

Tanabe Motoha's portraits do not reproduce a single appearance. Research extends to the subject's family, friends, and strangers who carry something of that person — photographs accumulate, often exceeding ten thousand, and from their fragments a single face is woven.

What emerges is the totality of gazes through which a person has been recognized. The paint records an accumulation of decisions; the weight left on the surface is the trace of sustained attention directed toward a single life.



Someone, 2025, Oil on canvas, 652 × 530 mm (25.7 × 20.9 inches)

ARTIST STATEMENT

When Tanabe Motoha begins a portrait, the process starts with conversation. From there, the research extends beyond the subject to family, friends, and strangers who evoke something of that person. Photographs accumulate across ages and genders; the archive often exceeds ten thousand images. From these, fragments of expression and gaze are selected and woven into a single face.

The finished portrait is not a reproduction of one person's appearance. Nor is it a fictional composite.

The finished portrait is not a reproduction of one person's appearance. Yet it is not a completely fictional character either.

What is it that recognizes a person? Not the image of one individual, but the totality of many relationships. To exist as a person is inseparable from being seen, remembered, and recognized by others. This process of making is an attempt to bring that structure into visibility on the painted surface.

Layer by layer, Tanabe builds with precision. The thickness of the paint records the accumulation of decisions one resemblance chosen, another set aside. The weight that remains on the surface is the

trace of sustained attention directed toward a single life. Through portraiture, Tanabe confronts the question of what it means to recognize another person.

BIOGRAPHY

Tanabe Motoha approaches portraiture as an inquiry into what it means to recognize another person. Beginning with conversation, Tanabe's research extends to family, friends, and strangers who evoke something of the subject—archives often exceeding ten thousand photographs. From these, fragments of expression and gaze are selected and woven into a single face. Tanabe studies at Tokyo University of the Arts. In 2025, selected for the 5th Hoki Museum Grand Prize Exhibition.

CV

EDUCATION

2026 Tokyo University of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Oil Painting, enrolled

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

2026 *Portrait*, Upstairs Gallery, Tokyo

AWARDS & GRANTS

2025 Announcement of the Special Award for the 5th Hoki Museum Grand Prize

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