



SIGHS

An exhibition of works by Shota Nakamura
C L E A R I N G New York
January 22 - March 1, 2025

Sighing is associated with an array of feelings, chief among them boredom, exasperation, relief, arousal, distress, exhaustion, and anxiety. This multiplicity, however, does not suggest the endless meanings of a sigh, but its ubiquity as a regulatory function—filling and emptying the lungs while making a whooshing sound has the potential to mean anything.

“Sighs” (all works 2024) is infused with ambiguity. In a new series of fourteen oils on linen, Shota Nakamura demonstrates his tendency to slip between the genres of landscape, portrait, and still life painting. The suite’s titular image portrays a duo of pallid, male nudes perched amidst yellowing grass. While one gentleman is preoccupied by the smoothness of the “Ken” doll blob where his genitals should be, the other conceals his crotch and glances in the direction of the smattering of purple and white flowers. A similarly ambivalent frustration is at the centre of *Nude I*, in which another undressed figure grabs at the flesh between his legs but doesn’t seem to pleasure himself as much as rummage around his pubic hair.

Departing from “the gardens of [his] dreams,” as he once described them, these new terrains evince abject climates such as the frostbitten *Landscape (Snowscape)* to the sunstruck *Landscape*. Whereas Nakamura distorts proportions, signifiers, and tonal values to break down the human-nature understanding, he prefers conceptual metaphors to upset the connotations of the domestic interior.

The symbolic portal in *Window (Seascape)*, for example, is denoted by the frame-within-a-frame effect of the titular object and view. Likewise, *Flower on the table*, features two miniature meta-Nakamura paintings superimposed onto a window frame and the backrest of an armchair; also, it suggests the notion of a portal as a room which lacks the fundamental concepts of a floor, ceiling, or walls. Even the tourmaline haze which breaks up the monochromatic tablescape of *Window (dusk)* exemplifies the inherent solitude of the “artist-at-work” and by extension, Nakamura’s turn toward himself.

Capturing certain tensions—between ambiguity and universality, absence and presence, as well as the act of sighing as either meaningless or meaningful—Nakamura’s new paintings offer a glimpse at the convergence of human emotions, nature, and domesticity.

“Sighs” is Shota Nakamura’s third solo exhibition at C L E A R I N G, and his debut solo exhibition in New York City.