

Winter Garden: the Exploration of the Micropop Imagination in Contemporary Japanese Art

This exhibition attempts to explore the significant tendencies of contemporary Japanese art shared by the generation of young artists who were born between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, and emerged as professionals between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. In spite of the seeming variety of their artistic practices, this generation of artists shares certain attitudes and artistic principles: confronting the negative effects of globalization manifest in the disintegration of economy, the uniformity of life styles and destruction of local communities worldwide, this generation of artists seeks a unique way of survival by making the best of a disadvantageous situation by the use of modest and everyday materials, as well as by the deliberate adoption of a childlike spontaneity as a method.

Micropop, a word invented by Midori Matsui, critic and curator, indicates the methods of: 1) accumulating various fragments of information gained from individual experiences, without depending on dominant cultural discourses, in order to form unique aesthetics or ways of behavior, and 2) re-using preexisting, banal, everyday objects, outmoded fashions, or anonymous places, in a playful way that deviates from their utilitarian functions and social assumptions, in order to create situations or new games in which participants can find new opportunities for mutual communication or meaningful actions.

This idea, tested in the 2007 exhibition "The Door into Summer: The Age of Micropop", held at Art Tower Mito, reflected the moral and aesthetic struggles of the new artistic generation to transform the perception of the world through the small but inventive changes made on everyday objects, through the apt selection and rearrangement of details. The current exhibition explores both the continuity of this attitude and the expansion of its application by the artists who present a new awareness of the significance of the unconscious processes of the mind and body for the freer formation of images, as well as their increased need to gain an immediate and physical contact with the materiality of the living world.

The exhibition title, "Winter Garden", contains two opposite meanings. One literally indicates a "desolate garden in the winter time". But, understood as one phrase, "winter garden" signifies the hothouse. This coexistence of opposite meanings within a single expression embodies the central paradox of the exhibition. The "negative" meaning of the phrase represents the difficulty of contemporary life, as well as the

artists' confrontation with the unfavorable conditions of the time and their efforts to make the most of them. The image of a hothouse also suggests a space that, in spite of its small scale and enclosed artificial environment, nurtures various organisms—including plants, insects, birds, and above all, the perpetual activities of microbes within the soil—that constitute rich and diverse layers of life.

The exhibition ultimately presents the modest but flexible art forms that capture the fundamental activities of the human mind and body that liberate imagination from historically or culturally imposed limits. Such art works are responses of young Japanese artists to the discouraging conditions of their age, and they convey the hope of spiritual survival and effective reorganization of the living environment.

冬日花園：探索日本當代藝術的微波普想像

本展覽試圖探索六十年代至八十年代出生，並於九十年代至新千年初期嶄露頭角的那代青年藝術家所共同表現出的一些重要特質。儘管他們的藝術實踐看似各不相同，這一代藝術家所持有的某種態度和藝術原則是共通的：面對經濟崩潰所暴露出的全球化的負面影響、單一化的生活方式以及世界範圍內地域性社區的瓦解，這一代藝術家使用最謙卑平常的素材，並刻意採用一種充滿童趣的隨意性手法，充分利用劣勢條件，從而尋求一種獨特的生存之道。

藝術評論家、策展人松井碧所創的「微波普」一詞特指：一、不依賴主流文化語境，從個人經歷中積累信息的片段，從而形成獨特的美學或行為方式。二、對既存的、陳腐的、日常用品、過時潮物或無名場所以戲謔的方式進行再利用，使之脫離其實用主義功能和社會定義，從而制造新的情境或遊戲規則，使得參與者可以找到新的相互交流的機遇，或促使有意義的行動發生。

二零零七年在水戶藝術館舉辦的展覽「夏日之扉：微波普時代」對這一概念進行了驗證。展覽呈現了新一代藝術家如何通過對日常物件細微卻極具獨創性的改造，以及對細節的巧妙選擇和重組，實現世界觀的轉變，反映出他們在這一過程中所經歷的道德與美學上的掙扎。本次展覽將探索這一態度的延續，並進一步關注一些藝術家對其應用的擴展。這些藝術家意識到頭腦與身體的無意識過程在更自由的圖像構成中起到重要的作用，並愈發需要與現實世界的物質性進行及時的身體接觸。

展覽標題「冬日花園」包含兩層對立的含義。從字面上可理解為「寒冬中孤寂的花園」，同時作為詞組理解，還可以表達溫室的含義。一個詞匯中對立含義的

共存揭示了展覽的核心矛盾。標題的「負面」含義表現了藝術家艱難的生存現狀，以及面對不利條件所做出的努力。溫室的意象暗示著，即便是在狹小封閉的人造環境中，也可能培育出植物、昆蟲、鳥類等各類生物體，特別是土壤中通過微生物不分季節的耕耘形成的豐富且多樣性的自然系統。

總而言之，在「冬日花園」中展示的謙卑而靈活的藝術形式，捕捉了人類頭腦及身體的基本活動將想像力從歷史、文化框架的禁錮中解放的過程。這些藝術作品是年輕藝術家對於他們所生活的時代中不利的客觀條件所做出的回應，表達了他們精神不死的信念和對有效重組生存環境的期許。