

galerie frank elbaz .

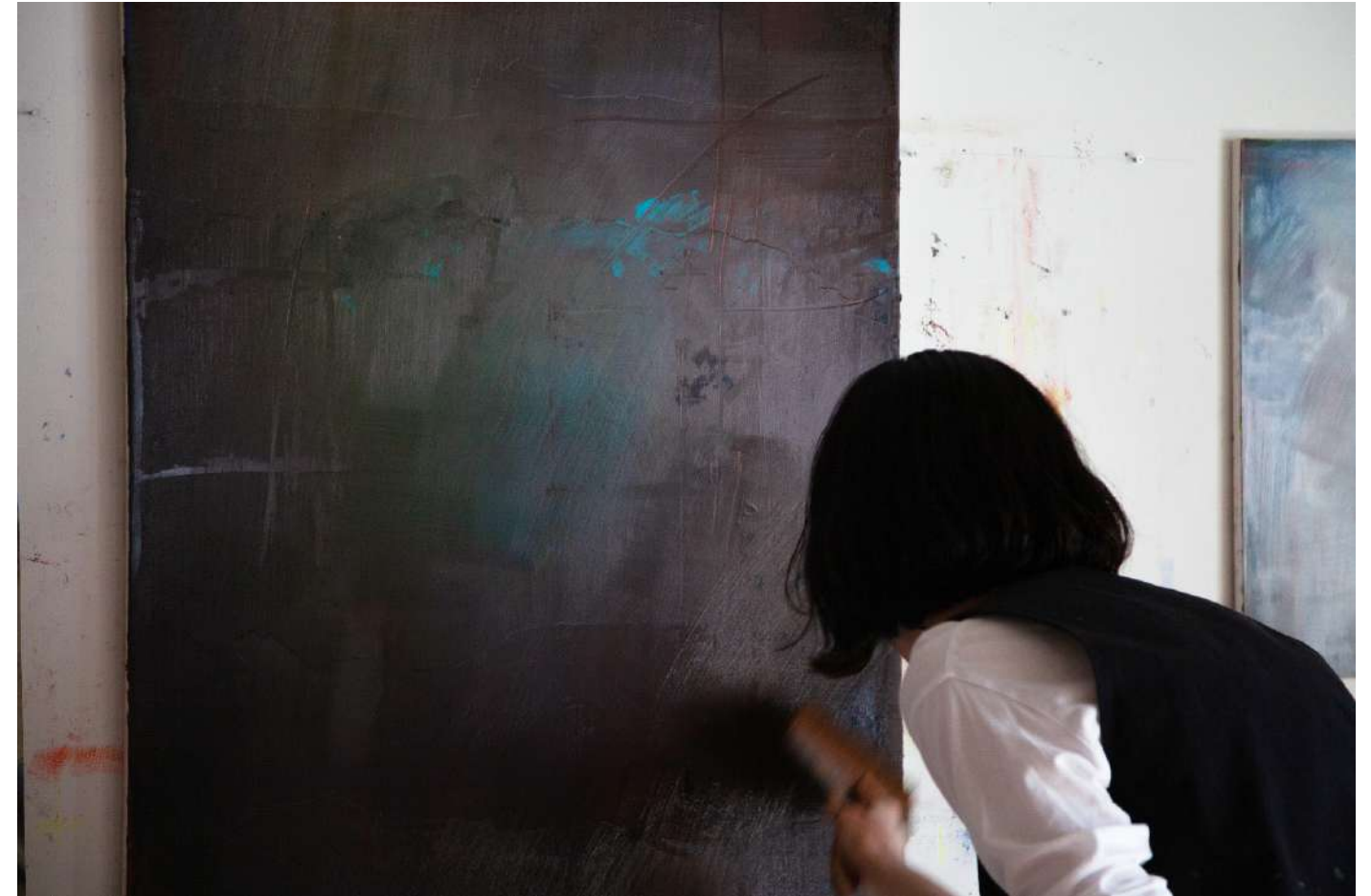
Yasuko Hirano

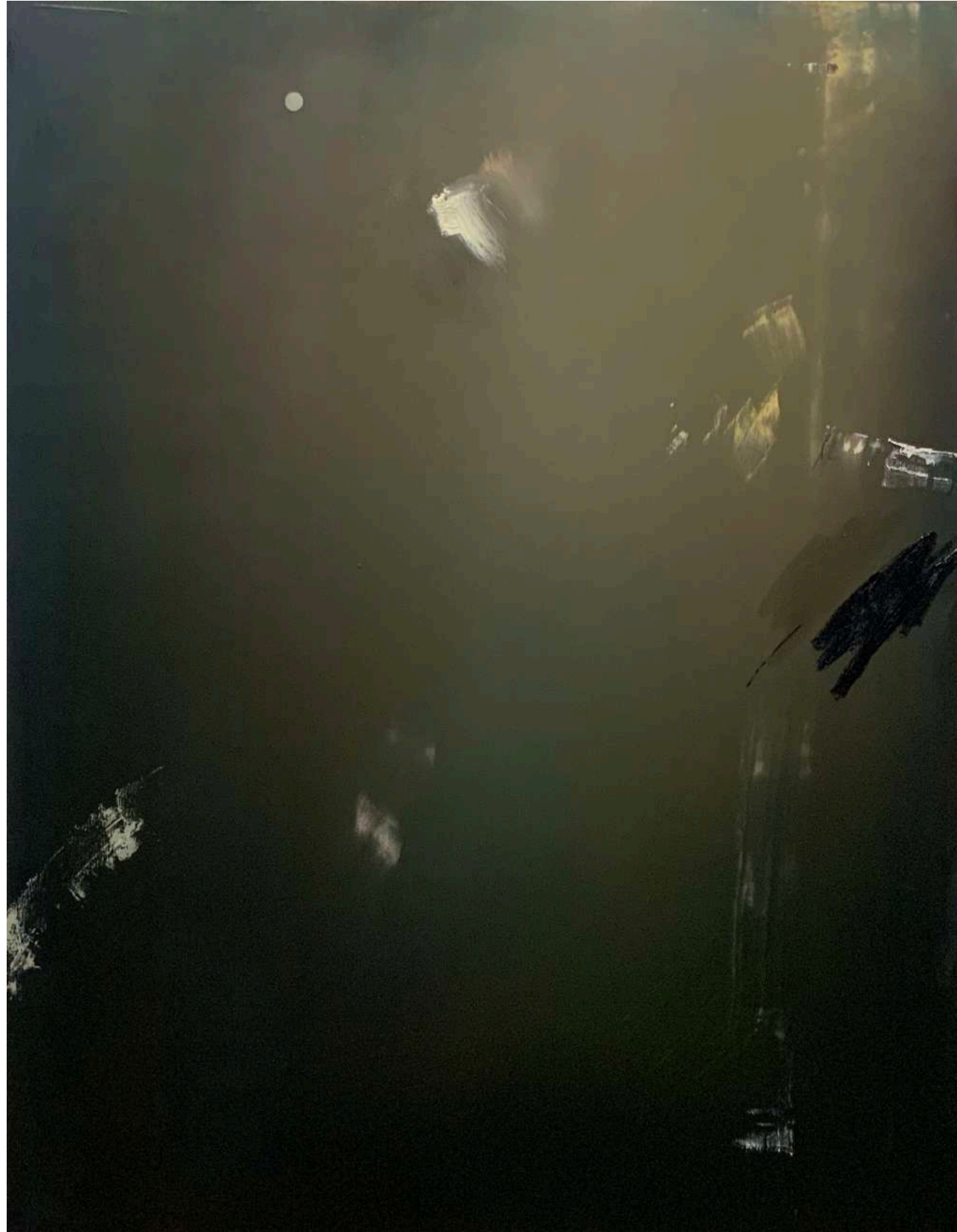


Yasuko Hirano

Born in 1985, Toyama Prefecture, Japan; lives and works in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

Yasuko Hirano's work explores the relationship between perspective, memory, and landscape. Her inspiration is drawn from everyday sceneries like the sky, plants, trees, the still darkness of night, or the mountains of Toyama, where she spent her childhood. Her paintings are crafted by stretching canvas over wooden panels, which are then primed with animal glue and plaster. After carefully polishing the surface, she applies layers of oil paint exclusively in the three primary colors—yellow, red, and blue. By restricting her palette to these fundamental hues, she explores their infinite potential, creating delicate interactions that generate light, movement, and depth. While she refers to her paintings as “landscapes”, they transcend figurative representation to evoke elusive sensations and deeply buried memories. Over time, her practice has shifted away from recognizable shapes, evolving into compositions that, at first glance, appear monochromatic but gradually reveal intricate and poetic interplays of color and form. Through the meticulous and subtle layering of paint, these abstract landscapes indulge viewers to reflect on the fleeting nature of perception.





