



The Sun, the Moon and a Pegasus Soar 2005 Mixed media work

Melody of the Firmament

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ARS VITA ESTA - VITA ARS ESTA - Ideal toward Art -

Koji Kinutani, Honorary Director

< ARS VITA ESTA - VITA ARS ESTA > This is my motto, meaning "art is life – life is art" in Latin.

I was born in the ancient town of Nara with the teachings of Shinto gods and Buddha as the landscape of my heart. Through studying in Italy, where the Renaissance masterpieces originated, I was blessed with ample stimulation and encounters as I witnessed the great works of genius artists. Furthermore, I was fascinated with their cheerful philosophy of appreciating life in this world of "eat, sing and love", developing my view of life that we should find paradise within our finite lifespan.

Tenku Art Museum presents < ARS VITA ESTA > this time, which is a concentration of my life philosophy. What lies at the source of this philosophy is the idea of "Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality", as the harmony of knowledge connecting east and west and wisdom of life. It is the teaching of the Vimalakirti Sutra, an ancient eastern philosophy which tells us that seemingly conflicting things such as life and death, good and evil, war and peace, man and woman, do not have separate existence but are all parts of one entity.

In fact, I had a chance to talk with Dr. Juichi Yamagiwa, the former president of Kyoto University the other day. We shared the opinion that what is needed today as a recommendation to survive this time of COVID-19 is not the dualism of western philosophy which divides things but the flexibility of eastern philosophy which finds a way out among the connection of things. In the ecology of gorillas, the expertise of Dr. Yamagiwa, there are clues to coexist with the virus in the natural environment or how continuously connecting life should be. I think new medical science or thoughts of people

may emerge from here, leading to a revelation toward salvation for human beings. The latest knowledge is alive in the old wisdom to live.

Originally affresco (fresco), my choice of painting method, is the oldest painting (murals) method of human beings, created by people in olden times along with limestone (calcium carbonate CaCO_3). Limestone seals carbon dioxide in the air within itself to develop conditions for human beings to survive. The bones of people, fish and animals are made of calcium carbonate, telling us that the mountains do not have a separate existence from animals and plants. Instead of separating oxygen from carbon dioxide, or water from oil, it is essential to recognize that each element is indispensable as a component in the natural world in order for life to exist. It can pave the way to reduce CO_2 in the global environment, the most crucial issue in modern society. We can clearly see that the oldest method has a direct connection with the latest wisdom.

I always think that the senses of beauty and values can change their shapes along with the passing of time, while the most important spirituality endures. The truth lies in the eternity among the trends. I want to care about the free expression to regarding the universe as ever-changing under the concept of "Non-Duality, being both sides of a coin" which encloses conflicting things such as tradition and innovation, or virtual and real, and give praise for the abundance of nature which accepts everything.

I want to integrate "beauty" of the east and the west. I want to offer dreams and hope to people, and above all, I want to keep sending blissful messages for people to realize their unlimited potential. This very ideal is my < ARS VITA ESTA - VITA ARS ESTA >.

Description of a work : Koji Kinutani and Kanako Kinutani “Shining Life”

Akio Takahashi, Curator / Educator of Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum

Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum held a special exhibition “A Link of Lives That Lights Up the Sky” from December 2020 to June 2021 with the main feature “Shining Life” which we introduce this time. This work was painted in the summer of 2017 at Meishukan, the birthplace of Koji Kinutani located in Ganriin-cho on the shore of Sarusawa Pond in Nara. The painting was a father-daughter collaboration with Kanako Kinutani, his second daughter and Japanese-style painter. On F200 linen canvas (2590 × 1940mm) finished with absorbent finishing material, Kinutani used his original mixed media of matte texture consisting of pigment and marble powder (sand base material) dissolved in animal glue and water, etc., while Kanako used glossy and clear Indian ink. It took only six days to work on the painting. The painting came about through the sensitivity of two artists with conflicting background and styles such as affresco and Japanese-style painting or colors and monochrome when they collide, connect and create harmony from time to time. Incidentally, the production process was featured in a documentary program of NHK BS Premium “Challenge! Shine of Life painted by father and his daughter - painters Koji and Kanako Kinutani -”, and was aired in 2017 for the first time. When the program was re-aired in March and October last year, our museum received numerous inquiries about “Shining Life”.

