

Kenichi Hoshine

THE MAGICIAN AND THE THIEF

JANUARY 9-FEBRUARY 15, 2020

ESSAY BY JOHN YAU

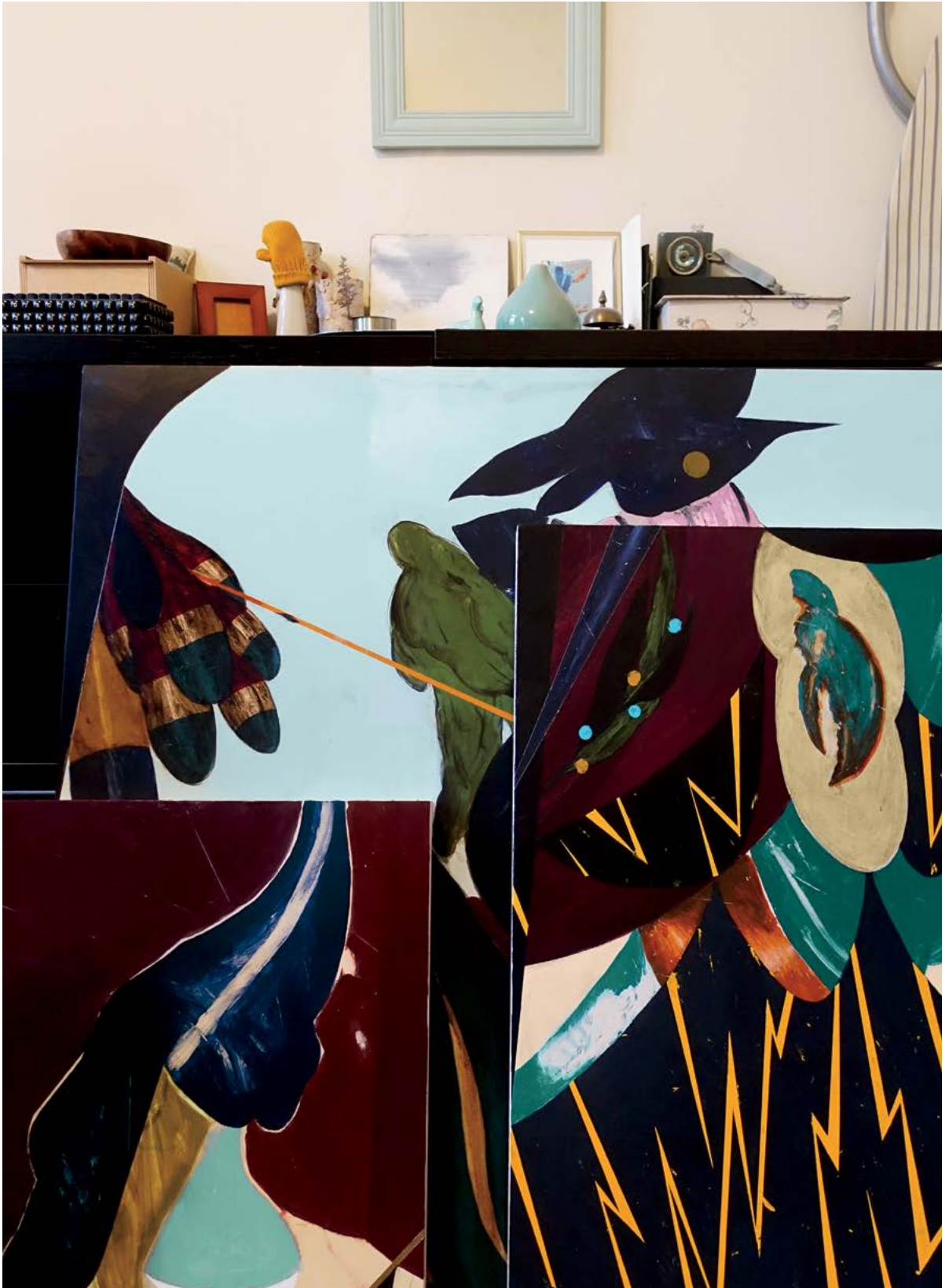
FOREWORD

Describing his artistic practice, New York painter Kenichi Hoshine has noted, “I have always found images that are obscured or fragmented to be more interesting than ‘complete’ pictures.” Hoshine’s paintings enchant in glimpses through abstract forms, gestures, and quotidian references, which entice the viewer into alluring and mysterious narratives. The gallery is delighted to present Hoshine’s new body of work, which brings together his interest in theater, poster design, and the occult, in the solo exhibition *Kenichi Hoshine: The Magician and The Thief*.

