

Masayoshi Nojo

## Under the Moonlight

16 January 2020 – 15 February 2020



Masayoshi Nojo, *Mirage#48*, 2019, Cotton on panel, acrylic, silver foil, aluminium foil, 250cm x 600cm

JD Malat Gallery is proud to present 'Under the Moonlight', the first solo exhibition by Japanese artist Masayoshi Nojo, on display from 16 January 2020 until 15 February 2020.

'Under the Moonlight' presents a new series of work entitled "Mirage". Inspired by natural phenomena and Japanese landscapes, Nojo fuses contemporary visual languages with Japanese aesthetics to explore the themes of memory and the passage of time. His use of silver foils on top of a marbled acrylic base creates an array of dark and reflective passages, deeply resonating with the atmospheric mirage one may feel when under moonlight.

Nojo's new series is highly motivated by the relationship between light and dark in natural scenery. The multi-layered images with both dark and light shimmering passages present an array of grayscale tones in constant flux, allowing the viewer to traverse the complexity of the surfaces and be transported to a landscape in the distant memory of the viewer.

Born in 1989 in Kanagawa, Japan, Masayoshi Nojo completed his MA in Japanese Paintings in 2015 from the Kyoto University of Art and Design. Rooted in Japanese art history, Nojo's use of silver is reminiscent of Ogata Kōrin's celebrated work during the Edo Period in seventeenth-century Japan. Drawing upon contemporary methods of creation and traditions in Japanese art and culture, 'Under the Moonlight' explores themes of memory and time.

'Under the Moonlight' is Nojo's first solo show outside of Japan. Nojo has shown in many galleries in Japan, such as Tokyo Arts Gallery, Tokyo and the Gallery Art Composition, Tokyo. The widespread acknowledgement and admiration of his work has been marked by his awards, most notably the *Grand Prize, Tadasu no Mori Dessin Contest* (2009) and the *Grand Prize Turner Award* (2013).

## JD Malat Gallery in conversation with Masayoshi Nojo

### **JD Malat Gallery: What is this exhibition about?**

**Masayoshi Nojo:** This exhibition shows, “Mirage”, a unique series of works inspired by natural phenomena and Japanese art. In this series I explore the relationship between the perception of time and memory and visualise such themes through disassembling and reconstructing my photographs with metal foils on panels. This way, the photographs, affected by both light and space transform into forms of faint existence, abstracting the factuality of photography. The viewer can feel immersed in this scenery in the grand-scale works, most notably in *Mirage#48*, my main piece which measures 250cm by 600cm. The stillness and silence evoked in each work may generate an eerie feeling of loneliness. Like the relationship between light and shadow, I hope viewers find beauty in such feelings, beauty found under the moonlight.

### **JD: How is this different from what you have done in the past?**

**MN:** I majored in Japanese painting at Kyoto University of Art and Design. It was a very meaningful period of my study as I became familiar with Japanese culture and its tradition in Kyoto. However, I began to feel that what I wanted to express was a little different from what I had learned there. During my studies, I started to become interested in contemporary art, which was completely different from the art world I knew. I visited galleries, museums and art fairs in London and Hong Kong as a student. It was an exciting and unforgettable experience which contributed to the current style of my work which fuses contemporary Western artistic techniques and Japanese cultural references.

### **JD: Can you go through your technique in detail?**

**MN:** The method I use is unique, informed by academic methods and a combination of contemporary visual languages with Japanese aesthetics. When I create new works, I start by imagining the complete vision of the work. I then work towards this vision through thinking about the materials and methods that are required for the work. The artworks in “Mirage” are predominantly made of silver and aluminium foils. First, I create a layer of marbled acrylic paint on the panel. Secondly, I reconstruct my photographs and imprint them onto the base layer through silk-screen printing. The overall effect creates multi-layered depth on the screen. I came up with this process following my interest in traditional techniques used for creating patterns and design on kimono. Through my process, a range of grayscale and multiple forms expand across the screen, resulting in “mirage”, a phenomenon in which areas of photographic realism and flat reflective surfaces coexist.

### **JD: How would you situate your work in the history of art? Both Asian art and Contemporary art in general.**

**MN:** This is a challenging question as it would take a long time to situate my works in the history of art. I believe my work presents a connection between the Japanese and Asian context of art and its trend, with a wider contemporary scene.

### **JD: What and who are your main influences? Artistic or otherwise?**

**MN:** The Japanese environment and its culture resonate deeply with my current works and is often the starting point of my creation. I incorporate elements influenced by the environment to some extent. I have been influenced by many artists. For example, Olafur Eliasson, Rudolf Stingel, Anselm Kiefer, Michael Borremans, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and On Kawara.

**JD: How do you feel about exhibiting here in London at JD Malat Gallery?**

**MN:** I feel very honoured to have a solo exhibition. This is my second time visiting London. I first came here as an art student six years ago. But this time, I am happy to come back to London as an artist. This exhibition is the biggest one I've ever had and will be an important milestone in my career.

**JD: Your work is very focused on time and memory. Can you elaborate more on this?**

**MN:** As a series influenced by natural phenomena, the images can change depending on the environment, lighting and weather. For instance, the images on the screen can vary from morning to night and rainy to sunny days. It means that the artwork is under the influence of time passage as we all are, making the time specificity of each image blurred. Viewers can project their memory of nature unconsciously onto the image as their eyes wander across the screen.

**JD: Does silver hold a particular significance as a colour for you? It is by far the most predominant colour in your work.**

**MN:** The images on the screen are all made of foils. For me, these are not "colours" but "shadows". Light and shadow are like two sides of a coin, their relationship is inseparable. Sometimes that "shadow" accentuates the presence of the work, but other times its presence can be more ghostly.

**JD: Can you discuss the absence of colour in your works?**

**MN:** As the marbling of acrylic and creation of grayscale imagery is inspired by sceneries only I've ever seen, the marbling on the panel represents the ambiguity of memories and our unsettling mind. Grayscale and absence of colour serves a complimentary role for the viewer's immersive experience. The absence of colour and varying tones of the grayscale emphasise the relationship between light and dark as well as the ambiguity of time in each piece, allowing the viewer to contemplate the passage of time and reflect on their memories of different landscapes.

**JD: Do your landscapes reflect anything about Japanese culture?**

**MN:** The atmosphere emulated by my works evoke the idea of "wabi-sabi", a view in Japanese aesthetics centred on the acceptance and beauty of transience and imperfection of form. Nothing in this world is permanent. Therefore, the appreciation of impermanence and change is reflected in my materials and process.

**JD: Your landscapes appear idyllic. Is this your desired interpretation?**

**MN:** Many people find beauty in my artwork, but some people may feel scared of the silence evoked by the absence of people, flowers and other living creatures in my pieces. I would be delighted if viewers discover this duality in my artwork.

**JD: What can we learn from this exhibition?**

**MN:** I hope that my series "Mirage" embodies and evokes the shifting moods one may feel when under the moonlight. By immersing oneself in the shifting tones of my grayscale and shimmering pieces, I hope that one can also explore the ambiguity of time and memory while being simultaneously transported to these mysterious landscapes.

# JD MALAT GALLERY

JD Malat Gallery specialises in contemporary art and champions a broad spectrum of emerging and international contemporary artists. The programme consists of an array of exciting artists supported by year-round exhibitions and contemporary art fairs. As the first show of Nojo's work outside Japan, this London exhibition showcases an exciting new chapter in Nojo's artistic journey.

For interviews, images and comment, please contact:

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Exhibition Opening Hours:

Monday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm

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