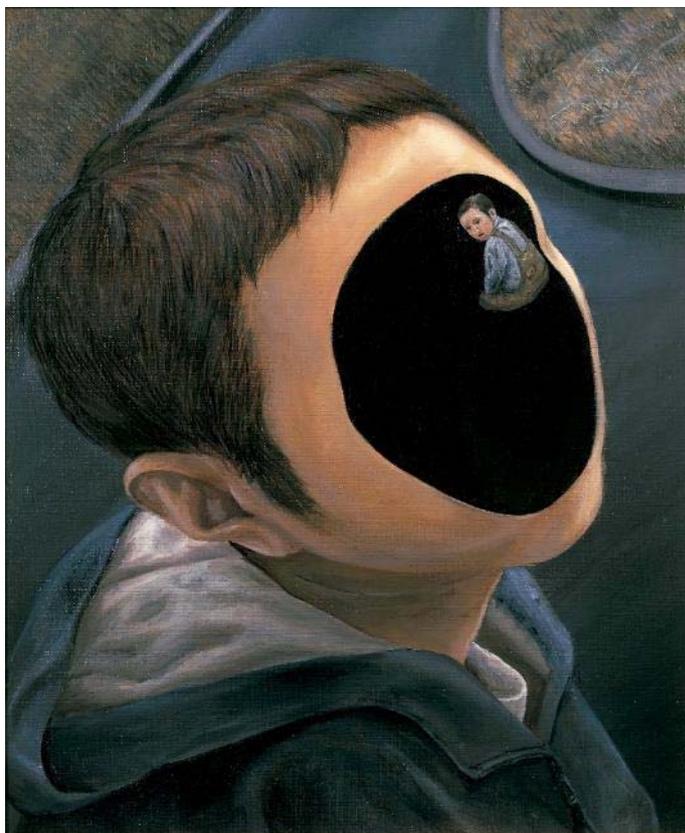


## Tetsuya Ishida. *Self-Portrait of Other*



**TETSUYA ISHIDA**

*Viaje de regreso*, 2003

Acrílico y óleo sobre lienzo

45,5 x 38 cm

Colección particular

© Tetsuya Ishida, 2019.

Fotografía: Takemi Art Photos, cortesía Kyuryudo Art Publishing Co., Ltd.

<b>DATES:</b>	April 11 - September 8, 2019
<b>PLACE:</b>	Palacio de Velázquez
<b>ORGANIZATIONN:</b>	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
<b>CURATORSHIP:</b>	Teresa Velázquez
<b>COORDINATION:</b>	Suset Sánchez
<b>TOURING:</b>	Wrightwood 659, Chicago, USA. (October 3 –December 14, 2019)

**Tetsuya Ishida: *Self-Portrait of Other*** is the first retrospective exhibition of the work of Tetsuya Ishida (Yaizu, Shizuoka, 1973–Tokyo, 2005) to be held **out of Japan**. It brings together a significant selection of around **70 paintings and drawings**, from 1996, the year he finished his degree in fine art at Musashino University, Tokyo, to 2004, shortly before his sudden death.

His paintings, drawings, and notebooks are an extraordinary testimony to the malaise and alienation of contemporary subjects in advanced capitalism. A cult artist in his own country, where his imaginary world has become a reference for younger generations, his sharply critical work was presented in Europe at the 56 Venice Biennale in 2015.

Ishida's skeptical, nihilistic realism bears witness to today's normalization of precarity and consumption in every sphere of life. The characters in his works are hybrid, anthropomorphic machines who embody a state of total technological domination and limitless subordination to a new, inescapable form of slavery that makes no distinction between work and consumption and heightens the anxiety of our bodies and subjectivities.

Ishida's bitter social satire cuts away at the Japanese postwar financial miracle, stripping it of any idealistic consideration. Although the 1973 petrol crisis briefly affected scientific, industrial, and technological growth in Japan, the country's developmental trend was boosted in the 1980s at the height of real estate speculation, which led to the bursting in 1991 of the financial bubble and the deep depression that followed. This was a gloomy period of wholesale economic restructuring fed by the need to adapt and reinvent: factories intensified large-scale robotic automation, industrial methods were used to rationalize the workforce, the service sector took over from manufacturing, and unemployment rates rose to previously unseen levels.

Ishida was one of the so-called lost generation of those years, the skeptical product of truncated lives and unmet expectations that resulted from the crisis. Works dated 1996, such as *Tsukawanaku-natta Biru no Buchō no Isu* (*Derelict Building Department Head's Chair*), *Shachō no Kasa no Shita* (*Under the Company President's Umbrella*), *Nenry Hokyū- no youna Shokuji* (*Refuel Meal*), and *Beruto Conbeya jō no Hito* (*Conveyor Belt People*), are lucid, uneasy reflections on the transformations in the Fordist production line within the financial and service economy's mass factory of social mutilation. The salaryman's lifetime and his own utility are stamped with an expiry date (*Kaishu-[Recalled, 1998]*).



