

Shadows of the Mind

“Consciousness” has been intriguing me for a long time. I have been reading various ideas about the conscious mind in medicine, psychology, technology, philosophy and religion. What does “consciousness” mean in the history of the universe/multiverse?

Human consciousness has been defined as awareness, sentience, a person’s ability to experience and feel, but despite the important role it plays in our lives and making us who we are, we actually know very little about how consciousness works. Roger Penrose discusses in detail the non-computability of conscious thought in “Shadows of the Mind”. Rapid development in Artificial Superintelligence makes the definition of “consciousness” more complicated.

A ring of lights has been appearing in my paintings for some time. Viewers of my paintings are associating my ring to different things: halo, fairy ring of mushrooms, view of an aurora from outer space, circular chandeliers in a cathedral, a growth ring (tree), a ring system (planet), etc. They are all relevant. However, for me, a ring of lights specifically symbolizes the presence of the conscious mind.

In my work, I use a fictional and symbolic space and I condense experienced and imagined multi-layered events. In the space I create, the conscious mind experiences an encounter with a person, a creature, a tree, a flower, a rock, a room, a book, a song, a painting, a life, a planet or the cosmos.

In my youth, I wanted to pursue writing fiction. I still strongly believe in fiction's ability to express the deepest truths. In these painting compositions, I use libraries, museums, public spaces, performance halls and lands, all intermingled with images of the cosmos. It’s my fiction writing: incomplete, fragmented and under inquiry. That’s my cosmic theater.

Through this working process, I am trying to come to terms with the complex reality of the 21st Century. And my vision stays incorrigibly optimistic.

Michiko Itatani 2018