



Taka Ishii

Gallery

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Rei Naito “breath”

Taka Ishii Gallery Roppongi: Feb 15 – Mar 29, 2025

Taka Ishii Gallery Kyobashi: Mar 1 – 29, 2025

Opening reception: Saturday, Feb 15, 17:00 – 19:00

Taka Ishii Gallery is pleased to present Rei Naito’s solo exhibition “breath” from Saturday, February 15 to Saturday, March 29. The exhibition will open at Taka Ishii Gallery Roppongi, expand to the gallery’s Kyobashi location, and then travel to Oslo.

I decided at the outset: I would not try to paint a picture, or to create a work, but wait only for the colors to manifest themselves. I prayed that, when the moment came to touch the paper, my mind, hands, and fingers would act as one — not so much as me, but as that which makes a human. When colors emerged, would I be able to gaze upon them with amazement and joy? I had only this in my mind.

Rei Naito, July 2023

From the exhibition catalog *breath* published by Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München

The *color beginning/breath* series featured in this exhibition started in 2020 with *color beginning*, which explored the human unconscious. It was inspired by the pure wonder and joy that stirs in the heart at the moment when paint is placed on paper and color, analogous to life, appears. The following year, this series was shown in the solo exhibition *breath* at MtK Contemporary Art in Kyoto. In 2023, the series evolved into an exhibition of the same name at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung Munich, in which sculptural works and paintings created as homages to life resonated as a single breath. During the development of this exhibition, the artist realized that a “longing for the earth” is intrinsic to human nature, and embraced painting landscapes, which she had previously resisted. In 2024, at *Rei Naito: come and live – go and live*, held concurrently at the Tokyo National Museum and Ginza Maison Hermès Le Forum, Naito’s *color beginning/breath* paintings expanded into a space reflecting humanity that precedes the “I,” deep within the unconscious. Inspired in part by encounters with clay objects from Japan’s prehistoric Jomon period, they also evoked the countless lives that have departed from this world over billions of years.

“Naito’s changeful dialog shifts from diptych to diptych. The artist constantly modifies creative decisions as though she were moving through unknown terrain. In view of the comparison with diary entries, one might think of images reflecting a certain mood. But this idea misses its mark. Because, in the end, Naito has no images in mind when she makes her compositional decisions. As unforced as her drawn investigations and abstract motifs do become over time, she adheres to an essential artistic plea: If only I could see nature just as it is, and not as I, a human, make it.”

Dr. Michael Hering, Director of Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München

From the interview on *color beginning/breath*, August 2024

Stay with me, release me:

I realized that I was distancing myself from form, which is closely tied to individual will, as if pushing these things away, or running away. I was drawing closer to the unconscious. Only then did I sense countless people appearing before me.

Rei Naito, January 2025

Positioning herself at a point removed from form, Naito explores moments when mind, hands, fingers, paper, paint, water, and brush become one. Her painting media shift and go through cycles: brushes of various shapes and sizes, spoons, paper, canvas, flannel, paint tubes, paper towels, tissue paper, and even branches. The new media she adopted for this exhibition have awakened physical and mental instincts that transcend human will. They liberate her and the countless lives dwelling in the unconscious, guiding her toward painting as a human endeavor and, ultimately, toward the essence of human nature.

During preparations for this exhibition, Naito began to perceive the white surfaces of the paintings as “matrix” spaces. This realization forms the foundation of paintings in which the placement of color reveals the air and light within them, as if the surface were generating phenomena akin to those in her spatial works. These paintings, in turn, form a single space with her sculptural works comprising water, waterways, and mirrors, which explore the indivisibility of life and death. The works reveal a world in which everything around us – objects, people, animals, plants, air, light – and the departed and the unborn interweave in close relationships inseparable from our own life (breath).

We invite you to experience this space created by an artist whose heart embraces life and breath as they expand across inner and outer realms, assuming myriad forms and dimensions in a world of infinite color.

Rei Naito was born in 1961 in Hiroshima. Currently lives and works in Tokyo. In 1985, she graduated from the Musashino Art University, College of Art and Design, Visual Communication Design. She first came to public recognition with “One Place on The Earth”, at Sagacho Exhibit Space, Tokyo in 1991. This led to her being invited to install the same piece within the Japanese Pavilion at the 47th Venice Biennale in 1997. Her work asks us “Is our existence on the Earth a blessing in itself?”

Notable solo exhibitions include “Being Called”, Karmeliterkloster, Frankfurt am Main (1997); “Tout animal est dans le monde comme de l’eau à l’intérieur de l’eau”, The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Kanagawa (2009); “the emotion of belief”, Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, Tokyo (2014); “the emotion of belief”, The Japan Cultural Institute in Paris (2017); “Two Lives”, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2017); “on the bright Earth I see you”, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, Ibaraki (2018); “Mirror Creation”, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Ishikawa; “breath” Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, Munich (2023.); and “come and live – go and live”, Tokyo National Museum and Ginza Maison Hermès Le Forum, Tokyo (2024).

Permanent installations include “Being given” (Kinza, Art House Project, Naoshima, Kagawa, 2001), “Matrix” (Teshima Art Museum, Teshima, Kagawa, 2010).

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Tue-Sat 12:00 – 19:00 Closed on Sun, Mon, and National Holidays



Rei Naito

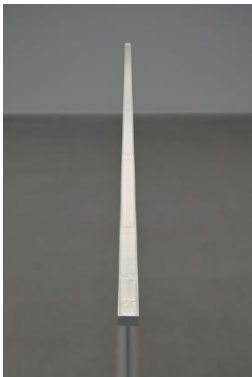
“matrix”, 2023

Water, glass jar

Installation view at The Museum of Modern Art, Hayama, Kanagawa

“NAITO Rei, Tout animal est dans le monde comme de l’eau à l’intérieur de l’eau, 2022.”

Photo: Naoya Hatakeyama



Rei Naito

“tama/anima (please breathe life into me)”, 2023

Water, painted stainless steel

Installation view at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich “breath.”

Photo: Naoya Hatakeyama