

**Kazuyuki Takezaki**

*Before Spring*

May 1–June 8, 2024

Twenty years ago I was standing in Yvon Lambert’s old gallery space on 25th Street looking at a room of works by Kazuyuki Takezaki. Back then he was making small mixed-media paintings featuring large swathes of blank space punctuated by odd scribbles and gestures, rendered faintly in pencil or pen with occasional touches of color. I remember the lighting in the gallery being dimmer than usual because there was a big Tatsuo Miyajima installation of flashing digital numbers the next room over. The shadows heightened the incidentalness of Takezaki’s works. The critic Manami Fujimori happened to be there too and we exchanged observations. I said something about the works being like haiku. Of course I wouldn’t have made a straight comparison to haiku. I probably said “dirty haiku” or “chopped up haiku” or “stretched out haiku.” I was trying to express the way the works captured fleeting impressions of sensory events without resolving them into a coherent structure. With their almost stuck together feel, these loose collections of fragments pushed back against regimes of framing and signification, or how we impose order on things.

Three years later, in 2007, I organized a presentation of Takezaki’s work for Arts Tropical, the storefront window project space run by artist Andrew Guenther from his studio in Greenpoint. I wrote an introduction to Takezaki’s practice that was printed out for anyone to grab from a take-out menu box by the door. Conscious that viewers would be seeing the work through a window, I compared the work to a window. “In any given drawing, scratches of yellow color pencil could be sunlight reflecting off a highway median or a strobe bouncing off a disco ball, but could just as easily be heat rising from concrete or sweat rising from dancers’ bodies, or [representations of] car horns or music. Through this visual synesthesia, these works achieve a kind of transparency. If you don’t look closely, you’ll never see beyond the surface; if you look [too] deeply, you won’t find anything beyond the surface.” What I might have thought to myself, but didn’t write, is that transparency is its own kind of opacity.

After that Takezaki moved back from Tokyo to his hometown in Kochi on the Pacific side of Shikoku and then moved again to Marugame, a regional city on the Seto Inland Sea side of the island. His current painting practice is deeply informed by the landscape around Marugame, with its plains ringed by low mountains in the distance. Often employing a grayish, chalky palette highlighted by blushes of orange shading into purple or white, he paints studies of plant life or mountain ridges as quickly rendered silhouettes that evoke miniature frescoes. In another body of work, he attaches canvas to a board and then sets out in his van to find a spot in the countryside, where he records his impressions in situ using oil stick. Comparing this practice to

old men playing board games outdoors, he often spends several days on these “Board/Table” pieces, trying to keep up with the atmospheric conditions as they change hour by hour and day by day.

Both the canvases and the “Board/Table” pieces retain an element of the windowness of the earlier works in allowing for a coexistence of transparency and opacity. “At dusk, I often see the town horizontally divided into upper and lower halves by transparent and opaque color,” Takezaki writes. Sometimes the sky looks like “solid gouache” while the town and trees are shot through with light, while at other times it’s the sky that takes on “a deeply transparent color” against the dark shadow of the town. The bands of color that occasionally bisect the small canvases at odd places, suggesting a horizon line but also arbitrary erasures, allude to this effect. They also come, Takezaki says, from a desire to work with multiple images at the same time. In a sense his works replicate the visual noise that accumulates on the surface of a window—replicate the agency of the window itself in simultaneously framing and interfering with the view.

But there is also a subtext to the works that pushes them beyond the tradition of the landscape—ranging from literati ink scrolls to amateur Sunday paintings and everything in between—into something that feels urgent and timely. According to Takezaki, the land around Marugame is dying. He can see it clearly in the sprawl being constructed in the plains, which drives away animal life, and the effects of fertilizer and other chemicals on the vegetation. The immediacy he strives for in his paintings—the way he tries to take everything all in at once, including the particles in the air and the brilliant light that illuminates the trees at dusk—is also an act of bearing witness to nature as a liminal zone between the worlds of the living and the dead. Communicating a profound yet fleeting sense of place, Takezaki’s windows onto this constantly shifting environment are also reflections on time, memory, and the porous overlaps between subject and object.

