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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christian Franzen
SHIFTY

March 12 – May 9, 2026

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 12, 6–8pm

Uffner & Liu is pleased to present *SHIFTY*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles–based artist Christian Franzen. Working primarily from scenes of the Southern California coastline where he grew up, Franzen creates luminous, atmospheric paintings that are seeped in the psychological charge of place. Through layered glazing, airbrush, and deliberate surface abrasion, Franzen constructs paintings that feel both cinematic and weathered, as though glimpsed through salt-streaked glass or recalled from a half-remembered dream.

Franzen has long drawn from a vast personal photo archive. In earlier bodies of work, photographs functioned as points of departure, anchoring his radiant seascapes in lived geography. The paintings in *SHIFTY*, however, are made without direct reliance on photographic references. Instead, they are rendered from memory—of specific landscapes, events, sensations, and even of earlier paintings themselves—allowing perception and recollection to become primary compositional tools. What remains are impressions: a horizon suspended in atmospheric haze, a flare of sunset dissolving into oceanic darkness, a band of reflected light fractured across water. These remembered landscapes appear in moments of transition, where clarity yields to constant motion.

Structurally, the paintings adopt what Franzen describes as a method of “stacking”: horizontal bands of information that flatten pictorial depth while reinforcing the atmospheric pull of the horizon line. The result is a tension between spatial illusion and surface, linking the works as much to color field painting as to traditional landscape.

Franzen stretches and gessoes his own canvases, refining them to a particular smoothness before building up layers of translucent glaze applied by brush and airbrush. He works on multiple paintings simultaneously, often “tabling” paintings in progress, using them as working surfaces. Through this process, the surfaces accrue scratches, scrapes, and incidental marks organically. The resulting patina mimics the weathering of memory itself: imperfect, layered, and susceptible to distortion.

Recurring within these landscapes are doubled or superimposed images—owls, ghosts, a black cat—figures that function as symbols of deception. The dummy owl is a garden fixture intended to ward off pests; during a studio move, Franzen wrapped these objects in cloth, transforming them into spectral ghosts that linger in the paintings as faint apparitions. The black cat recalls a childhood prank in which a cutout was placed in the road to startle passing drivers. Each motif hinges on illusion—objects meant to trick the eye or manipulate belief.

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Their presence within the paintings complicates the seductive tranquility of the seascapes, introducing an undercurrent of unease beneath their luminous surfaces.

Franzen's landscapes, alluring yet ambiguous, resist full immersion. Scratches and surface incisions act as interruptions, drawing attention to the canvas as object and to the distance between lived experience and its recollection. In relinquishing the photograph's authority, *SHIFTY* embraces perception as mutable and subjective. Sunsets dissolve; reflections fracture; images double and slip. What remains is not a fixed record of place, but a shifting field of light and memory—an atmosphere in which truth is always provisional, and the horizon forever receding.

Christian Franzen (b. 1994, Long Beach, CA) received his BFA from California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, CA in 2018. He has had recent solo and two-person exhibitions at Glasshouse, London, UK (2024); In Lieu, Los Angeles, CA (2023, 2022); and OWO Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2019). Franzen's work has been included in recent group exhibitions at Uffner & Liu, New York, NY (2025); Henkyo Gallery, Tokyo, JP (2025); James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY (2024); Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York, NY (2024); De Boer Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2024); Irvine Fine Arts Center, Irvine, CA (2024); Anthony Gallery, Chicago, IL (2024); and Sow & Tailor, Hong Kong, CN (2023). Franzen lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Image: **Christian Franzen**, *Like the End of a Beautiful Play*, 2024, acrylic on linen, 50 x 40 x 1 1/2 in (127 x 101.6 x 3.8 cm)

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