

## Nara Park Solo Exhibition: 'Completely You,' 26. 2. 19. – 3. 21.

Nara's solo exhibition begins with the concept of 'forced performance'—the demand that humans manage their surfaces. To become cleaner, healthier, and better, we use soap daily, apply cosmetics, and perform hygiene and beauty rituals. While these acts are framed as language of care and self-protection, they simultaneously represent the pressure of 'self-optimization' imposed by modern society.

The film *American Psycho* (2000) starkly reveals the psychology of a man obsessed with surface in a materialistic society. The obsession with skin care, appearance, and brands is not a matter of taste but a repetitive performance to gain social approval. This fixation feels sadistic not because it represents an exceptional pathology, but because it lays bare the logic of self-care we already practice routinely today. Park Nara's work addresses this point in a quieter, more material way. Soap, cosmetics, and hygiene and beauty products function in her work not merely as consumer goods, but as the language through which modern society manages and regulates the body. Words like 'clean,' 'natural,' 'healthy,' and 'pure' are repeated through industrial marketing, making individual desires appear like natural choices. What the artist focuses on is precisely how desire is designed and circulated at this very point.

This approach connects to the trend that emerged in art after the 1960s and 70s, exploring the politics of the body and materiality. Hannah Wilke addressed issues of beauty, gender, and illness through her own body, while Carolee Schneemann elevated the body not merely as an object of representation but as a subject of meaning production. Nara Park, too, evokes corporeality indirectly through the objects and materials that surround, manage, and protect the body, rather than directly representing it. Notably, in previous works, the artist has covered or replaced the human body with cosmetic products, soap, and hygiene items, revealing that the body is no longer a fixed entity but an object to be managed and processed. This aligns with Susan Sontag's argument that the boundaries between illness and health, cleanliness and contamination, are socially constructed concepts. A surface that appears healthy always simultaneously implies normative expectations and anxiety.

In this exhibition, the painterly plane functions as both a skin and an advertising billboard. The colors and images arranged on the surface are composed of cosmetic and hygiene products like tinted cosmetic powders, soap, and toothpaste, evoking a cross-section of the artificial body humans create through self-management, as well as a wall. While the surface appears smooth and refined, beneath it lies an accumulation of the anxiety and deficiency of existence that must be constantly renewed.

Her work poses these questions: 'Does this surface we endlessly polish, apply, and maintain truly protect us, or does it render us more easily consumed and replaceable?' 'How much of our desire for beauty and health stems from personal choice, and how much from a psychology engineered by society and industry?' This exhibition quietly yet firmly reveals the structures of power and emotion hidden beneath the surface, at the intersection of human desire, industry, the body, and image.