

LISSON

PAST PRESENCE

PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION DATES:
6 AUGUST – 5 SEPTEMBER 2026
27 BELL STREET, NW1 5BY

'Noh, which is one form of Japanese classical drama, is a unique kind of theatre that espouses jumps in time. In noh, time can run backward, and antiquity appears on the stage as the present. It could be the ghost of a woman who went mad from unfulfilled love, or a commander who perished in battle and who was also a poet, coming on stage to express his resentment that his name has been lost to time. It is a drama where the protagonists are ghosts, while we, the spectators, are just a single generation of passers-by travelling through the present.'

– Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Giacometti/Sugimoto Staged* (2024), pp. 34-35.

Lisson London is pleased to introduce a group exhibition of works by artists from its international programme, including Dana Awartani, Rodney Graham, Peter Joseph, Anish Kapoor, Wael Shawky, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Tunga, and Masaomi Yasunaga – united by their collision of the past and present.

The exhibition derives its name from HIROSHI SUGIMOTO's acclaimed series, *Past Presence*, where masterworks are transformed into reflections on cultural continuity, memory and time. Two pieces from the series are highlighted, preceding the artist's forthcoming solo show at Lisson New York and the reopening of the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden later this year. Acting as the entry point to the exhibition is *Past Presence 042, No. 3 / No. 13, Mark Rothko* (2014), a black-and-white photograph of an early Rothko composition at MoMA, New York, paired with *Past Presence 077, The Big Ear, Alexander Calder* (2016), captured at Basel's Fondation Beyeler. By using a large-format camera to render familiar subjects through an intentional lack of focus, Sugimoto compels the viewer to call upon their visual memory, prompting contemplation on our perception of history and visual culture.

Nearby, ANISH KAPOOR's shimmering *Silver Base with Blue to Cobalt to Prussian Blue* (2023) echoes the Rothko captured by Sugimoto. The gentle gradation of paint creates an intense depth of colour, furthering the artist's exploration into the temporal evolution of pigment and the profound symbolic resonance inherent in primary palettes. Outside the gallery, Kapoor also presents the monumental, stainless-steel, hourglass *Non-Object (Pole)* (2008), coinciding with an exceptional year of solo institutional exhibitions for the artist at Palazzo Manfrin in Venice, the Hayward Gallery in London, Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg and The Serlachius Museum in Finland.

A commitment to tracing the evolution of a singular reference point unites other artists in the exhibition. Beyond Kapoor stands a Murano glass relief by WAEEL SHAWKY that monumentalises a sixteenth-century Persian miniature painting. By intervening with his own layer of 'myth', Shawky questions preconceived notions of history and fantasy, investigating how accounts of the past have been authored, recorded, and reshaped by posterity. Driven instead by an urgency to commemorate and preserve endangered history, Saudi-Palestinian artist DANA AWARTANI's hand carving *When the Dust of Conflict Settles: Temple of Bel* (2025) brings awareness to the importance of traditional craftsmanship in reconstructing the future. This presentation coincides with Awartani representing Saudi Arabia at the 61st Venice Biennale.

While Shawky and Awartani engage with collective histories, PETER JOSEPH charts the depth of a singular personal experience. Marking the genesis of the artist's Cinema Paintings, *Cream with Black* (1970) demonstrates the capacity of a fleeting moment to influence decades of subsequent experimentation, speaking to *Past Presence* as an enduring concept of continuation and evolution.



By contrast, RODNEY GRAHAM's *Untitled (20) from Picasso, My Master* (2005) uses irony and serious homage to reinterpret Cubist principles through his 'gifted amateur' persona – a signature method of 'appropriating' art history that runs throughout his practice, often as a generative springboard for the contemporary.

Extending this concept, MASAOMI YASUNAGA and TUNGA challenge the permanence of physical memory. Simultaneously primeval and contemporary, Yasunaga's *Mosaic Vessel* (2026) appears weathered by earthly forces across centuries, destabilising our perception of time itself while bridging an imagined antiquity and speculative future. A similarly visceral trace of the body can be experienced through the work of Tunga, whose ethereal *Anjos Maquiados* works on paper make permanent the ephemeral state of the made-up face. Presented alongside two sculptures, these works exemplify the artist's research into material energies and their capacity to act as portals between time-based realities.

ABOUT LISSON

Lisson is a global gallery dedicated to shaping the art of today. Creating meaningful dialogues and robust markets between artists and audiences across six venues in the UK, US and China, Lisson exhibits the most engaging and challenging work, adding value and narrative through decades of experience and innovation.

Building significance and reputation with our artists, Lisson nurtures and amplifies their vision at every turn, supporting opportunities to show beyond the gallery's walls in museums, the public realm and through international partnerships. The gallery's heritage and its foundational role in contemporary art since 1967, allows for a deeper perspective and more thoughtful relationships when furthering the career and voice of an artist.