

Atsushi Suwa | Painter

According to a book I read, when the left hemisphere of the brain which is responsible for language and logical thinking is damaged due to causes such as stroke and we are left with only the right hemisphere of the brain dominant in artistic sensitivity receptive to things like the resonance of music and moving images, we lose a sense of self and the distinction between inside and outside.

“I” can no longer recognize the borders that divide the physical body from its surroundings. Overcome by a sensation of liquid bleeding out into the world, one ceases to be an individual—a strange sensation where one does not know where one starts and where one ends, and where the outline of the body is obscured. The concept of boundary dissipates. Everything seems connected through a mutually complementary relationship. One is emancipated from anxiety. Full of euphoria, a sense of time is lost.

This state of ultimate stillness and calm which compares to Buddhist enlightenment is, as horrifying as it may seem, something that can happen in reality. However, the sense of omnipotence is rather one-sided. It is a sense of limitlessly expanding out into the world and yet, never gaining an understanding of the emotions of the other. If one were to come across yet another consciousness that has similarly lost a sense of boundary inching closer from beyond the horizons, masses of “his” consciousness and his history would flow into “me” with sudden force. These are the kinds of things Ataru Sato’s paintings evoke. In fact, he states:

“I want to become a painting and get inside you” (from a group exhibition titled “INSIDE” held at Palais de Tokyo in 2014)

Based on my memory of his past works, Sato’s method—his use of obsessive lines in pencil combined with collage—has been consistent. It has always been the same regardless of whether the output is in the form of a stage, a large space, or an installation. At this point in his career however, Sato’s work seems to be undergoing a change. Before, his works were characterized by either a large set of eyes, which had a highly strong presence in his images, or a spectrum of faces. However, judging from his new work which I saw still in its unfinished stages, this kind of distinct focal point has disappeared—what struck me was a sense of scattered awareness. His work, in which a sense of self is dissipating, is overflowing with detail, yet, it seems in a way to evade comprehension. I still have not fully grasped the imminent change that Sato is facing. However, I intend to continue following his work led by a sense of awe.

Translation: Nobuko Aiso (Art Translators Collective)