The purpose of the previous special exhibition was a song of praise to love for all living creatures, and wishes for them all to continue shining brightly. It was to offer encouragement and some strength as people felt uneasy in the days when the future was uncertain due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for motifs, Kinutani painted people, flowers, musical notes, etc. on the lower right, a child with a lily on the upper left and the sun on his back. The parents and the four children indicate the family Kinutani adores. As for the structure, the picture is colored with a dripping method to increase the degree of finish of the image, and the outlines adjust the whole picture. As Kinutani said, “Colors are a force for living, and our dearest wish for survival” in the aforementioned program. The beloved family is painted in brilliant colors as if praising the force of shining Life. The words “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” emerge from the mouth of the babe on its father’s arm, meaning conflicting concepts such as impermanence and eternity, reality and imagination, joy and sorrow, light and dark do not exist separately but as parts of a whole thing. It is the teaching of Vimalakirti Sutra that tells us the importance of seeing everything with both eyes and thus understand them.



Meishukan, the birthplace of Koji Kinutani located in Ganriin-cho on the shore of Sarusawa Pond in Nara



Kanako Kinutani « Mirror Tiger » 2020 Japanese paper, Indian ink, Mineral pigments
A piece with precise description of each hair and impressive eyes forcefully looking at us

Meanwhile, Kanako painted the crane, the elephant and the monkey on the upper part and the panda in the arm of a person in the lower right and the moon countering the sun. Ms. Kanako Kinutani creates Japanese-style paintings featuring gentle and tranquil painting style on the base of monochrome. She creates numerous realistic ink paintings, especially with the motif of animals. She finds brilliance and stories in the life of animals that makes living freshly alive for us or in their expressions in a single moment, and she paints them with tender care. In this work, Kanako depicts the peaceful and gentle expression of animals with minute care. However, possibly due to the different absorbency of canvas from the usual paper she uses for Japanese paintings, her touch is somewhat more ferocious compared with her usual delicate one, and we can see her brushwork unique to this painting. In addition, we can see experimental painting methods on her part that differ from her usual ones, such as rubbing crumpled newspaper on the elephant in the center of the painting to express the rough texture of its skin. We can assume that Kanako was often bewildered in this improvising collaborative painting work, as she usually works while calmly facing her deep inside. We can say it must have been very difficult to reach perfection as one piece when she faced a work that was changing every second while maintaining her own painting style at the same time. However, the trial and error of Kanako under such circumstances bore fruit, resulting in a final beautiful harmony of conflicting styles.

The notable point is the dragon, which came about as their joint work. The dragon is arranged as if he is dominating the whole picture. His clearly shaped head, both arms holding the sacred ball, and the outline from his back to tail were painted by Kinutani, while the scales with their three-dimensional effect were painted by Kanako. Kinutani first painted the general shape of the

dragon, and entrusted Kanako to finish it as if checking her competence. After taking over the work, Kanako gave it some thought and came up with a combining method of shading off, a method used in ink painting, using the mixed media of Kinutani instead of Indian ink. She finished the magnificent white dragon by painting the gentle scales. Kanako had intentionally emphasized a conflicting style against Kinutani to keep her own expressions. However, she was aware of the cohesiveness of the whole painting and aimed at fusion with the Kinutani style. As a result, the white dragon consisting of two painting methods brings a complementary harmony to the motif in the painting made of conflicting styles, as was intended by Kanako. The dragon shows his presence, the best in the painting. Is it possible for us to see the dragon, the creator of all things, bring “co-existence” to the lives that shine in various ways by gently enclosing motifs in the painting with an air of composure? In addition, the “co-existence” is nothing but practicing “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” the motto of Kinutani. In the interview while creating the painting, Kinutani himself talked of the condition of Kanako (condition of color harmony) and colors of Kinutani, how lines were used in Japanese paintings and western paintings, and pointed out the “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” in



Koji Kinutani and Kanako Kinutani « Shining Life » 2017 Mixed media, Mineral pigments, Whiting, Thin gold leaves

this painting. He entrusted the dragon to Kanako. Maybe he intended Kanako to realize this “co-existence”.

