

Gallery Moryta owner: Morita Shunichiro-san

At the start of “Monogatari no aru omise”, we first visited Gallery Moryta on the Keyaki Street, which celebrates its 16th anniversary this year. We spoke with its owner, Morita Shunichiro, about the existence of art in everyday life. Various authors from Morita's collection were introduced to us, as well as a recommendation of a select few. (Composition+writing: Kosaka Akiko)

Direct touch and feeling

Morita: The problem in the art world is, that the gap between the people involved with art and the information that is commonly distributed, is too big. If we compare the number of people at the Iwasaki Chihiro Exhibition, not even a fraction of the contemporary art scene comes. Is there a curator, who really wants to do the Iwasaki Chihiro exhibition? I follow my own intuition and truth in regards to art and therefore want to freely go where the vector of my thoughts leads me.



Oi: Japan lagging behind in terms of art is surely a reaction to the countries over-emphasis on economy.

Morita: The spirit of Europa, especially Vienna, 100 years ago can be a reference. At that time, the answer they found was “art”. At that time, after the Industrial Revolution, the economy could've been given priority, but peoples hearts were sick. There was an initiative to grand hopes and dreams by turning peoples eyes to art and their inner selves. In other words, they believed that art could breath new life into society. In case of today's Japan, do politicians and bureaucrats have the sense to take that direction as well?

Morita-san spoke enthusiastically to look at artists living during the same era.

Morita: You have to create drama between the living artist and the people, who watch him. Current artists say, that the demand for paintings in the United States and Europe is at around 80%. In Japan, even the people that buy art, don't look at art as "art". I feel like the difference between art and interior design isn't clear either. Art should have the power to completely change your surroundings, not harmonize with the furniture. Picasso and Matisse weren't famous from the start, but they were brought up in Europe. That's why whether it's Spain or Tokyo, I always try to get artists to come here, so people get a chance to meet them in person. They want to shake and be shaken by their existence. That's what I want to emphasize.

The same space, the same time, experience and feel with your own body. Rather than relying on other people's evaluations, feel and realize it for yourself. These are Morita-san's values.

Your own dream, shared values

They began to talk about how one's own sensibility and responsibility are opposite each other and between them a "story" is born, which is proof that you live as yourself.

Oi: I think the keyword here is "story". After all, I think people, who can't make their own stories, can't feel the meaning of life and withdrawal and suicide among young people are increasing. The truth is, every person has a small story, but they can't see it.

Morita: Right, "stories". You have to make a story inside yourself. Now young people commit mass suicide all over the internet. I think it's not because society is harsh, but because they don't have a dream and can't make their own "story".

In the end, you have to depart from your habitual every day life and have the courage to step forward into a new world. They can't interact well with other people either. So they withdraw. But how much encouragement can you get, if you only know one person? It is important to share values. The space of the gallery emits a strong sense of the value: "artwork". Therefore, people with similar values come. You can have the same dream because you share values. Such people come together around a large table in the gallery.



Just recently a male student from Kyushu University came in; his parents and teachers have high hopes for him, but he doesn't have a dream. At that time, I met a dance troupe from Israel. I think that dancing clearly made him feel alive. Afterwards he paused his studies at the university, took up a part-time job for 3 months and went to Israel this January. He works hard and stoically and will be performing in the UK soon. It would be nonsense to tell such a child to commit suicide. So now, everyone is standardized and applies themselves to something, but it's scary. We also had standardization in our generation, but since there were adults around with their own values, I think the situation is quite different.

What is formed between the painting and yourself

Follow your dreams and follow your own path. They town should liven up, as such people increase. That's why Oi-san has such an interest in hearing stories from owners, who have created their own, original brands. There's a power that “pulls in and resonates with self-made people”.

Morita: Because they can't believe in themselves, they rely on so called major brands. None of the people, who come to us look like “brands” at first glance. The thing is, many children, who wear such brands usually also have a lot of paintings. For those, who hone their inner selves and think about how to live their lives beautifully, outward appearance isn't that important. Since I'm talking to kids like that here, I feel a strange gap, when going to Tenjin. They are still young and turn to make-up to play someone that isn't them. I want them to focus on refining their inner selves.

