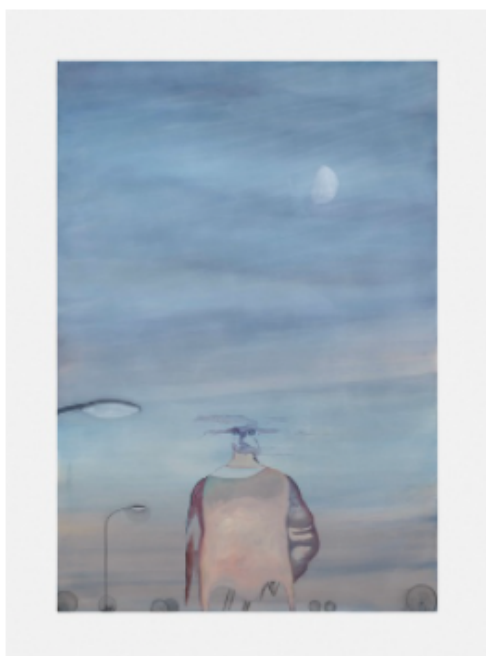


ARTFORUM



Hiroka Yamashita, *Moonrise (Route 2)*, 2021, Oil on linen, 63 ¾ × 44 ½ "

BERLIN

Hiroka Yamashita

TANYA LEIGHTON

Kurfürstenstrasse 24/25

March 12–April 23, 2022

These are landscapes that beguile with more than just the visuals. You sense the wind or the weight of the fog. You feel the coldness of the falling snow on your skin or the warmth of the fire. The works of Hiroka Yamashita seek to capture what, strictly speaking, eludes the eye: the impermanence and inconstancy of nature and the myriad nuances of humankind's attachment to it. The title of this exhibition, "Fūdo," is a Japanese word that means "wind" or "earth" and can refer to the climate but also applies to cultural traditions, including medieval royal legal codes. More pointedly, it is

a quotation of the title of a 1935 book in which the Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji probes the manifold ties that bind humans to the natural world and the influence the environment can have on one's character.

Executed in oil on canvas, Yamashita's paintings scrutinize this relationship with unrivaled sensitivity and tenderness, incorporating elements from both traditional Japanese painting and Western art. *Willow and Figures around a Fire*, 2021, offers a lyrical example, foregrounding a foggy landscape with a sweep of hanging willow branches. To the right of the composition, several characters huddle around a fire, whose smoke cuts a diagonal swatch across the canvas. As one looks more closely, the figures seem to have grown together with the trees and branches surrounding them. In *Moonrise (Route 2)*, 2021, a hazy moon shimmers through a slightly overcast sky. In the bottom center of the image is the disembodied torso of a legless figure whose head seems to dissolve into the clouds. But who merges into whom: the face into the clouds, or the clouds into the face?

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

—*Noemi Smolik*

Artforum, April 2022