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Jean Claude Wouters exhibition : Portraits

« Condensed Essence »

As I entered the gallery, what jumped into my eyes is a “white picture” hung on a white wall. I thought it might be a type of conceptual art, but as my eyes adjusted, a human head vaguely started to appear out of the picture frame. “Jean Claude Wouters” exhibit taking place at the Marunouchi Gallery (Chiyoda-Ku, Tokyo).

A sense of presence, something like aura fills the air, and commands goose bumps. In terms of the technique, the subject faintly appearing like a shadow is trapped in the paper surface by repeatedly photographing the photo image, and by bringing in the sunlight during the process.

“What is important is not the technique. But I am obsessed by handling the image again and again. Just as a Zen monk polishes a black stone to create a mirror. By shedding everything extra, my aim is to get closer to the essence.” Wouters, who is a Belgian, explains. Having lived in Japan, he is very much affected by Eastern philosophy, for example, he was deeply moved by Junichiro Tanizaki’s *“In Praise of Shadow”* Shave off the “visible” and strive to see the “invisible.” Peculiarity of that addition and subtraction is fascinating.

Written by Ayako Fujita.