

# GUILD GALLERY

## Syotatsu "UBUSUNA"



September 13 - November 4, 2023

Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 13, 6-8pm

Guild Gallery is pleased to present the first solo U.S. exhibition of Syotatsu (b. 1982, Wakayama, Japan), a Japanese artist known for drawings and paintings that engage with the natural world through both subject and medium—depicting scenes and phenomena of nature that hover between figuration and abstraction, made using a distinctive technique that mixes in local soil into the paint before application. The exhibition presents a series of 30 new works that were inspired by a return to Syotatsu's hometown of Wakayama, where the climate, topography, and spirituality of the Japanese countryside inspired a radical new direction in his craft. Titled *Ubusuna*, which means birthplace, the exhibition is on view at Guild Gallery in New York from September 13 through November 4, 2023.

Originally trained in portraiture, which he began drawing on the streets of Kyoto as a teenager, Syotatsu has spent the past two decades honing his singular method and expressive style to depict the natural world. Using the soil found just outside his home in the Wakayama mountains and local materials including indigo, sumi (charcoal), and Japanese ink, his subjects exude a spiritual essence, influenced by ancient forms, tools, and traditional arts, while both existing in and drawing inspiration from the environment. His works often incorporate items from his natural environment, including found objects and reclaimed lumber, and are executed on surfaces including Japanese paper, vintage fabric, and wood. Composed of natural elements, they also depict imaginative scenes of nature: birds crowing toward rings of light; moons bursting within torsos and spangling across the canvas; swirling figures embracing in a spray of starlight; and hands drawn together in a blessing and raised up toward the sun.

A palette of dark and light in high contrast is consistent throughout the works, which Syotatsu attributes to the observation of shadows and the patterns in which day and night flow throughout space, as though “the sun and moon are in conversation with each other.” This distinctive combination creates a textured surface and matte quality while infusing his work with the energy of the land around him: the light, the sounds of animals, wind and rain, and the hum of everyday life. Syotatsu begins creating without a specific outcome in mind, but rather looks to the medium to reveal natural shapes over time, then connects those forms with the otherworldly visions he encounters in his dreams and in his daily exchanges with the land, binding tangible and spiritual senses into a physical work. The result is a manifestation of Syotatsu's own relationship to nature—one of wonder, appreciation and respect expressed through his subjects—abstracted to enlarge their ethereal energy and capacity for emotional transference.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tatsuya Kawai, or Syotatsu (b. 1982, Wakayama, Japan) makes expressive paintings guided by the climate and spirituality of the land from his studio in Wakayama. Trained at Kyoto University of the Arts, Syotatsu was first introduced to the art of portraiture at the age of nineteen on the streets of Kyoto, where he met the many people who inspired an evolution of his

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style. Upon moving back to Wakayama, Syotatsu became increasingly observant of the beauty and divinity landscape that would become the signature symbol of his paintings, and he has remained there as he hones practice.

Syotatsu's name was suggested to him by a friend who thought he should have a painter's name, rather than name. When asked what is most important for Syotatsu when painting portraits, he answered "smiling face then took "Syo" (smile) and "Tatsu" from his given name to create his painter name.

## **ABOUT THE GALLERY**

Guild Gallery, founded by Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch, and designed by Roman and Williams, is an extension of Roman and Williams Guild. The gallery celebrates the millennia-long legacy of the decorative exhibitions of contemporary masters of their respective media. With a focus on natural materials such as clay stone, Guild Gallery celebrates artists and values utility in exquisite craftsmanship and form. Guild Gallery platform to expertly showcase ideas and artists, creating a new dialogue between ancient and modern, fine art

Website [guildgalleryny.com](http://guildgalleryny.com) Instagram [@guildgallery](https://www.instagram.com/guildgallery)

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