

Naofumi MARUYAMA Interview  
2018.06 at his atelier

——Can you briefly explain your thoughts on the title of the exhibition, Lascaux and Weather?

I am using paints called Lascaux right now, and when I first bought the paints, I thought of the cave paintings in Lascaux because of their name. I thought it was interesting to think of, let's say, the distance between the paints that were used 20,000 years ago and the ready-made paints I am using now. There are two meanings, the fact I am using the paints called Lascaux and the distance to Lascaux.

Speaking of "weather", when I am painting, I don't really feel like I am painting. Instead, I feel like I am painting things around myself, things that connect to the center, things that take me into the painting. It can be said to my painting style as well because it is very important for me to have water between myself and my painting on which I apply water with a cotton cloth. The reason why I emphasized "weather" is that things look different under different weather conditions with rain, snow or sun. Just like that. It is not only about weather but also era or information; "weather" is not the direct object but something in between.

——Do you have emotional attachment towards Lascaux?

I feel like painting is in crisis right now. I think you can sell it as a product but its power as a fine art is devolving; however, there is the history of painting. Why do we paint? Why did we paint?

Apparently, the true meaning of those cave paintings like the ones in Lascaux have not been revealed. It seems like the paintings were made to have plenty of hunting game, but those paintings are located deep in the cave where there is no one to see them. People went in there using ropes and painted with torches or something similar. We have not been able to classify to whom those paintings were made. Maybe they are a type of prayer, but we just don't know.

If you are asking me why I am interested in the paintings in Lascaux, there might be two things: its aspect that makes me wonder why people painted as well as the current tendency implying painting is dying as a form of fine art.

——Do you think "you should do something as a painter" in relation to the current tendency implying painting is dying as a form of fine art.

I feel like I have to develop ways to read and interpret painting. Of course there are various ways of reading paintings, but there must be more ways to pull different possibilities or stories out of painting. When the time changes, the ways of reading paintings will also change. If we cannot really understand why we paint, I think we still have more options. I would like to interpret in my own ways.

——You apply water to your painting style. How does it affect your artistic practice?

When I paint with cotton clothes, I use water with acrylic paints since oil paints do not work. I did not like my brushstroke before but now I feel like I can be free as water spreads over my painting. It gives me a feeling of liberation as it spreads, but at the same time, if it spreads too much and overlaps with each other, I get very uncomfortable. I feel like water is ambivalent and it gives me freedom and restriction at the same time.

———In the current exhibition, you are using grey consistently. How do you describe your choice of this color?

The reason why I am using grey is somewhat accidental, but also I was organizing my thoughts to think about the role of water. And eventually, I have decided to leave colors on the side even though I usually use a lot of colors and believe it is one of my weapons. When you think of the color “grey,” it feels obviously not “black and white” which gives you a different impression from a monochromatic painting. If it is black and white, it feels symbolic, but if it is grey, it feels like it does not symbolize anything.

I am using the grey that is right in the middle of the greyscale of Lascaux paints for all of my paintings. In a way, it is similar to what I just said. It is not white nor black.

———Is there a relation between the time you are painting and the time that is flowing inside your painting?

I think there is. I was trying not to relate each other in the past and I thought there was no relation between the two different times. But I think there are a lot of connections between the two, and I think it is the way it should be. I could not forgive any of my failures before, but I can accept them now by coming up with possible solutions or considering them worthwhile for my artistic practice. When I was young, I used to think failure was absolutely no good.

As I became able to accept failure outside my painting, I started accepting failure in my painting. When you see a difference between this thought and this goal, I guess a failure becomes a real failure. Sometimes I wonder whether this thought is that strong. If you tweaked this thought a little bit, you would be able to get to this goal. Something like this happens a lot, but I cannot get away with this thought. I still have that kind of tendency, but overall I guess my practice has become more relaxed.