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MIZUMA CONVERSATIONS

Eyes & Curiosity—Flowers in the Field

Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna), Kimura Ryoko, Kobayashi Satoshi, Mizuno Rina

Mizuma Gallery, 16 March 2019, 5-6pm



From left to right: Kobayashi Satoshi (artist), Kimura Ryoko (artist), Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna) (artist), and Mizuno Rina (artist), standing in front of Kimura Ryoko's *The Sea of the Enchanted City - Paradise of Dragon Palace*, 2016, © Kimura Ryoko, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

The artist-led exhibition walk-through was conducted in Japanese and interpreted to English by Lim Sim Lin.

Lim Sim Lin: Good evening everyone. Allow me to introduce to you our first artist of this walk-through. This is Mizuno Rina who is one of the artists of this exhibition, *Eyes & Curiosity—Flowers in the Field*.

Mizuno Rina: Hello. My name is Mizuno Rina and these are my artworks.

There are 3 elements in play throughout my works. The first element is the brushwork. In Japanese ink paintings, the brushworks are always done in ink but I replicate that affect through the use of oil paint, not through ink or watercolour, but purely oil paint. The second element is the inspiration from Turkish miniature paintings and the last element is the exposure of the raw canvases. I prefer to paint on raw, unprimed canvas instead of the commonly used primed white canvases. Raw canvases are exposed in parts of my paintings, thus creating interesting negative spaces in my works. I try to incorporate all three elements, melding using contrast, to construct a bigger impact as opposed to presenting purely using one element in a single painting.

This is my first time in Singapore. I have visited Arab Street, Little India, and Chinatown, and has incorporated different motifs that I took from each of these places within my painting. I hope that through a fresh pair of



Mizuno Rina, *Entrance to the Limestone Cave*, 2019, oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm, © Mizuno Rina, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

eyes, Singaporean viewers will find elements that are familiar to them through a new kind of composition within my paintings.

Audience: So where are the elements? Are they present in the painting?



From left to right: Mizuno Rina (artist) with Lim Sim Lin (translator) explaining about her work, *Mansion in a Mountain Range*, 2019, oil on canvas, 162 × 130 cm, © Mizuno Rina, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

Mizuno Rina: These [gestures to parts of *Mansion in a Mountain Range*] are the areas that contain elements that I took from Little India, or more specifically from India. I have studied miniature paintings in India and has stayed there in order to learn the techniques. I incorporate these techniques into my own, but the difference is that I use oil paints. These flowers are examples of the inspiration from the Indian art. These flowers against the red colour are inspired from the Chinatown, and the blue parts are influenced by the Arabic motifs found in Arab Street.



Kimura Ryoko, *Monju Bodhisattva*, 2018, Japanese pigments and gold leaf on silk, 104 × 104 cm, © Kimura Ryoko, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

Lim Sim Lin: Thank you Mizuno-san. Let us now move on to our next artist, Kimura Ryoko.

Kimura Ryoko: Hi everyone, my name is Kimura Ryoko and I am a Japanese painter/artist. My works are the screens that you see over there [gestures to *Monju Bodhisattva*, *Fugen Bodhisattva*, and *Jizo Bodhisattva*]. My painting style is based on traditional Japanese arts, particularly the concept of *bijin-ga*, which is the portrayal of women as one of the main subjects in traditional Japanese paintings. Instead of taking women as the main motif, I choose to depict *ikemen*—handsome and beautiful Japanese men—as my main motif, altering a male gaze to a female gaze.

As a heterosexual woman, I feel that the male form and body is what I admire and want to paint. I feel that it is a very natural thing for me as a female painter to take on the male body as my main motif. Throughout the history of art and culture, it is rare for a female painter to depict male forms as the main subject,

especially if it illustrates sexual objectification. Through my art, I hope to challenge and overturn the stereotype that only male painters can paint the female body. And because I enjoy looking at handsome, beautiful, and attractive men, I find painting them a rather enjoyable thing to do.