And eventually art. Paintings don't tell stories, the story emerges between the painting and oneself. But those “stories“ don't come from the paintings themselves, they are born, when you yourself change. Since many people have little innate images, they solely rely on the one-way traffic

that is TV. Watching TV is passive. To truly see pictures, you have to be active. So, the more you mature, the more you are able to enjoy them. That's why I want the inner self to shine through paintings.

Oi: And there often is nobody around to tell you that your own “story“ is important.

Morita: After all, art comes from being different from other people. But in today's society being different isn't something that is respected, it rather has a tendency to being feared. It shows that society is sick.

Oi: Words like “winner, loser“ are becoming mainstream. When you read a book concerning those developments and think about it, we will probably have an increasingly disparate society in the future. However, the important thing is not to aim upwards, but to try and improve ourselves every day. Unless everyone recognizes these values, suicides will continue to rise.

For that purpose, I think art is very good. Art is something that enriches the mind, a spiritual thing, that goes beyond income and social status. If you have a 100% competitive society, everything will end, when you loose, but hopefully we will become a society, that finds meaning in culture and art. As we mature, the American-model society will reach it's limits.

Morita: In the end, this country is too American. Currently, Michel Doneda, a musician who worked with Saito Toru returned to his home country France and is now disturbing the kids with his music playing in front of Mc Donalds or KFC. What we take for granted and don't care about in Japan, will be perceived as quite frustrating in other countries with a firm originality.

Being different from other people is frightening, that's why people immediately fall in step with everyone else. But, comparing yourself to people, nothing comes from restricting yourself. That's why you should look at yourself more confidently.

Art in everyday life

At the moment Morita-san is interested in publishing his homepage as a book. One day he would like to make books on “women, who love and buy paintings“ and “visitors of a gallery“.

Morita: When did the works of the artist appear in the magazine “Arne“ and were displayed in the lobby and rooms of the Seven Day Hotel in Kochi?

Oi: “Arne“ is a private magazin published by Ohashi Ayumi alone, but I don't think it's that expensive. There are nearly 100 copies of every issue, even though we are a small shop; it's a small scandal. It seems to make a mockery of what the major media accumulated. Usually there are few common magazines that sell 100 copies. Even magazines that do not have barcodes or don't go through distributor can sell depending on their content.

Morita: Currently I want to give the opportunity at the gallery to interact with art in casual everyday life. The same is true for the Kawasaki Ichokua Clinic and Café de Kaffa on the Keyaki Street, they promote and exhibit our artists. I want to create chances to encounter art in your daily life. Also, packages and interior design was made for a candy shop in Kumamoto, as well as stickers for restaurant dressing and independent labels for CDs. Since I asked for the dressing painting, I have worked with Horikoshi Chiaki for over 10 years. Hirokoshi, who lives in Spain, is not only a painter, but also a flamenco singer. From that connection we created a label company called Aficion Record. In the singing world the Agujeta Family records are sold among those, who know them in their hometown Madrid. They are a well known family in Spain. It is not exaggerated to say that the from

the outside they might look small, but the head of the household is really honest. We make their music available on their homepage and ship it to other countries.



Love for yourself and your philosophy

It takes courage to go your own way. You understand that it's difficult to shine in your own way in a world like this. But what matters is taking the first step.

Oi: On that note, the number of collectors was much higher after the war and is now rapidly decreasing.

Morita: The people, who love art naturally grew up in an artistic environment. It would be nice, if we could just always hear good music and beautiful paintings were easy to see or something like that, but there are few places in Japan currently, where that is possible. Wherever you go, the places are barely different from game centres and Pachinkos.

For example, the packaging work for the aforementioned candy shop wasn't a deal from the beginning. When I was introduced to their wonderful manager, we talked in a cafe, that was on the second floor at that time. The manager asked me: "What do you think of this place?", to which I replied straight away "I do not feel at home". Because for me a real comfortable place, is always improved by a painting or a sculpture. However, there is a wall cloth, but it's designed in a way that it's easy overlooked with a cheap design and there is also a plastic flower full of dust. In my opinion, when you are arranging false flowers, that's like equating the sweets to falsehood. Consumers in this country can be very strict... to give it more originality and by "originality" I mean art, I cleaned up the whole wall with a carpenter I knew and repainted it; it took until the early morning to do renovate

it.