Anyway, various expressions born of the styles of each painter co-exist and shine in this “Shining Life”. Partially seen, they seem to be opposing and clashing with each other. But seen as a whole, I feel they are sublimated to a beautiful harmony by the spirit of “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” dwelling in the dragon and become “dazzling” unique to this piece. As I said at the beginning, this “Shining Life” is a painting loved by many people. I think this “dazzle” is the reason why this painting is so well regarded and is the biggest charm of this work.

It is because this work is sprinkled with “dazzles” formed by various painting methods (painting material, outline, colors, brushwork, etc.), motifs and messages, and each component is emitting light as a bright character on the common understanding of “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” without offsetting the others or being completely merged. That is why it looks like an elaborate “dazzle” of each sparkling character to the eyes of the viewers when they look at the whole painting, bringing diverse empathy and excitement. If I were to compare it to something, it would be the image of various tones in a concert piece played by multiple musical instruments, charming the audience. A beautiful concert requires a maestro who can see the big picture. In this piece, it is the spirit of “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” and the white dragon swelling in the painting.

When I watched the aforementioned documentary, which followed the six days of production, I could feel that the workplace was filled with tension. In the production within the limited short time, in addition to the power of the concentration, I do not think the painting could have made it to completion if it had not been for the harmony built on the deep trusting relationship as a father and a daughter. More than anything, I assume that the clash between the painters who have devoted their lives to art like < ARS VITA ESTA (art is life) > must have been fierce and hard beyond our imagination. That said, each of the diverse expressions emerging from the impact forcefully shines. The shining may appear to be dispersed, but when observing the whole painting with both eyes, it becomes a huge message in the same vector in the end, charming the audience. In this way, the viewers are captivated by the dazzling brightness of life, only possible because of the father and daughter with conflicting styles, and then realize the magnificent comprehensive perspective of “Dharma-Gate of Non-Duality” which summarizes them all.

Aiming for a museum as never before

Hirotaka Sakamoto, Director of Museum Project Office

Koji Kinutani says, "If you answer the same as others in painting, you are wrong". In arithmetic, it is a mistake if you do not have the same answer as others, for example, $1 + 1 = 2$. But in painting, $1 + 1$ can be 3, or 10, or even 100. He says such free imagination and originality is necessary in painting. Tenku Art Museum takes on a challenge of new measures, unlike conventional museums, based on his philosophy.

One of them is the "World's first dive into pictures! Powerful 3-D image experience", which has been a feature since the opening of the museum to enjoy works by Kinutani with 3-D images and sound. The sound travels to the exhibition rooms where viewers appreciate the paintings and 3-D works that



"Yumemuhuen" 3-D image to dive into pictures

In field trips, etc., we tell them at the beginning "You can talk and enjoy when watching 3-D, but you need to be quiet in the exhibition rooms" to start the program. Children express their individual feelings in words and their body movements through shouting "Wow, beautiful It's Mt. Fuji." or "Tears? The dragon is crying", while some try to reach out and touch as they watch 3-D. And in the exhibition rooms, they gaze at the works of Mt. Fuji and dragon that appear in 3-D. This can be also be true with adults. Carefully observing the actual works after viewing in 3-D enables them to affectionately appreciate them

because they have already experienced its outlook of the world even if they are seeing the painting for the first time. Currently the museum has evolved to provide two works in 3-D to experience them as more spectacular images; one is "Yumemuhuen (Infinite Dreams)" to travel Kinutani World since the opening of the museum, and the other is our new "Heiji no Ran (Heiji Rebellion)", a painting depicting civil war in the Heian era which was shown at Koji Kinutani Exhibition held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, in 2017.



"VR experience to connect with Koji Kinutani", a new experience style content started in 2020

In 2020, we started a new experience content "VR experience to connect with the painter" to provide an opportunity to contact with Koji Kinutani for the visitors when contact among people was restricted in the COVID-19 pandemic. All the visitors can virtually experience the thoughts of Koji Kinutani for the museum, an explanation of the works, and the production scene and spirit of Kinutani art in their trip from the atelier in the museum to his atelier in Tokyo. We reversely converted the COVID-19 pandemic to an opportunity to create a new experience.

Koji Kinutani Tenku Art Museum will keep offering a new way to enjoy art as the one and only museum of its type.

QR code



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<https://www.kinutani-tenku.jp>

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