Throughout my career as an artist, I have exhibited in many places throughout Asia, including China, Indonesia, and of course Singapore. Travelling to these places, I have met numerous wonderful and beautiful Asian men. As a Japanese painter, I would rather paint beautiful Asian men as opposed to Western men. These [gestures to *Monju Bodhisattva*, *Fugen Bodhisattva*, and *Jizo Bodhisattva*] are my newest series of paintings which embody the theme of Buddhism. My motivation to paint this series came from a meeting with a very beautiful and handsome monk. I went to a temple to seek consolation as I was at a very despondent, depressed and vulnerable period of my life. There I met a wonderful monk with a beautiful appearance which



Kimura Ryoko, *Fugen Bodhisattva*, 2018, Japanese pigments and gold leaf on silk, 104 × 104 cm, © Kimura Ryoko, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery



From left to right: Kimura Ryoko (artist) and Lim Sim Lin (translator)

surprised me. Having received solace from the monk, I felt an utmost admiration and a great sense of gratitude for him. Since that encounter, I am inspired to study Buddhist paintings and it took me 10 years just to study the traditional Buddhist paintings in Japan.

This large screen here [gestures to *The Sea of the Enchanted City - Paradise of Dragon Palace*], depicts a fantastical underwater palace, known as The Dragon Palace. I am sure everyone is familiar with the Disney movie, *The Little Mermaid*. In Japanese tradition, when someone says mermaid or *Ningyo*, it usually connotes to a female being and it is uncommon to associate it to a man. In this work, I

have painted the sea palace and populate it with very cute and dynamic mermen fusing them with various sea creatures.

Overall, I attempt to take traditional Japanese painting techniques and traditional Japanese art techniques and combining them with the portrayal of contemporary young and handsome Japanese or Asian men. If there are any young and handsome Asian men here who would like to be my model, I will be very welcoming and happy to have you [audience laughs].

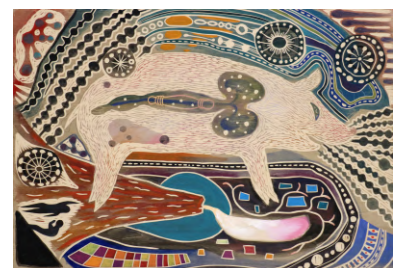


Kimura Ryoko, *The Sea of the Enchanted City - Paradise of Dragon Palace*, 2016, Japanese pigments and gold leaf on paper mounted on a four-panel folding screen, 176 x 340 cm, © Kimura Ryoko, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

Lim Sim Lin: Thank you very much Kimura-san. Let us move on to our third artist of this exhibition walk-through, Kobayashi Satoshi.

Kobayashi Satoshi: My name is Satoshi Kobayashi and I am from Japan. I have lived in Singapore for five years and within these five years, I did not have an exhibition with any Japanese artist. It has definitely been a very long time since then.

The one thing I have noticed is the overall style of this exhibition exudes a strong Japanese vibe. The most obvious part of it will be Ai Madonna- san's artworks over there which are the reminiscent of anime and manga-styled drawings. Kimura-san's and Mizuno-san's artworks are strongly influenced



Kobayashi Satoshi, *Pig*, 2018, acrylic on low relief board, 42 x 60 cm, © Kobayashi Satoshi, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery



From left to right: Lim Sim Lin (translator) and Kobayashi Satoshi (artist)

by traditional Asian painting techniques. In my own works as well, I feel that I am very much influenced by Japanese art.

My childhood dream was to be a manga artist and the style of these manga comics is that they are all drawn in black on white paper. I have been working with woodblocks for the past 10 years. Using woodblocks in my works provides a distinctive contrast between the blacks and whites. When I first started using woodblocks, I felt that it could potentially be a medium that allows me to produce manga inspired works.

