



浴室生活 | *Bath Living*, 2023. 布面油畫 | Oil on canvas. 181 x 227 cm. 圖片提供：藝術家與貝浩登 | Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

TOMOKO NAGAI

HOUSE

May 30 – July 13, 2024

A gentle breeze stirs; butterflies flutter their wings; a teddy bear sits in the room, smiling; the crescent moon casts a soft, pearlescent glow over the kitchen; leaves seem to nestle, tenderly drooping, lulling a little girl into her dreams. The minutiae of life quietly inhabit every corner, hidden amidst various shades of verdant green, where lost moments linger...

To translate Tomoko Nagai's painted scenes into words, one naturally gravitates towards quiet, delicate, almost whispered phrases—as if more emphatic words or a louder voice would break the spell of this dreamlike serenity and tranquility. The stuffed animals, the little girl, and even the pots and pans are transformed into playthings of a make-believe home, beckoning us to a world that seems far removed from reality. Here, we are drawn to observe often overlooked details and listen to their rhythm. Yet all these elements originate from our shared reality, informed by the artist's memories and experiences.

Nagai's earliest memories involve playing with dolls and toys and fabricating miniature houses for them. She recalls, "I would indulge myself in fantasies, using dolls to enact the scenes. This probably marks the beginning of my artistic endeavors." Home represents the initial physical space where individuals first perceive and comprehend the world through their bodies. This corporeal journey extends from one's home to the surroundings and, ultimately, to the city one inhabits. Nagai vividly remembers an abandoned station near her childhood home, where an object by the tracks—perhaps a part used in freight trains—had the shape of a dog. "It seemed like a living entity. And this curious resemblance, like a primal landscape, has stayed with me." For her, memories need not be

長井朋子

家屋

2024年5月30日-7月13日

一縷微風、蝴蝶輕振翅膀、小熊坐在房中，微笑着、一彎新月讓廚房泛起溫和的珍珠光澤、樹葉也彷彿在棲息，溫柔地垂下，陪伴小女孩進入夢鄉、細微之物在各個角落安靜地、在各色碧綠之中潛藏着掉落的時光……

如果要用語言轉換長井朋子畫下的這一個個場景，想到的幾乎只能是這些安靜而輕盈的詞句，並且要盡量小聲，似乎濃重的詞句和稍微大一點的聲量，便會打破這猶如夢境般的靜謐柔美，以及各自安好。這些玩偶、小女孩、甚至幻化成過家家玩具般的鍋碗瓢盆，都在召喚着我們進入到一個遠離現實的美好世界。在這裡，我們專注於觀察平時被忽視的各種小物件，開始聆聽他們共同譜寫的韻律。然而事實上，他們都來自我們共同身處的現實世界，來自藝術家的記憶和身體經驗。

對於長井朋子而言，小時候用布娃娃、玩偶做遊戲、為布娃娃做小房子，是記憶的最初，她「會在自己腦中進行各種幻想，並借用娃娃的身體完成，這應該就是自己繪畫創作的原點」。可以說，家是人們最初通過身體進行感知和理解世界的有限空間，從家出發，到家周圍的環境，再到自己生活的城市，這樣的身體經驗事實上始終跟隨着我們。正如長井朋子始終會記得小時候老家附近的無人車站，「在軌道旁邊有某種物體（可能是運貨列車使用的部件），看上去就像是狗的外形，奇妙地讓我很在意，就覺得好像是某種生命體。這樣不可思議的感覺始終伴隨着我，如同原風景一般」。記憶並不



喜歡的沙發 | *My Favourite Sofa*, 2023. 布面油畫 | Oil on canvas. 162 × 130 cm. 圖片提供：藝術家與貝浩登 | Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

anchored to specific entities; they can manifest as ambiguous impressions or even illusions, deeply rooted in our minds, providing a point of return.

As we grow, our journeys expand from the relatively confined spaces of our homes into the wider world. Life, both public and private, pulls us in all directions, catching us off guard. The physical cognizance nurtured in the sanctuary of the home seems increasingly inadequate under the weight of these pressures. The cherished, lighter moments of memory are on the brink of vanishing. Nagai navigates universal life experiences—such as the birth of a child and the passing of a beloved pet—by retreating into a fantasy world to confront a growing fear of loss.

But Nagai's "submersion into the world of fantasy" is not an escape into the irrational. According to the artist, "There are many things in the real world I adore, such as exquisite landscapes and majestic forests. When I encounter these captivating tableaux, I think to myself, 'If only something could be added.' So, I embellish reality through my imagination, bringing it closer to my ideal world." Nagai traverses reality and fantasy, never tethered exclusively to either. Through her nuanced perceptions and lived experiences, she crafts a distinctive "third space"—a hybrid domain that hovers between the tangible and the imagined. This space emerges from a unique perspective, shaped by an alternative logic and a deeply personal sensory interpretation.

