



The Driver, 2022. Flashe and acrylic on canvas. 70 × 104 inch | 177.8 × 264.2 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

KOAK THE DRIVER

May 21 – July 30, 2022

Perrotin is pleased to announce its collaboration with San Francisco-based artist Koak with her first solo presentation in Asia, *The Driver*, an exhibition of new paintings and sculpture.

Archetypes of the Self in Living Color

“To project feelings into outer objects is the first way of symbolizing, and thus of *conceiving* those feelings,” wrote Susanne Langer in her vital philosophical treatise on the nature of art as a form of communication. She continues, “The conception of ‘self,’ which is usually thought to mark the beginning of actual memory, may possibly depend on this process of symbolically epitomizing our feelings.”¹ The expression of feeling is a signatory attribute of the paintings of Koak, and it is a force that she uses to articulate her bold, arresting style. Her canvases, saturated in mood, denote various emotive timbres through her deployment of color, line quality, spatial configuration, and gesture. The figurative subjects that populate her compositions—namely feminine figures and felines—moreover, are vehicles for expression and indexical devices that communicate a vast range of behaviors and emotional states. Koak has said that her paintings are “about archetypes of self that we have that are developed throughout our life or are internalized by experience”² and she suggests that she is playing with, and perhaps upending, these internalized archetypes.

This is especially evident in her most recent body of work produced for her exhibition in Hong Kong. Koak developed this series of paintings during the pandemic and in them she heightens the sense of delay,

KOAK 《駕駛者》

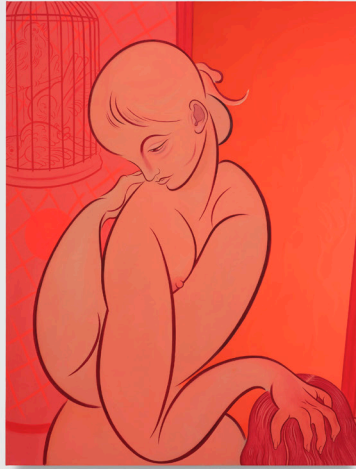
2022年5月21日至7月30日

貝浩登欣然宣布與駐三藩市藝術家Koak合作舉辦其首次亞洲個展《駕駛者》，呈現一系列全新畫作和雕塑。

於鮮活色彩中形塑自我的原型

「將內在的情感投射至外在的物件，是將情感形象化最基本的方式，也是那些感受形成的開始。」美國哲學家蘇珊·蘭格（Susanne Langer）在其重要的哲學論文中，如此描述藝術作為溝通媒介的本質。文中，她還提出，「對『自我』的理解通常被視作一個人記憶的起始，它可能取決於我們怎樣以象徵符號去體現情感。」¹情感表達是藝術家Koak作品中所具有的標誌性特質，亦是驅動她建立出大膽、引人注目的作畫風格之力量。Koak的畫布承載著豐富的情緒，藉由獨到的用色、線條、畫面構圖和筆勢等，展現出多元的情感色調。此外，她作品中的具象主體——即擁有陰柔特質的人物和貓科動物——是她用以傳遞各種行為舉止及情緒狀態的重要載體。Koak曾表示，她的畫作探問的是「自我的原型怎樣在我們的整個生命歷程中發展出來，或透過經驗被內化所構成」²，並試圖戲弄甚至顛覆這些已被內化的原型。

是次香港個展中呈現的作品，尤其鮮明地展現著以上對自我的探究。疫情期間，Koak創作了這系列畫作，她在作品中刻劃且加強了人類在經歷逾兩載的大疫之年時，從生活中體驗到的核心情感：滯後、孤立、焦慮，以至期盼。因此，這些作品上的構圖均展現



My Cage, 2021-2022. Flashe, acrylic, and graphite on linen mounted to panel. 59 × 45 1/2 inch | 149.9 × 115.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

interiority, angst, and expectancy that are quintessential aspects of the human emotional experience over the last two years. As a result the compositions exhibit and are redolent with the internalized, desperate cultural mood of the time. In particular, they convey a sense of pressurized space that is juxtaposed with the ominous atmosphere of the outside world. In this sense they tap into our experience of isolation and self-reflection. This becomes apparent in a work like *My Cage* (2021–2022), where a figure uncomfortably crosses her arms and tears at a downturned head—a sign of distress. A bird cage hanging nearby underscores her feeling of confinement.

