



Xu Ning “Starting with a Tear – HISTORY”

February 4 – March 4, 2023 CLOSED: Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Tomio Koyama Gallery is pleased to present “Starting with a Tear – HISTORY,” a solo exhibition of works by Xu Ning which centers on a showcasing of eight new paintings.

【Xu Ning’ s New Works: Paintings Full of Emotion, Where Delicateness and Dynamism Coalesce 】

Xu’s works are conceived by her painstaking precision of painting brushstroke by brushstroke upon a large white canvas with a fine-point brush, while also enabling the coexistence of fortuity created through the accidental splashing and dripping of paint. The vividness, dynamism, and intensity of her colors overwhelm the viewer, and her sincere belief in life, abundant love for nature, and emotion permeate her work. In her practice, Xu has been greatly influenced by her encounters and discoveries of matters across a diverse variety of genres, such as the ancient philosophies of her native China, the reality of Netherlandish painting, the decor and innovation of contemporary fashion, the beauty of nature, and the ephemerality of life, giving rise to a unique and unparalleled appeal.

Xu Ning titled the exhibition “Starting with a Tear – HISTORY,” and expresses her thoughts on this as follows.

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When I first saw the expressions of the paint dripping down the canvas, they reminded me of human tears.

What do tears mean to me?

Most human beings are born into this world with a cry for life as they take their very first breath. There are various scenes in our lifetime in which we find ourselves shedding tears as an expression of our emotions, such as when we feel joy, sadness, frustration, or when we are moved or experience happiness.

Even the final moments of our lives end amidst the tears of others.

I believe that tears are that which accompany one’s life from beginning to end.

In the West, there is the beautiful tale of Adam and Eve that tells the story of the birth of humankind.

I cannot help but expand my imagination.

Should Adam weep, his tears would transform the roses. Eve’s tears are an expression of love. That love at times appeals to one’s heart like a surging wave. At times it ambles into one’s heart like murmuring ripples of water. Tears bend, flow straight, and are shed together with the days. They flow further beyond into the distant future through the people encountered and the path one has paved.

We naturally shed tears when we feel despair, pain or sorrow. We also shed tears when we are emotionally moved by beautiful hope, unbreakable faith, and a sense of warmth inexpressible in words.

To speak figuratively, to live is to love. Shedding tears is an expression of that love. That love is like the final rose blooming earnestly in the summer, on the verge of enervation but eager and determined.

The sight of such people emerges before my eyes.

It moves forward and forward while remembering the light of spring, summer breeze, autumn moon, and winter snow.

For me, the tears in these paintings are also wishes for people’s happiness, hope, faith, and sublimity.

I chose the title of these works in the belief that the history of mankind is the culmination of the brief lives of countless people who have lived in this way.

I made this the title of the exhibition in hopes to inform people of the subtle thoughts and emotions I have instilled in these works.

Xu Ning

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Xu’s paintings at first glance appear like abstract expressions, yet in many places incorporate the “eyes” of figures in Western paintings of the 14th to 16th centuries which she paints in an elaborate manner, while the flowing lines also represent flowers, butterflies, birds, hands, and so forth. The “hand” in particular is one of the artist’s most important motifs, as it is connected to the heart and represents the mind, as in the Chinese saying, “ten fingers and ten hearts.” From the various people who appear in her work, to the tears that accompany emotions, and the layers of time and history, we welcome viewers to take this opportunity to engage with the new and fascinating world of Xu Ning’s work.