

Tomio Koyama Gallery is pleased to present, *Itinerary, non?*, a solo exhibition of works by Tam Ochiai. The exhibition marks the artist's first solo presentation in Tokyo in nine years since his show, *spies are only revealed when they get caught* at WATARIUM Museum in 2010, and as his sixth solo exhibition with Tomio Koyama Gallery since his previous showing at the gallery's Kyoto space in 2012, features a series of new painting works.

Tam Ochiai's practice encompasses a range of different media from drawing, painting, three-dimensional works, videos, performance, book production, to writing poetry and text. His works unearth hidden meanings and contingencies in the various things that exist within the world such as names, feline animals, words, cities, and even death itself, presenting complex and unfettered significations that resonate and enrich the imagination. Ochiai's very own process of association is made manifest as forms through the linkage and engagement of colors and lines.

#### [About the Exhibition]

A total of 12 painting works, one representing each month of the year, are presented in the exhibition. Each month is depicted with a different background color, upon which the names of holidays and national holidays celebrated that month in various countries across the world are painted along with the names of their cities. The works thus serve as an "itinerary," inviting viewers to travel the cities of the globe through their respective holidays.

These suggested itineraries, that attempt to travel the world within a short span of time, suggest highly tiresome journeys that, in reality, would be impossible to fulfill. However, if it were possible to actually realize these trips, we could constantly be experiencing a "holiday or national holiday" wherever we may be. Through limited elements of "words" and "colors," the works are able to convey not only various seasonal imageries, the cities of the world and their respective holidays, but also describe an ever expanding distant horizon and collapsing spans of time.

What had served as the initial idea for this work surrounding the theme of holidays was a drawing Ochiai presented in New York in 2008. Derived from the concept of "things that are a surplus (noise)" such as "a cat's tail" and "mistakes" that he had contemplated within his practice at the time, Ochiai observed that "holidays" could also be considered as a "surplus" or "additional thing."

This painting series had originally gained its formalistic inspiration from "L'Oeil cacodylate," a work composed of various words and text created by French painter Francis Picabia in 1921 (translating to the "Cacodylic Eye" in English, Picabia had begun this painting while he was sick in

bed with an eye infection, inviting his friends who came in to visit to add messages and texts to a large canvas). Ochiai continued to develop this series over many years, beginning its production in 2012, temporarily suspending the project in 2014 with the release of the corresponding publication *Itinerary, non?* from French publisher onestar press, and later resuming work from around 2017.

Ochiai originally began producing the series based on the idea of an impossible yet somewhat refreshing journey as depicted in *Mount Analogue*, the masterpiece of French surrealist literature by René Daumal. However, when resuming production in 2017, he came to recognize that there are new ways of perceiving the work due to the numerous changes within society that have occurred over time. First was the realization that holidays have a deep relationship to religion and war, as could be seen in celebratory holidays of national independence. Furthermore, Ochiai discovered their connection to immigration and racial issues that arise when entering and leaving the various cities of the world each time one moves or travels. Even the eye that is depicted in the paintings is reminiscent of security eye (facial) recognition systems recently introduced at U.S. immigration, thus indicating new narratives emerging within the work subconsciously to the intentions of the artist.

#### [Conceptual Drawings: The World of Ochiai's Work]

All of Ochiai's means of expression could be described as "conceptual drawings." Whether it may be through words, paintings, or video, he transcribes the thoughts and images within his mind into works in a "manner like making a drawing," enabling various sorts of time to emerge.

In the work "broken camera" at his solo exhibition at the WATARIUM Museum, the video footage projected is played through a broken camera, each time becoming subjected to a different effect. What viewers presently witness is an accumulation of past video logs that cover the entire screen, as a result conveying an interplay of more than two different passages of time. In his architectural drawing series, although the buildings themselves remained unchanged, the narrative focused on how the contents housed inside had been subject to change over time. The series of paintings exhibited at Tomio Koyama Gallery Kyoto had through them were painted with bleach on fabric, thereby conveying the very length of time (seconds) taken for their production. In his 2008 book note on the drawing (published by team gallery), Ochiai evokes various manners of time and imagery to manifest through "conceptual drawings" consisting of phrases such as "the line from a flannel coffee filter dripping" and "the moment when the sunlight is reflected in a mirror".

Art critic Midori Matsui critiques Ochiai's work as follows:

*“The world of Ochiai’s work is conceived in a manner akin to quantum theory in the sense that things serve to formulate fluid and organic networks through the assembly and disassembly of fragments.”*

(Midori Matsui, “Tam Ochiai Solo Exhibition: *spies are only revealed when they get caught* – Installation as a Fluid and Organic Network,” LIBERTINES MAGAZINE, July Issue, 2010.)

While engaging in a means of expression full of lightheartedness and wit, Ochiai appears to be in pursuit of a fundamental world that is open to countless possibilities, transcending both time and dimension. It is an attempt to reproduce the seemingly exhausted medium of “painting” through the conversion of everyday perspectives, and could be discerned as seeking the extreme point at which today’s art is established. Through looking at the works and re-experiencing his thoughts, we as viewers are gradually liberated from fixed stereotypical concepts, in the end realizing that what we essentially need is a sense of humor and the flexibility to engage with everyday life with more care and attention.

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