

Crèvecoeur

Yu Nishimura: Beyond Binaries, Painters Painting Paintings,
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Painters Painting Paintings

Yu Nishimura: Beyond Binaries

The ascending trajectory of Yu Nishimura reaches new heights with 'Threshold' at Crèvecoeur in Paris.



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In the art world one routinely encounters press releases declaring work to exist “between figuration and abstraction”—a tired reflex born from our exhausted vocabulary for contemporary painting. What we’re left with is a standardized inbetweenness, a formulaic straddling of representation and non-objective expression that rings hollow. Then arrives Yu Nishimura, whose ascending trajectory reaches new heights with *Threshold* at Crèvecoeur in Paris. And here’s the crucial distinction: Nishimura isn’t caught between anything—he encompasses all of the above and more, dissolving the very premise of these tired binaries.

Working primarily in oil and tempera on canvas, along with watercolors and pastels on paper, Nishimura a Japanese artist born in 1982, employs subdued yet luminous palettes that distill scenes from his domestic world into something approaching the metaphysical.

Here is an artist who resists categorization not through indecision but through genuine versatility, refusing the lazy comfort of any single genre or style. His visual temperature shifts from work to work, sometimes within the same piece—what begins as landscape liquefies into abstraction, what appears as still life suddenly reveals itself as something closer to portraiture.



Yu Nishimura, *offering*, 2025, acrylic on canvas, 194 × 371.5 cm

space where the aquatic becomes atmospheric, where what might be microscopic organisms suspended in water could just as easily be celestial bodies drifting through space or ground dwelling organisms viewed through a glass wall. There's a kind of visual humming in the piece.

It's a vibration that Nishimura knows and relishes: the way pigment settles and pools, creating zones of density and translucence that feel almost sonic.

This quality—what the gallery's press material aptly describes as “a certain tone.. a sound”—connects works across the exhibition that might otherwise seem worlds apart. *Seashore*, an intimate oil on canvas from 2024, shares this vibration with *planktos* despite the vast difference in scale and subject. Both works reference Nishimura's repeated invocations of air and wind, of invisible forces that move through space and alter what we see. In *seashore*, gentle striations of color suggest tidal movement or perhaps the way light refracts across water and sand, while the paint itself seems to breathe with ample surrounding negative space throughout the landscape.

Crève-cœur

Then there's *offering*, a commanding horizontal canvas in acrylic stretching nearly four meters wide. Here Nishimura flattens the hierarchy between portrait, landscape, and still life entirely. It's a painting that refuses to settle into any single reading, and yet it never feels tentative or unresolved. This is the confidence of an artist who has thoroughly internalized his materials and methods.



Across both gallery spaces, Nishimura demonstrates what happens when versatility is pursued not as stylistic promiscuity but as a form of radical openness. His smaller works—watercolors like *vending machine*, ink drawings, even collaborative pieces with Yasuaki Hamada—share DNA with the monumental canvases. They are modes of seeing and being, they both observed and the imagined.



Yu Nishimura, *seashore*, 2024, oil on canvas, 32 × 41 cm

What makes *Threshold* so compelling is how it demonstrates that genuine innovation in painting doesn't require the invention of new languages so much as the dissolution of false boundaries. Nishimura doesn't split the difference between abstraction and figuration; he reveals how the distinction was always somewhat arbitrary, a convenience of criticism rather than a law of perception. This is painting that doesn't hedge its bets but multiplies them, offering us not a middle ground but an expanded field where anything might occur—and frequently does.