

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Atsushi Kaga
'I LOST YOU'

16 October – 19 December 2026
Opening Reception: 16 October, 6–8pm

Tanya Leighton is pleased to present 'I lost you', an exhibition of new works by Atsushi Kaga, in which the artist's pictorial world undergoes a quiet transformation.

Kaga's practice has long centred on Usacchi, the rabbit who serves as the artist's alter ego and emotional proxy, a figure through whom vulnerability, doubt and melancholy can be voiced at one remove. Around him has grown a recurring cast of companions, among them Kumacchi, a wounded and chronically melancholic bear and Usacchi's closest friend. In these new paintings, however, Usacchi no longer anchors the composition in the way he once did. In some works, he and Kumacchi walk through dense forests or dissolve into seascapes, barely distinguishable from the terrain around them; in others Usacchi remains at the centre, but the world has thickened around him, grown wilder, begun to assert its own claims. Paint moves differently: looser, more atmospheric, led by colour rather than contour. If the earlier work staged the self, this body of work asks what happens when the self yields to a larger order.

That order is a cosmological one. The paintings draw on Japanese folk mythology, in particular the daidarabotchi, a colossal deity said to have formed lakes and rivers with its footsteps as it strode across the land. In *I lost you*, the title painting, Usacchi appears as a translucent giant striding across green mountains, cargo ships and solar panels scattered like details at his feet, the mythological body superimposed onto the infrastructure of contemporary life. In Kaga's animist cosmology, landscape is not backdrop but agent, populated and watchful, the sacred distributed across the natural world rather than concentrated in a single figure. A palette of pastels, dusty pinks, and soft lavenders, drawn from the artist's recent engagement with Brazilian modernist Tarsila do Amaral, holds the work's darkness and tenderness in the same breath.

The titles in the exhibition read like messages sent to someone who can no longer receive them. *We laughed so much, my friend. Thank you for keeping me company. I forgot to tell you life without you is freaking boring. Is reincarnation legit? My friend.* Casual and direct in their affection, diaristic rather than poetic, they name loss in the vocabulary of everyday intimacy. In *The month of May makes me want to go to somewhere warmer*, Usacchi stands motionless on exposed linen while swallows circle, perch on wires, and nest on his head. In East Asian tradition, swallows are cherished as omens of luck precisely because they do not stay. They arrive in spring and vanish before summer. Usacchi does not reach for them. He has learned to be the place they come back to.

Tanya Leighton

Atsushi Kaga (b. 1978, Tokyo, Japan)
has a BA in Fine Art from the National
College of Art & Design, Dublin.

He has enjoyed previous institutional
solo exhibitions at Douglas Hyde
Gallery, Dublin, Ireland; Butler Gallery,
Kilkenny; and Irish Museum of Modern
Art, Dublin. Kaga's work has been
included in recent group exhibitions at
Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin;
Tokyo National Museum, Japan;
Galerie Haas, Zurich, Switzerland;
Powerlong Art Museum, and Linenhall
Arts Centre, Castle, Ireland. Kaga has
participated in residencies in Paris;
Dublin; Callan, Kilkenny; Washington,
CT; Miami; and São Paulo and will
enjoy a forthcoming residency at
Headlands Center for the Arts in
2026. He lives and works between
Dublin and Kyoto. Kaga is represented
by Maho Kubota, Tokyo; mother's
tankstation, Dublin; and Jessica
Silverman, San Francisco.

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