



DÉJÀ-MAIS-VU A Walk of Broken theater / 2020 © Akiko Ueda

Akiko Ueda

DÉJÀ-MAIS-VU

CENTRALE
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

lab

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Akiko Ueda

Akiko UEDA (born 1983, Kyoto, Japan) finished her Bachelor studies in painting at Musashino Art University Tokyo and obtained her Master's at the Académie royale des Beaux-arts in Brussels. In 2009 she received the Grand Prize of the 6th Haruhi Trienniale for her painting "Our World Could Be Sometimes a Big Bouquet". In the same year she was awarded the Tamayo Uemura Prize of the Shell Art Award. Two years later Ueda received the Ohara Museum of Art Prize at the VOCA 2011. In 2013, from her alma mater, Ueda received a scholarship for a 1-year long residency at Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. Ueda also participated in other artist-in-residency programs, notably ARKO 2012 at Ohara Art Museum in Kurashiki and Kitakata Yume Art Project in Fukushima. In 2018 Ueda received a 1-year long art scholarship from POLA ART FOUNDATION with which she decided to pursue her Master's Degree at the Académie royale des Beaux-arts in Brussels. She currently lives and works in Brussels.

<http://www.uedaakiko.com/>

Conversation between Akiko Ueda & Tania Nasielski

Audio recording of the 26.10.20 –
Spotify Link: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/4d0eZCIJ78jBRUiix2I3VG9>

T: Hello Akiko, how are you?

A: Hello Tania, I'm good and you?

T: I'm fine, thanks. Nice to see you.

A: Nice to see you as well.

T: We are here to talk about your project for CENTRALE.lab which is due to open at the end of November if all goes well.

A: Crossed fingers.

T: Yes, it is a strange situation at the moment, with the pandemic. But hopefully the show will take place sooner or later. So you have been living here for two years but you come from Japan. What is it that led you to decide to come to Brussels? What happened in your artistic practice that perhaps made you choose Brussels as a city to live and work in?

A: Well, I had already an artistic carrier in Japan after I graduated bachelor in university in 2006. And then in 2018, I got a scholarship which supports young artists during their research outside of Japan. I chose Brussels because of its historical grand master painters. Especially Pieter Brueghel the Elder and Jérôme Bosch.

T: Yes, you talk about Brueghel and Bosch, and indeed Bosch comes to mind when we look at some of your paintings. You paint and you draw. And there is quite an interesting relationship between your paintings and your drawings as you work from the one to the other and back like a to-and-fro process. Also, quite specifically in your work, you start with

the painting and then you extract the essential lines from it and you draw them. Which brings a diptych. Could you tell us a little bit about that working process?

A: My painting process begins by pressing paint directly on the canvas, without any plan made ahead. And then I start to observe the state of image as if it's a natural phenomenon on the canvas where I can find its mechanism and rules. So in this way, observation of the canvas state is a very significant process for me. It's like a conversation or developing communication between me and the canvas. This is why drawing helps me a lot in how I adapt what I have done on canvas and to rethink it. And then, I can find some new clues to develop on the canvas and rework it.

T: Yes, I remember once we were talking about your work and you spoke about ruminating which I thought was both quite funny and interesting as a way of processing things. Is that still something that you would say about your thinking process? Is it that rumination which brings the same elements from your paintings and drawings and then kind of transforms them?

A: Yes, the word of rumination and also the act of rumination are interesting. We try to trace or reduce something but every time the outcome tends to be something different. So through rumination, we see something similar as we saw before but we also see something new as a fresh thing. There is always a kind of metamorphosis during this process. This is why I'm fascinated by it. And also, cows have four stomachs and each one has its function to ruminate the food to make it proper nutrition. This idea is very attractive for me.

T: Yes, so the different stomachs of the cow could actually be somehow present in the project that you're working on now for CENTRALE.lab. We are going to show your work in a working process in the different spaces of the lab in a period of two and a half month. And so you'll be working on the two floors of CENTRALE.lab, including this very small room which is downstairs at the end of the space, which we spoke about. I thought it might be too small or with not enough light because it's somehow like a small cave. And you told me it was fine for you. So I'd like to hear more about this working space that interests you to work in as in the system of the cow where you have one space which is the stomach and the other which is maybe the intestine? or the second, or third, or fourth stomach? So what about that?

A : (laughter) Yes, when I saw this small space in the lab, that reminded me my own working space in my apartment. It's an underground space, there is no window, no natural light and it is kind of small and a very hidden place in the city. I feel that I would develop some intimate feeling which I need when I paint there. So I'm looking forward to working there. And also, the word 'painting' in English is actually great. It means 'painting' as a noun and 'painting' as an existence, like a final outcome. And on the upper floor, I'll work on the painting as a noun. I'll show finished works. But on the down floor, I'll show 'painting' as a verb which I'll work on during the time of the exhibition. This is why I like the structure of the space of CENTRALE.lab, it has layers, with a small cave.

T: Yes it has layers like in your work. So you're in action and while you're in action on the ground floor, the visitors will be seeing your work. This is also a scheme

which allows people to meet the artist and for you to meet the different kinds of public. And to engage in a conversation, which is on one hand, the conversation with the painting, and on the other hand perhaps also a conversation with the people who are coming to visit. They will see your top floor with 'painting' as noun and the floor below with you in action with 'painting' as a verb. Is that how you see this as well?

A : Yes being in CENTRALE.lab would be a very interactive experience as a creation process. So I would like to adapt this opportunity to see some visitors and being a little bit as a performative painter but not too much like a performer. I would work in a little different way from how I work in my own studio. Because it's literally an experiment project I guess.