ALMINE RECH

Keita Morimoto
Aperto 19: what has escaped us

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Keita Morimoto (1990-) immigrated to Canada at the age of 16, and has exhibited his works mostly in Canada and elsewhere overseas. Morimoto chose to study classical painting techniques, and his unique depictions of contemporary urban landscapes leave a strong impression on the viewer. He has a strong interest in how "light," which has been an important issue in painting since the modern era, is represented, and his depictions of artificial light from street lamps, billboards, and vending machines imbue his paintings with a lyrical atmosphere. Morimoto also creates collages from photographs of people and landscapes that have been taken separately, before proceeding to reconstruct them with paint on the canvas, an approach that confers a kind of anonymity onto these people and landscapes. The spaces and people depicted in these works occupy a kind of boundary between fiction and reality: while it seems as if they might exist everywhere, the reality is that they cannot be found anywhere. Viewers are drawn into these works, which leave some room for their memory and imagination. Morimoto's work follows in the lineage of Edward Hopper and Peter Doig, artists that he has openly stated as influences. It represents an attempt to demonstrate how the contemporary city can be portrayed. Faced with these seemingly familiar landscapes and people, where reality and fiction blur into each other, we superimpose our own emotions and memories onto them. Through Morimoto's works, this exhibition will provide an opportunity for each viewer to reassess their own reality and everyday routine, and to reconsider the power of painting as a format of artistic expression.

Everyday landscapes of contemporary Japan depicted with classical techniques

In his first year of college, Keita Morimoto encountered the paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn, one of the leading proponents of Baroque painting who was also known as the "Magician of Light." Later, at university, he went on to study classical painting techniques. Morimoto uses techniques reminiscent of Baroque painting to depict contemporary landscapes. The viewer is left with the sensation that the boundary between reality and fiction has been undermined in the midst of all this visual beauty.

The mysterious world of Keita Morimoto's paintings

For example, a young man standing in a modern 2 district of a city that comes alive at night with fast food restaurants, parking lots, vending machines, and more. The illumination coming from the street lamps and stores and the lights from the vending machines bring out the shadows of these people. The ubiquitous Japanese urban landscape evokes universal themes and an invitation to a deeper humanity. Viewers are encouraged to engage in a dialogue with their inner selves, as if reading a novel, as these scenes seem to have a special story to tell.

Scenery that can be found anywhere and nowhere

The motifs of Morimoto's works are created from actual cityscapes he has shot and collages of people he has extracted from photos he has taken of people he knows. According to the artist, he seeks to incorporate a degree of randomness into this selection process. The resulting landscapes depict the loneliness of contemporary youth and reveal scenes of places that seem to be everywhere, but are in fact nowhere to be found.

Young Japanese artist winning global acclaim

Morimoto’s works were exhibited at Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Fair Tokyo in March this year, where they attracted much attention. He also held a solo exhibition entitled 'To Nowhere and Back' at Almine Rech in New York from March to April, and is scheduled to hold a solo exhibition at Kunsthal n in Copenhagen in August. In addition, he is involved in a corporate creative project that United Arrows has been organizing since 2024 as a way of communicating with the next generation, where kabuki actor Sennosuke Kataoka will appear in paintings inspired by the theme of light wearing the brand’s clothing. As one of Japan’s most popular young artists, there is much excitement surrounding Morimoto’s future practice and activities.