

Keita Morimoto's first solo exhibition in Japan, 'After Dark', invites us into his "heterotopia" through controlled light paintings.



Keita Morimoto, *Bathing Light*, 2021

From November 20 to December 25, 2021, KOTARO NUKAGA, Tennoz is pleased to present 'After Dark,' a solo exhibition by Keita Morimoto. After 15 years in Canada, the artist has returned to Japan this year to unveil 17 new paintings at his first ever solo exhibition in his home country.

Keita Morimoto first began learning painting when he moved to Canada at the age of 16. He is particularly attracted to the techniques and compositions of classical painting, and by combining perfectly controlled expressions of light reminiscent of Baroque period paintings with motifs of everyday scenes from contemporary society, Morimoto forms an eclectic combination that allows him to open up his own original approach to realism. His ability to create beauty and mystique out of ordinary, unremarkable landscapes, together with his method of constructing personal narratives featuring anonymous protagonists, positions him within the lineage of magic realism represented by such artists as Edward Hopper and Peter Doig. At the same time, his dispassionate view of contemporary society introduces viewers to a brand new perspective.

Light is an element that has fascinated people such as Rembrandt throughout art history, and has often been as treated as mystical and religious. In the series of works shown in this exhibition, Morimoto expands upon this motif of "light" to include not only natural and sacred phenomena but also the light which attracts people in today's consumerist society, such as vending machines, fast food restaurants, and electric signs in parking lots, depicting our everyday experience of the 21st century. His nighttime scenes purposefully evade iconic symbols that could be used to identify them as specific locations. Overlooked corners within the blindingly bright Tokyo cityscape, local train stations with few passengers, and familiar hilltops that you swear you've seen before somewhere but can't remember where... Morimoto inserts

unidentifiable figures into these unremarkable places, and depicts them in controlled light. In this way, Morimoto shines a light on the transit points-- the "anonymous places"-- of our daily lives, and through the contrast of darkness and light, creates a "heterotopia," a place where we can temporarily escape from the real world. We, the viewers, are invited into this "heterotopia" that Morimoto has created, a place that looks familiar, a place that could be anywhere.

The concept of "heterotopia" was advocated by Michel Foucault, the 20th century French thinker, and is derived from the Greek "hetero = different" and "topia (tópos) = place," meaning "other place." Foucault was a philosopher who continuously contemplated "the difficulty of living" and the powers that cause such difficulty. Responding to the idea of "utopia" as a mythical, fictional location conceived to challenge reality, Foucault proposed the idea of the "heterotopia", a place that exists in reality but is absolutely different or 'other' to all other places, an "anti-place" that nullifies all other places from within. In order to challenge and resist the reality that makes living so difficult, Foucault believed it was necessary to build a "heterotopia" in the real world, rather than a utopia in an imaginary world.

"In today's society," says Morimoto, "many people suffer from the difficulty of living."

He believes that this is due to the fact that we unconsciously focus too much of our attention on values that have been defined outside of ourselves, especially in our current world, where social systems of mutual surveillance are continuously being created. Through painting, Morimoto attempts to delicately deviate from this "difficulty in living" in modern society.

The freedom to make our ordinary lives special, no matter how we may be deprived; through his works, Morimoto suggests that this freedom to determine our own way of being can never be taken away from us. We hold the power to weave our own unique stories and add color to our daily lives-- to create our own "heterotopias" out of our everyday surroundings-- and Morimoto's works remind us that it is up to us to decide how we interact with and face the world.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Keita Morimoto, 'After Dark'

November 20 (Sat) - December 25 (Sat), 2021

11:00-18:00 (Tue - Sat)

*Closed on Sun, Mon and Public Holidays

*Schedule and contents are subject to change at the request of the national and local governments.

VENUE

KOTARO NUKAGA, Tennoz

TERRADA Art Complex 3F, 1-33-10 Higashi-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 140-0002 Japan

Access : 8 minutes walk from Tokyo Waterfront Area Rapid Transit Rinkai Line "Tennoz Isle Station"

10 minutes walk from Tokyo Monorail Haneda Airport Line "Tennoz Isle Station"

8 minutes walk from Keikyu Main Line "Shinbanba Station"

ARTIST PROFILE

Keita Morimoto

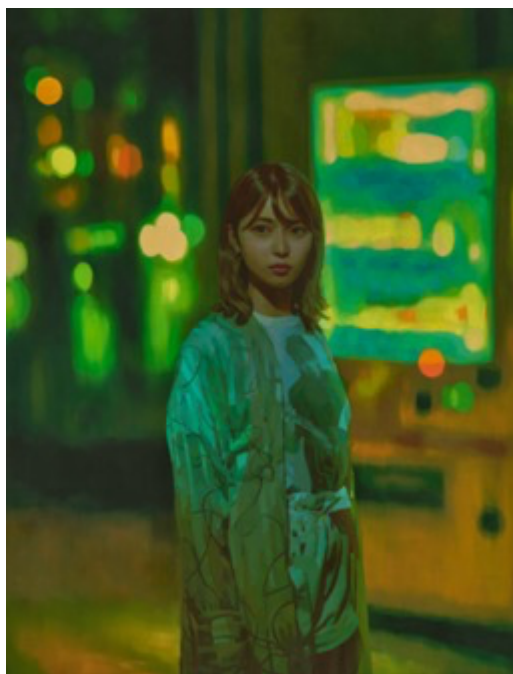


Born in Osaka in 1990, Morimoto immigrated to Canada in 2006 at the age of 16, and spent the following 16 years in Toronto before returning to Japan in 2021. He is currently based in Tokyo. He completed high school in Canada at Centennial Secondary School in Belleville, Ontario, and received his BFA from the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) in 2012. His work has been exhibited in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S., including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto Canada (MOCA) and the Nicholas Metivier Gallery in Toronto. Morimoto is best known for his paintings of Toronto cityscapes and inhabitants, which bring classical techniques into the present day and transform everyday scenes into extraordinary ones. Through his practice, Morimoto raises questions regarding the structural fragility of the visible real world and the true nature of the affluence that we hold necessary for survival.

WORKS



Keita Morimoto, *Last Train*, 2021



Keita Morimoto, *Night Walk*, 2021



Keita Morimoto, *After Light*, 2021

PRESS CONTACT

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