Kawasaki Ichokua Clinic isn't really in a good location. Nonetheless, the focus on art shows, that the director has good taste. The qualities of a doctor are more about his sense of surroundings than where he went to university or how old he is. To be fond of art and to understand the sensation of paintings means, to examine the feelings and mentality of living humans. They are also thinking about giving the books in the hospital new covers. There is no way that such a doctor won't give good medical examinations. Can't Japanese people rely on their sensitivity and intuition when seeing and choosing people? After all, when you eventually chose a doctor, would you want to eat with that person? You should see a doctor with such a way of thinking; same goes for a bookstore. Art should not be in a gallery. Even if you are a doctor or a bookstore owner, there should be artists and professionals coming to you. So what you really need, is love for what you do.

I fell that in Books Kubrik Oi-san, as well as the staff really love books. It's a mutual happiness to tell people about what you fell in love with.

Improve your own measurement

The number of shops that do not feel passion for what they live for is surging in the world and large standardized stores are increasing as well. Oi-san says in times like these, private owners need to work hard.

Morita: A private owner can express his own feelings more freely. Today you can communicate your personal thoughts and feelings more direct via the internet.

Oi: That's why businesses that are lying to larger businesses are becoming more vulnerable. In an age, where Arne is well received, I feel potential. From now on products without individual marks will gather attention.

Morita: I feel great about the current situation around paintings, there are already voice of adults and young people, who want to stop lying to themselves. If you can't afford even 1 Yen for an artwork, there are works for 1 Mio. Yen, that are cheaper. So, do you leave the judgement of value up to a company or do you choose with your own eyes. Right now there are few people, who make their own rules, it's all up to others and the media. I think, if you go by your own ruler, your values will change a lot. Even in regards to music, once you know the real thing, live events who are done without a certain care, will become unacceptable to you. You could call that growth.

Oi: I was also doing art related work in Osaka, but there are too few opportunities in Japan to get in touch with good art or to compare materials. For example, if you listen to jazz even a little, you can compare levels and personal tastes, but since I don't really know because I never listened to it properly. I think we have to somehow manage a situation where there are so overwhelmingly few opportunities.

Morita: I think it's possible to catch top notch jazz and exhibitions, if aren't just habitually living your everyday life, but live to meet a new tomorrow that's different from yesterday. That's why confluence is not accidental, but inevitable. Wearing the same things, making the same things and eating the same things as other people, won't create art. But now, society has begun to realize the value of originality and being different from other people. Therefore it is important to explore a heterogeneous world, different from your current self and develop the practise of confronting your new self. There are comparatively more women coming to this gallery and they are always full of curiosity. The gallery opens the door to a new world. I think it will be an important place for people, who are in search of a certain something.

The act of buying a painting

Few have the experience of buying a painting you like. However, women seem to be more decisive than men.

Oi: Women are more sensitive. There is also a trend of “slow life“ emerging.

Morita: The act of buying a painting is an element in today's Japan, that is considered an expensive hobby, most people have never bought a painting. But sometimes there comes a moment, where you want to make it yours and don't want it to be taken by others. Then, the energy that honestly jumps into your soul is stronger in women. Another thing I think is great about women is, that they quit their jobs or university to buy paintings. Men don't have the same feeling. Men are getting weaker. Here you can really see the essential difference in men and women.

Oi: I feel that women are carnal, while men are social.

Morita: The feeling of touching a painting or experiencing music is carnal and bestial. If your social side is stronger, for example you can't go to a live event because you have to work tomorrow or essentially the sensation of a person, who believes and relies on intuition and instinct is really different from a person, who is accustomed to society. I want my instinctual intuition to be awakened by art. Art tends to be considered something lofty, but that doesn't have to be the case. I think it can have a more familiar role. After all, art is something that lets you feel something even deeper as you enter a yet unknown world.

(end)

I want to be able to integrate art into everyday life. By doing so it can improve your own sensitivity and bring out the courage to trust your own instincts. The act of buying a painting can have such a primitive meaning. Morita-san will continue to promote various art, artists and artistic life through various approaches. In case you haven't been to the gallery yet, try going to one freely and casually. When you sit across from a stranger at an 119cm wide table or loiter in a space full of paintings, what do you feel? Meeting a new self that sprouts in your heart is the greatest pleasure.

