



Over the Influence Presents

Hiroya Kurata

Blunderbuss

20 May to 2 July 2023



Hiroya Kurata, *Blunderbuss*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 182.9 by 147.3 cm, 72 by 58 in, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence is pleased to present Brooklyn-based artist Hiroya Kurata's third solo exhibition with the gallery, Blunderbuss. This exhibition opens on May 20th and will remain on view through July 2, 2023.

"I'm painting my life. Nothing more," says Kurata. And certainly nothing less. The sixteen works in *Blunderbuss* record what it's like to be alive in the year 2023 in America's largest, most culturally robust city, New York. This is what food looks like. (Highly processed white cake with frosting and strawberries.) This is what children looked like. (Chaotic, cheerful blurs of energetic life force in cotton shorts.) And light. (Dappled.) And parks. (Serene.) And mothers. (Overworked but ever-present.) The exhibition serves as evidence, testament, and proof of the way we lived and the ways we made sense of the rapidly evolving world around us.

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The Japanese word *enikki* means photo diary. Each of these paintings is based on a photo from Kurata's *enikki*. As the father of three young children, his diary consists mostly of photos of them, his wife, the toys they play with, the activities they enjoy, the park by their house that they visit as often as they can. The title of the show is even borrowed from a children's book beloved by his daughter titled *The Three Robbers* by Tomi Ungerer. While the story refers to the antique shotguns with flared muzzles, the homonym applies equally as well to the often blundering, clumsy movements of children not yet grown into their limbs.

That children are constantly moving might be one reason for the figures' simplified, almost blurry faces. The chronographic images from the Victoria era, that captured several phases of motion in one frame, come to mind. The illusion is so deftly handled that to look too quickly is to see the young girl licking her fork, the baby squirming, the boy casting his fishing line. Contrasted by the impeccable details in which water, light, and grass, are rendered, the cartoon faces are both surprising and humorous.

Another reason, perhaps, is a desire to portray a figure in whom anyone could see themselves. By reducing a face to two eyes and a mouth, stripping away the defining details that reveal race, gender, and status, the audience is invited to find themselves or their relatives and offspring in any one of the figures. In this way, his characters become archetypal, representatives of a collective human experience shared by those living in this place, at this time, engaged in the most universal of pursuits: eating food, raising kids, quelling boredom, and vying for attention, affection.

Kurata's characters embody the drives, characteristics, and behaviors intrinsic to the human species. The good and the bad. In *Pig and Turtle*, the existence of both light and darkness within us is explicitly externalized through an uncanny, shadowy reflection peering back up at the figures playing on the fountain. In *Rear Naked Choke* one can sense the primal, animalistic instinct inhabiting the children wrestling on the grass. In *Miss Lemonhead* and *Blunderbuss*, there is an unmistakable feeling of joy and satisfaction.

Despite their vague faces, these characters express emotions plumbed from the depths of the human condition: carnal pleasure, delight, boredom, fear, exhaustion, alienation, rage, hope. Often, with multiple urges coexisting within a single scene, a single human. That Kurata can convey so much without the aid of a raised eyebrow, or an upturned nose, is a testament to both his mastery of material and craft and the profundity of his insight into the human condition. –
Tara Anne Dalbow

**Artist Bio**

Hiroya Kurata was born in Japan in 1980, and lives and works in New York, USA. He received his BFA from Parsons School of Design and currently living in New York City. His paintings combine representations of found imagery with those of personal remembrances, creating scenes that feel at once familiar and strangely disconcerting. Referencing the visual language of manga and landscape paintings, Kurata explores the conception and emotion of nostalgia.

Exhibition dates:

20 May to 2 July 2023

Location:

Over the Influence Los Angeles
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CA 90013

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