Yasuko Hirano

Parallelism, 2024

116.7 x 91 cm

Oil, plaster, glue on canvas and wooden panel

The Mystery of the Horizon of Illusion: From the Structure of Yasuko Hirano's Paintings

Kentaro Ichihara | Art critique

The long history of painting is always full of contradictions. The cloud of contradiction sometimes clears up. The realism of the first half of the 19th century at the end of the classicism painting and the materialism of the 1970s at the end of modernism painting. Then, in the 1980s, the sky of the paintings became cloudy again; however, at the end of the postmodern simulacrum, illusions are now peeking out.

Would you be surprised if I told you that this illusion is bubbling up from the tip of Yasuko Hirano's paintbrush? Illusions arise regardless of whether they are figurative or abstract, whether they are thin or thickly painted, or whether the artist tries to reject them. This illusion, which is created based on Hirano's focused attention on her manual work, persists as much as it is denied. On the contrary, it goes back to her body, which plays the role of the midwife during the birth, and dyes it with an illusion. But what is this illusion?

Hirano begins with the three primary colors of paint (the outcome is not luster and shadow because it is not light), and after the process of layering and mixing them, it will be completed with the moment that painting in front looks back at her. The marks are a round dots drawn on the screen. "Doesn't it look like the eyes?" she asks.

The obsession with the production system may be due to the unknown education of Etsutomu Kashiwara, Hirano's mentor. She explains that the motifs in her paintings are the scenery she saw in her hometown when she was a child and the memories of her grandmother. If they call up nostalgia for nature and the past like the German Romantics, then the achromatic paintings wrapped in vague gradations do not depict specific things. Thus, it does not appear to evoke emotion. There is no clear subject (referent). Also, the pattern of shades of gray brings to mind Richter's impressive "Grau" painting series, but Hirano's non-figurative paintings do not aim at "images without referents." There are only traces engraved that mark the end of the creation that embarked on that limitless illusion.

Regarding the points that are the eyes and the traces of various forms of paint that the matière perceive, Hirano answered it is an act of confirming the so-called "flatness" of paintings, and at the same time, it is the illusions generated by the process of manipulating colors. So, is this trace not only announcing the completion of the painting, but also a leftover that sticks out from the illusion that emerges on the screen? If that is the case, isn't it something that she scooped up like a magic trick from a fragment of the painting's structure that supports

the illusion behind it?

This trace could be called the "index" of semiotic terms. What it points adjacent to as eyes, cracks, and frame fragments is the structure of a painting that gives rise to illusions but never reveals the whole picture (eyes are viewpoints, cracks are differences, and frames are boundaries). These various traces, in contact with structures disconnected them, become indices that designate this structure. But it is not a coplanar sign adjacent to the referent. This is because this index floats in the midst of the illusion that intervenes between the structure of the painting and itself.

