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Enjoy the moment: Armisen

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Spanish artist Eva Armisen in Seoul with her smile-evoking paintings

With short black hair and a huge smile, Eva Armisen looked just like the grinning girl found in most of her jolly paintings. Her artworks are gaining popularity here, being referred to as "paintings that make you happy."

"I am sometimes unhappy, too, of course. But I know that everyone has a happy part inside them and that they need to make an effort to find it," the Spanish artist told The Korea Herald. She visited Seoul while her works were on sale at the Korea International Art Fair, which ends its five day run at COEX in southern Seoul today.

It is fairly easy to recognize Armisen's paintings from the mass, especially today when mind-boggling contemporary art is the trend. Her paintings mostly feature a girl, a family — modeled after her own — or animals engaged in their pleasant everyday affairs like waiting for someone, talking or daydreaming. With touches of Armisen's sweet imagination added, the works have the power to lift the viewer's spirits.

"I want to magnify things that are really close and familiar to me. In the end, I think things that happened to me are actually very universal," said Armisen.

"It is important to see the small things around us, although we often don't look at them very carefully. You get used to what you have and don't realize how precious it is until you lose it. I want to remind you that you're the lucky one."



Eva Armisen talks in front of her work "Sometimes I am like a Monarch butterfly" on Friday at KIAF in COEX, southern Seoul. (Park Hyun-koo/The Korea Herald)

She starts out each painting by writing down the key messages that popped up in her mind on the corner of the canvas, which she said are the "clues" to better understanding the works. On the work of a girl with big yellow butterfly wings, for example, two sentences are written in Spanish: "Sometimes I am like a monarch butterfly. I go really far away."

"These butterflies fly kilometers away to lay eggs, and then die. I wanted to express how I sometimes have to go really far away to do important things," said the artist.

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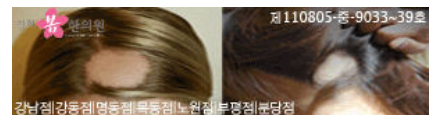
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In another piece, an open cage is placed on top of a girl's head. Butterflies are fluttering out through the open door. A word and a short phrase — "Ideas" and "While they are flying" — are spotted on the corners of the canvas. Armissen explained that butterflies symbolize ideas in an old Spanish saying, and the painting is an invitation to open the cage and catch the ideas while they are flying.

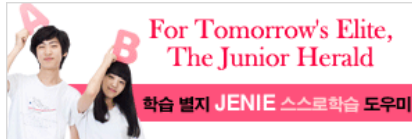
The artist is in high demand in Asia right now — not only are her works on sale at KIAF but her third solo exhibition in Busan just ended last week; she participated in a charity auction held by singer Lee Seung-chul last week; and she will soon fly over to Hong Kong for a large-scale shopping mall project around Christmas. Many Korean celebrities are known to have her paintings as well.

"I think we (artists) have a really big power. We can change things and open new ways of seeing things. We can move people's feelings in other ways from what politics and economics do," she said.

When asked her thought on the key to happiness, Armissen's answer was simple.

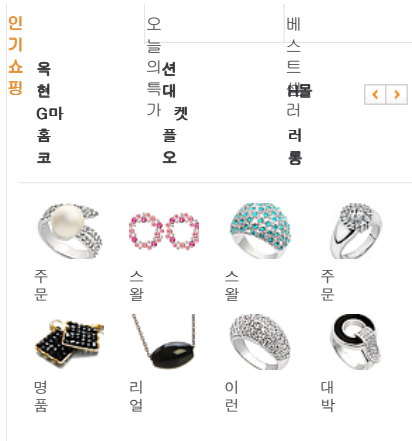
"We are not supermen and superwomen. Take steps, one by one, and try to enjoy the moment."

By Park Min-young (claire@heraldm.com)



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