In his recent paintings, Hoshine focuses on an exploration of the properties of acrylic on wood panel. The act of scraping away the surface, or editing, through the building up and removing of layers in order to play with the concepts of revelation and obscurity, continues to be a hallmark of his process. An equally masterful colorist, Hoshine employs vibrant hues of turquoise, rose, marigold, and crimson tempered by more somber passages of black and neutral tones to create bold, emotive contrasts that add further drama to his pictures. John Yau’s thoughtful essay for this catalogue reflects upon the significance of Hoshine’s enigmatic imagery, and we are grateful for his critical contribution to illuminating the key themes in this artist’s work.

We would also like to thank Kara Spellman, Director of Research & Acquisitions, who was instrumental in bringing this exhibition to fruition as well as the entire gallery staff for their hard work and dedication. Finally, we offer our most heartfelt thanks to Kenichi Hoshine for his vision, energy, and collaboration on this exhibition, which we are honored to bring to the public.

Hollis Taggart
Jillian Russo



INTRODUCTION

JOHN YAU

IN RECENT YEARS I have noticed that a number of artists of Asian descent are exploring the possibilities of a fragmented and elusive narrative. Although I do not believe these artists form a group or even demonstrate a stylistic affinity, I want to call attention to this development and to painters as diverse as Hu Chau-Tsung, Chie Fueki, Tammy Nguyen, Hà Ninh Pham, and Hiroka Yamashita. Inspired by a wide range of sources, including theater sets, film, anime, maps, modern architecture, folk tales, occult symbols, magic tricks, and history, much of it little known in the West, the dreams and flights of imagination of these artists are a welcome presence in an art world that has for the past few years been understandably preoccupied with overt social content.

This is why I find Kenichi Hoshine's paintings of singular interest. In our conversation in his studio, he never tried to explain or to justify what he was up to, never emphasized the ramifications of his subject matter, and never attempted to parse his pursuit of something that strikes me, in its resistance to explication, as quintessentially enigmatic. Over the course of an afternoon, the furthest Hoshine would go was to say that he was interested in a "fragmented narrative" and that he saw a relationship between the artifice of theater and the artifice of painting.

When I pointed to a pale turquoise form in one of the paintings and inquired about his choice of color, he gestured toward a small mirror whose frame was the same color, and said that his palette was inspired by the things his wife used to furnish the apartment where they lived. This only deepened the mystery of his paintings. Did he restrict his unique range of colors to those he saw in his apartment? Or are there others that take on a similar importance? And if so, what is the criteria?

Like the other artists of Asian descent that I previously mentioned, Hoshine seems to be defining a trajectory that exists outside the grid of conventional choices currently approved by the art world. Even in the face of globalization and a decentralized art market, Hoshine seems to have gone his own way. In fact, I would go so far as to say that I can think of no obvious predecessors or styles when I look at his work. Sure, surrealism and collage come to mind, but that is as generalized as saying the artist is influenced by his everyday life.

In his current practice, Hoshine works in acrylic on wood. He makes no drawings or preparatory sketches, preferring to work out everything on the panel's surface. This means that if he becomes dissatisfied with one area, he will often sand it down and start over. Although the paintings do not leave traces of how they came into being, as the gestural works of the Abstract Expressionists do, Hoshine's paintings are the culmination of an improvisational process in which the artist seeks out whatever will finally hold his attention.

In *Wurlitzer* (pl. 8), the artist paints distinct flat shapes against a black ground. Three of these shapes hang down from the panel's top edge, while two of them push up from the bottom. Among the few identifiable things in the painting are a pair of light tan boots with slightly curled toes, set against the red ground

of a rounded shape in the upper right-hand corner. A column of tan smoke rises from each wrinkled boot. Resting on the instep of each boot is a black circle or hole. These black voids puncture the painting, suggesting a deeper space we cannot enter, much less see into.

In the lower left corner, there is an orange, egg-like form cropped by the panel's edge. A lip of blue pokes out from beneath the orange egg, alongside a tapered triangle pointing sharply downward. This cluster of forms—which evokes, but does not cite, Russian Constructivist painting—and the image of the boots in the opposite corner, are inexplicable but captivating. This is one of the strengths of Hoshine's paintings: We see what is right in front of us but cannot quite explain its presence. Another thing that becomes apparent is that his vocabulary consists of different languages, from representational to abstract, which he brings into close proximity. The third thing I would like to point out is that everything he paints feels palpable and even familiar, even if its identity escapes us.

