

MIDORI SATO “Floating Drapery”

April 2 – 30, 2022 CLOSED: Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Tomio Koyama Gallery is pleased to present Midori Sato's solo exhibition “Floating Drapery.” The exhibition features a selection of the artist's new paintings including an ambitious large-scale work measuring over two-meters.

【About Sato's Works: Contemporary Elegance and Dynamic Painting Compositions】

Midori Sato's works are characterized by their depictions of closets packed full of colorful clothes, an array of high-heeled shoes on shelves, carpets, vivid assortments of flowers, and fruit. Sato expresses sincere fondness for such motifs that many likely consider beautiful, and while depicting her yearning and affection in a straightforward manner, presents them as contemporary manifestations of elegance and worlds of fantasy in her paintings through the overlaying of vibrant colors and rich imagination.

However, it can be said that the appeal of Sato's work lies not only in its beautifully figurative aspect, but also the bold brushstrokes that dynamically unfold across the surface of the large canvas, as well as the remarkable composition of her paintings.

“It is true that the motifs Sato depicts tend to have widespread appeal. Yet upon closer observation, one comes to realize that her brushstrokes are bold and ferocious, reminiscent of those of abstract expressionism. The essence of Sato's work may indeed be misunderstood if only judging by their first impression. While seemingly presenting themselves as that which appeals to the masses, a contradictory sense of prettiness and wildness in fact coexist. This is precisely, the foremost attraction of Sato's work.”

(Masaki Higuchi, “Midori Sato: Eternal Moment,” Hanatsubaki Column, Shiseido, December 2016)

Another interesting aspect is that while Sato depicts the same motifs repeatedly, the way in which she paints them changes depending on her mindset and the emotions she feels from what she sees at each particular moment.

“The closets are not those that belong to any specific person, but are my very own imagination. I want people who view my paintings to perceive them in a more wide and open manner. They didn't have to look like closets, and it didn't matter if they were simply seen as a succession of beautiful colors. For this reason, there was a time in which my work had ventured more towards the abstract. (...) Four years ago I had resided in Paris for a year on the Overseas Study by Young Artists program supported by POLA Art Foundation. During that time I often took walks around the city of Paris, and gained a lot of inspiration from window displays of the various clothing boutiques that lined its streets. I took photographs of them and made them into paintings. It was my first experience painting actual scenes that I had seen in my work, and thus signified a slight return to more figurative depiction.”

(Midori Sato Interview: “Artist Midori Sato's Philosophy on Closets: Opening the Doors of One's Own Means of Expression,” GINZA, Magazine House Ltd., July 2021)

Furthermore, during her stay in Paris, Sato had actively engaged in producing works featuring flowers. Having depicted motifs such as bouquets and rose gardens, she eventually began to introduce flowers to her paintings of closets.

Drawing inspiration from the plants growing in the garden of her own home, last year in 2021, Sato presented a series of works depicting closets in which flowers were entwined with the hangers and clothes hanging within. In the new works presented on this occasion, the dresses are inspired by the artist's actual visit to a dahlia garden, and the emotions that were evoked when witnessing its petals that appeared to overlap upon one

another like the folds of a dress, their decorative nature as they prettily grow like a string of pompoms, and the sight of them gently swaying in the breeze. Furthermore, while Sato had used acrylics as her sole matiere in her early paintings, she eventually started combining acrylics with oil, as well as producing paintings entirely in oil paint.

While drawing attraction through distinct and characteristic motifs, Sato continues to capture the interest of those who view her work through her fresh expressions. In her new works, she gives rise to the fun and joy of thinking about how the closets and flowers are transforming.

The unlikely world of her work that permeates with originality has been well received by numerous collectors, art professionals, businesses, and creators.

A significant characteristic of Sato's practice is the wide range of her creative endeavors that include her 2019 solo exhibition "Diaphanous petals" at POLA Museum of Art, her participation on the 2015 group exhibition "Embracing for Painting –Minako Abe, Midori Sato, and Manika Nagare exhibition—" at Shiseido Gallery, as well as releasing a make-up kit in collaboration with the cosmetics brand "RMK" in 2017, and her work being featured on the cover of the 2013 novel *Last Winter, We Parted* (Gentosha Inc.) by the Akutagawa Prize-winning author Fuminori Nakamura.

【About the New Works: Floating Dresses, Flowers, and Closets as Liberation of One's Heart and Mind】

In the new series of work "Floating Dahlias Closet," the closet itself finally rises up into the air.

Sato herself states as follows with regards to this exhibition.

"I envision the closet itself extending outdoors, further rising up into the sky. (...) That is, I feel that it reflects a desire for freedom, or like the liberation of one's heart and mind of sorts.

The image I have is that of the dresses inspired by the flowers and the actual flowers themselves floating up into the air, followed by the actual closet itself. Recently I've come to develop an interest in the sky. The color of the sky and its clouds are constantly changing. Each and every moment of change is never the same, and although seemingly graspable, can never indeed be captured. I developed a desire to try and make this something of my own. (...) I also became truly interested in nature such as flowers, plants, clouds, and the sky. Serving as sources of inspiration, there is an endless array of things that I can gain from them."

The word "drapery" featured in the title of this exhibition, refers to a "cloth draped gracefully in folds, as is observed in Greek sculpture and paintings." The "Goddess Series" which the artist has worked on since 2019, begins with paintings that draw associations between mannequins adorned in dresses and Greek goddess sculptures, culminating in her new work "Cloud Dress and Rose" that depicts a dress inspired by the sky and clouds, upon which she has painted a rose that she is especially attached to.

Also influenced by the flower-studded translucent dresses worn by the goddesses depicted in Botticelli's work, Sato has begun to turn her attention not only to the closet and the nature and conditions of its space, but also to the beauty of the movement of the dress cloth itself.

In the works, clothes and flowers float and flutter in the wind, while clouds drift by. Viewers will likely feel as if being enveloped by a pleasant spring breeze.

The way the same motifs come to give rise to different expressions over time can indeed be likened to an epic tale in which characters variously grow and develop. Since the works are born through a mutual relationship with one another due to the artist working on multiple pieces simultaneously, the entire exhibition appears to unfold as if turning the pages of a story.

Sato started painting closets beginning with her small personal closet in the small dormitory room in France that she had stayed at as a foreign exchange student during her third year of university. Sato mentions that through this particular experience of living alone, she had felt as if her own world had been established for the first time. The small closet that is the beginning of the artist's very own world, blossoms and flutters up into the sky. The closet is a part of her mental landscape, and is a testimony of her personal growth, as well as the changes she has experienced.

Motifs that have fascinated people since ancient times from the graceful folds in clothing, to flowers, the sky, and clouds, through Sato's hands, are presented as new expressions in our contemporary context. We welcome viewers to take this opportunity to savor the world of Sato's work that permeates with an air of spring-like lightheartedness and rich elegance.