

Technology cultivated by each individual should not be used in part or trivialized for compromise. Art is a series of “technology of return” that is, the means by which to return from points such as “Art is a capitalist game and is meaningless” or “I’m gonna die someday, and there’s nothing left.” The wilderness of emptiness and relativity is never an ultimate objective, even if it is your current destination. While it indeed could be meaningless, there is still something that you want to do. That’s why you turn on your heels to return, instead of compromising in the wilderness and pretending that it is your destination.

Daisuke Takahashi

Born in 1980, Saitama Prefecture. Graduated from Tokyo Zokei Univeresity Painting Major, Department of Fine Arts.

Selected exhibitions include *The Way of Painting*, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (Tokyo, 2014), *Present-Day Paintings: Two-Dimensional Works of Four Artists*, Kawagoe City Art Museum (Saitama, 2015), *NEW VISION SAITAMA 5 The Emerging Body*, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama (Saitama, 2016), *Sleeping Painting*, Viewing Space / URANO (Tokyo, 2018), *Self-Portrait*, Art Center Ongoing (Tokyo, 2018), *Ota Art vol. 3 “Sazaedo 2020 — Modern spiral and a hundred paintings,”* Art Museum & Library, Ota (Gunma, 2020), *Blue paintings / Why does the scenery change as I walk*, Second 2. (Tokyo, 2021)

Consider compromise as being “halfway happy.” What it potentially harbors is the time of future. This year, aM project presents exhibitions with five artists, who each through their individual approach, attempts to study and share technologies of return for believing in the future in this day and age in which they live and die.

aM Project 2020–2021

Halfway Happy

Vol. 5

Daisuke Takahashi
RELAXIN’

2021.10.2 SAT — 12.18 SAT

13:00–20:00

Closed on Sunday, Monday, Holidays.