My art making process starts with carving onto the wood and thereafter paint over them. Sometimes, I will also carve the wood further after painting them to create more detailed illustrations.

This work is named *Untitled*. For this work, I want to create a more complex work. By joining the individual disparate pieces together, I hope to be able to portray that complexity. I have also added another layer of complexity through the presentation of this work. Hanging similarly like a curtain, it allows the artwork is to move in response to the slight wind from the air-condition or passing movements. Most artists would not have liked it if the air-condition is directly hitting their works but for me, this coincidental arrangement is ideal.



Kobayashi Satoshi, *Untitled*, 2018, acrylic ink and acrylic paint on low relief wood board, 140 x 225 cm, © Kobayashi Satoshi, courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

Lim Sim Lin: Thank you Kobayashi-san. Lastly, we will hear from the final artist of this exhibition walk-through, Kato Ai.



From left to right: Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna) (artist) and Lim Sim Lin (translator)

Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna): Nice to meet you, my name is Ai☆Madonna, also known as Kato Ai, but I prefer to go by Ai☆Madonna. Welcome to Mizuma Gallery.

My motif has always been about young girls. I often depict two-dimensional anime or manga-style young girls in my works.

The reason for my choice of motif is that these girls are all objects of desire, the desire to be closer to them and to touch them, but being two-

dimensional characters, they belong in that two-dimensional world. They are very far removed from our physical contact, you can never truly touch them or have an encounter with them. Far removed from the human sphere, it gives them a portrayal of a goddess-like facade.

These blank canvases you see here are in preparation for my live painting performance that will commence at 6pm later today. I hope that you will stay after the talk and join me at this performance.



Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna), live painting session at Mizuma Gallery on Saturday, 16 March 2019



Left: Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna), live painting in Singapore 1, live painting in Singapore 2, and live painting in Singapore 3, 2019, acrylic and marker on canvas, 76 x 61 cm each, © Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna), courtesy of Mizuma Gallery

I have done many live painting performances at various places where I have exhibited or travelled to. In these live painting performances, I would not dwell deep into it much, but rather, I would incorporate the influence that I have received from my new surroundings, atmosphere, people, and my feelings about the country or place into my paintings.

I also have more paintings at the back of the gallery, you are very welcome to take a look.

Lim Sim Lin: Thank you Kato-san. If there are any questions, the artists will still be present throughout the opening so do feel free to approach them. Thank you very much!

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Eyes & Curiosity—Flowers in the Field exhibition, featuring works by Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna), Kimura Ryoko, Kobayashi Satoshi, and Mizuno Rina will run till Sunday, 21 April 2019.

About the Artists



Kato Ai (b. 1984, Tokyo, Japan), also known as Ai☆Madonna, graduated from the Tokyo Metropolitan Art High School, Tokyo, Japan in 2003, and the Bigakko Art School, Tokyo, Japan in 2004, where she studied under artist Aida Makoto. She had her first solo exhibition *KYUPIN* at Mizuma Action, Tokyo, Japan (2009); followed by *AI☆MADONNA Trick Art 9F* at BT Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2011); *HATSU-MOE - LOVE & Dragon* - at Digger Gallery Workshop, Tokyo, Japan (2012); and *Ambiguous U Meeha Love* at AWAJI Café and Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2017). Kato Ai (Ai☆Madonna) also took part in various group exhibitions around the globe, such as in Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Poland, and the United States. Kato Ai lives and works in Tokyo, Japan.



Kimura Ryoko (b. 1971, Kyoto, Japan) graduated with a Master's Degree in Mural Painting at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo, Japan in 1997. Her previous exhibitions include the most recent *Tenderheartedness* at Kyoto-ba, Kyoto, Japan (2018); *IkemenMärchen* at Artcomplex Center of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan (2017); *Beaute Animale de L'Homme* at Galerie Vanessa Rau, Paris, France (2015); *Paradise* at Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2011); and *Prince Come True* at The Butchart International Contemporary Art Space, Taipei, Taiwan (2008) and at GalleryES, produced by Mizuma Action, Tokyo, Japan (2007). Kimura Ryoko has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Japan as well as in Korea, Taiwan, China and the United States. Her works are in the public collection of Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, United States, and Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, United States. Kimura Ryoko lives and works in Tokyo, Japan.



