



Rika Mianmitani “Silent Play”

October 28 – November 18, 2023 CLOSED: Sun, Mon, National Holidays

Tomio Koyama Gallery Roppongi is pleased to present Rika Minamitani’s solo exhibition, “Silent Play.” This marks the artist’s first solo presentation with the gallery, and features a selection of oil paintings of various scales, centering on her latest works. Through her work, Minamitani pursues experiments in imagery that drift back and forth between the possibilities and limitations of the medium of painting. Minamitani’s paintings are constructed through various contrasts that unfold upon the canvas, such as contrasting color combinations, uniform applications of paint and areas with pronounced brushstrokes, and the abbreviation and detailed depiction of motifs. The figures and animals portrayed in these works, with their richly expressive demeanor and distinct gestures, manifest with a sense of spiritedness and effervescence.

What further distinguishes Minamitani’s paintings is their dynamic compositions that make bold use of white space. In her group portraits depicting several figures together, their interlocking poses and gazes serve to both guide and mislead the viewer’s gaze. On the other hand, in compositions in which single motifs fill the entire picture plane, the painted figures and animals appear to have been “tactfully inserted” as if restricted to, or in response to, the linear edges of the canvas itself.

Another recent development also observed in the works presented in this exhibition, is the presence of line drawings akin to tattoos and patterns on the skin and clothing of the characters. These line drawings, which the artist refers to as “roughly rendered lines,” add a new layer to the painted surfaces of color, thereby subverting any feeling of denseness, while at the same time creating a nested structure in which the figures depicted on the canvas are given a new drawing within the painting.

The title of this exhibition, “Silent Play,” derives from *Moku-geki*, the Japanese word for pantomime, that is, a play solely performed through gestures and body movements. The artist, having learned of this translation, drew connections between the figures in her paintings and a pantomime she had seen in the past where performers “were pretending to do something,” and at the same time, also discovered a common link to the nature of painting as a silent, wordless object.

The motifs of figures and animals, which at first glance seemingly appear to represent fragments of a story or some character or another, may only be a part of the artist’s experiments in imagery, as informed by her belief that “figures are nothing but vessels for colors and forms.” The figurative motifs in Minamitani’s work are indeed inseparably interrelated with the visual effects distinct to her paintings. This sense of balance establishes a unique visual language that the artist refers to as “autonomous paintings,” which are neither a means of conveying a particular meaning nor solely a pursuit of visual effects. We welcome viewers to take this opportunity to enjoy the artist’s latest creations.

Rika Minamitani was born in 1998 in Kanagawa, Japan. She graduated with a BFA in Oil Painting from Tama Art University in 2021, and completed her MFA in Oil Painting at the Tokyo University of the Arts Graduate School of Fine Art in 2023. She currently lives and works in Ibaraki, Japan. Major awards include being selected as a finalist for the 2022 CAF Award, and her receipt of the Tomio Koyama Award at ART AWARD TOKYO MARUNOUCHI 2023.