

all the space in between us (could be an opportunity)

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10.338km separate me from Tokyo. 10.338km for ideas and memories to get lost within every sunrise and every sunset. But getting lost is nothing but a tool for the unexpected to show up on the timeless painting that could bring us together.

I spent two months in Japan last summer, as a resident artist at Youkobo Art Space. During that time I became somewhat of a strange visitor in a completely different country. I was not really a tourist but neither a citizen of Tokyo. It was something in between, an interesting position to be, as I had my everyday life in a city where everything was new and exciting.

The first month of my residency Youkobo was full so I was hosted by Takehiko and Yoko Konomatsu at their guesthouse nearby and had my studio at co-ume lab. in Higashi Koenji lent by Joshibi University. What may have seem like an inconvenience at first, ended up being the trigger to my most beloved memories from Tokyo, as it introduced me into exciting new contexts. The Konomatsu family taught me and my flatmates about Japanese culture, cooked traditional breakfast for us on weekends and invited us to dinners with their friends. It was close to Youkobo so I got to meet the rest of the artists and join the activities there as well.

The studio at Co-ume lab became my shelter during rainy season. I went there almost every day and worked on new paintings. I experimented with new materials and techniques, such as washi and oil and spent many time looking through the window, observing the everyday life of the Japanese... Every day curious locals approached the door of the studio and tried to talk to me, see my work and even join me painting. Everyone was welcome! At the end of the month I held an open studio exhibition there, called “Immature Infinite Desire” and shared with the community and students of Yoshibi the work and thoughts I developed during the first half of the residency.

In August I moved into Studio-1 in Youkobo. This time I took a more introspective approach towards my work, and focused more on the exploration of the city and the surrounding areas as well. All experiences outside of the studio are achievements for my paintings, both intertwine in complex ways that are beyond my understanding but that I know are key in Art making. With a creative process as tied to practice as mine I pay close attention to even the smallest detail inside and outside the studio; the importance of emptiness and in-between spaces, lonely streets at night in contrast with frenetic nights at the karaoke or the delightful smell after a summer rain are some of the things that left a bigger impression on me. The final exhibition “喜びの空の形. The empty shape of pleasure. Pozik zeruan.” in Youkobo served as a closure to my trip and welcomed AIR Network activities.

Overall I feel this time in Japan has ignited a new perception on my own practice. Aesthetic similarities and differences with my cultural imagery, colors, shapes and gestures deeply rooted on Japanese citizens made me question about mine. Furthermore, I found myself thinking a lot about the boundaries of languages, universal codes and other forms of communication; and receiving feedback on my paintings from such a variety of people gave me a better understanding of how my work is perceived in a culture different from mine.

Undoubtedly my residency in Youkobo Art Space has been a powerful source of inspiration, new experiences, friendships and love. I have built a big archive of material and memories that I keep close to me. Some of them will develop into further research or new lines of work. Others, however, will just stay close to my heart; next to the never-ending thought of going back to the city with an empty center.

