

Mizuma Gallery is delighted to present SWEET PARADOX, a Japanese group exhibition curated by father and daughter, Sueo and Yukari Mizuma, from YUKARI ART and Mizuma Gallery. The show features a total of 22 artworks from 5 leading Japanese artists. YUKARI ART was established in 2007 by Yukari Mitsuma with the aim of supporting artists who grew up in the same era and bring their artworks into the world. The collaboration between the two galleries is done with the intention of introducing leading young contemporary artists from Japan to the world.

Ranging from paintings to sculptures, the artworks displayed are very animated in style. However, the artworks contain a handful amount irony. They are good examples of how looks can be deceiving. Despite their vibrant exterior, each of the artworks raises a serious social issue. This contradiction between their aesthetic and their concept is what turns SWEET PARADOX from a light-hearted, comical group show into an exhibition with significant complexity and purpose. Particularly, the purpose of bringing intimidating social problems to light through whimsical artworks in order to encourage audiences to be less afraid to discuss and act on these issues amongst their own communities.

This exhibition features Japan's leading contemporary artists Ohata Shintaro, Ito Enpei, YODOGAWA TECHNIQUE, Yoshida Akira and Watanabe Osamu.

OHATA Shintaro (b. 1975, Hiroshima, Japan) is known to create artworks that capture and display breathtaking, frozen scenes from everyday life that we normally take for granted. He uses different types of light in his work (strong light expressions) to dramatize the otherwise ordinary sceneries, which essentially gives a very unique touch. He has a very distinct style where in an artwork he would place sculptures in front of paintings, hence combining 2 and 3 dimensional worlds. The reason for this, is because by doing so, he believes that he could bring a different "atmosphere of dynamism" to his artworks.

ITO Enpei (b.1976, Kasama, Ibaraki, Japan) graduated from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music graduate school (MA) in 2002. He is always inspired by the great outdoors surrounding him. He has been creating paintings and sculptures with the same light textures in the form of humans and animals. However, he is now moving onto more non-figurative themes, as he states, "I don't pursue only visible subjects. I feel that one of the very important elements for my further self-expression and my current aim is that by including various senses of vitality, my works will start to move and function just like living creatures".

YODOGAWA TECHNIQUE is an art group founded by Hideaki Shibata and Kazuya Matsunaga in 2003. Based out of the river terraces of Yodogawa, Osaka, they mainly use garbage that has drifted to the riverbank to create their artworks. Their creations involve making beautiful models and sculptures that completely does not resemble its original form as garbage. The group's focuses on the concept of "Gomunication" which derive from the word gomi or rubbish in Japanese and communication. By finding garbage along the riverbank, in the ocean and everywhere in town, the group get to know the local community and be involved in their everyday life. They are renowned for making works in various places, interacting with locals and doing community projects. Their way of communicating through their art and projects always brings a new perspective for locals and also raises awareness for environmental issues.

YOSHIDA Akira (b. 1976, Kanagawa, Japan) graduated from Tama Art University with a Bachelor in Fine Arts in 2002. He is renowned to make sculptures with fibreglass reinforced plastic that is painted over by airbrush. His airbrush skills are so impeccable, done with such great precision and detail, that it looks like the patterns have been printed onto the object. Visually, his works are very “cute” and follow pop aesthetics standards. However, ironically, the themes of his artworks revolve around problems of contemporary society. The significant contradiction of the appearance and the concept gives Yoshida’s works their unique and charming quality.

WATANABE Osamu (b. 1980) is one of Japan leading contemporary decorative artist. He first started decorating reproductions of Vincent Van Gogh and Pierre Auguste Renoir’s masterpieces using ‘fake cream’ made of modeling paste and wax. Watanabe, traces his fixation with all things sweet to his childhood. His mother was a confectionary school teacher, and from watching her, the images of sweets come naturally to him and so he uses it as the theme to his artworks. Watanabe believes in decorative art’s important quality and continues to create it. He started a revolution that has shifted the artscene from puzzling contemporary art to charming decorative art that can be enjoyed by everyone. Watanabe is a part of the kawaii art movement that is gaining popularity in Japan.