

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY



### Review: Tetsuya Ishida

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Brace yourself before you enter the world of Tetsuya Ishida, because the Japanese artist's empty gaze might leave you bereft of something – peace, perhaps, or a good night's sleep – for a long time after you leave Gagosian Gallery. Although this is the late artist's first solo exhibition outside of his native country, his large-scale paintings are instantly recognisable due to his surreal, almost hallucinogenic style, miles away from the bubblegum manga aesthetic. Most of his works in this show are self-portraits, where his own gloomy profile (it seems, although Ishida vehemently denied those claims...) is replicated again and again in slow-moving, torturous scenes: a man looks on gloomily at his arms, which are conveyer belts; a series of youngsters with plastic bags for bodies lie and sit in a cluttered room; a mechanic detachedly assembles a box full of human body parts. Ishida's commentary on a desperate nation – Japan – springs from his own experiences during the economic turmoil in the 90s, and the emotional isolation that plagued (and still plagues) younger generations. Despite the intricacy and absurdity of these scenes, the eye's gaze is drawn again and again to Ishida's haunting expression. It's almost impossible to tear yourself away.

The melancholic drudgery echoes all the more loudly considering Ishida's untimely death aged 31 (alleged suicide) in 2005, after being run over by an oncoming train. But there's life yet in his works as they haunt us in Hong Kong.