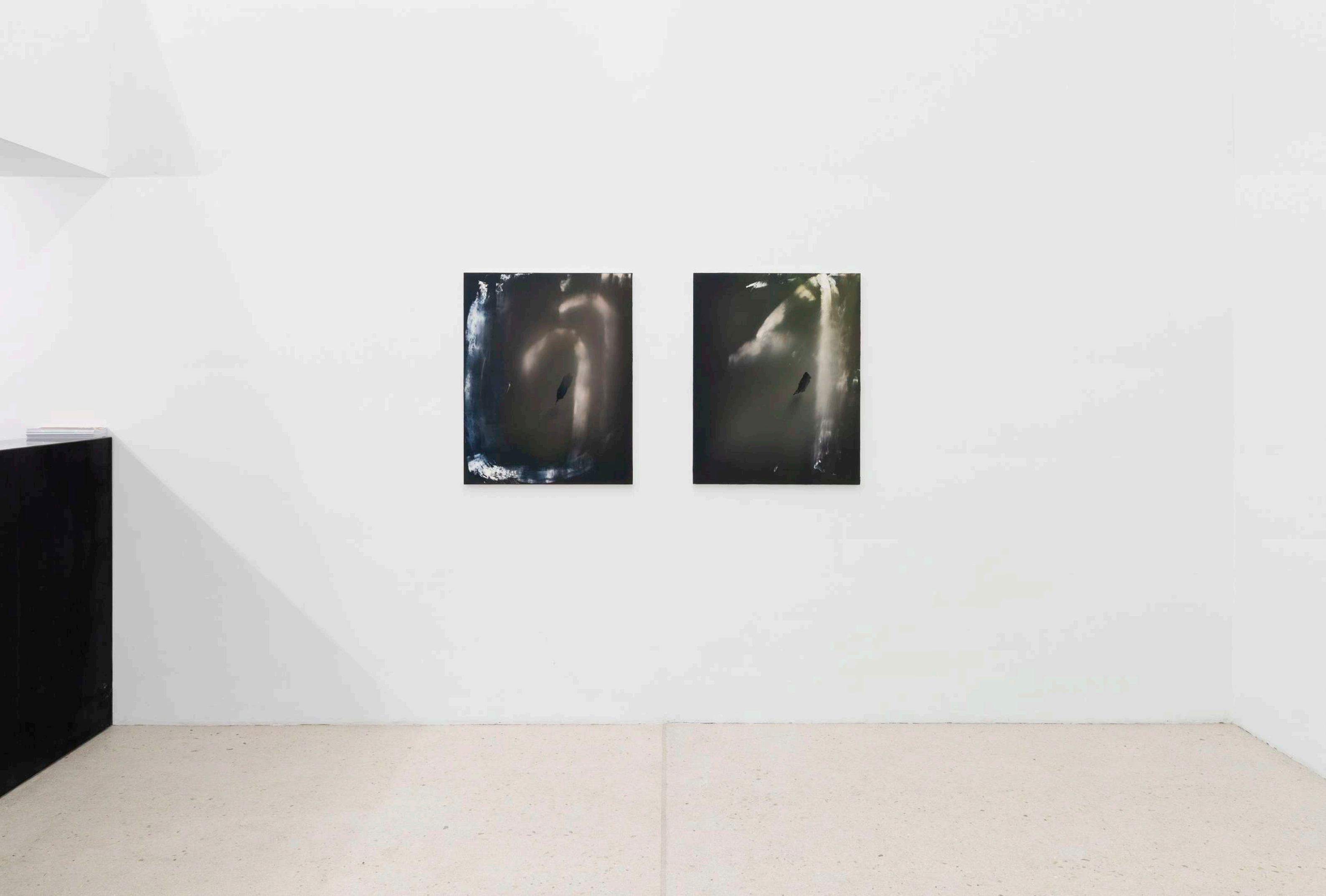
The index, which points to the structure of the painting, also serves as a milestone of a boundary between the illusion of the interior and the reality of the exterior in her paintings. As a nested visible frame within a frame, it functions as a bulwark that contains the infinitely receding abyss of the illusion (the blind spot in the painting's structure).

The painting's structure recovers from the risk of infinite regression through the intervention of its trace index, reactivating the illusion, but the attributes of this illusion are neither real nor fictional. Also, the state is neither presence nor repesence. Nor is it a simulacrum (deformation of repesence). From this, we can understand that Hirano is trying to eliminate fiction from her expression. The refusal of the unintentional illusions that emerge under her brush to be collected into the dualism of reality and fiction, of realism and romanticism, has become the supreme proposition of painting.

The motivation to reject this fiction becomes the driving force behind Hirano's paintings. But where does the illusion, the inevitable effect of this process, go? If it's not fiction, then it's reality. But it is not the reality of the fictional antithesis. Her goal is to make the illusion a reality. Certainly, the vague scenery drawn along the way was reminiscent of Richter's paintings. So her paintings seem referenceless. But for her, it's just a by-product of the process. Although the traces of matière that mark the end of each event are valuable information that indicates the point of passage to reality. The whole of Hirano's paintings hints at a structure that conceives an illusion. Unlike the crucifixion of Jesus and the image of the Virgin and Child in religious paintings, which are symbols that convey the divinity (transcendence) of Christianity, the vague fog of illusion suspended in the index of residual traces predicts the new structure (immanent perspective) of a painting.