One of the first things that strikes the viewer upon seeing these paintings is the intensity of the palette which exhibits a variety of psychological states. The hues are markedly different from previous bodies of work that possess cheery canary yellows, soft peaches, pale pinks, and baby blues. In fact, in this most recent body of work, the colors are what she describes as “domineering.”³ In *The Cocoon* (2021–2022), Koak drenches a crouching figure in red-violet, setting her before a deep ultra-marine wall and fire-orange light that floods the room. For those in San Francisco, the ominous orange glow beyond the window immediately recalls that unforgettable day on September 9, 2020 during the pandemic that the city’s skies alarmingly turned orange as a result of the fires blazing northwest of the city. The sharp contrast in the coloration in Koak’s painting delineates the sense of space indoors and effectively suggests that one’s home was a kind of cocoon from the virus and the smoky atmosphere at that moment in time. On this point Koak explains, “the sense of unease presented by the unnatural quality of light in the paintings, very much is intended to reflect the last several years of feeling weary from the abnormal light from the fires on the West Coast, as well as a sense of tenuousness regarding the outside world.”⁴

Like in *The Cocoon*, the painting *The Loop* (2021–2022) presents a range of jarring colors that commingle in the surface plane. The green of the chair contrasts sharply to the blue of the person’s face, the red of her body, and the black back wall. The artist states that in making these works she sought to blend colors that “shouldn’t

並喚起一股被內化且絕望的文化情緒。更特別是，畫面中擠逼的室內空間總是與外部世界的不祥氣氛相對照，勾起觀者經歷孤獨與自省的回憶。其中一幅作品《我的牢籠》（*My Cage*，2021–2022年），畫中人正以不舒適的姿態交叉雙臂，並一手抓著下方的頭顱——這恰是一種痛苦的跡象，而人物身後懸掛的鳥籠，又突顯她被禁足在室內空間的憂鬱。

畫作中強烈又鮮明的色調表現出各種心理狀態，將率先吸引觀者的目光。今回Koak用上被她形容為「盛氣凌人（domineering）」的色彩³，跟以往作畫用上令人愉悅的色彩，如金絲雀般鮮亮的黃色、輕柔的水蜜桃色、淡粉紅色及淡彩藍色，明顯有別。以作品《繭》（*The Cocoon*，2021–2022年）為例，Koak以紫紅色填滿畫中人物蹲伏在地上的身軀，並將她安置於窗前，被如火的橙色光華所覆蓋，也跟群青藍色的牆壁構成強烈對比的房間一隅。對居於三藩市的人來說，窗外這道鮮豔得帶點不祥的橙光，使人不期然聯想起疫情期間讓人難忘的一天，即2020年9月9日，三藩市西北部的嚴重山火令天空瀰漫一片橙色的異景。《繭》畫面中激烈的色彩對比把室內空間明顯地勾勒出來，並有效地隱喻著在病毒和山火濃煙的籠罩下，當地居民的家便猶如蟲繭般給予他們保護。就這一點Koak解釋：「這幅作品中利用不自然的光線，特意反映出過去幾年群眾被西岸的怪異火光與外界的異常環境，觸發的疲憊和脆弱無力感。」⁴

