

Craig Kucia

act(ive) enclosure

Artist | Craig Kucia
Exhibition Title | *act(ive) enclosure*
Dates | November 20 (Sat.) – December 22 (Wed.), 2021
Location | MAKI Gallery / Omotesando, Tokyo



Craig Kucia
absent landscape
2021
Oil on canvas
121.9 x 121.9 cm

MAKI Gallery is pleased to present *act(ive) enclosure*, Los Angeles-based artist Craig Kucia's first solo exhibition in Japan, which will be held at our Omotesando space. Kucia is known for his idiosyncratic practice which integrates his upbringing with rigorous art historical training. For his debut exhibition in Asia, a new series of intimately-scaled canvases will be featured along with five new paintings.

The exhibition title is drawn from the 18th and 19th century British Inclosure Acts, creating legal property rights to land previously held in common. Displaced by the process, tenants left the countryside to work in towns, providing the labor for the coming Industrial Revolution. *act(ive) enclosure* examines cause and effect, agency and culpability, and the ways in which our ancestors inadvertently participated in the early creation of today's environmental crisis.

In his large-scale oil-on-canvas works, the artist plays with the viewer's perception through various visual mischiefs. *making the moon* contains a slightly irregular model of a moon where, dangling from a cable passing through a shut window, rests a brightly lit light bulb. The window appears to sit atop the moon, a logical impossibility that calls direct

attention to the flatness of the painted surface itself. Although technically remarkable, these illusions are only a prelude to the layered experience Kucia's paintings have to offer. In *is a window a painting*, Kucia plays on dimensionality by juxtaposing flat, stage-like space with materially rich elements to explore the notion of picture-as-window, blurring the borders between the pictorial realm and the realm of the viewer. *1975* depicts a fish in a fishbowl filled with pink leaves, leaving little space for it to move freely. The enclosure here is as protective as it is restrictive, reminding us of the past years of gazing outward while living inside, finding ourselves contained by new habits and new customs. Drawing inspiration from his personal experiences, Kucia's uncanny interior scenes stage what appears to be random items in surreal compositions. Embedding symbolism both personal to himself and to the collective consciousness, the artist creates an intricate visual vocabulary rich in metaphor.

For the past two years, Kucia has been focusing on making works based on the repetition of the same subject depicted in various scenarios. In addition to the five new paintings, his newest series further explores the possibilities of oil painting through the central motif of a giant squid floating in the sea. At first glance, the works may look like a playful technical exercise with its vivid colors and humorous, childlike depiction of squids, floating aimlessly with a flowerpot or a rain cloud on its head. However, beyond the light-heartedness, Kucia's metaphorically rich paintings attempts to investigate our accountability and responsibility in the world we inhabit. As the artist states, "Like the toucan and the whale series before it, the squid as an image is almost more familiar as a cultural symbol—something we recognize and have invented an identity for, with little real understanding of what it is or how it operates. As humans, we've been increasingly disconnected from the world around us for a long time; cartoon avatars are more familiar than the living, breathing thing. So, in a way, these squids are less about squid, than our idea of squid."

Employing archetypal imagery and technical trickery, Kucia's thought-provoking paintings are far from linear, rather each painting contains multifaceted narratives within. The layered references and metaphors force the viewers to reflect on their own experience, inviting them to expand their field of perspective, ultimately bringing awareness to our place in the world. We invite you to take this opportunity to visit Craig Kucia's first solo presentation at MAKI Gallery and attempt to parse out the hidden meanings behind each work.



Craig Kucia was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He received a BFA from Cleveland Institute of Art (Cleveland, Ohio) in 1999 and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Arts (London) in 2003. Kucia is known for his thought-provoking paintings with intricate and uncanny compositions which explore the visual and psychological spaces that arise between memory and imagination.

Kucia's paintings integrate references from various historical movements such as Surrealism, Pattern & Decorations, and Cubism, to name a few, as well as draws from his own personal experiences. With varying subjects, the artist explores the possibilities of oil painting by using various techniques within his work by juxtaposing flat and graphic elements with materially rich impasto. Often using universally familiar

imagery—such as sperm whales from his signature whale series or motifs of flora and fauna—Kucia's otherworldly paintings contain an allegorical and metaphorical resonance. The unexpected and intriguing narratives Kucia purposes, invites viewers to reflect, question, and create their own stories within each work.

The artist's recent solo exhibitions include *a toucan*, L21 (Islas Baleares, 2021); *whales*, The Pit (Glendale, 2021); *paintings*, AM Gallery (Los Angeles, 2018); and *accidental documentaries*, Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Art (Cleveland, 2014). His work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Wild Frontiers*, The Pit (Glendale, 2021); *36 Paintings*, Harper's Book (East Hampton, 2021); and *L.A. : Views*, MAKI Gallery (Tokyo, 2020).



Craig Kucia
making the moon

2021
Oil on canvas
142.4 x 132.1 cm



Craig Kucia
1975

2021
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 116.8 cm

MAKI Gallery / Omotesando, Tokyo

4-11-11 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0001 JAPAN

Tel: +81-3-6434-7705

Fax: +81-3-6434-7706

E-mail: info@makigallery.com

Opening hours: 11:30-19:00

Closed on Sundays and Mondays

*For further inquiries, please contact