

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Leiko Ikemura, *Air*, 2020, tempera on canvas
100 x 90 cm | 39 1/3 x 35 1/2 in, M-20-17
Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Cologne Paris St. Moritz

LEIKO IKEMURA

a.ï.r.e

November 5, 2021 – January 29, 2022
Opening on Friday, November 5, 2021, 11 am– 8 pm
an ART COLOGNE 2021 event
The artist will be present.

Galerie Karsten Greve is delighted to present *LEIKO IKEMURA a.ï.r.e* in Cologne, a solo exhibition to coincide with the 2021 edition of ART COLOGNE. The collaboration between Leiko Ikemura and Galerie Karsten Greve began in 1987 with a solo show in the gallery's former Cologne exhibition space in Wallrafplatz. Since then, this exceptional artist's distinctive oeuvre which features painting, sculpture, drawing as well as photography, has consistently been presented at all gallery locations – Cologne, Paris, formerly Milan, and, since 1999, St. Moritz –in twenty solo exhibitions to date and regular accrochages.

The current exhibition marks a new phase in Leiko Ikemura's artistic work. Around twenty paintings from the past eight years, ten watercolors created in 2018, and photographic works from 2020 are on display. The focus of the exhibition, both in form and content, is on overcoming boundaries: "What I'm trying to do now," says the artist, "is to cross the border, to go into the picture, into the other world. ..." Leiko Ikemura's characteristic horizon paintings and cosmic landscapes, which run like a leitmotif through her work, are dissolved in the latest works, transforming into a new form of abstraction, opening up a freedom of imagination for the observer thanks to their depth.

The sources of Leiko Ikemura's artistic inspiration can be found, for instance, in the artist's curriculum vitae. She chose the Spanish exhibition title *a.ï.r.e* (air) as a reference to her initial situation as an artist in Spain, where she met the world's most famous painters and became acquainted with the medieval art heritage of the Iberian Peninsula. She first experimented with translucent tempera in Spain. Her deliberate choice of the "unprocessed" quality of jute or canvas as a painting support is part of her artistic creations. The fabric structure penetrates to the surface and enters into an exciting relationship with the elements of the composition – which has largely been executed in highly diluted translucent tempera paint. At the same time, Leiko Ikemura uses the term *a.ï.r.e* both playfully and pictorially: "One of the new works was entitled *Air*. ... However, this English word wasn't really appropriate for my feeling. And then I thought about *aire* with the two dots because there are many dissolving elements and dotted lines in my recent paintings. So I took a more playful approach. This is how I came up with *a.ï.r.e*, with lots of dots. The work is in the title. The title itself is like one of my latest works."

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In this exhibition, Leiko Ikemura also crosses the boundaries of the two-dimensional. On display are new ceramics and two transparent glass sculptures, *Butterfly out of Face* (2021) and *Usagi with Wings* (2021). Transparency and translucency lend a new aspect to sculptural solidity. Another piece on show is the bronze *Usagi Kannon* (2012–2017), the fifth from a small edition of five bronzes, each of which develop a unique character through patination and painting. The hybrid creature with the erect long ears rests on a large skirt that is open at the front, comparable to the Christian Virgin of Mercy. This well-known piece and her new works see Leiko Ikemura create a unique synthesis between Japanese and Western European culture.

Born in Tsu, Mie Prefecture, Japan, Leiko Ikemura studied Spanish literature at Osaka University of Foreign Languages between 1970 and 1972, followed by language studies in Salamanca and Granada in 1972. From 1973 to 1978, she studied painting at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabel de Hungría in Seville. Via Spain she arrived in Switzerland where she became known in the early 1980s thanks to exhibitions in Zurich and Bern. In 1983, the Bonner Kunstverein art society was the first to present her work in a comprehensive solo exhibition. In 1990, she was appointed a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts, and, in 2014, was awarded the title of Honorary Professor by Joshibi University of Art and Design, Sagamihara, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan. Her oeuvre was recently shown in a retrospective entitled *Leiko Ikemura: Our Planet – Earth & Stars*, at the National Art Center, Tokyo (2019); in exhibitions such as *Leiko Ikemura. Toward New Seas*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2019), and *Usagi in Wonderland*, Sainsbury Centre, Norwich (2021), as well as in *Leiko Ikemura. Aquí estamos / Here we are*, Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències, Valencia (2021/22). Her work is represented in international private and public collections including Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum Pfalzgalérie in Kaiserslautern, Kolumba – Kunstmuseum des Erzbistums Köln [Art Museum of the Archdiocese of Cologne], Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst Köln [Museum of East Asian Art, Cologne], Musée national d'Art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Leiko Ikemura lives and works in Berlin and Cologne.

The exhibition is accompanied by four publications on Leiko Ikemura published by Galerie Karsten Greve:

Leiko Ikemura, with texts by Udo Kittelmann, Friedemann Malsch, Noemi Smolik, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Paris, Milan 1996 (German / English; French / Italian), 40.00 euros.

Leiko Ikemura. Mountains in Exile, with text by Elisabeth Bronfen, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris 2016 (French / English), 10.00 euros.

Leiko Ikemura. Woman of Fire Dancing with Tree, with texts by Dr Barbara Scheuermann, Katharina Winnekes, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne 2017 (German / English), 15.00 euros.

Leiko Ikemura. Woman of Fire Dancing with Tree, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne 2017, poster 46.7 x 38.8 cm | 18 3/8 x 15 2/7 in, 10.00 euros.

ABOUT GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Karsten Greve has been a successful art dealer for fifty-two years. He opened his first gallery in 1973 with a solo exhibition of Yves Klein and Cy Twombly in Cologne. He then opened additional premises, one in Paris (Rue Debelleye) in 1989 and one in St. Moritz (Via Maistra) in 1999. Galerie Karsten Greve ranked from the beginning as a leading gallery worldwide and is regularly represented at international art fairs such as the Art Basel shows, FIAC and TEFAF. The gallery organizes important individual exhibitions of renowned international artists such as Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Joseph Cornell, Willem De Kooning, and WOLS. Its program is determined by the owner's personal contact to artists of the international post-1945 avant-garde, such as Cy Twombly, Louise Bourgeois, Jannis Kounellis, John Chamberlain, and Pierre Soulages. Karsten Greve's long-standing collaboration with artists such as Gotthard Graubner, Pierrette Bloch and Leiko Ikemura has contributed significantly to them achieving worldwide recognition. The gallery, which is representing about thirty artists, is constantly expanding its portfolio to include rising young artists like Georgia Russell, Claire Morgan, Gideon Rubin, and Raúl Illarramendi. Galerie Karsten Greve is equally well known for its solo exhibitions and its highly ambitious accompanying catalogue productions published by the gallery.

MEDIA CONTACT

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We are happy to provide you with images of the works shown in the exhibition.