

## **Fiction and Fact: On the Occasion of Kazuteru Torigoe's Solo Exhibition**

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November 10, 2015, New York. On that day, the main sale room of Christie's was filled with a strange feverish atmosphere. The bid for "Lying Nude" (1917-1918) by Amedeo Clemente Modigliani (1884-1920), a representative painter of the Ecole de Paris, fetched approximately 21 billion yen. The winning bidder was Liu Yi-jian, a self-proclaimed "dirtbag" and owner of the spacious Long Art Museum, which was renovated from a coal unloading facility. He is known as a man of great ambition who started out as a taxi driver, worked his way up to street vendor, and then made his millions by investing in stocks and real estate.

At the age of 21, Modigliani left his hometown of Livorno, a port town in northern Italy, and moved to Montparnasse, Paris, with dreams and hopes. However, his works were not well received, and he became addicted to alcohol and drugs, which only worsened his chronic disease of tuberculosis. A Polish art dealer, Leopold Zborowski (1889~1932), was so concerned that he suggested that Modigliani paint nudes. The result was a series of 22 nudes with melancholy almond eyes and peach-colored skin (various theories exist). His only one man show was held at the Berthe Weil Gallery on December 3, 1917. However, the exhibition was raided by the police for offending public order and morals, and the exhibition was over after only one day.

In poverty and despair, Modigliani died of tuberculous meningitis after only 35 years of life. The next day, his lover Jeanne Hebuterne (1898-1920), who was carrying his child, threw herself from the apartment where they lived. She was 22 years old. After his death, the price of his works rose, perhaps due in part to the irony of his dramatic life, and with the release of the film "The Lights of Montparnasse" (1958), the artist and his lover became a legend, creating a huge boom around the world.

In recent years, Kazuteru Torigoe has been developing an abstract expression that seems to wrestle wildly with the canvas. His works are accompanied by furious brush strokes that seem to shatter all the deceptions that lurk in the world. The "X" symbols that appear from time to time are reminiscent not only of negation and incorrect answers, but also of the

“close” and “butsu” symbols of Ayatsuko, which seal off the passage between this world and the other world, and the “X” symbol of the alphabet, which represents the unknown. The artist himself once told me that he was inspired by the crossing of light. What it is exactly, is left to the viewer. However, the title of his exhibition, “DO CHANGE WITH ART” (2021), seems to suggest a “social distance” against the ever-widening economic disparity, the new Corona virus, gun control, various gender inequalities, and other issues that are dividing the world, and that we, who have chosen to turn a blind eye, need to wake up. I can’t help but think that the “social distance” is a way of turning on those of us who have chosen to turn a blind eye.

Torigoe returns to his roots in this solo exhibition, once again tackling figurative works. The theme is “nude. As of 2022, the evolution of advanced technologies such as “AR (Augmented Reality)”, “VR (Virtual Reality)”, and “XR (Cross Reality)”, which has further evolved, has blurred the boundary between “virtual = imaginary” and “reality = real”. The boundary between “virtual = imaginary” and “real = actual” has become extremely blurred. The “virtual=false” and “real=real” boundaries have become extremely blurred. The popularity of NFT (non-fiat tokens) using blockchain, the core technology of crypto assets, has soared to a maximum price of approximately 7.5 billion yen (Beeple “Everydays-The First 5000 Days”, 2021). Torigoe’s “flesh and blood” nudes are similar to those of Edouard Manet (1832-1883), who heralded the arrival of “modernity” by depicting prostitutes, while previously using nudes as an excuse to depict goddesses, The nude nude, which had previously been an excursion into the nude goddess, is considered to be confronting the “incarnation/incarnation” on display, as in the case of “Olympia” (1863) by Edouard Manet (1832~1883), which heralded the arrival of “modernity” by depicting prostitutes.

Since the invention of photography, paintings have lost their functions of “recording” and “propagation,” but with the development and spread of smartphones and the Internet, even photography has changed its role from “recording what was happening in the past” to “sharing what is happening now. In defiance of such a world situation, Torigoe has continued to work in a foolish manner to discover the truth of the world in his paintings, which at first glance may seem outdated.

This exhibition follows in the footsteps of Modigliani and consists entirely of 22 nudes. Modigliani slurped down a bottle of absinthe, which was called the devil's wine, and put the last of his strength into the canvas to depict the emotions of Eros (sex/life) and Thanatos (fear of death). What do Torigoe's emotionally pulsating nude works, which reference Modigliani's works, really appeal to us in this age of virtual world?

We look forward to his "DO CHANGE WITH PAINTING."

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