Another legible image in *Wurlitzer* is a costumed figure seen in profile. The gender of this individual is indeterminate. Given the theatrical appearance of the figure, we might ask, could the other shapes in the composition be stage props? What function do they serve?

This is yet another thing I find compelling about Hoshine's work. Once we recognize and accept the boots, the columns of smoke, and the figure whose gender eludes us, we feel compelled to consider the identity of everything else in the painting. The mystery is compounded by the work's temporal uncertainty: We do not know what preceded the moment the painting focuses on, nor can we guess what will follow.

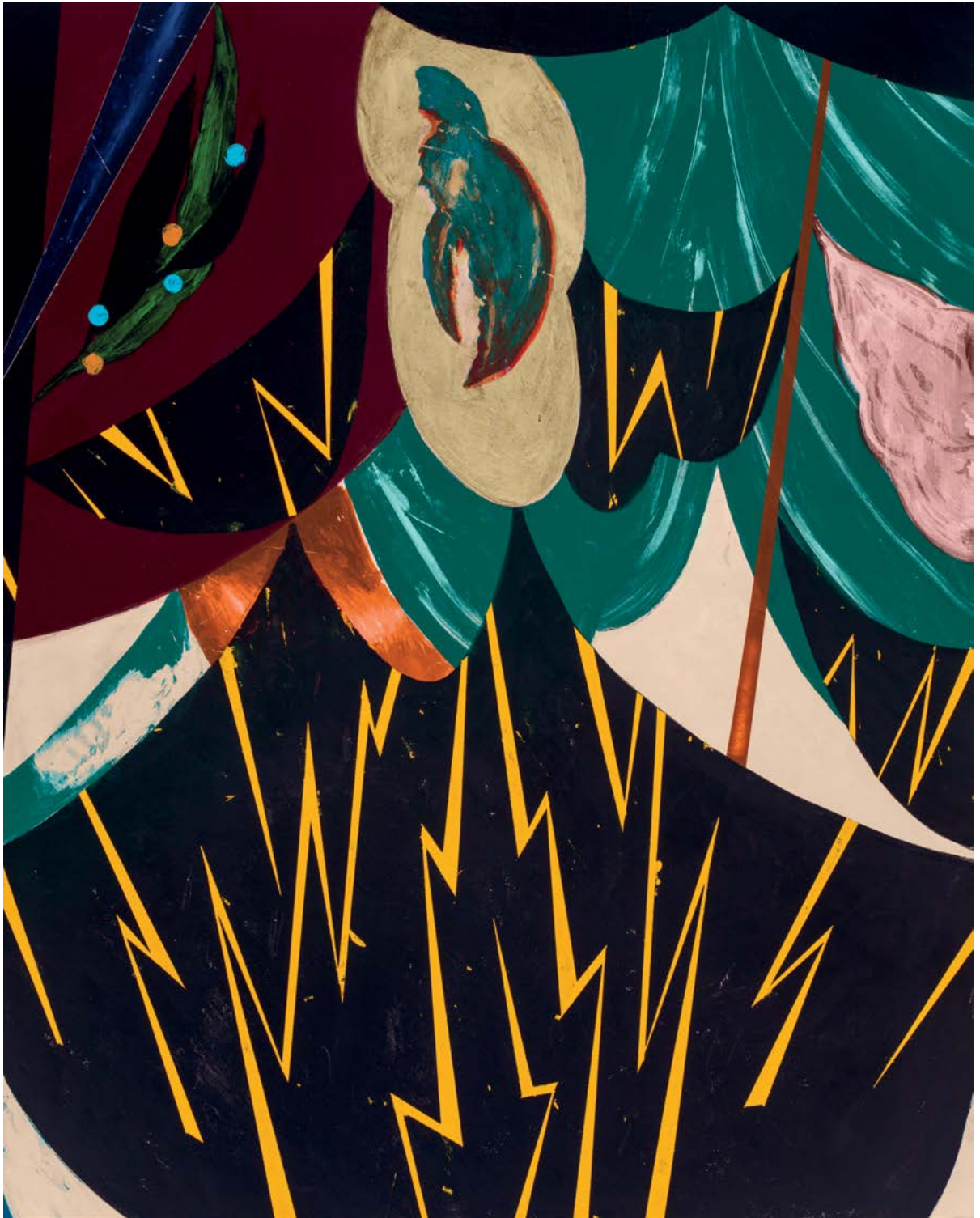
By working in a self-defined, imaginary territory, bordered by the immediate and decipherable on one side and by the elusive and indecipherable on the other, Hoshine has opened up a rich territory for himself. This is the core of his work. We are looking at a world where everything seems to fit together without adding up. We are witnesses to a realm of fertile incongruities.