Nagai's works offer fresh discoveries upon each viewing. In *My Favorite Sofa* (2023), tucked among the lush green foliage, a grey teddy bear and a parrot seem engaged in a silent dialogue while, in the background, a little girl and a kitten are engrossed in a Hamtaro story. In *Tea Time* (2023), a teddy bear sits atop a lion, preparing for afternoon tea with friends. In *Bath Living* (2023), the bear luxuriates in a bathtub and greets "the little sprites" in the bushes as light filters through the leaves, casting fluttering shadows reminiscent of butterflies. Nagai's acute observations and perceptions recall Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*. As Italo Calvino aptly said about the poem, "Knowledge of the world tends to dissolve the solidity of the world, leading to a perception of all that is infinitely minute, light, and mobile." Lucretius urges us to focus on these microscopic, kinetic, subtle worlds to guide us toward hidden, invisible realms:



麵包卷小女子 | *Miss Little Bread Roll*, 2023. 布面油畫 | Oil on canvas. 80 × 60 cm. 圖片提供：藝術家與貝浩登 | Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

一定指向某個具體的人事物，它可以是一種讓人辨不清道不明的感覺，甚至是一種錯覺，卻在腦海中紮下根，成為可以回去的原點。

隨着年歲增長，我們從家這個相對有限的空間，不斷走向更大的世界，來自社會生活和私人生活的種種外在力量，在毫無察覺之際將我們扯向四面八方，曾經在家中養成的身體認知似乎越來越難以抵擋這些外在力量帶來的重壓，那些記憶中珍視的、那些輕盈的時光不可避免地幾近消失。於是，長井朋子選擇「潛入空想的世界」。特別在她經歷着普通人都會面臨的人生過程，如孩子的誕生、愛犬的逝去等等。對於「失去」這件事，長井朋子也感受到越來越大的恐懼。

然而，她的這種「潛入空想的世界」，並非是逃避到幻想與非理性的世界中去，按照藝術家自己的說法，「現實世界中也有很多自己喜歡的事物，比如綺麗的風景、壯美的森林等等，當看到這些令我心動的景象時，便會想如果再加上點什麼就好了，就這樣在自己的想象中為現實添磚加瓦，讓它們更接近自己的理想之鄉」。可以說，長井朋子就是這樣穿梭來往於現實世界和幻想世界之間，並未一味地停留在某個世界，而是通過自己的感知和體驗，用繪畫的形式創作了「第三個世界」，這個世界處於兩者之間，緣起於從另一個角度的觀察，用另一種邏輯、另一種感知進行的構建。

再度回到長井朋子的作品前，我們又有了新的發現。在碩大的綠葉之間還有灰色的小熊玩偶，鸚鵡望着他們似乎若有所語；小女孩斜後方的小貓正與她一起讀着哈姆太郎的故事（《喜歡的沙發》，2023）；坐在獅子背上的小熊，分明是要與好朋友一起享用下午茶（《下午茶》，2023）；在浴缸泡澡的小熊正充滿好奇地與樹叢中的「小精靈們」打招呼，透過樹葉縫隙落下的光影與蝴蝶一般翩翩（《浴室生活》，2023）——是的，長井朋子的觀察和感知正是這樣一些細微到極致之處，讓我們得以追溯至盧克萊修的《物性論》，正如卡爾維諾對這部詩篇的評價，「認識世界就是把世界這個整體分解成無數個細小的、運動着的、輕微的世界並感知它們的存在。」而盧克萊修之所以提示我們注意細小的、運動着的、輕微的世界，恰恰是為了將我們引向隱秘的、不可見的世界。例如他在詩中舉例道：

*For behold whenever
The sun's light and the rays, let in, pour down
Across dark halls of houses: thou wilt see
The many mites in many a manner mixed
Amid a void in the very light of the rays,
And battling on, as in eternal strife,
And in battalions contending without halt,
In meetings, partings, harried up and down.
From this thou mayest conjecture of what sort
The ceaseless tossing of primordial seeds
Amid the mightier void—at least so far
As small affair can for a vaster serve,
And by example put thee on the spoor of knowledge.¹*

Where, then, do Nagai's paintings lead us? As Lucretius wrote, it is only in a darkened room that we can see the movement of particles in sunlight. Perhaps it is our experiences of loss and decay, or the harshness we face in reality, that draw us closer and make us cherish these fragile, ephemeral shimmering particles—the serene and beautiful scenes depicted by Nagai. It may be precisely because of the troubles, cruelty, and misfortunes in life that we are able to recognize, perceive, and truly appreciate beauty. As Misuzu Kaneko expresses it in her nursery rhyme “Rainbows on Eyelashes”:

*Wipe away, wipe again,
Tears that keep flowing down.
I can't help but think—
—I must surely be
a child who was found.*

*On the bridge my lashes make,
A beautiful rainbow sways.
As I look, in wonder stray—
—what snack will come my way today?*

In Nagai's “third space” between reality and fantasy, we retain some of our naivety, idealism, and rebelliousness amid life's harsh realities. Through her creations, we are invited to construct a new home for our adult selves, a place shaped by our individual visions. This home is a vessel of cherished memories, “a portal to fantastical worlds and a refuge from the brutality of reality,” offering us a fresh start.

Text by Jing Yuan
Translated by Lingxuan Tang

About the artist

Tomoko Nagai was born in 1982 in Aichi, Japan, now lives and works in Japan. In Nagai's artworks, various animals, children, colorful trees and mushrooms are depicted in a theatrical arrangement against the backdrop of forests and domestic rooms. Loaded with a multitude of motifs, each of Nagai's paintings embraces a unique sense of spatiality, wherein a dynamism that encapsulates the worlds of fictional narratives intricately overlaps with layers of images. The colorful *matière* and brushstrokes form a fantastical rhythm as the artist exercises an expression akin to composing a musical piece. The viewer perceives this melody while standing face-to-face with each painting. This evokes a sense of being inside the painting, as the viewer's own memories and experiences – nostalgic sensations, recollections and dreams from childhood – connect with the worldview represented in each artwork.

¹ Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*, Book II, “Atomic Motions,” translated by William Ellery Leonard, Dover Publications, 19 Mar. 2004.

瞧，每當你讓太陽的光線投射進來，
斜穿過屋內黑暗的廳堂的時候，
你就會看見許多微粒以許多方式混合著，
恰恰在光線所照亮的那個空間裡面，
像在一場永恆的戰爭中，不停地互相撞擊，
一團一團地角鬥著，沒有休止，
時而遇合，時而分開，被推上推下。
從這個你就可以猜測到：
在那更廣大的虛空裡面
有怎樣一種不停的始基的運動，——
至少就一件小事能夠暗示大道理而言，
這例子可以把你引去追尋知識的蹤跡。¹

那麼，長井朋子的畫又將我們引向何方呢？正如盧克萊修的詩中，唯在黑暗的房間里才能看到陽光中微粒的運動，長井朋子這些美好恬靜的畫面，難道不正是因為我們曾經經歷過遺失和逝去，或正在經歷來自現實的殘酷，才讓我們更想貼近並珍惜眼前這些脆弱的、似乎正在消失的「閃亮的微粒」。反過來說，或許正是因為這些現實的煩惱、殘酷和不幸，才能夠讓我們發現、感知並體驗真正的美好，一如金子美鈴童謠中「睫毛上的彩虹」。

*擦了又擦，
還是不停流下的淚
不禁想到
——我一定是
撿來的孩子——*

*睫毛連成的橋上
看見了漂亮的彩虹
不禁想到
——今天的小點心
會是什麼呢——*

藝術家藉由自身在現實世界和幻想世界之間打造的「第三個世界」，讓我們得以在面對現實世界的殘酷或不順意之時，仍能保留一些幻想世界的天真、理想，甚至「離經叛道」。可以說，藉由長井朋子的作品，我們也得以在長大之後，按照自己的想法，給自己安置重新出發的「家」。這個家保留了過往歲月的珍貴記憶，同時也是藝術家心中「通往幻想世界的蟲洞，以及防禦現實殘酷的庇護」，是我們給予自己的新的原點。

撰文：袁璟

關於藝術家

長井朋子1982年出生於日本愛知縣，目前生活和工作於日本。長井的作品以戲劇置景的方式描繪了森林和室內場景，充滿各種動物、孩童、五顏六色的植物和蘑菇。豐富的元素使得她的創作包含了獨特的空間感，其蘊含的活力在層疊的圖像中凝練地概括了虛構敘事里的世界。長井朋子實踐着一種類似於音樂作曲的表達方式，斑斕的色調和筆觸形成了一種奇妙的節奏。當站在長井的繪畫面前時，觀眾將會感受到她譜寫的旋律。這喚起了一種身臨其境的感覺：我們將自身的記憶和經歷——戀懷的感受、兒時的往事和夢想——與每件作品所描繪的世界與其深藏的觀點彼此聯繫。

¹ 《物性論》[古羅馬] 盧克萊修著，方書春譯，商務印書館，2011。