如《繭》般，另一幅《循環》（*The Loop*，2021–2022年）亦可見不和諧的色系被並置於同一畫面。作品中的綠色椅子與藍色的臉孔、紅色身軀和黑色的牆構成強烈的色彩對比。藝術家表示，在創作這系列作品時，她刻意將「不該共存的顏色融合在一起」，透過色彩上的不和諧來呈現另一種和諧。「這樣一來」，她說，「此等用色得以化成意念的延伸——反覆將迥然相異的部分組合成一致的整體。」⁵ Koak通過這方式表達了不同情緒和心理狀態之間的衝突——畫中那張藍色的臉讓人聯想起其內在的憂傷，幽藍眼珠中反射出一點焦灼黃光，紅色的軀軀則暗示著憤怒——皆在人物的



The Cocoon, 2021–2022. Acrylic, Flashe, oil, chalk, pastel, graphite, and casein on canvas. 96 × 64 inch | 243.8 × 162.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

really go together,” in an effort to render harmony through coloristic disharmony. “In that way,” she says, “the color choices become an extension of the ideas within the works—a reiteration of imaging disparate parts as a unified whole.”⁵ In this way, Koak represents the conflicting moods and psychological states—the sadness associated with the blue head, the anxious yellow reflection in the blue eyes, and the anger captured in the red torso—that blend in the physical body and become a composite reflection or expression of the self. The gesture of the person behind the seated figure further augments her tense state as we see the figure tautly pulling back her hair while it gets aggressively brushed. Again, the ominous red-orange sky filters through the nearby window.

In *The Driver* (2022) the viewer encounters the elegance of Koak’s soft, undulating lines that define the contours of the reclining figure who clasps her hands in a wistful gaze. Although the sinuous, graphic nature of the lines appears somewhat spontaneous and natural, it is actually carefully constructed. Much of Koak’s drafting happens before she applies the paint to the canvas. Each work is the result of sketches she first executes. Often she scans those sketches and then draws over the reproductions, establishing many layers, before then projecting the design onto canvas where she reworks or enlarges it in order to achieve the right shape and effect. The outcome is perfectly delineated contours that rhythmically and harmoniously converge to express the state of the subject. Unlike other paintings in the show, this work in particular exemplifies her process and she leaves out the intense palette present in the other paintings, the effect of which highlights its linear qualities. Koak has named the exhibition after this work, signaling to the viewer that the underlying import of the paintings has to do with agency—perhaps foremostly female, self-agency—and an interrogation of control: who is controlling whom? Relating to this Koak asserts, “I think when we’re imagining ourselves as a conglomeration of selves, there’s often the question of who rises up to the surface, which fractal is our true self.”⁶

Koak also plays with doubling and mirroring in several of these paintings. In *Dark Corridor* (2021–2022), a figure saturated in brick

肉體內融而為一，並且化成當事人的一種情感的綜合表現或自我表達。身處於她背後的另一人及其手勢加劇了當中的緊張氣氛，她正用力地拉扯和梳理着前者的長髮，而那道不尋常的橙紅天色又再次從旁邊的窗戶出現。

於展覽同名作《駕駛者》（*The Driver*，2022年）中，觀者可以看到Koak優雅地以柔軟及起伏的線條，勾勒出畫中主角輕躺床上，緊握雙手地凝視遠處，一臉若有所思和渴想的神色。畫中蜿蜒、俐落分明的線條看似自發自然，實際上是經過藝術家精心建構而成。創作時，Koak多數會於上色前先描畫草圖。每幅成品皆為這些草圖所延伸出的結果。Koak慣常以電腦掃描草圖，再於複製品疊上多層繪畫，然後以投影機將圖像投射到畫布上，調整並放大圖像以達成理想的造型和效果。這種手法能達至完美的輪廓，並有節奏及和諧地表達主體的狀態。有別展覽中其他畫作，《駕駛者》又特別體現Koak的創作過程，放下從其他畫作所見的高對比度調色，以突顯線條的質感。Koak以此作的名稱給展覽命名，向觀眾述說此系列畫作的潛在意義——即或許對女性尤其重要的「自主性（self-agency）」——以及對「控制權」的質疑：究竟是誰在控制誰？Koak言道：「我認為當我們將『自己』想像成一個多重自我的集合體，通常都會引伸出另一問題：『誰』是表象的代表，哪個面向才是最真實的自己。」⁶