Exhibition view : *Anthem*, Yasuko Hirano Solo Exhibition, galerie frank elbaz, 2026. Photo : Claire Dorn



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Exhibition view : 同時に、どこでも*painting is a body.*, Tezukayama Gallery, 2026. Photo : Naohiro Seki



Exhibition view : *After Light, Before Shadow*, Yasuko Hirano Solo Exhibition, gallery stoop, 2025. Photo : Naohiro Seki



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Exhibition view : *After Light, Before Shadow*, Yasuko Hirano Solo Exhibition, gallery stoop, 2025. Photo : Naohiro Seki



Exhibition view : *Not a Mountain, but a Flat Summit*, TEZUKAYAMA GALLERY, 2023. Photo : Hyogo Mugyuda



Yasuko Hirano

Born in 1985, Toyama Prefecture, Japan; lives and works in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

Education

2007 B.F.A., Painting, Kyoto Seika University

Solo Exhibitions

2026 galerie frank elbaz (Paris) - upcoming

2025 «Sign» at Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi Contemporary Gallery (Tokyo)

2024 «Gesture» at ARTDYNE (Tokyo)

2023 «Not a Mountain, but a Flat Summit» at TEZUKAYAMA GALLERY (Osaka)

2023 «Two Eyes» at Ginza Tsutaya Bookstore ART WALL (Tokyo)

2020 «HIRANO YASUKO EXHIBITION - UNFOLD ROOM -» at stoop (Tokyo)

2018 «Uncertain Map» at CALM&PUNK GALLERY (Tokyo)

2018 «To be Called» at Gallery PARC (Kyoto)

2013 «Hidden Form - Becoming Shadow» at a-room (Kyoto)

2013 «Twilight» at masayoshi suzuki gallery (Aichi)

2009 «Twilight» at masayoshi suzuki gallery (Aichi)

Selected Group Exhibitions

2024 «Shape of Prayer» (MARUEIDO JAPAN / Akasaka, Tokyo) - upcoming

2024 «Remaining Fragments: Yasutake Iwana, Yasuko Hirano, and Naoko Matsumoto»
(CADAN Yurakucho / Tokyo)

2024 «a hue and cry.» (Art ka Beefun ka Picyu / Tokyo)

2024 «La Promesse d'Avril» by galerie frank elbaz (MtK Contemporary Art / Kyoto)

2023 «WALL SELECTION vol.2» (WALL _alternative / Tokyo)

2023 «Monologues On-the-Go #4» (GASBON METABOLISM / Yamanashi)

2023 «Cama III: The Principle of Kiss» (Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi Main Building Contemporary
Gallery / Tokyo)

2023 «Dérive feast» (Yokohama Civic Art Gallery / Kanagawa)

2023 «Kyoto Prefectural New Generation Selection Exhibition» (Kyoto Prefectural Museum
of Culture / Kyoto)

2023 «Where the Window Comes From, Where the Space Goes» (ARTDYNE / Tokyo)

2022 «UNLOGICAL 05» (MONO.LOGUES / Tokyo)

2022 «the case against perfection» (Awobasou / Tokyo)

2022 «Directors' Selection - FOCUS» (TEZUKAYAMA GALLERY / Osaka)

2021 «[m@p] meet @ post» (Gallery PARC / Kyoto)

2021 «Pictorially Yours,» (Omotesando Gallery / Tokyo)

2021 «New Positions 2021» (Taguchi Fine Art / Tokyo)

2016 «Shitamachi Art Festival: With Painter» (Kobe Municipal Regional Human Resources
Support Center / Hyogo)

2015 «VOCA Exhibition 2015 - New Vision of Contemporary Art: New Flat Artists» (Ueno
Royal Museum / Tokyo)

