

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY



### Arts preview: Tetsuya Ishida's artworks take a surreal look at Japanese life

Edmund Lee



*Burden right after he had a friend shoot him in the arm. Image: Courtesy of the artist*

The dehumanising routine that is modern life has been a recurrent motif in the arts for the better part of a century. One of the lesser known, but certainly no less distinctive, mavericks of this tradition is about to receive the global attention he deserves with an exhibition at Gagosian Gallery - eight years after he was killed by a train in a possible suicide at the age of 31.

The late Tetsuya Ishida (1973-2005) was a Japanese artist who acutely captured the sentiments of a nation in economic recession throughout the 1990s. Despite his untimely death, Ishida is now gaining belated recognition for his surrealist paintings, which enigmatically mix together nature, machines, Japan's social and academic systems, and the citizens who live precariously in their midst.

"In his highly surreal paintings, Ishida captured the feelings of hopelessness, claustrophobia, and emotional isolation that burdened him and that dominated Japanese society during this era," says Nick Simunovic, managing director of Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong. "His work is utterly unique in this regard and radically different from the anime and manga-inspired art which tends to dominate contemporary visual culture in Japan."

Among the 186 works that Ishida painted during his brief career, about half are maintained by his estate. These are rarely exhibited. At the Gagosian exhibition, 13 paintings gathered from a

variety of private collectors will be on view. According to Simunovic, these include a number of Ishida's best pieces, as well as his largest painting.

"Ishida's work is relatively well known in Japan, partly because of the public's immediate and emotional response to the imagery found in his paintings, partly because a number of Japanese museums have mounted exhibitions since his passing, and partly because of two television documentaries made in the wake of his suicide," says Simunovic.

"That Ishida is barely known outside Japan is a problem which this exhibition aims to address. We hope to raise awareness of his hauntingly beautiful paintings in Asia, and across the world."

Gagosian Gallery, 7/F Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-7pm. November 7-December 21. Inquiries: 2151 0555