

ETSU EGAMI MELODY

KÖNIG GALERIE | CHAPEL
17 JANUARY – 23 FEBRUARY 2025

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present MELODY, a solo exhibition by Japanese artist Etsu Egami. On view in the Chapel of St. Agnes, the show marks the artist's first solo presentation in Germany. MELODY features six new, visually complex paintings that contain a series of portraits reduced to broad, translucent brushstrokes.

Egami is known for her color-rich paintings and captivating compositions that bring together the traditions of figurative and Japanese painting into an entirely new kind of aesthetic experience. The six oil-on-canvas works that comprise MELODY make use of a similar palette and gestural approach to the language of portraiture. Departing from the traditional bust format, Egami's faces seem to float, ethereally, above a swirling context of color and gesture, the image more at home in the shadowy ephemera of the screen than the traditional IRL painting. The effect is one in which each portrait appears in the process of emerging, held tenuously together through fully transparent building blocks of line and color.

The subjects included in this exhibition range from pop icons, like John Lennon and Freddie Mercury, to unnamed heads, as well as Egami's first full-length group portrait, the eponymously named, MELODY. This sprawling work is a pink, fleshy affair, put together as though Egami took her cues directly from the materiality of the bodies she chose to figure. The amazing frontality and brash nudity of the individual figures in MELODY are reminiscent of Picasso's pathbreaking "Les Femmes d'Alger", which radically reduced the illusionistic space of traditional easel painting, much in the way Egami atomizes her corporeal beings into a concentrated grammar of brushwork and tone. Egami, trained in Germany, her native Japan, and China, fuses the European heritage of portraiture with caricature and swift gestural marks that are inspired by non-European traditions.

Egami has emerged as a leading voice in contemporary painting of the third generation of post-WW II Japanese artists, whose playfulness and immediacy have managed to breathe new life into the medium. Collectively, the works in MELODY showcase the artist's range and breadth of subjects, bringing an established genre into dialogue with a thoroughly digital epoch. Like those performative predecessors in the Gutai movement in the 1950s in Japan, Egami's emphasis on the act of painting through clearly legible marks offers an open space for viewers to connect in new ways to the delicate composition that makes up the human figure.

KÖNIG GALERIE

KÖNIG GALERIE | ST. AGNES
Alexandrinenstrasse 118–121
10969 Berlin, Germany
www.koeniggalerie.com

OPENING HOURS
Tuesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm

CONTACT
T +49 30 261 030 80
info@koeniggalerie.com
Instagram: [koeniggalerie](https://www.instagram.com/koeniggalerie)

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