

The main themes in my work are to find the pictorial aspects in the environment where I am.

Over the years I have started to paint larger portraits. The larger size allows me to paint more freely than before. This series begins within the general framework of “portraying a face”. There are times when the face resembles someone else, times when it is closer to me, and times when it oscillates between genders. As I paint, I look for the moment for the portrait to take on a personality and emerge on the canvas. I paint dogs and cats in much the same way. Sometimes I start with a cat and it turns out to be a dog or some other creature. The image in my head does not always agree with the image on the canvas. The difference in the image of the subject shows me that there is another way that I can take.

I focus on nature and outdoors, because I spent a lot of time in such landscapes in my childhood. Not the so-called great nature, but the abandoned woods and vacant land of underdevelopment. The small nature in the urban space has formed the landscape of my primary experience. When I paint something, there is always a memory of this landscape behind me. Gazing into the bushes, I would find small creatures without trying to see them. To see the deepest part of the painting, I look for the shapes I know. When I paint a detail, I recall the same emotions from that moment. I work on several paintings at the same time and as I do so, each piece starts to have its own role. I like to see the effect of the relationship between the viewer and the seen, and that of the multiple paintings.

My schema of work, the process of making each work is different. Through a single subject, I wait for its lines, shapes and colours to be placed in a two-dimensional space, outside of the image that the subject has. The transition of the image while I paint a piece is very important for me. I try to see the existence of the subject in a situation between the image and the image, in a state of uncertainty.

I set up my studio in 2014 in Yokosuka, a coastal area near Tokyo. I take a train from my house to get there. It is a renovated old house and the size is not very big. I work there six days a week, five or six hours a day. I take Sundays off completely to spend time with my family. The image of the town of Yokosuka is reflected in my work. The beach and the roadside palm trees have become repeated motifs, too. There are many overlaps between this place and the town I used to live in. Since I have been here I feel closer to the landscape and I have become more conscious of the fact that I am painting in this place.

About how I want the spectators and the viewers to receive and understand my work, there are many things that I have not quite established yet, but I believe that I am painting the view that I want to stay there and look at. The world is fast for me, so keeping a certain distance from it is more like an instinct that I had from the beginning before I became an artist. I chose to paint as a way to keep a place for myself. So I hope to paint in such a way that the scenery will reach the people who need it. For me as a spectator, what I am looking for in art is the potential to extend the concept of beauty.

When I have a show and I receive a floor plan of the venue, the first thing I do is to imagine which wall I want to hang

the biggest painting on, and its size. A large work requires a lot of planning and I am always thinking about it. It is a special feeling to exhibit in a place where you have never been to before. I try to imagine the place as much as I can and then I become able to paint as if I know the country. Acting something as a painter is one of the things I have learnt by showing my works in various places.

My reference, influence, inspirations come from the snapshots of *Daido Moriyama* and *Takuma Nakahira*. I get the impression that you just come across to the scene without the presence of the photographer. If this were reality, we would not gaze at them so attentively. People try to look at them carefully only when they are depicted in a painting or a photograph.

My inspirations are photographers, but I have always been drawing, since I was little, and even though there was a time when I was away from painting, my family and I thought that I would become a painter. My father was also a painter. So in that sense, I could say that I was a painter from the beginning. I did not start to look at photography until much later after I left school. I would not say that I saw that many, but it was a time when I became interested in the Japanese landscapes that were taken by Japanese photographers. Although I could learn enough about technique from painters, as an artist, I was trying to find the answer to the fundamental question of what and how to paint it in a few photographers. I felt a sense of nostalgia and déjà vu, even though the photographs were taken long before I was born. I wanted to capture this scene in a painting. However, unlike photography, the subject itself always lies in a state of change in the accumulation of time in the act of painting. I have come to believe that it is natural to make paintings of this change in the subject, and my own change with the subject.

About if art should be committed to something political, whether to see political meaning in artwork or not, may depend more on awareness of the issues that the viewers hold. I also see artworks in that way as an audience and I think it is very important to see them upon understanding the context behind the work. However, to me, I am mostly occupied with dealing with issues about colours and shapes on canvas as I paint and it is the most I can do.

I have never been good at putting my thoughts into words, the best way to explain what I am trying to do was to show it in pictures. It is only recently that I have become able to convey my ideas to the viewers, but I had kept working on it for a long time, even when there was no such understanding. I have more and more opportunities to be introduced abroad, and I would like to continue to devote myself to giving universality to the sensibility that I have cultivated since I was born and raised in Japan.

Painting is a very solitary process, but I am very happy to have the time to do it. I also know the joy of connecting with the people that support in the form of an exhibition by making works. Last year, I did an exhibition with a painter in Japan, where we painted a single picture together. It taught me so much about how to approach things in a way that I had never thought of before. Painting requires time and patience. At the moment I am trying to work more deeply into what I ought to be doing.

Crève-cœur

Daphné Mookherjee, Yu Nishimura,
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