

GJ Kimsunken

Figuration

July 23 – September 10, 2022



Yi Gallery is pleased to present *Figuration*, an extraordinary body of new paintings by GJ Kimsunken. This is Kimsunken's first solo show in New York. The opening, at which the artist will be present, will take place on Saturday, July 23, from 3pm to 6pm. Starting July 28, an online viewing room of Kimsunken's new works on paper will be live.

In his work, Kimsunken asks questions about human existence: who are we, why are we and what are we for? Generally, he titles each work *Figuration*. The new works represent a significant departure from his previous series and are an exciting development in his continuing interest in and investigation into human figuration. Kimsunken still methodically primes the canvas with gesso, which he then covers in multiple layers of oil paint, giving the surfaces an otherworldly luminescence, as well as substantial weight. Despite his compositions' reductive, abstract appearance – achieved by scraping away paint from the canvas – Kimsunken's paintings represent the human figure. To the artist, this method is very much the most direct way of mark-making and is related to the core theme of his work - arousing the human condition - leading to the question of human salvation.

Kimsunken's non-descriptive figure paintings occupy a singular space between representation and abstraction. His repetitive and rigorous painting process emphasizes the physical properties of oil paint, with the resultant works deeply rooted in the history of the medium.

For this exhibition, the artist reflects on new modes of representing and abstracting the human figure. Absence and presence are equally important in the new group of works – absence makes presence possible and presence exists through absence. The two states of being are inseparable. Only eight inches wide, *Figuration 22. 18 (Otherness)* is the same height as the artist himself – seventy-one inches. Here,

Kimsunken makes direct reference to the concept of absence by using an exaggerated, elongated format, cropping out a large part of the canvas and giving it an almost sculptural presence off the wall. In the artist's own words, "My work seems to question the meaning of presence through the concept of absence." Kimsunken wants viewers to stand next to a painting and feel the presence of a figure. The elongated, upright format isolates the essential image from the larger compositional structure and accentuates the human figure through articulation of the head. The exploration of this long format is further developed in two paintings, *Figuration 22. 12* and *Figuration 22. 17*, which allude to cropped torsos and suggest the presence and absence of a full figure.

In the rear gallery, three smaller scaled works reflect the artist's most recent exploration in figuration. By isolating part of the human figure, one at a time, Kimsunken encourages the viewer to use imagination to fill the blank wall space, where their own figure stands. Intended by the artist to hang low on the wall, *Figuration 22. 16 (legs)* alludes to the position of legs where a human figure stands. Questions of spatial relationship are necessarily a part of viewing *Figuration 22. 13 (shoulder)* and *Figuration 22. 15*, in response to one's own figure and other bodies in space. Through radical and tactful placement of intimately sized canvases, Kimsunken invites the viewer into a transcendental experience which affirms one's own sense of presence.

As with much of the artist's practice, these predominantly monochromatic paintings possess subtle yet richly worked surfaces with pronounced textures. Kimsunken sought to investigate the relationship between the paint material and the passage of time, with an emphasis on raising physical matter to the height of the human spirit.

GJ Kimsunken (b. 1985, Seoul, South Korea) received his MFA from the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture in 2010, and an BFA from the National Art School in Sydney, Australia in 2008. Kimsunken currently lives and works in New Jersey. His work has been featured in galleries and institutional exhibitions around the world.

YI GALLERY program features a diverse and eclectic mixture of emerging and mid-career international artists. Started in 2018 as a curatorial project exhibiting in non-traditional settings, the gallery has expanded to include a collaborative exhibition space in Bushwick (2020 - 2021). The gallery continues to evolve with a new space inside Brooklyn's vibrant creative hub Industry City, launched in 2021. YI is committed to offering a platform for distinctive artistic voices, while enhancing the public's interaction with contemporary art.

For additional information, please contact Cecilia Zhang Jalboukh at cecilia@gallery-yi.com or call / text +1 (917) 617-6561.

Image: GJ Kimsunken, *Figuration 22. 12* (2022), Oil on canvas, 71 x 16 in 180.3 x 40.6 cm

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