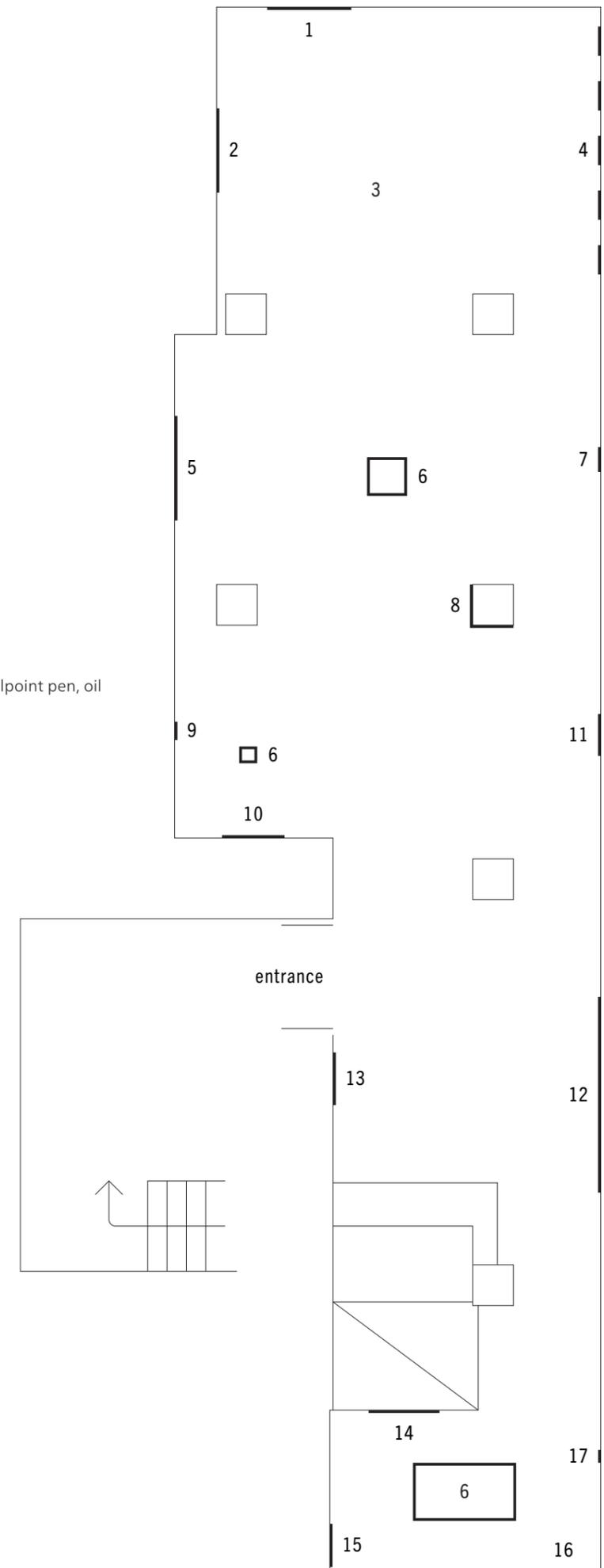
Entrance Free

Guest Curator Arata Hasegawa

Cooperation:

ANOMALY

- 1 **Untitled (pineapple / Let there be light!)**
2021 | canvas, acrylic, oil | 1610×1305 mm
- 2 **Steam Train**
2021 | canvas, acrylic, oil | 975×1305 mm
- 3 **Drawing**
2020–2021 | paper, colored pencil, pencil, water-based marker, ballpoint pen, oil
- 4 **Drawing**
2021 | paper, water-based marker | 323×442mm (each, 5 works)
- 5 **Toy (giraffe)**
2021 | canvas, acrylic, oil, oil bar | 1945×1620 mm
- 6 **Building Around the Corner**
2021 | paper clay, acrylic
- 7 **Despair (then I put a pineapple on my head)**
2021 | board, acrylic, oil | 460×385 mm
- 8 **Train Cards [tentative]**
2021– | colored paper, laminated film
- 9 **Untitled / One Yen Coin**
2020–2021 | board, oil | 235×283 mm
- 10 **Untitled / One Yen Coin**
2020–2021 | board, oil | 1620×970 mm
- 11 **Untitled / One Yen Coin**
2021 | board, oil | 510×650 mm
- 12 **Toy (tiger)**
2021 | board, oil, oil bar | 1940×3030 mm
- 13 **PW6/PB29**
2020 | board, canvas, oil | 580×815 mm
- 14 **Untitled (drawing)**
2018 | cardboard, gesso, oil bar | 795×1100 mm
- 15 **Despair (then I put a pineapple on my head)**
2021 | board, acrylic, oil | 880×607 mm
- 16 **PW46/PB28/PY42.151.154.40/PG7**
2020 | board, oil | 465×385 mm
- 17 **Untitled (B · UP · G)**
2013–2014 | board, oil | 140×200 mm



Current Thoughts on My Practice

Trying to produce work while engaged in the affairs of everyday life, I am more likely subject to disillusionment or impatience rather than feelings of joy.

There are by far more challenges confronted than environments that encourage me to enthusiastically pursue my own practice.

When producing a painting I am able to “envision its completion” in a split second, yet depending on the circumstances, it could take several years to actually finish it.

I cannot quite find the right words to describe it, but in my case there is a point at which I feel that I should “no longer persist.”

There are many things that I must let go of. It takes a great deal of time and energy for me to devote myself to my work and engage in the fierce struggles that are ensued. Meanwhile I venture out on my bicycle with my daughter. I hold my son as he pushes his head towards me.

Until now I have only worked with oil paints, but perhaps it is time to bid farewell to such preferences I had once considered important. At any rate, I wonder how many more tableaux I can continue producing hereon forth.

Having said that, I am by no means entirely worried or depressed, but instead, I consider it more as an opportunity. What do I mean by opportunity? What is it an opportunity for? Art? Myself? My Family? For us?

I suspect that it is an “autonomous opportunity,” which you could seemingly forget about or let pass without harboring much anticipation or disappointment.

September 6, 2021
Daisuke Takahashi

Upon visiting the artist’s studio in the town of Ogawa-Machi, Saitama Prefecture, I came across a fairly large painting propped up beneath the rain gutter. The painting appeared reminiscent of a piece of laundry that had been washed and put out to dry. I asked the artist whether it was alright to do such a thing, by which he replied that he was exposing the painting to natural sunlight so as to restore the yellow discoloration of the white paint to its original color. It is perhaps common knowledge for those working with oil paints that the sun can have such an effect. I consulted a book that specialized in this field.