In the square painting, *The Endowment* (pl. 6), we seem to be situated above a female figure—or is it?—whose face is hidden behind a black, pointy shape that could be read as a mask faintly reminiscent of the one worn by the roguish adventurer Scaramouche. The aerial view corresponds to a balcony seat overlooking a stage, suggesting that we are part of the audience. It is not clear why the figure is holding a long, thin pole, or what she or he is doing with it. We could be watching a play, but one we cannot understand even though nearly everything seems to make sense.

As in *Wurlitzer*, once we recognize one of the elements of the painting, we are challenged to accept the rest, no matter how mysterious they are. The act of covering and uncovering shapes and forms is the central tension animating Hoshine's paintings. That he brings in aspects of theater, with allusions to the stagecraft of props, flats, pulleys, and flies, underscore that painting and artifice are inseparable. In order to get at a truth, Hoshine creates a fragmented, compelling, and fictive domain.

1

Blind Joe Death, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 30 × 24 inches



2

Camoufleur, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 20 × 16 inches



3

Grenadine, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 36 × 48 inches



4



Niagara, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 36 × 48 inches



5

Selenographer, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 20 × 16 inches

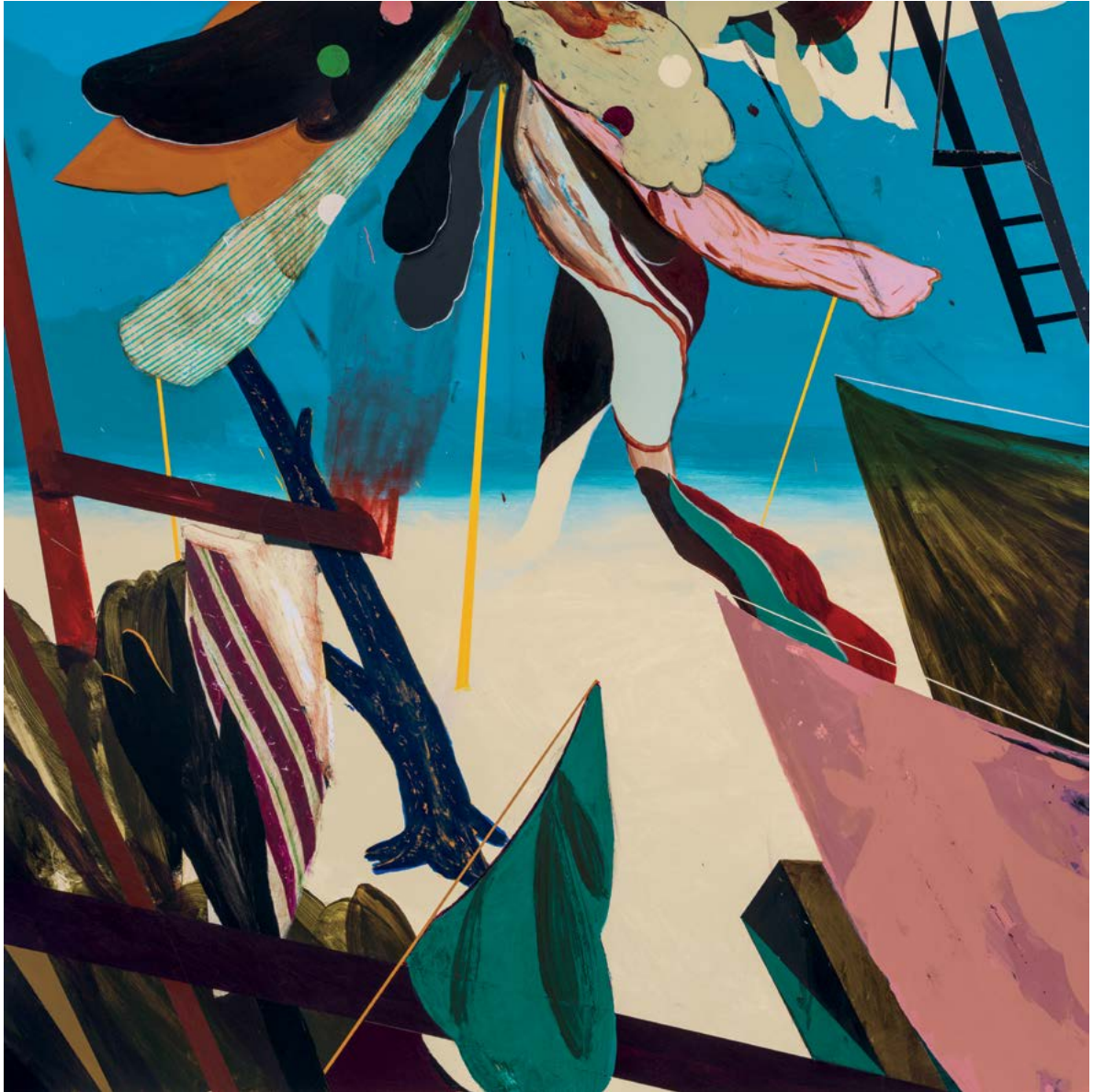


The Endowment, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 36 × 36 inches



7

The Itinerant, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 36 × 36 inches



The Magician and The Thief, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 36 × 48 inches



Wurlitzer, 2019
Acrylic on wood, 48 × 60 inches





BIOGRAPHY

Born 1977 in Tokyo, Japan
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Education

1999 B.F.A., School of Visual Arts, New York

Professional Experience

2010–19 Visiting Instructor, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY

Selected Exhibitions

- 2019 *October Group Show*, Pt.2 Gallery, Los Angeles (Group Show)
Galleri Kant Booth, Enter Art Fair, Copenhagen, Denmark (Group Show)
Summer Selections, Hollis Taggart, New York (Group Show)
The Island Show, Galleri Kant, Copenhagen, Denmark (Group Show)
Amawalk, Pt.2 Gallery, Oakland, CA (Solo Show)
- 2018 *Juxtapoz Clubhouse with Pt.2 Gallery*, Art Basel Miami Beach, FL (Group Show)