**TETSUYA ISHIDA**  
*Retirado*, 1998  
Acrílico sobre tabla  
145,6 x 206 cm  
Nick Taylor Collection  
© Tetsuya Ishida, 2019.  
Fotografía: Takemi Art Photos, cortesía Kyuryudo Art Publishing Co., Ltd.

At the same time, the period's accelerating, unstoppable development of new forms of consumption was leading to new forms of attachment and community life (as in *Konbiniensu Sutoa no Oyako-zō* (*Convenience Store Mother and Child*, 1996), as well as isolation in both public and domestic

spaces. After 1995, when the use of personal computers was democratized in Japan, the increasing tendency in youth toward introspection often led to the dramatic, voluntary reclusion of the hikikomori, youth who withdraw into virtual worlds and choose a lifestyle of marginal vegetation, as suggested by the works *Dango-mushi no Suimin* (*Sleeping Pill Bug*, 1995) and *Onshitsu* (*Hothouse*, 2003).



**TETSUYA ISHIDA**  
*Despartar*, 1998  
Acrílico sobre tabla  
145,6 x 206 x 5,8 cm  
Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art  
© Tetsuya Ishida, 2019.  
Fotografía: Takemi Art Photos, cortesía Kyuryudo Art Publishing Co., Ltd.

Ishida's work pinpoints the obsessions of the individual who oppressively inhabits undistinguishable spaces and times where work, consumption, and free time merge. Kafkaesque references appear in the larval states of the imprisoned, tamed subject (*Mino-mushi no Suimin* [*Sleeping Bagworm*, 1995]) or the social coercion of real powers like the educational system (*Mebae* [*Awakening*, 1998]; *Shu-jin* [*Prisoner*, 1999]); the means by which the mass media penetrate our lives (*Untitled*, 1995); and the business culture of the "salaryman," the archetypal worker who gives his entire life to his company (Toyota Jido-sha Ipsum [*Toyota Ipsum*, 1996]). Ishida's alienated vision of

contemporary society is personified in this automated figure, who has lost all connection to the products of his labor and is alienated from the labor process itself through its conversion by the post-Fordist economic paradigm into miscellaneous services where goods are rationalized, labeled, and distributed.

Ishida dresses his armies of students and clone-like workers to signify their uniformity, which is also expressed in their identical, expressionless, unmistakable features. These are duplicated from one painting to the next like a mirror image of one individual representing the many. This anonymous figure has been seen as a self-portrait of the artist. Although Ishida denied this identification in many interviews and writings, he did acknowledge his empathy toward the pain, pessimism, and anonymity of today's city dwellers, particularly those in megalopolises like Tokyo.

In one of his sketchbooks from 1999, the artist wrote, "I tried to reflect myself— my fragility, sadness, angst—as a joke or something funny to laugh at. To turn myself into an object to laugh at, or something sadder. Sometimes people saw it as a parody or satire of people today. I opened myself up to include consumers, speculators, workers, and the Japanese. The figures of the painting expanded toward people I could feel."

Ishida plays with the scales between things, buildings, and people and dislocates spatial relationships in his compositions, accentuating the viewer's disquiet at the lack of emotion and other signifiers of communal memory in his work. His body-machines, objectified and bound, exist in solitary confrontation with the disorientation of depersonalized urban spaces, or question their adolescent identities or childhood, which opens up as a sort of black hole into a disturbing regression that still carries some innocence.

This search for a reconciliation with subjectivity comes through in a transformational dream in *Koi no Yume* (*Carp Dream*, 1996); in the reminiscence of a child whose head pokes through the hole in a head in *Kiro* (*Return Journey*, 2003); or in the metamorphosis of the teenage body embraced in *Zenmō* (*Pubescence*, 2004), perhaps an attempt by Ishida to shake the social body out of its alienation.

Many of the pieces in the exhibition come from Japan, especially from museums such as the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, the Hiratsuka Museum of Art and The National Museum of Modern Art, as well as from the artist's Estate. Works will also be shown in various private collections in Singapore, the United States, Hong Kong and Korea, and also includes a set of notebooks, sketches and writings that reflect some of Ishida's first-person reflections.

### **Catalogue**

On the occasion of the exhibition *Tetsuya Ishida. Self-portrait of another*, the Museo Reina Sofía publishes a catalogue which, in addition to including images of the exhibited works, contains texts by the curator Teresa Velázquez and several authors such as Noi Sawarag, Tamaki Saito, Kuniichi Uno or Isamu Hirabayashi, Ishida's personal friend.

#### **Further information:**

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