

"Meet the Artist: Atsushi Kaga"

By Philip Carton

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Atsushi Kaga: 'I want my audience to feel empowered'

Atsushi Kaga is a Japanese artist who lives and works between Ireland and Japan. A graduate of the National College of Art & Design, Dublin, Kaga is known for his playful yet unsettling works which blend elements of fantasy, pop culture, and dark humour.

His distinctive visual language has gained international attention where his work stands out for its emotional ambiguity and narrative depth.

In his current exhibition Just Another Human Experience, Kaga has transformed The Douglas Hyde Gallery into an immersive experience and invites visitors to reflect universal themes of fragility, loneliness, and the passage of time.

He presents a series of encounters between one's inner world and the natural phenomenon of the exterior world exposing the fragility of life and the fleeting nature of all things.

How my artistic journey began

I was always interested in art, films and fashion as a kid. But I would say that NCAD is the official academic training to be an artist for me.

Where the title for my current show came from

It is a stand-up comedy Netflix series by David Chapelle, called *The Closer*. In it, Chapelle talks about his new friend Daphne Dorman. During their conversation, Dorman says: "You don't need to understand me. But you have to believe me I am having a human experience." I thought it was quite a layered line. And it stayed with me. I always wanted to use it for my show.



Just Another Human Experience at The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin runs until February 22; see: thedouglashyde.ie

What I want the audience to feel when viewing my work

I want my audience to feel empowered by my work. That is always my aim through my work. I want them to feel encouraged, better about themselves, and empowered.

Something I wish people asked me about my art, but rarely do

Why do you paint? Because it is a difficult question and might bring an interesting conversation.

The most valuable investment I've made in my career

Definitely time. I have invested a lot of time in my career.

A place that means a lot to me

Bookstores and libraries. I love being in there as much as in my studio.

The biggest misconception people have about being an artist today

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I think people may think artists don't work hard.

A recent cultural moment that has stayed with me...

This is a recent enough film. Like *Father, Like Son* by Hirokazu Kore-eda. It completely changed the way I see the world. It specially changed the way I relate with people, and my notion of communities and families.

How I see technology reshaping the art world

They have already made a great impact on us and the art world. AI particularly will further change the art in terms of both viewing and producing art. It will be like camera/photography today. It will be a part of our life and the art world.

If I could disrupt one thing about the art world, it would be...

All those artworks in storages sounds like a waste. It would be nice to show them to the public. We could put tax on artworks that stay more than a year in a crate.

The best piece of advice I ever received

I got this advice when I was in the fourth year in the art college from Japanese artist, Tatsu Nishino. He told me that for the next four years after college no one might come to my studio, but I must keep making my work. From this advice I developed a strategy to entertain myself in the studio without any future audience in mind. I still do it just to make work for myself. If nobody sees it, that's still ok. I enjoyed making it.



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