

Interview with
Eli de Haas

Eli de Haas 專訪



About the Artist

關於藝術家

Eli de Haas (b. 1999, Rotterdam, the Netherlands) is an artist who explores the boundaries of subterranean worlds in his colorful, ambiguous, and magical compositions. His works summon the viewer's childlike spirit, prompting intuitive feelings and responses rather than rational conclusions. Evoking fragments of dreams or fairy tales, the works often feature free, casual, and sometimes naïve figuration, presenting a more visceral, embodied presence to the reality he depicts, without ever pinning down a single, fixed interpretation. In de Haas's compositions, bodies morph into landscapes, silhouettes emerge from the shadows, and faces become the projection of viewers' inner worlds.

De Haas studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

The artist currently lives and works in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Eli de Haas (生於1999年·荷蘭鹿特丹) 在他色彩豐富、含義模糊、充滿魔力的作品中探索隱蔽世界的邊緣。他的作品喚起觀者孩童般的精神，引發直覺的感受和反應，而非理性的結論。作品彷彿夢境或童話的片段，經常呈現自由、隨意、有時略顯天真的人物形象，為他所描繪的現實呈現一種更直觀、更具體的存在，而不會將單一、固定的解釋固定下來。在 de Haas 的作品中，身體會變成風景，剪影會從陰影中出現，而面孔則會成為觀者內心世界的投影。

De Haas 曾就讀於阿姆斯特丹里特維爾藝術學院和杜塞爾多夫藝術學院。

藝術家目前生活和工作的荷蘭鹿特丹。



Artist Portrait

藝術家肖像



Eli de Haas : 天地間
2024年7月13日至8月17日
Eli de Haas: Close to Heaven, Close to Hell
July 13–August 17, 2024



Installation views of "Close to Heaven, Close to Hell"

「天地間」現場圖

On the occasion of Eli de Haas's solo exhibition "Close to Heaven, Close to Hell," the gallery team had an in-depth discussion with the artist, highlighting the thoughts and concepts behind his art practice. The exhibition opened at MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong on July 13, 2024.

Featuring his most recent paintings, the exhibition explores the complex, ambiguous relationship between figuration and the idea of space, fabricating dreamlike and surreal worlds that linger between extreme allusions. The title "Close to Heaven, Close to Hell" does not refer directly to the religious imagery but rather invites viewers to navigate the suggested, mysterious terrain in between, the one that encapsulates both real and imagined experiences, authentic and fictional narratives. In exploring the ambiguous space captured in his works that spans disparate worlds, the artist invites viewers to explore the liminality between the familiar and the unknown, the real and the imagined. By blurring the boundaries between confined environments and figuration as well as their evoked relationships, his work prompts a deeper, more nuanced engagement with the complexities of the human experience.

值 Eli de Haas 個展「天地間」之際，畫廊團隊與藝術家進行了一次深入的探討，談及了藝術家的創作理念以及創作過程中的所見所想。展覽於 2024 年 7 月 13 日在 MOU PROJECTS 香港空間開幕。

展覽展出藝術家最新的繪畫作品，探索了人物主體與空間概念之間複雜而模糊的關係，創造了徘徊在極端之間、夢境般的超現實世界。標題中的「天堂」與「地獄」並不直接涉及宗教意象，而是邀請觀眾去探索這兩者之間的神秘地帶——一個包含了親歷與想象的經驗、真實與虛構的敘事的地帶。在探索其作品中跨越不同世界的模糊空間時，藝術家邀請觀眾發掘熟悉與未知、真實與想象之間的臨界點。他的作品模糊了封閉環境與人物之間的界限以及它們之間的關係，促使人們更深入、更細緻地了解人類經歷的複雜性。

MOU PROJECTS (MP):

Most of the works featured in the show are paintings on panels. What characteristics do you value the most in experimenting with its materiality? How is painting on hard surfaces different from the rest methods?

