

Suzume Uchida Solo Exhibition “As You Truly Are”

Dates : 6 December (Sat) – 26 December (Fri), 2025

Venue : SAI



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SAI presents Suzume Uchida's solo exhibition *As You Truly Are*, on view from 6 December to 26 December 2025. This is her first solo show in approximately two years since her 2023 exhibition at “NEW,” and the largest presentation of her work to date. Uchida has long depicted an inner memoryscape etched deep within the mind, almost as if documenting it.

Through painting, she continues to give form to the sorrow and anxiety inherent in living, as well as the hope and quiet joy that emerge beyond those emotions.

From childhood, painting had been Uchida's greatest joy, yet she grew up keeping this passion locked deep within her heart. Living with an unconscious denial of her own existence, the world around her felt filled with confusion and pain. Unable to find her place in society, she eventually left her job. Then one day, in the midst of profound loneliness, she found herself guided back to the paintbrush, and began painting as if releasing the emotions buried within her. Facing painting became, for Uchida, an act of confronting her own formative experiences—an act that often carried deep pain. Yet the works created through that process, unadorned and sincere, have resonated with viewers again and again.

In *As You Truly Are*, Uchida presents new works shaped by the emotional shifts she experienced through giving birth and becoming a mother. Once someone who had wished to “disappear,” she now reflects on the doubts and conflicts that surfaced when she conceived life and confronted the biological reality of passing on her genes. The exhibition explores these tensions, the new emotions awakened by having a child, and the renewed gaze she casts upon her past self. What is life? What does it mean to live? We invite you to enter this quiet, symbolic world, where a fragile light gently illuminates the depths of human existence.

It's said that living beings are instinctively driven to leave offspring.

If that is true, then is there something wrong with me for not wanting a child?

After years of struggling with that question, I eventually arrived at the decision to give birth for many different reasons. One of the biggest was that, as I continued to show my paintings, I gradually learned to like myself a little more. I felt as though I had been allowed to keep living because so many people cherished my work.

You don't have to live the life others expect of you.

Now that I'm an adult, I want to embrace my younger self. It's okay to be yourself; just being happy is enough.

Time flows not only from the past to the future, but from the future back into the past.

The past is not something finished; it remains a part of our ongoing experience.

Let us go on living fully. I am sure everything we encounter in our lives teaches us the meaning of our very existence.

Profile

Suzume Uchida

Born in 1986. Graduated from the University of Tsukuba. After leaving her previous company, she encountered art and began collecting works. She started painting at the age of 27 and held her first solo exhibition in 2014. Since then, she has exhibited widely both in Japan and internationally as an artist.

Uchida's works consistently convey a vital energy that emerges not from negative emotion but from the raw intensity of her primal memories. Through her realistic and highly expressive artworks, she has continued to capture that vivid breath of life. Since her first collaboration with Yohji Yamamoto POUR HOMME in 2017, she has worked on numerous collaborations with brands such as Y-3 and BE@RBRICK.

"New Annunciation" of Suzume Uchida

In Florence, Italy, there is the Uffizi Gallery, where Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation is displayed.

The painting depicts two figures: the Virgin Mary and the angel who comes to tell her that she will conceive a child. Upon hearing the angel's words—"You have conceived the Son of God, Christ"—Mary opens her hands in astonishment. Although the work captures a dramatic biblical moment, it moves even viewers with little religious sentiment. This power comes not only from da Vinci's extraordinary technique, but also from the universal theme embedded in the painting. It portrays the instant when a woman realises that a child has begun to grow within her—a moment that is undoubtedly momentous for any human being. It is this universality, transcending religion, that da Vinci so powerfully renders.

As I began writing a text for Suzume Uchida's exhibition, I found myself returning to painters from more than five centuries ago. This is because, when looking at the works in Uchida's forthcoming exhibition, I could not help thinking of da Vinci's Annunciation. In a sense, this exhibition may be described as Uchida's own "New Annunciation." What follows is an attempt to explore that idea.

Suzume Uchida is a painter who continually turns her gaze inward. One could even call her a self-portraitist. She has produced self-portraits that transcend every conventional image associated with the genre.

I first encountered her work at a group exhibition curated by young artists. It was summer, and the theme—apt for the season—was ghosts. Each artist presented their own interpretation of a spectral figure. Among them was a work consisting of nothing but a bundle of hair affixed to the canvas. The hair curved to trace the outline of a face, revealing a white visage without eyes or a mouth.

