



Your, My, Story -Pink-, 2021. Oil on canvas. 150 x 150 cm. ©2021 ob/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin

OB
YOUR, MY, STORY

Opening reception Wednesday, November 3, 6-8pm
November 3 - December 23, 2021

Perrotin is pleased to present an exhibition by ob, a young member of the Kaiikai Kiki studio who has become known for her delicate, atmospheric paintings depicting girlhood in Japan. Drawing inspiration from her upbringing, the artist’s signature style references manga, anime, and video games, as well her fondness for Western paintings. In this new body of work, she asks a set of questions that challenge our conception of adolescence.

Born in 1992 in Kagoshima, and raised in Kyoto, ob is part of a generation that has carefully utilized social media to build spaces for both intimate social interaction as well as broader attention. In Japan, Social Networking Services (SNS) allow adolescents to experiment with ways of expressing themselves, and, for ob, SNS was an important platform

for artistic expression. Viewers would play a critical role for ob, as their evaluation determined the ranking and visibility of the artists presented – but, as most online platforms, it also made it easier to connect among artists and their supporters.

Interested in acrylic painting since junior high school, she debuted her practice at the age of 18, by organizing a virtual exhibition through the pictures sharing platform called pixiv. The exhibition was titled “wassyo!” which is an encouraging word used by Japanese revelers during traditional Japanese festivals, and by extension a word which is used to encourage and show solidarity with others. This first online gathering of young artists who had previously met only online proved both successful and inspirational, and ob went on to curate exhibitions in person, one of which Takashi Murakami attended at the 0000 Gallery in Kyoto.



Left: *Access*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 55 x 33.2 cm. ©2021 ob/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin



Right: *Lingering Scent*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 80 x 134 cm. ©2021 ob/Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Perrotin

Entering the exhibition at Perrotin, one is invited into ob's dream world, delineated in pastel colors, in which delicate figures seem to float against complexly structured backgrounds. The artist creates imaginary landscapes, sometimes reconstructed from actual ones, composed of manga-style flora, silky clouds that melt into the sky, and seemingly flat horizons, which altogether support these large-eyed, questioning creatures. ob has often referred to her creations as different versions of herself and her friends, as young persons "wandering through adolescence full of uncertainty" who are still unable to fully express their thoughts and dreams. As ob herself has said, "as I get older and face various decisions, ... different things will be gained or lost." However, the more unstable state of early adolescence is described by the artist as having a lot of potential, and a painting motif that allows her to expand her imagination. Their characteristic large, rounded eyes are often the darkest part of the painting, which is mostly characterised by pastel tones. ob has said that the eyes of her characters are "like a tunnel, or the moon...", leaving a sense of both fascinated curiosity and uncertainty. It then is up to the viewer to answer the question these enigmatic characters raise, allowing their imagination to create new stories.

While imbued with all seeing eyes, her characters are often devoid of a mouth. ob says that removing the mouth allows her characters to be neutral vessels, devoid of emotions that could be read in the expression, or even shape, of the mouth. Omitting speech and visible emotion, ob references the feminine condition of her imagined girls: they are eternal observers, not entirely at ease in expressing an opinion aloud, but registering all the details of their surroundings. Sometimes, the largest eyes incorporate entire landscapes – dreamscapes, perhaps, where it can be daytime or night-time, with mountains and valleys expanding within the depths of sea and sky. There is a darkness, a weariness that accompany some of the most brightly tinted works. These girls have seen a lot, whether in this world or in their own dreams, and what they are unable to tell us they communicate with their eyes. While parts of them will always be inaccessible to us, if only we can use our imagination to tune in enough to listen and decipher their message.

Are they inviting us closer, for a more intimate conversation, or are they asking us to question our own preconceived ideas? Or are they simply contemplating, absorbing all the details of the world in which they are preparing themselves to live in? Through these fixed and communicative gazes ob presents us with all the nuances of an adolescent heart. Her figures, always well-groomed and cared for, are lit with a gentle aura, creating an awareness of space, and melting into one another with a sense of softness. Ultimately, they are captivating us with an affectionate exchange, undisturbed of what we make of them, communicating something very close to love.

Ilaria Maria Sala

More information about the artist >>>