With oil paintings the phenomenon of yellowing, which undermines the overall lightness of the work, is unavoidable (especially should it be placed in a dark place in the early stages following its production). However, since this is a reversible structural change, the extent of yellowing can easily be restored to that of its time of production by placing the work in a bright place or (gently) exposing its face to the sun¹.

I thought to myself, paintings are in motion.

The fifth installment of *aM Project 2020–2021 Halfway Happy* is Daisuke Takahashi’s solo exhibition, *RELAXIN’*. The exhibition is comprised of various “paintings” that Takahashi has created over the past several years. Its title is derived from that of an album by the Miles David Quintet, which Takahashi often listens to while engaged in the production of his work. This exhibition hopes to share with viewers the ways in which the artist Daisuke Takahashi engages in diverse maneuvers that involve the stretching, pounding, and folding of paintings. The act of painting itself is indeed susceptible to change, like the way in which the white pigment recreates its own whiteness beneath the light of the sun, or perhaps even on a much larger scale than this process of transformation.

In recent years Takahashi continues to produce paintings that illustrate different qualities to the extremely thick painterly surfaces which had previously been characteristic of his expression. In correspondence to this change, specific motifs come to emerge upon the picture plane. For instance, it is possible to recognize specific lines and words in the works presented on this occasion, such as a colored pencil drawing featuring a plant observed in the decorations of the 1-yen coin, and a painting of periodizations like “Jomon/Yayoi...” There is also a self-portrait of the artist balancing a pineapple on his head (which he had apparently done as a means to calm himself down when in a state of panic). There are also paintings of animals and vehicles that he depicts dynamically through applying paint directly from the tube as opposed to using a brush. Allow me to take a moment to venture on a slight detour.

Five years ago, Takahashi wrote, “When I set out to make a painting, I couldn’t find a motif, in the usual sense of a subject I wanted to paint².” What does he mean here by “the usual sense”? In the text that follows he makes a drastic jump by formulating a link between motif and motivation (impulse, motive). Takahashi states how the motivation to “make a painting” is reflected within his abstract paintings. He chooses to produce abstract paintings not due to the absence of motif, but because he considers the entire paintings as his motif=motivation.

Let us look at another work. *Building Around the Corner* is a work in which Takahashi spent day after day applying paint to a block of paper clay. A building of a former chiropractic

clinic stands en route from the station to the artist’s studio. The walls of the building are painted in colors of pale green and yellow green, and what is highly eye-catching is the clinic’s sign featuring a pink gorilla that once served as its mascot. Takahashi transcribed his impression of this building to a mass of paper clay. He engaged in a repeated and continued process of opening the bag of paper clay, taking its entire contents out, and painting it in a single color. Such a rectangular mass itself has also appeared in the form of relief-like brushstrokes in his previous works, and had indeed stood out amongst his paintings. In *Building Around the Corner* such elements seem to sprout and grow from an extremely strange place.

As one’s daily life becomes increasingly hectic, the time for producing work diminishes. One’s concentration is constantly interrupted, and without it being possible to set aside an adequate amount of time, there is no choice but to work bit by bit during what remains of the day. The drawings, the block of paper clay painted in a single color, and laminated cards presented on this occasion, are all series of works that incorporate repetition. This repetition and the very fact that they are not oil paintings, are fundamentally supported by the drive and impulse (motivation) to “continue making paintings without having to deny one’s everyday life.” What is reflected in the selection of forms and materials is a certain feeling of confidence of being able to continue painting while at the same time experiencing the exhaustions and irreplaceable joys of living with family.

That being said, *RELAXIN’* also features oil paintings. The largest painting in the exhibition titled *Toy (tiger)*, is an oil painting measuring about 3 meters × 2 meters, which Takahashi was suddenly inspired to paint while tidying up the toys his children had been playing with. In this sense, there seems to be a discordance between the artist’s words and actions. I feel that the highlight of this exhibition is the very range and amplitude of this contradiction, at which we cannot help but laugh. Paintings are indeed in motion.

1 Ed. HOLBEIN WORKS, Ltd. Technical Division, *The Science of Paints [Revised Edition]*, Chuoukouron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2018, p. 180.

2 *NEW VISION SAITAMA 5 The Emerging Body*, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, 2016. Excerpt from text featured between pp. 56–57.