Art at Kings Oak, Newton, PA (Group Show)
Calico Sunset, Pt.2 Gallery, Oakland, CA (Group Show)
- 2017 Harpy Gallery, Rutherford, NY (Three-Person Show)
- 2016 *Uncatchable*, Galerie Guido Romero Pierini / Lei Dinety, Paris, France (Two-Person Show)
- 2015 *Paintguide*, Unit London, London (Group Show)
R Wells Gallery, Binghamton, NY (Solo Show)
- 2012 *Calico Brooklyn*, Brooklyn, NY (Group Show)
Permanent Collection, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York (Group Show)

- 2011 R Wells Gallery, Binghamton, NY (Solo Show)
Morton Fine Art, Washington, DC (Group Show)
R Wells Gallery, Binghamton, NY (Group Show)
Dark Water, Copro Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (Group Show)
- 2010 R Wells Gallery, Binghamton, NY (Group Show)
J. Cacciola Gallery, New York (Group Invitational Show)
Morton Fine Art, Washington, DC (Group Show)
- 2009 *Tangents*, Booooooom / Lifetime Collective Show, Vancouver, BC (Group Show)
J. Cacciola Gallery Booth, Toronto International Art Fair, Canada (Group Show)
The Night Before, Jonathan Levine Gallery, New York (Solo Show)
- 2008 J. Cacciola Gallery, New York (Group Show)
Saatchi Online Booth, Pulse Art Fair, New York (Group Show)
Pop Subversion, Ad Hoc Art, Brooklyn, NY (Group Show)
- 2007 *True Love Always*, Angles Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (Group Show)

Selected Awards, Recognitions, and Reviews

- ArtMaze Mag*, Winter Edition Issue #11, 2019
New American Paintings, #134 Northeast, 2018
Semifinalist, Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2009, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
Myers, "Considering Affairs of the Heart," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2007, p. E21

Selected Collections

- Colección SOLO, Madrid, Spain
Fidelity Investments Corporate Art Collection, Boston

This catalogue has been published on the occasion of the exhibition
“Kenichi Hoshine: The Magician and The Thief” organized by
Hollis Taggart, New York, and presented from January 9–February 15, 2020.

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ISBN: 978-1-7333303-1-2

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Page 6: Kenichi Hoshine’s studio, 2019. Photograph by Kara Spellman
Page 30: Kenichi Hoshine, 2019. Photograph by Jiyeon Hoshine

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Catalogue production: Kara Spellman
Copyediting: Jessie Sentivan
Design: McCall Associates, New York
Photography: Kenichi Hoshine, Brooklyn, NY