Eli de Haas (Eli):

Paint behaves quite differently on panels than on canvases. For me, creating transformations is a very essential part of painting; I never adhere strictly to one direction. The imagery evolves, merges, and is often painted over in a dynamic, back-and-forth process. When one element emerges, it often necessitates revising or removing another. Working on panels allows me to sand or scratch away parts of the painting, revealing underlying layers. And because the subjects I explore often involve a certain fragility, this way of dealing with layers is very valuable. It enables me to create thinner, more delicate formulations, helping me approach the figuration in my work in a less rigid and perhaps more ambiguous way.

MP:

Magical, cartoonish characters populate your paintings. What is your fascination with creating these figures and depicting them on canvases?

Eli:

To me, the characters in my work aren't particularly magical. Although they aren't reflections of any actual existing persons, I use figuration to explore real-life elements and experiences—maybe not so much in the way it resembles reality, but instead in the way it challenges one.

MP:

The relationship between figures and their surrounding environments is often the key to solving puzzles in your works. For example, in *Untitled* (2024), the central figure's hair

MOU PROJECTS (MP):

本次展覽中的大部分作品都是木板油畫。在創作中你最看重這種材質的哪些特點？在堅硬的表面上繪畫與其他繪畫方法有什麼不同？

Eli de Haas (Eli):

顏料在木板上的表現與在畫布上的表現大不相同。對我而言，創造變化是繪畫過程中至關重要的一環，我從不局限於單一的創作方向。在我的創作中，畫面中的圖像總是在一個動態的、反復的過程中不斷演變和融合。當新的元素出現時，往往需要我來調整或移除其他部分。木板作為創作媒介的獨特之處在於，它允許我打磨或刮去部分顏料，以揭露出隱藏在下面的層次。這種處理方式使我能夠更好地去探索脆弱性這一主題。它使我能夠創作出更為精緻、細膩的作品，以一種不那麼僵硬、更為曖昧的方式來呈現畫中的形象。

MP:

你的畫作中充滿了奇妙的、卡通般的人物形象。是什麼驅使你創造這些形象並將他們展現在畫作中的？

Eli:

對我來說，我作品中的人物形象並不是特別奇妙。雖然它們不代表任何真實存在的人，但我的確用這些形象來探索現實生活中的元素和經歷——也許不是用它們來反映現實，而是用它們來挑戰現實。

MP:

在你的作品中，人物與其周圍環境之間的關係往往是解開謎題的關鍵。例如，在《無題》(2024)中，中心人物的頭髮與周圍的樹狀物體融為一體。你是如何在作品中探索這一主題的？



wherever I wander, wherever I rove, 2024
Oil on panel
100 × 90 cm

《無論我漫遊何處》· 2024
木板油畫
100 × 90 cm



Untitled, 2024
Oil on panel
57 x 50 cm

《無題》· 2024
木板油畫
57 x 50 cm

merges with the tree-like objects as one. How do you explore this theme in your work?

Eli:

Throughout the process, I approach every element—be it figure, color, object, or background—with the same level of possibility. Each component holds equal importance and maintains a similar performative presence. Since I often understand little about the subjects I engage with and can never predict where discoveries will emerge, I must treat each work in its entirety as a space of discovery. By constantly shifting between clarity and ambiguity, a new narrative seemingly forms itself.

MP:

Where does your inspiration often come from? Are the scenes and figures derived from your own life experiences, observations of the world around you, or primarily from your imagination?

Eli:

I believe that "not understanding" is my most fundamental drive. In a way, what I'm doing in my works is formulating uncertainties, which involves challenging my perceptions of things and creating a sort of indifference to my own judgment. Although I lose the origin of the narratives in my work during the artistic journey, I take most actions with quite some consideration and don't see them as imaginations. I engage with the obscurity and uncertainty of things—not necessarily illuminating or strictly defining them but observing and utilizing the uncertainties that emerge. I know that the origins of my work are not random, but it can be challenging to trace exactly where the insights came from. Real-life experiences and observations definitely play a significant role here, but I also quickly let go of them, reaching for a more hidden subterranean area.