Kobayashi Satoshi (b. 1981, Chiba, Japan) graduated from Tokyo Art University in 2005, where he majored in Japanese Painting and a Master's Degree in Japanese Painting from Tokyo Art University, Tokyo, Japan in 2007. His past solo exhibitions to date include the recent *Of Craft and Carving* at UOB Art Gallery, Singapore (2018); *The World of Living Things* at Gallery Zerohachi, Ginza, Tokyo (2014); *Pink Eyes Girl* at Gallery Sakamaki, Ginza Tokyo; and his first solo exhibition *Kobayashi Satoshi* also at Gallery Sakamaki, Ginza, Tokyo (2010) amongst others. He is the recipient of the Bronze Prize at the UOB Painting of the Year in 2016 and was shortlisted for The Ueno Royal Museum Award by Ueno Royal Museum, Biennale Ome by Ome City Educational Committee, and Art Award Debut by Gekkan Bijutsu Art Magazine in 2013. Kobayashi Satoshi lives and works in Singapore.



Mizuno Rina (b. 1989, Aichi, Japan) graduated with a Master's Degree in Oil Painting from Tama Art University, Tokyo, Japan in 2014 and a B.A. in Oil Painting from Nagoya University of Arts, Aichi, Japan in 2012. She held her first solo exhibition at Taimatz, Tokyo in 2012, and since then, she has mounted numerous solo exhibitions such as the recent *mizu no musubime* at Gallery Ohrin, Ibaraki, Japan (2018); *nested structure* at Roppongi Hills A/D Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2018); *ARKO2017 Rina Mizuno* at Ohara Museum of Art, Okayama, Japan (2017); and *Boundary line* at Dai-ichi Life South Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2016). Mizuno Rina has participated in groups exhibitions including *The Encyclopedia of Masamichi Katayama Life is hard...Let's go shopping* at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2017); *Fruitfulness - Contemporary Art in Toyokawa* at Toyokawa City Sakuragaoka Museum, Aichi, Japan (2015); and *AICHI TRIENNALE 2013* at Aichi, Japan (2013). Mizuno Rina was also the recipient of the Mitsubishi Estate Co. Ltd. Prize in 2014; Art Award Tokyo Marunouchi in 2014 and 2012; Yuji Wakamatsu Prize in 3331 Art Fair - Various Collectors' Prizes in 2014; H. P. France Prize in 2012; and Excellence Award / First Prize of Brighton University Award from Nagoya University of Arts Degree Show in 2012. Her works are in the public collection of Daiwa Press, Japan, Mitsubishi Estate, Japan, The Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company Limited, Japan, JAPIGOZZI Collection, Switzerland, and Ohara Museum, Kurashiki, Japan. Mizuno Rina lives and works in Aichi, Japan.

About the Gallery

Mizuma Gallery was established in 1994 in Tokyo, and since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, it aims for the promotion of Japanese artists in the region as well as the introduction of new and promising young talents from Southeast Asia to the international art scene. The gallery creates a new vector of dialogue within Asia, by exchanging art projects between East Asia and Southeast Asia.

About Gillman Barracks

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Gillman Barracks' vision is to be Asia's destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. Today, Gillman Barracks is a place for art lovers, art collectors, and those curious about art. The cluster is a focal point of Singapore's arts landscape, and anchors the development of visual art in the region and beyond. For more information: www.gillmanbarracks.com

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Gallery hours:
Tue-Sat: 11am-7pm
Sun: 11am-6pm
Closed on Mondays &
Public Holidays

www.mizuma.sg
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Transcribed by Cai Yun Teo and Theresia Irma.