130 Orchard Street
New York, NY 10002

Tuesday - Saturday
10am - 6pm



Izumi Kato, *Untitled,* 2026. Oil on canvas. 82 1/2 x 87 3/8 inches. Photographer: Kei Okano. ©2026 Izumi Kato. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

IZUMI KATO

October 28 — December 19, 2026

Perrotin New York is pleased to present an exhibition by Japanese artist Izumi Kato, featuring suspended and freestanding sculptures alongside paintings composed of canvases in varying sizes, creating a distinctly sculptural sense of rhythm. The exhibition coincides with the artist's monumental commission for the reopening of the Hirshhorn Museum's Sculpture Garden in October.

The artist's latest body of work, realized between 2025 and 2026, is comprised of an enigmatically powerful array of paintings and sculptures that collectively propel his exploration of form, color, and spatiality into new realms of consciousness. These two-and three-dimensional constructions rendered across the mediums of oil on canvas, cast aluminum, plastic models, fabric, and wood, feature Kato's signature *hitogata*, or humanoid figures, that appear at once primordial and futuristic. These totems alternately allude to relics from a mystical past, travelers from a distant galaxy, or spirits from another dimension. Their haunting, vacant eyes directly engage the viewer in a mesmerizing stare that transcends time and civilizations. As with past bodies of work, these untitled portraits reveal only minimal distinguishing features, with reference to the most basic anatomical and gender designations offering a boundless platform from which the viewer can project their own sociopsychological interpretations.

This new series poetically illuminates the seamless fluidity between Kato's painting and sculpture practices. Fundamentally a painter, the artist considers his sculptures as complex, three-dimensional paintings. He "paints" his sculptures just as he would a flat canvas, creating a deliberate separation between form and surface. Cumulatively, the works challenge the conventions of physical scale and the rectilinear compositional frame, offering modular, sometimes disparate, elements—evoking the surrealist parlor game *cadavre exquis* (exquisite corpse)—that highlight the shape shifting aspect of Kato's mysterious figures. Both these painting and sculpture series incorporate nautical elements including various fish, coral, and other sea life as a nod to the artist's lifelong passion for fishing. Whereas in past series the figures were endowed with floral and botanical elements, here the anatomical gestures often allude to amphibious and aquatic extremities, such as the frog-like



Izumi Kato, *Untitled,* 2026. Urethane paint on aluminium, coating, carabiner, chain. 70 7/8 x 21 5/8 x 18 7/8 inches. Photographer: Yamato Ogawa. ©2026 Izumi Kato. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Izumi Kato, *Untitled,* 2026. Oil on Canvas. 105 7/8 x 58 7/8 inches. Photographer: Kei Okano. ©2026 Izumi Kato. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

legs and mermaid tails found in Kato's sculptures on view. A striking detail in the paintings is the formal treatment between the humanoid figures, which are often fragmented and remain largely abstracted, and the figural elements inspired by the sea which are rendered whole and in a realistic manner. Kato's compositional structure has become increasingly complex, utilizing canvases of disparate shapes and sizes to create oversized diptychs, triptychs, and for the first time quadriptychs. The physical delineation created by the canvas edges in the multi-panel works functions as a representational break between planes and environments. For example, in the large blue triptych, the horizontal break between the upper and lower canvases signifies the shift between air and water.

Sculpturally, Kato continues to take inspiration from found stones he discovers in nature. In this body of work the stones are then transposed into cast aluminum using a similar process inspired by the artist's plastic model series from 2022. The lightweight properties of aluminum, a new medium for the artist, has enabled the oversized sculptures to be suspended in space akin to Kato's fabric sculpture series from 2018 at the Red Brick Museum. However, whereas the flat, sail-like fabric constructions were merely punctuated by small stone weights that tethered them to the earth, these voluminous cast and painted aluminum stone sculptures fill the space with a commanding presence. These suspended mobile-like figures are similarly constructed in segments like the paintings, alternately evoking giant fishing lures and shamanistic totems. They exude an air of gravitas reserved for ancient relics harkening back to the prehistoric Jōmon and animistic Shinto influences rooted in Kato's hometown of Yasugi, a historic rural city in Shimane Prefecture. Even the relatively diminutive *hitogata* astride stone mounds exude a monumentality and permanence that transcends time and cultural specificities. This new sculpture series includes a version commissioned as part of the new sculpture garden at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.

The wooden sculptures mounted on stands are also influenced by Kato's recent plastic model series. The prone painted figures are displayed trophy-like atop two stainless steel posts. The primary figure's shape is evocative of Kato's *Untitled* sphinx-inspired paintings which were on view at Perrotin New York in 2021. What sets these works apart is the addition of readymade lures, a motif that extends from the plastic model series, in which the artist affixed readymade plastic models onto his wooden figures to create surreal tableaux. In these newest works, the found lures resemble remora or tile fish that are known to attach themselves to sharks and other apex predators. Their inclusion emphasizes the dynamism and implied movement of the figures cutting through space. Unilaterally, Kato's sculptures are created with a frontal orientation in mind—with the face, back and sides represented pictorially rather than structurally. When considered as a whole, this new body of work affirms the undeniable bond between humanity and nature, and the enduring continuum of the creative impulse across chronologies and geographies to seek the answer of what it means to be human.

— Michelle Yun Mapplethorpe, Director & Chief Curator, Katonah Museum of Art

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