



Naoki Koide “JONICONIAN: Relics of an Unborn Kingdom”

May 20 - June 17, 2023 CLOSED: Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Tomio Koyama Gallery is pleased to present Naoki Koide's solo exhibition, “JONICONIAN: Relics of an Unborn Kingdom.” Koide's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery since his previous show ten years ago comprises solely of new works centering on ceramic sculptures, drawings, as well as a selection of two-dimensional mixed media works that demonstrate new frontiers for the artist.

【Perspectives on family members and familiar people expressed in a humorous and mysterious way】

Naoki Koide was born in Aichi prefecture in 1968. He graduated from Tokyo Zokei University in 1992, and currently lives and works in Chiba. Koide, whose practice centered on sculptures using materials such as FRP and wood, and photographic works in the early stages of his career, started making works with ceramics in 2010 during his artist residency at the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park. As he himself states, “the time of firing (ceramics) that enables one of take a moment to stop and reflect, had best corresponded to my feelings,” it is a method that he has continued to work with to this day.

In addition, Koide's works and exhibitions to date have dealt with significant turning points in his own personal history, such as the death of his mother, his relationship with his partner, his wedding, moving to a new home, and the birth of his child. In his expressions, Koide transforms his family as well as familiar people and creatures into somewhat humorous, dream-like beings that appear to transcend both time and space, and even the very world in which we live. While they incite memories that we as viewers may have in common, they harbor a mystical sense of endearment and joy, reflecting the artist's warm gaze towards those in his surroundings.

【Relics of an Unborn Kingdom—A magnificent world of work that is an honest expression of the artist's mind and thoughts】

“JONICONIAN” is a term coined by Koide to refer to an era in time that does not actually exist. “Relics of an Unborn Kingdom” reflects a world of fiction and fantasy that cannot be seen or does not have to be seen by anyone but oneself. In his new works for this exhibition, Koide has come to honestly express the nature of his own mind and thoughts without worrying about the presence or eyes of others. Koide had initially envisioned an “urn” of sorts in producing his “sacred relics” reminiscent of large towers. However, as he continued to work with his hands and engage in a dialogue with his own feelings, the works gradually expanded in scale to take on forms akin to towers and ruins, or something similar to a king or queen chess piece. Here, the underlying theme of “family” is sublimated into abstract forms, that is, “vessels for the souls of one's family” that are neither descriptive nor direct and cannot be associated with a particular place or time.

What served as an impetus for such works are the sessions that Koide has been holding over the past few years for children with developmental difficulties at Kodomo Mirai En “Art Room.” Koide mentions that seeing children freely create works with the colors, shapes, and movements that they wish with an attitude that pays no regard for being understood by others, had enable him to rid himself of his own biases and greatly expand the scope of his work.

In addition, he came to regard the “burdens and constraints” in production as an important element of his practice. Large works are divided into parts and are each fabricated using different methods, such as firing the center section in a wood-fired kiln while the other parts are fired in a gas kiln. Furthermore, different colors and impressions are added to a single object through use of glazes in addition to base paints, thus instilling the works with the reason and persuasiveness worthy of its burdens, allowing things that by far transcend the artist's own limits to manifest. Despite the extensive amount of time and effort that is put into the creation of these works, what they indeed reflect are the painful yet exciting joys of expression, as well as the artist's major determination to sincerely engage with his own thoughts and feelings and free himself from the eyes of others.

A magnificent and delightful world unlike ever seen before, which transcends the biases of thought, is conceived as a result of physical burdens and constraints. Such a world is full of mysterious charm that amuses and captivates us viewers. Although there is no such thing as the “JONICONIAN” era, who is to say that it did not really exist? While encouraging such contemplations, Koide's works stimulate our imagination and introduces a new perspective as if venturing into parallel world.