

# Kyoko Idetsu

## Curated by Douglas Fogle

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In his 1863 essay “The Painter of Modern Life,” Charles Baudelaire emitted a clarion call to artists asking them to turn away from the heroic depiction of myths, grand historical figures and events, and timeless ideals, and instead focus their attention on finding wonder in the transient and ephemeral aspects of modern everyday life. The Tokyo-based painter Kyoko Idetsu has spent the past decade or so deftly modifying Baudelaire’s suggested approach to the world by developing an observational methodology in which her own personal experiences – the minutiae of her everyday life – have become the building blocks of an intuitive and wonder-filled approach to painterly storytelling that owes as much to the historical conventions of painting as it does to the narrative aspects of manga and film. Her loose and stylistically open approach to figurative painting has allowed her to create surfaces on which time and space collapse as she creates connections between disparate moments observed in her own life – scenes of domesticity with family and friends, instances of sadness and joy, or even passages from books that she might be reading. Looking at her work, it is not surprising that she paints in her own suburban Tokyo home amid the ebb and flow of her family and the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life. While this domestic setting of production is crucial to understanding her work, in Idetsu’s hands painting is decidedly autobiographical while at the same time standing in for more generalized concerns with the intimate intricacies of the human condition.

The centerpiece of Idetsu’s presentation for MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is the painting *Where words fail. 2* (2024). With a spatial approach to painting that collapses perspectival approaches to the medium while embracing a flattened all-over chaos, Idetsu builds up a painterly narrative scaffolding in this work with over fifty rectangular vignettes that resemble comic book panels while doubling as architectural building blocks. Are these expressively rendered episodes composing billboards or houses? Within Idetsu’s fantastical floating spaces these individual elements depicting moments of playfulness, sadness, confusion, inquisitiveness and joy take on an ideogrammatic approach to storytelling.

Where words fail, images speak. Her painting *Where words fail. 2* invites the viewer to construct their own narrative thread by ping ponging from panel to panel, up, over, and across her canvas.

This large-scale work is accompanied by a more intimate diptych by the artist titled *Sisters* (2024). Idetsu often writes short descriptive texts about her individual paintings. For *Sisters* she wrote: “I saw elderly sisters in the neighborhood out in the heavy rain.” Observational yet surprisingly heartbreaking, these two small paintings enshrine a forgotten moment of ephemeral grace as the artist moves through her life. From one painting to the next we experience a slight shift of perspective and the movement of time in a scene that might be forgotten in the ebb and flow of the world historical events that dominate the narratives of our lives. In Kyoko Idetsu’s world, these minor, overlooked and evanescent moments of life unfold into an entire universe of feeling that we are all invited to share.

**Kyoko Idetsu**

Kyoko Idetsu (b. 1986) lives and works in Tokyo. Her paintings have been featured in solo exhibitions at galleries in Paris, Los Angeles, and New York. Her work has also been included in solo and group exhibitions at institutions around the world such as the Institut Français de Tokyo, Echigo-Tsumari Satoyama Museum of Contemporary Art, Niigata, Japan, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen in Switzerland, Busan Museum of Contemporary Art in Busan, South Korea, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska, and Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.

**Douglas Fogle**

Douglas Fogle (b. 1964) is a curator and writer based in Los Angeles. Fogle has nearly thirty years of experience as a museum curator focusing on exhibitions and publications devoted to contemporary art, film, architecture, fashion, and design. He recently curated the traveling retrospective *Thomas Demand: The Stutter of History* and will open the exhibition *Marlene Dumas: Cycladic Blues* at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens in June 2025.