



Charlotte Dumas “Ao”

March 10 – April 8, 2023 CLOSED: Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Tomio Koyama Gallery is pleased to present leading Dutch photographer and artist Charlotte Dumas’ solo exhibition “Ao 青” at our two galleries in Roppongi and Tennoz.

For more than 20 years, Dumas has turned her attention to animals that maintain a close and intimate relationship with humans, such as horses and rescue dogs. Her works, which capture the coexistence of animals and humans in contemporary society, as well as the beauty of ephemeral moments within life, have received high international acclaim.

Dumas has frequently visited Japan, and in 2014, initiated an on-going project to photograph the native horses of Japan.

For “Bezoar by Charlotte Dumas” held at GINZA MAISON HERMÈS Le Forum in 2020, comprised of photographs, films, objects, and an installation of indigo-dyed fabric, Dumas attracted significant attention for the refreshingly vibrant world of her works that unfolded in the form of a cohesive spatial experience.

This marks the artist’s second solo exhibition at our gallery since her previous five-day show in 2018.

【On “Ao 青” and the exhibited works】

In Roppongi, Dumas will present the photographic series “Ao 青” (2016-2021), which will be shown for the first time in Japan, along with a selection of new ink drawings. The exhibition at Tennoz will consist of a screening of her latest video work “Ao 青” (2022).

“Ao 青” is a series of works that Dumas has been photographing since 2015 that capture the native horses of Yonaguni Island and Okinawa, as well as young girls amidst the landscape (also including photographs taken in Britany during the period in which the artist was unable to visit Japan due to the pandemic).

There is a tragic history and myth concerning the island of Yonaguni, where in the eighteenth century, to reduce the population, many pregnant women were forced to leap across a deep rocky crevice. Today, the island has a declining population and many of its buildings now stand empty. The small slender horses continue to roam its steep coasts, forever tied to the island.

Dumas mentions how her engagement in this project had led her to form an attachment and develop various emotions towards the location itself, and even sense the spiritual and atmospheric energy surrounding the island. The horse appears to roam freely across the land, yet harbors an air of lonesomeness. The girl finds kinship with the horse, wanders along the coast, and explores the island on her dancing shoes and bare feet. Dumas states that the “common thread between children and animals is that they live one hundred percent in the present.” The girl, who appears to embody the powers of nature itself, becomes an “eye” through which the island is depicted.

“Ao 青” is the final instalment of a trilogy of films following “SHIO 潮” (2018) and “Yorishiro 依代” (2020) which were presented at GINZA MAISON HERMÈS Le Forum, and thus also illustrates the passage of time through the growth of the girl that serves as their protagonist.

【“Humans are unable to live alone” -The nature of human existence that is observed through looking at animals】

The project in Yonaguni Island, Okinawa, gave birth to collaborations with other artists through creative encounters such as with textile artist Yuko Kitta, also served as an opportunity to generate a curious sense of fluidity in the world of Dumas’ work.

“Animals have at times appeared in myths and have been deified, and have also been used for practical purposes such as labour. I believe that turning one’s gaze to animals, including the relationships that change throughout history, is indeed congruous with what it means to observe humans.”

(“My Zero Story” Vol. 8: Charlotte Dumas, Hanatsubaki, 2022)

Humans are unable to live alone. This exhibition presents beautiful scenes that appear to have manifested through moments of experiencing the flow of time and connection with others.

We hope visitors will take this valuable opportunity to witness the remarkable worlds that unfold through Dumas’ work.