A woman stood beside it and said, "This is my work." She explained that side effects from medication and stress had caused her hair to fall out, and she had collected it to create the piece. At first glance, the theme appeared negative, as if made by someone withdrawn. Yet she spoke with striking determination, eager to articulate her work. The gap between that assertiveness and the seemingly passive subject made me wonder who she really was. Looking back, that very tension—between persistence and vulnerability—may be where the essence of Uchida's artistic world lies.

From that first encounter, I continued to follow the development of her work. There was, for example, a monochrome painting of a naked woman—presumably the artist herself—cutting open her abdomen, pulling out her intestines, and eating them. I wondered whether it visualised nightmares born from an eating disorder.

Then one day, I saw a post on Uchida's social media stating she was in Paris. I assumed she was travelling. But the next day, she posted photographs from Paris Fashion Week. Unlike museums, Paris Fashion Week cannot be entered casually; only those involved may attend. The following day, she posted images from the Yohji Yamamoto show—models wearing garments printed with her paintings.

What? She was participating in Paris Fashion Week? When had Uchida stepped onto such a stage?

I later learned that Yohji Yamamoto had been searching for works by young painters who depicted faces with strong, piercing eyes, and Uchida's paintings caught their attention. And so, the unknown young artist who once stood earnestly beside her work in a small gallery, saying, "This is my piece," continued climbing the ladder of success.

As mentioned earlier, I have — perhaps arbitrarily — described the works in this exhibition as her “New Annunciation.” A profound shift has taken place in Uchida’s life, one that has inevitably transformed her art. The artist who once painted self-portraits marked by self-denial and other negative themes became pregnant, gave birth, and became a mother. The painter who had long struggled with eating disorders and self-harm — experiences not exclusive to troubled youth, though often associated with them — has now stepped into motherhood.

The works in this exhibition depict the new worlds that opened to her through these experiences. I find myself wondering what pregnancy, childbirth, and raising a child signify within our culture. Brighter, more hopeful paintings — imbued with the light of welcoming a child — began to appear around her 2023 solo exhibition, but here that sensibility deepens.

Uchida once said she had never imagined giving birth. She confessed that she despised her own body — one that carried the genes inherited from her parents — and that she once wished she could end her life and erase those genes along with herself. Yet Uchida eventually conceived a child through in vitro fertilisation. An egg floating in a glass dish, sperm introduced into it — the attempt at conception playing out on a sheet of glass. It is undeniably a drama of life, yet one that feels strangely detached from the natural continuity of human biology. Uchida transforms this deeply personal experience — this chapter of her life — into a painting.

In this sense, her work bears a curious resemblance to Leonardo da Vinci’s Annunciation. The Bible recounts that Mary conceived the Son of God without the act of procreation. Mary’s miraculous conception and Christ’s birth echo, in an unexpected way, the artificial operation of life unfolding atop a glass dish. In the visualisation of that “coldness,” I sensed the allure of da Vinci’s painting and a shared thread with Uchida’s “New Annunciation.”

Leonardo da Vinci not only drew a fetus in the womb; some even argue that the Mona Lisa depicts a pregnant woman. His gaze toward the origins of life permeates his entire pictorial world, not only the Annunciation in the Uffizi. There is something in da Vinci’s Annunciation that resonates with the new world emerging in Uchida’s work. Yet the difference is clear: whereas da Vinci casts an external gaze — a painter looking upon figures within a scene — Uchida reveals that vision as a self-portrait, through an inner gaze.

The birth of life is not merely the arrival of a new being. The anatomist Shigeo Miki studied the world of the fetus and concluded that fetal development reenacts the entire history of biological evolution. He called this phenomenon “life memory.” Within the fetal world, the vast evolutionary drama spanning hundreds of millions of years is compressed and repeated.

In Uchida’s “New Annunciation,” too, one senses a gaze directed toward that primordial dimension of life.

As we absorb each painting in this exhibition, we find ourselves tracing how this story of life unfolds — considering what in that process resonates within us, and what echoes within our own bodies and memories. Encountering Uchida’s “self-portraits” is like looking into a mirror: we are compelled to rediscover ourselves as living beings. Her paintings whisper to us that although this world can be painful, it is also profoundly beautiful.

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The exhibition information

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DATE : 6 December (Sat) – 26 December (Fri), 2025

PLACE : SAI

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