

SETAREH

Maki Na Kamura

22. October – 04. December 2021

Maki Na Kamura's paintings arise from a profound exploration of the medium itself. Her works interweave not only motifs and techniques from different periods and cultures that reciprocally influence and adapt each other, but also investigate fundamental questions about surface, color, abstraction, and space.

Her intense and vibrantly colored paintings depict the way landscapes emerge from our memories or even imagination: shifting and ambiguous. These are images that stem from different times and take shape in our mind's eye. Owing to an energetic use of paint that shifts between glazes and impasto as well as a variety of different materials—such as oil paint with water, dry pigment, and gouache—the color surfaces oscillate in a dynamic interplay between figuration and abstraction. Larger hues and gestural brushstrokes combine into clearings or shapes resembling trees and clouds, while depth and breadth are created by means of diagonals in the pictorial composition. Human figures can be discerned in active, animated postures across the vibrant landscapes, whose arrangement echoes the paintings' overall structure, often drawing upon and challenging traditional pictorial compositions.

Some of her works are simply titled LD., an abbreviation for "landscape depiction." Yet they are far more than a conventional tribute to nature and its contemplative beauty. There isn't a straight, static horizon to be found. The landscape's depiction takes shape rather gradually, as viewers behold the different interlocking areas of color. Such a fragmentary approach to painting can keep its subject elusive, until it eventually arrives at figuration in a new way. Na Kamura uses a particularly vivid color palette to structure her pictorial space, where there is a lot of room left for interpretation. What appear to be large golden surfaces—which are actually not gold, but orange-yellow—seem to give the series Golden Shade its name; this hue at times depicts the sky, a background, or even the division between the picture's foreground and background.

In *La Guerre IV* (2021), a figure with a raised hand holding a flag or a torch towers over the scenery. The work's title prompts the recognition of additional figures lying on the ground below. Both the work's composition and content are based on a lithograph by Henri Rousseau after his eponymous 1894 painting, in which we can see a female figure jumping off a black galloping horse and several figures lying on the ground. This is not a coincidence. Rousseau's painting also includes references of its own, such as the horse portrayed, which may allude to Théodore Géricault's *Epsom Derby* (1821) as well as to Francisco Goya's prints from the series *Desastres de la Guerra* (1810 – 1820). Na Kamura thus demonstrates that pictorial subjects have always been adapted and transformed—not only across different time periods, but also geographical and cultural frontiers.

Na Kamura's work transforms, translates, and condenses the history of painting, outlining a truly original, contemporary image of what the medium can be in the 21st century. Her distinctive painterly style masterfully brings the histories of Western and Eastern painting into dialogue. It explores and describes—in both conceptual and aesthetic terms—how synergies and transformations from artistic traditions pertaining to different geographies and times can create a new, unique painterly language.