Koak又於部份畫作中使用「雙重」和「鏡像」元素。於《暗黑迴廊》（*Dark Corridor*，2021–2022年）中，畫面的正中央，可見一位背對畫面、渾身磚紅色的人物沐浴於綠光之中。與之相對的戶外，則隱現了一棵樹的輪廓，似在暗示「內部」和「外部」空間之間的差異。拱門下的第二個人物則正面凝視着觀者。然而，細看之下第二個人物的上半身，似乎是從第一個人物的腰部衍生而來，也暗示著她們實際上是二為一體的。那麼存在於兩人之間的，到底是走廊還是鏡子？眼前所見的容貌，是背對觀者而立的那位之正面反射，還是完全不同的兩個人呢？那些光源是來自室外的，還是僅源於房間另一側的光線反射？一如其他畫作，Koak在這幅畫中再度



Dark Corridor, 2021-2022. Acrylic, graphite, Flashe, and chalk on linen. 79 1/2 × 59 inch | 201.9 × 149.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

red stands beneath an arch bathed in green light. Outside we see the outline of a tree, suggesting an interior and exterior spatial difference. A second person appears under the arch as well and gazes out at the viewer; however, her upper torso seems to emerge from the waist of the other one, suggesting that they are in fact one in the same. But is it a corridor or is it a mirror? Do we see the frontal reflection of the individual who stands with her back to us or is this another person entirely? Is the light source coming from outdoors or is it merely a reflection from the opposite side of the room? As in other paintings, Koak plays with the light source in this painting, rendering it somewhat elusive. Bathed in light that asserts its presence as an object in space, Koak splits her subject, underscoring the sense of duality within the figure.

In an olive-green painting, *Mirroring* (2022), a body bends over, again splitting into mirrored subjects at the torso, while in *My Teeth* (2022) two entangled figures push and writhe against one another. On the importance of duality in her work, Koak surmises, "I've noticed that it feels impossible for me to make a show that does not center, in some form, on ideas of duality—and that that duality often has to do with the distinction between ourselves and others, the interplay of that. This show feels as though it's about merging that duality. That it's looking at the places where those parts get muddled, where we subtly absorb one another only to become more of ourselves."⁷

While she was producing this body of work, Koak read the cognitive scientist, Douglas Hofstadter's book *I Am a Strange Loop* (2007), in which he discusses how the self becomes a feedback loop, or a subjective construction of disparate experiences that fold back and reflect on our psyches and thus impact the formation of the self. Koak plays with this metaphor in these works, where bodies morph and reflect various psychological states. This is perhaps most evident in *Strange Loop* (2021), a large-scale bronze sculpture depicting the elegant, elongated bends of three feline bodies, whose curves visually reflect and complement the arcs and bows of the other proximate appendages. In this work, it is difficult to discern where one body begins and another ends, as they all appear intertwined in a fantastical

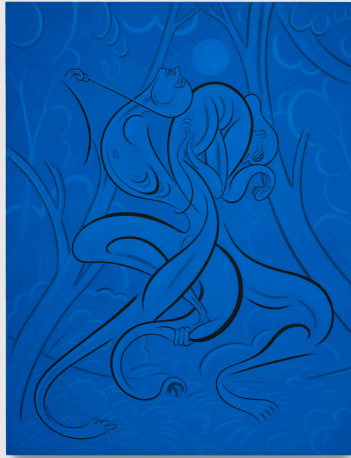
把弄光源，形成難以捉摸的視覺效果。將人物置放於光源下，既可表明其存在於該空間，Koak亦可藉此將主體分割，強調出人物的二元性。

