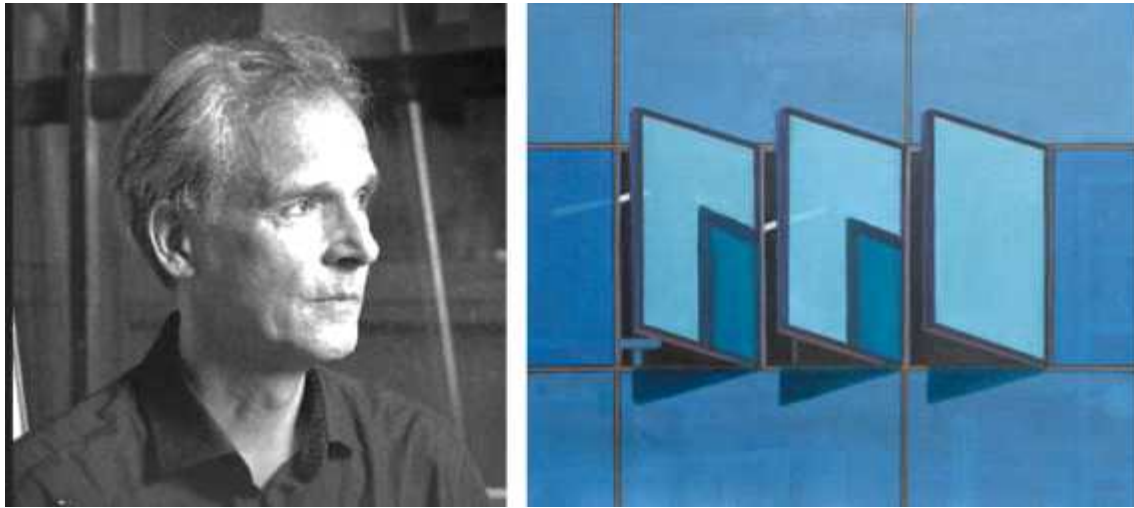


Art Criticism

Evoking the Morning, A Place In-Between: Ingo Baumgarten Solo Exhibition SEEN SCENE

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Left: Artist Ingo Baumgarten (b.1964) Right: 3 open window, from SEEN SCENE, 2025

“Every true work of art must contain a place from which, to the one who seeks to enter, a breeze blows forth—fresh as the wind of dawn.”

—Walter Benjamin, 『The Arcades Project』

Ingo Baumgarten's (b.1964) solo exhibition 《SEEN SCENE》(CDA gallery, Sept. 12–Oct. 11, 2025) carries a condensed resonance. Seen signifies “what is beheld” or “what has been witnessed,” while Scene denotes “landscape” or “setting.” The title itself gestures toward the artist's inquiry: how do the urban moments he observes transform into new painterly landscapes?

Baumgarten begins with architectural fragments of the everyday and reanimates them through the language of color and line. A wall, a window, a façade—humble elements of the built environment—are transfigured within his pictorial field into scenes that stir emotional undercurrents and summon cultural memory.

Born in Hanover, Germany, Baumgarten studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe and the Institute for Higher Studies in Visual Arts, Paris. He received his M.A. at Tokyo University of the Arts in 1999. Since 2008, he has lived and worked in Seoul, serving as Professor of Painting at Hongik University. His practice has long circled around the hybridity of architecture and lived life within alleys and neighborhoods of the city.

When he first encountered Seoul in 1993, the hillsides crowded with dense clusters of red-brick and concrete houses appeared at once unfamiliar and mesmerizing. He turned his attention to these hybrid landscapes where Western architectural order intersected with the sensibilities of Korean everyday life, translating them into his own visual idiom.

In the present exhibition, harmonies of clear greens and blues, ochres and grays are tempered, while flashes of red and deep brown concentrate around window frames and railings, unsettling the stillness. The surfaces are dominated by the geometry of horizontals and verticals, yet acute angles and asymmetrical gaps intervene, weaving a subtle rhythm beyond mechanical uniformity.

Most striking among them, <3 open window>(2025) captures three successive windows flung open along the façade of a building. The luminous panes of blue seem to carry the air of morning infused with sunlight—transparent, vivid, alive. Shadows and overlaps cast by the repetition of angles generate another dimension of space within the painting. The work embodies, in symbolic form, the metamorphosis of the seen into the scene.

Baumgarten's gaze lingers at the thresholds where things converge: the corner of a building, the crack in a façade, the junction where an old house abuts a modern structure. These sites conjoin strata of time, through which the sensibilities of Korean everyday life seep forth. His canvases are not mere records of architectural structures, but devices that awaken the narratives of life inscribed within them.

Here one recognizes what Homi Bhabha has called the "Third Space"—a site where divergent cultural languages intersect and new meaning is born. Baumgarten views the Korean cityscape through the eyes of the Other, revealing places we have overlooked within the texture of familiarity. In them dwells the sensibility of morning, when night and day cross, and the aesthetic of JEOPHWA(接化, Transformation)-assimilation and harmonization—that shapes Korean consciousness. 《SEEN SCENE》 unfolds as a visual dialogue offered to the viewer. The works breathe in variations and repetitions, and within their intervals the audience encounters a rhythm at once gentle and dynamic. This echoes Benjamin's insight: "novelty arises through the interruption of continuity." Baumgarten conjures such novelty as a sensation of dawn and asks his viewers: Of what we have seen, what remains as scene? In this question, the exhibition becomes a breeze that awakens the senses and memories within us.