—Andrew Maerkle

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Kazuyuki Takezaki

Born 1976, Kochi, Japan  
Lives and works in Marugame, Japan

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *Before Spring*, 47 Canal, New York City, New York
- 2023 *Jewel Beetle and Mouse*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan  
*Marugame, Milwaukee*, The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, USA  
The Saanen Vitrine, Saanen, Switzerland (Organised by Marc Jancou Contemporary and hosted by the Saanen Vitrine)
- 2020 *A Sunny Day After Rain*, Kochi Museum of Art, Kochi, Japan  
*Twin Boat Songs* with Yu Nishimura, KAYOKOYUKI, Tokyo, Japan  
*Miso soup on the board, Orange*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan
- 2016 *Heaven Hill*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan.
- 2015 *Kochi / Kazuyuki Takezaki*, Susaki Street Corner Gallery, Kochi, Japan  
*Kochi / Kazuyuki Takezaki*, THE STEAK HOUSE DOSKOI, Tokyo, Japan
- 2013 *Numbers and Variations*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan
- 2011 *Takaido The New Landscape Part II*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan
- 2008 *BIO TOPOS*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan
- 2006 *Fished in the Sky*, Community Center Akta, Tokyo, Japan
- 2004 *SPEED*, Weekender, Tokyo, Japan

Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Warm Invitation*, GATOPARDO, Los Angeles, California
- 2023 Kazuyuki Takezaki + Yu Nishimura: *Sequel — Twin Boat Songs: Midori no Utsuwa*, Museum on Echigo-Tsumari (MonET), Niigata, Japan
- 2021 *Abstraction!*, by MISAKO & ROSEN, CADAN YURAKUCHO, Tokyo, Japan
- 2020 *Cool Invitations 7*, XYZ collective, Tokyo, Japan  
*Contemporary Art Eye vol.13, 8/CUBE 1,2,3* Shibuya Hikarie, Tokyo, Japan
- 2019 Ehime Sansan monogatari.....?
- 2018 *STREET JUSTICE — ART, SOUND, AND POWER*, Galaxy —Gingakei, Tokyo, Japan  
*parinters*, Nakata Museum, Hiroshima, Japan
- 2017 *#12 Post Formalist Painting*, statements, Tokyo, Japan

Group Exhibitions (continued)

- 2016 *NEW INTIMACIES*, XYZ collective, Tokyo, Japan
- 2014 *Depicting the Indelible Japanese Landscape*, Musee Bernard Buffet, Shizuoka, Japan.  
*The Way of Painting*, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2013 *Imprisoned, Jailbreak*, XYZ Collective, Tokyo, Japan  
*Now Japan*, Kunsthal KADE, Amersfoort, Netherlands
- 2012 *i'll explain you everythiinnngggg*, Chert, Berlin, Germany  
*Real Japanesque The Unique World of Japanese Contemporary Art*, The National Museum of Art Osaka, Osaka, Japan
- 2011 *Other Paintings*, Roppongi Hills A/D Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
*Tokaido Shinfukei Yamaguchi Akira to Takezaki Kazuyu*, The Sculpture Garden Museum Vangi Museo, Shizuoka, Japan
- 2010 *Voca 2010 — The Vision of Contemporary Art*, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- 2009 *Stripe, Dots and Skulls in Assorted Shapes, Colors, and Sizes*, Soka Art Center, Tainan, Taiwan  
*Geba-geba Summer Show - Geba-geba 4 weeks-*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan
- 2008 *Four of a Kind*, Gallery Side 2, Tokyo, Japan  
*New Tokyo Contemporaries*, Shin-marunouchi building 7f, maronouchi HOUSE, Tokyo, Japan
- 2007 *Kazuyuki Takezaki / Maya Hewitt — Experience: from Tokyo from London*, MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo, Japan  
*Il faut rendre Czanne*, The Collection Lambert, Sheffield, UK  
*Not only A but also B*, Transformer, Washington D.C.
- 2006 *Whispers Behind a Wall*, Mehr (Midtown), New York
- 2005 *graft*, TAKEFLOOR 404&502, Tokyo, Japan
- 2004 *AKIMAHEN*, Maison Folie de Wazemmes, Lille, France  
*EIJANAIIKA! YES FUTURE!*, The Collection Lambert, Avignon, France  
*NIPPON TIME RECYCLED*, Yvon Lambert, New York City
- 2002 *Matsuyama+Takezaki*, Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan
- 2000 *VOCA -The Vision of Contemporary Art-*, Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, Japan  
*3 + 1*, Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan

Collections

Vangi Sculpture Garden Museum, Shizuoka, Japan  
The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan  
The Museum of Art, Kochi, Japan