於橄欖綠色調的《鏡像》（*Mirroring*，2022年）中，Koak則刻畫了一個彎曲的身體，於軀幹處再次分裂成鏡像的雙重主體；而於《我的牙齒》（*My Teeth*，2022年）中，則繪畫了兩個互相糾纏、互相推擠的扭曲身影。說到「二元性」在其作品中的重要性，Koak解說：「我發現自己構思展覽時總是無法不談及二元性——這種二元性在區分我們與他者或兩者相互影響的關係至關重要。這次展覽就像是以融和兩者為目標。它探究當中的模糊之處，在那裡我們微妙地互相吸收彼此的特質，使我們的本質得以昇華。」⁷

在創作這系列作品期間，Koak剛好在閱讀美國認知科學家道格拉斯·侯世達（Douglas Hofstadter）的著作〈我是個怪圈〉

（*I Am a Strange Loop*，2007年），作者在書中探討「自我」怎樣演變成為一種反饋的循環，或每個人處於不同生命體驗中，又怎樣受各自的主觀性影響心理的構成，繼而形成自我。Koak在這些作品中活用有關隱喻，藉由繪畫變形的身體反映各種心理狀態。這一點在大型青銅雕塑《怪圈》（*Strange Loop*，2021年）中尤其明顯。這座雕塑由三隻身姿細長彎曲、動態典雅的貓科動物所組成，牠們的身軀線條在視覺上同時突顯並補足周邊的足部和尾巴呈現之弧形和弓形。儘管三隻動物的肢體之間並無任何接觸，但由於牠們均交織於同一個奇幻的循環中，觀者或難以辨別哪端是始，哪端是末。

另一作品《空海》（*An Empty Sea*，2021-2022年），Koak再次以「光與色」的重量象徵文化時刻。畫面中，一個亮紅色的曲面鏡反射出朱紅色的日光，其光源本來隱藏在鈷藍色房間的透明窗簾背後。因着鏡子的反照，這道光成為房間裡一個特殊的主體，比起一般反射，這道光更像一個實體，更鮮明地突出包圍房間的藍色



My Teeth, 2022. Flashe, acrylic, chalk, and graphite on canvas. 59 × 45 1/2 inch | 149.9 × 115.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

loop, despite the fact that none of the bodies actually touch.

In *An Empty Sea* (2021–2022), Koak again plays with the weight of light and color as a signifying device of the cultural moment. A bright red curved mirror reflects light from a vermillion sun hidden behind a sheer curtain in a room saturated in cobalt blue. The light of the mirror becomes a strange object in the room, more solid than reflective, that starkly accents the surrounding blue room. In effect, the light becomes another character in the painting behind the pensive figure in the foreground. “I think there’s something about the act of painting light, of physically representing an intangible element, that gives it the same weight as the depicted physical objects,” Koak has stated.⁸

The paintings Koak has produced for this exhibition are the signs and symbols not only of Koak’s lived experience of the last several years, but also point to a more sublimated reality of the pandemic. About her paintings and the subjects she portrays, Koak asserts, “I can find myself in any of the pieces. Some fragment of myself. A skewed mirror. A version that I felt once. But at the same time I can see each one entirely not as me. A fiction, a part of a friend or loved one, a stand-in for broader society, a historical trope, or an archetype reimagined.”⁹ Throughout this body of work, Koak weaves her fabric of human experience for a specific moment in time through her chosen signs and symbols: light, color, individual subjects, interiors, exteriors, mood, gesture, and mirroring effects. As Langer has again noted, “Out of signs and symbols we weave our tissue of ‘reality!’”¹⁰

– Apsara DiQuinzio
Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, Nevada Museum of Art

調。實際上，這道光線不僅是畫中沉思者的背景襯色，它更像另一個角色。「我認為繪畫『光』就是將無形之物轉化為實體，並給予它形同畫面中其他實體所含的重量與價值。」Koak說。⁸