Eli:

在我的創作過程中，每一個元素——無論是人物、顏色、物體還是背景——都被賦予了同等的重要性和可能性。我力求讓每個元素都保持相似的表現力，不分主次。由於我通常對所接觸的主題瞭解有限，且無法預知創作過程中會有什麼樣的發現，我將每件作品都視為一個探索的空間。在這個空間裏，我不斷在清晰與模糊之間轉換，讓作品自然地呈現出它想要呈現的樣子。

MP:

你的靈感通常來自哪裏？作品中的場景和人物是來自你自己的生活經歷、對周圍世界的觀察，還是你的想象？

Eli:

我相信「不理解」是我創作的根本動力。在某種程度上，我的作品旨在創造不確定性，這涉及挑戰我對事物的認知，同時培養對自己判斷的一種超然態度。雖然在創作過程中，我常常無法追溯作品敘事的最初起源，但我的大多數創作決定都是經過深思熟慮的，而非純粹的想象。我致力於探索事物的曖昧性和不確定性。我並不急於闡明或嚴格定義這些元素，而是觀察並利用它們所呈現的不確定性。我知道我的作品並非隨機產生，但要準確追溯這些創作靈感的來源卻並不容易。現實生活中的經歷和觀察無疑在我的創作中扮演著重要角色。然而，我傾向於迅速放開這些具體的參照，進而觸及一個更為深邃、隱蔽的領域。

MP:

你使用的柔和又充滿活力的色彩給人留下了生動的印象，你是如何形成這種繪畫風格的？

Eli:

在我看來，我的作品最終呈現的樣子很大程度上是偶然的，因為我從未想過要形成一種特定的風格。在繪畫中，我無法真正將色彩與畫中形象的





MP:

Your use of vibrant pastel colors leaves vivid impressions. How did you develop this style of painting?

Eli:

It seems to me that the appearance of my work largely just happened by chance: as I've never aimed to develop a specific style. In paintings, I'm never able to really separate color from figuration; they're too deeply intertwined. You could say that color has guided me just as much as I have applied it.

MP:

You often prefer naming your works "untitled." Could you share with us your motivation behind it?

Eli:

Words often come only at the end of the process, if they come at all. When a painting is working well, it becomes autonomous in a way. A painting then seemingly starts speaking beyond me, and I don't want to break up that conversation.

MP:

Are there any artists in particular who inspire your painting practice?

Eli:

While I am often moved by the art I encounter, I tend to forget most of it once I start working in the studio. I can look at other artists' works quite obsessively. Today, for example, I was very taken away by the work of Léon Spilliaert: there is a beautiful uncertainty in his paintings. Although I can feel a very strong connection to certain pieces of art, I've never been interested in approaching the art I come across as a way to discover elements I can concretely adopt for myself.

描繪分離開來——它們交織得太深了。可以說，色彩對我的指引就像我對色彩的運用一樣重要。

MP:

你經常喜歡把作品命名為「無題」。你可以和我們分享一下這樣做的動機嗎？

Eli:

在我的創作過程中，文字通常都最後才會出現的。當一幅畫完成得很好時，它在某種程度上就變得非常自主。這時，一幅畫便開始為自己發聲，而我不想打斷它的訴說。

MP:

有沒有哪些藝術家對你的繪畫創作有特別的啟發？

Eli:

雖然我經常會被我遇到的藝術作品所打動，但一旦我在工作室開始創作，我往往會忘記其中的大部分。我可以痴迷地欣賞其他藝術家的作品，例如今天我就被 Léon Spilliaert (1881-1946) 的作品深深吸引：他的畫中有一種美麗的不確定性。儘管我能感覺到自己與某些藝術作品有很強的聯繫，但我從未試圖將這些作品作為尋找具體創作元素的來源。

MP:

你願意分享一些你即將進行的項目和展覽計劃嗎？

Eli:

我還沒有正式確定下來的計劃，但我有很多新作品正在創作中。我非常希望現在能專注於在工作室的創作。



Untitled, 2021
Oil on linen
60 × 50 cm; 61.3 × 51.3 cm (with frame)

《無題》，2021
亞麻布面油畫
60 × 50 cm; 61.3 × 51.3 cm (含框)



made up in you, 2024
Oil on panel
65 × 43 cm

《由你構成》· 2024
木板油畫
65 × 43 cm

MP:

Would you like to share some of your upcoming projects and exhibition plans?

Eli:

I don't have anything official to announce yet, but there is a lot of new works in the making. I'm very much looking forward to being focused in the studio at the moment.





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