Awards

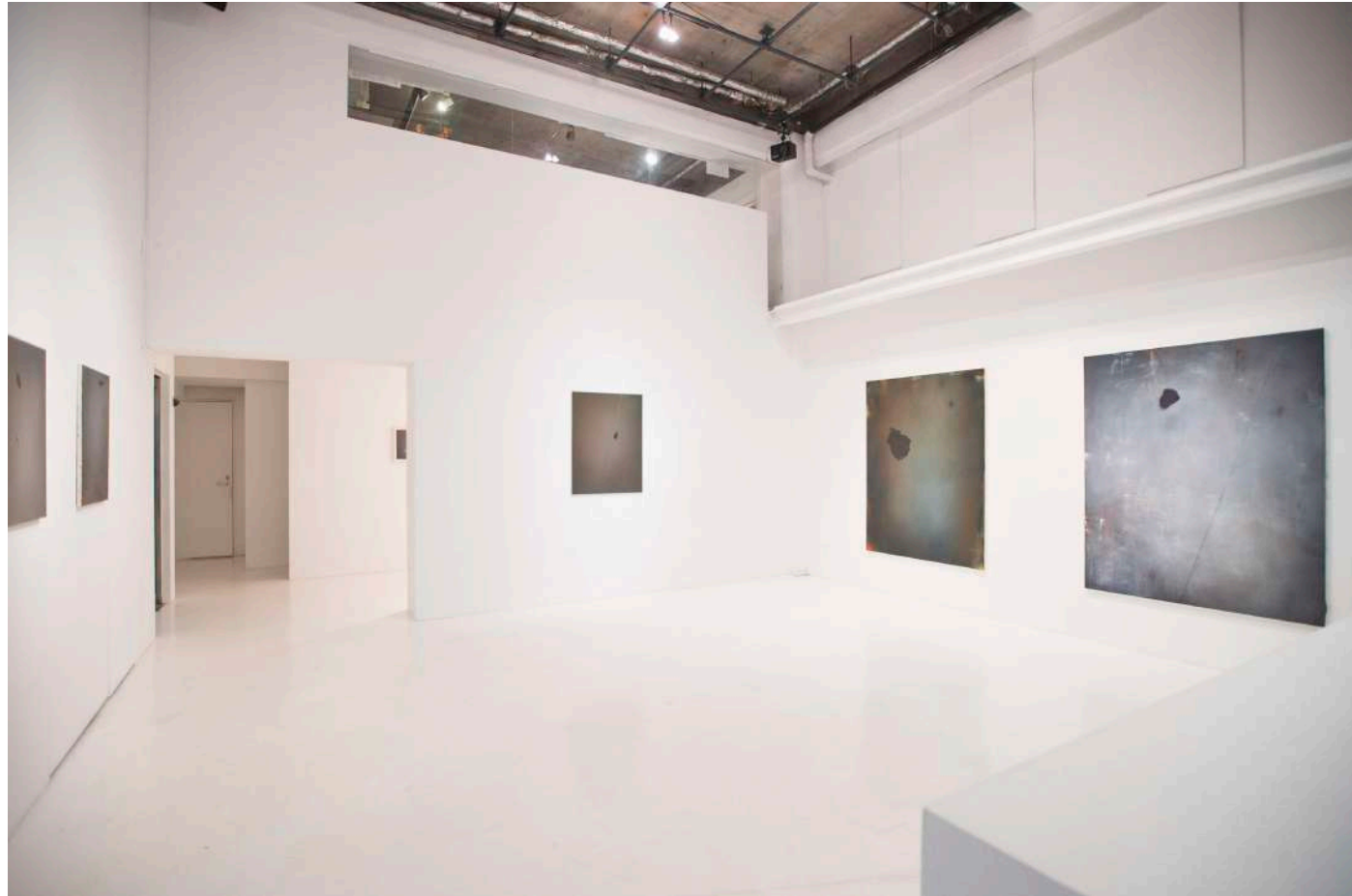
2016 30th Holbein Scholarship

2023 Media Award at the Kyoto Prefectural New Generation Selection Exhibition

Collections

Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., New Tokyo Building, Tokyo, Japan

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Exhibition view : «Uncertain Map», CALM&PUNK GALLERY, Tokyo, 2018.



Exhibition view : «Gesture», ARTDYNE, Tokyo, 2024.