Koak為是次個展所繪畫的作品，不但是她過去幾年生活經歷的標記和象徵，也指向疫情下現實生活的昇華。關於這系列畫作和所描繪的主題，Koak斷言：「在任何一幅作品中，我都尋找到自己，一些自己的碎片。就如一塊哈哈鏡，當中有我曾經感受過的面向，同時我又可將它們視作跟自己完全無關。像是小說、朋友或所愛的人的某部分，或普羅大眾的替身，或歷史中的一個比喻，以至重新構想的原型。」⁹ 在整個作品系列中，Koak通過她所選擇的作畫符號與象徵：光線、顏色、個別主體、內部、外部、情緒、筆勢和鏡像效果，在歷史中特定的時間點上編織了人類的生命體驗。正如蘭格所言：「以符號和象徵，我們編織了屬於自己的『現實』。」¹⁰

撰文：Apsara DiQuinzio
內華達美術館當代藝術高級策展人

1 Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.124.
2 Conversation with the artist, February 23, 2022.
3 Ibid.
4 Email to the author, February 22, 2022.
5-9 Ibid.
10 Langer, op. cit., p. 280.

1 蘇珊·蘭格 (Susanne Langer) 〈新鑰匙哲學：理性、儀式和藝術的象徵主義研究〉(Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art)，劍橋及倫敦：哈佛大學出版社，1957年，頁124。
2 筆者與藝術家的對話，2022年2月23日。
3 同上。
4 給筆者的電郵，2022年2月22日。
5-9 同上。
10 蘇珊·蘭格 (Susanne Langer)，引文頁碼280。



Strange Loop, 2021. Ferric nitrate patina on bronze, three figures. Overall (approximate) : 70 7/8 × 63 × 51 3/16 inch | 180 × 160 × 130 cm. *Grumpy Cat* : 37 3/8 × 28 3/8 × 52 3/4 inch | 95 × 72 × 134 cm. *Happy Cat* : 30 11/16 × 75 9/16 × 24 7/16 inch | 78 × 192 × 62 cm. *Sleepy Cat* : 70 7/8 × 23 5/8 × 43 5/16 inch | 180 × 60 × 110 cm. Edition 1 of 7 + 1 artist proof. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.



About the Artist

Koak creates emotionally charged portraits of figures invariably imbued with a sense of agency and inner life. Drawing on the visual vocabulary of comics, her work engages hierarchies of gender as well as form, interrogating commonly held cultural assumptions on identity and human nature. The exquisite technique for which Koak is known is expressed in beautifully effortless mark-making and demonstrates a rare type of generous and hand-made master craftsmanship.

Based in San Francisco, Koak (b. 1981 in Lansing, Michigan, USA) received a MFA in Comics (2016) from California College of the Arts and has held solo presentations in Buenos Aires, London, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Most recently, her work was on view in *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century* (2021–2022), a major survey exhibition exploring recent feminist practices in contemporary art organized by the University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA); and *100 Drawings From Now* (2020) at The Drawing Center, New York City.

[More information about the exhibition >>>](#)

關於藝術家

Koak在其藝術實踐中，創作充滿情感的人物肖像，並為其賦予一種自主性和內在生命。藝術家從漫畫的視覺語匯中汲取靈感，以作品探討性別和形式的階級劃分，並質疑社會上對於身分和人性的既定文化現象。Koak以精緻的繪畫技術為人所認識，其痕跡創作富美感且看起來毫不費力，然而那實際上是展示了藝術家難得慷慨而老練的技藝。

Koak 1981年出生於美國密芝根州蘭辛，現於三藩市工作和生活。2016年，Koak從加州藝術學院（California College of the Arts）取得漫畫藝術碩士學位，其後曾在布宜諾斯艾利斯、倫敦、洛杉磯和三藩市等地舉辦個人展覽。近期，她的作品在大型主題展覽《新時代：21世紀的藝術和女權主義》（*New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century* 2021-2022年）中展出，展覽由加州大學柏克萊分校美術館（University of California Berkeley Art Museum）及太平洋電影資料館（BAMPFA）主辦，探索近期當代藝術中的女權主義實踐。她的作品亦曾在紐約繪畫中心（The Drawing Center）的《從今開始的100幅繪畫》（*100 Drawings From Now*，2020年）群展中展出。

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