

## Artforum Must See: Matsuyama Tomokazu, *The Best Part About Us*



Tomokazu Matsuyama, *Let Him Run Wild Onyx*, 2021, Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 54 x 54 inches

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Kavi Gupta presents *The Best Part About Us*, a solo exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by internationally acclaimed, Japanese-born, New York-based artist Tomokazu Matsuyama.

The exhibition comes on the heels of the artist's landmark solo exhibitions at two of China's largest and most influential private museums, Long Museum Shanghai and Long Museum Chongqing. As with those exhibitions, the visual language Matsuyama deploys in the works in *The Best Part About Us* reflects the experiences

of today's nomadic diaspora—a global, intercultural community of wandering people who seek to understand their place in a world full of contrasting visual and cultural dialects.

Amalgamated from his vast mental and physical archive of iconographical material, Matsuyama's painted worlds vivify his lived experience. His fresh approach to the language of figuration creates dual references to both our contemporary realities and our multiplicitous pasts, combining allusions to fashion models torn from the



pages of glossy magazines; flora and fauna borrowed from Edo-period folding screens; open-source wallpaper patterns from the Internet; fragmented snippets of pop culture and celebrity life; frozen movements captured from the garments of centuries-old Buddhist sculptures; compositional strategies of the European Renaissance masters; aesthetic cues from Modernist art history such as shaped canvases and Abstract Expressionist techniques; and of course, those innumerable bits of branded trash ubiquitous on the streets of every city in the Western world.

Matsuyama's carefully constructed, fictional landscapes welcome anyone inside to build their own narrative and discover their own meaning. What name should we give this aesthetic, which relates to nobody nowhere, yet is recognized by everyone everywhere?

"I call it the global us," Matsuyama says.

This is Matsuyama's mastery as an artist; by questioning what is familiar and what is foreign, he shows us pictures of others that are also reflections of ourselves. The uncanny process of recognizing the unfamiliar also plays out in the presence of Matsuyama's sculptures, several of which are included in the exhibition. Simultaneously familiar and alien, they hint exquisitely at the worlds we know, not from life but from a dream. Hand welded from sheets of stainless steel and hand buffed to a mirror shine, these fragmented, labyrinthine forms are frozen in gestures that, again, relate to the "global us."

"My visual language is a community-based language," Matsuyama says. "My paintings are not intended to inform viewers of specific messages nor narratives."

These little fractions of everyday culture remind the viewers of narratives in their own life. That leads to ownership. It represents them. It represents me. It represents us. What's the best part? It's subjective."

Matsuyama received his MFA in Communications Design from the Pratt Institute, New York. Recent exhibitions include *Realms of Refuge*, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL, USA; *Tomokazu Matsuyama: Accountable Nature*, Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, China, and Long Museum Chongqing; *Tomokazu Matsuyama: Palimpsest*, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA; *Thousand Regards*, Katzen Arts Center at American University Museum, Washington, DC, USA; *Tomokazu Matsuyama: Oh Magic Night*, Hong Kong Contemporary Art (HOCA) Foundation, Repulse Bay, Hong Kong; *Tomokazu Matsuyama: No Place Like Home*, Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg; *Made in 17 Hours*, Museum of Contemporary Art Museum, Sydney, Australia; and *Edo Pop: The Graphic Impact of Japanese Prints*, Japan Society, New York, NY, USA, among others.

Large-scale public displays of Matsuyama's work can be found all over the world, including a monumental, permanent sculptural installation activating Shinjuku Station East Square, Tokyo, Japan; a sculptural installation at the heart of Ivy Station, a transformative, mixed-use development project in Culver City, CA; a 30m painted mural and two large-scale stainless steel sculptures in Tipstar Dome Chiba, a cutting edge, state-of-the-art cycling arena in Chiba, Japan; *Magic City*, a 124m x 150m LED billboard animating the facades of neighboring skyscrapers on the riverfront of downtown Chongqing, China; a large-scale, outdoor steel sculpture on the grounds of Meiji Shrine in Tokyo; as well as *Thousand*



Tomokazu Matsuyama, WALL TO WALL WITH YOU, 2021, Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 92 x 48 x 2 inches

Regards/Shape of Color, a monumental mural commissioned by the City of Beverly Hills, CA.

Matsuyama's works are in the permanent collections of the Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Powerlong Art Museum, Shanghai, China; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA, USA; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA; the Royal Family of Dubai; Dean Collection (Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys), USA; Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, CA, USA; Pt. Leo Estate Sculpture Park, Melbourne, Australia; and the institutional collections of Micro-soft, Toyota Automobile, Bank of Sharjah, NIKE Japan, and Levi's Strauss and Co. Japan.