wood 96 (red radio)</i> , 2025
Wood, acrylic paint
28 parts
Installed dimensions
202 x 175 x 330cm
79 1/2 x 68 7/8 x 129 7/8 in | 12 | <i>Wooden Wood 97 (blue apple)</i> , 2025
Wood, Acrylic paint
27 parts
Installed dimensions
180 x 170 x 350 cm
70 7/8 x 66 7/8 x 137 3/4 in |
| 13 | <i>Wooden Wood 99 (red radio)</i> , 2025
Wood, acrylic paint
100 x 80 x 17 cm
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 x 6 3/4 in | | | | |