ALMINE RECH

Keita Morimoto
Quiet Light

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The first time you stand in front of Keita Morimoto's paintings, you're struck by something truly special – a mood that resonates deep in your gut. We've all experienced that feeling of remembering something specific from our lives when hearing a certain piece of music or unexpectedly encountering a familiar scent. We're pulled back to that exact moment and the feeling we had in a situation many years ago. The sensation arises in our bodies, just as vivid and real as it felt back then. One might say it's the closest we get to a time machine.

Something similar happens when experiencing Keita Morimoto's works. This particular mood isn't necessarily tied to a specific time or experience, and yet a familiar feeling stirs in the body – just as intense as when music pulls you back. It becomes a physical presence, where you suddenly feel something beyond words, but which is undeniably real.

To truly experience this, the works must be seen in person – and ideally, given time enough to let them envelop you. Printed reproductions do not do them justice, nor can they convey the vulnerability found in each piece.

That's why it feels especially meaningful to present Keita Morimoto in Denmark for the first time. Despite the physical distance, there is a kinship between our cultures. Both Japan and Denmark share a sensitivity to light, an appreciation for silence, and an aesthetic that finds beauty in the simple and understated.

Morimoto's cityscapes are painted with countless tiny strokes, dissolving into abstract chaos when viewed up close, yet settling into an almost perfectly photographic stillness when seen from a distance. A mysterious effect that suspends time. In a single breath, something emerges and something disappears. Dissolved into the surroundings. Nearly erased. Yet enough is left behind for us to navigate. For absence lingers as a presence within us. As an atmosphere. As portraits of loneliness. Our loneliness.

When we are shown a picture, we often orient ourselves by looking for something we can recognise. A place, a situation. 'I've been there'. 'I've never been there.' 'I've tried that, I haven't tried that.' 'Would like to – don't care to.'

We rarely place ourselves emotionally in the scene. But that is precisely what Keita Morimoto wants us to do – to step into the landscape of feelings.

The exhibition 'Quiet Light' consists of urban scenes. In the glow of vending machines and shop windows, nameless people step onto the stage. At first figures, then characters, then figures again. They hover between states and forms: concrete and symbolic, action and atmosphere. Alone. Together.

Other people surrounded by the pulse of the city. Caught in its lights. Right there, in the artificial glow, they stand before us. And suddenly, we are with them. In an entirely different place.

'Quiet Light' speaks about us, revolving around a central paradox of modern life: the dual desire to be oneself and the need to be seen.

We live and breathe to ‘find ourselves’ amidst a tangle of opinions, behaviours and consumption patterns. To be unique is the goal. Yet we shop from the same shelves, see the same things, say the same things. Granted, we may be for or against. But so are countless others. The burden of belonging grows heavier the more we lean into shared rituals. Or the more we recoil from them. A matter only of degrees.

We are not unique. We are never alone. Aloneness does not exist. But loneliness does. And that, too, we share. At any rate, a strange connection between the Japanese and the Danish can be found here. We are both coastal cultures, finely attuned to the shifting rhythms of light, schooled in restraint. Our aesthetics are subtle and subdued. Our architecture is orderly. We trust the system. We tread carefully. And beneath the surface lies a yearning, a restlessness, that erupts in art, in ritual, in drinking, in suicide, in attempts at escape. In Japan, they have a concept called Johatsu: a form of formalised disappearance from the life you have lived so far in order to re-emerge in another context. A new life. But what would that resolve? Personally, I suspect the risk of relapse is overwhelming.

And so here we are again. In the same place. Far apart. Danes, Japanese, and others. Bound together by loneliness. We need to speak of it, and that is why Quiet Light is not merely an exhibition, but an inquiry into a strange paradox: that absence can be a presence.

So what do we do now? Can we find a community, right there, in the quiet light?