

**exhibition review**

**MAJELLA MUNRO**

*Frieze Art Fair*

Regent's Park, London, 15th-18th October 2009

Every autumn, 70,000 artists, dealers and collectors congregate in an enormous temporary structure in London's Regent's Park for the Frieze Art Fair, making it one of the largest art fairs in the world. This year's fair was no exception, showcasing the work of 1000 international artists. The park setting allows the large indoor site to be complemented by monumental sculptural presentations in the landscape. Like the location itself, the Frieze Foundation is a sprawling institution. Originating as a magazine, the foundation is now best known for the annual fair, complimented by musical performances, lectures, education outreach programs and tv tie-ins. Frieze seems to expand every year. At this year's fair, the 'Frame' section - an area of the fair where the stands showcase individual emerging artists, in opposition to the renowned, established galleries elsewhere in the fair, was a new addition to the format. The size and scope of Frieze remains impressive, yet in spite of optimistic commentary claiming this year's event as marking a triumphant return to confidence in an economically troubled art-world, the impact of global economic crisis was noticeable and marked. The cavernous site created anxious, large, empty spaces; many of the installations seemed rough around the edges or hastily thrown together; and one of the stands attracting most attention was a workshop where visitors could buy cut-price copies of works on show elsewhere.



Frieze Projects: Stephanie Sujuco Copystand,  
Frieze Art Fair in Regent's Park, London, UK  
Photo by Linda Nylind, Courtesy of Frieze | 18 October 2009

Despite the justified pride of the Frieze Foundation in the avowed internationalism of the fair, the presentations were dominated by German, American and London-based galleries. The London galleries in particular seem to be suffering from an ennui that induces them to continue presenting the yBa-style work that's been considered cutting edge for twenty years. It was in the presentations from emerging art markets, then, that freshness and newness were to be found. Of these, a

handful of presentations represented contemporary Asian art: a few from Japan and China; one from South Korea, the Kukje gallery, showing at Frieze for the first time this year; and presentations by Gallery 88 of the work of Indian graphic novelist Sarnath Banerjee as part of Frame, and of sculpture by Neha Choski in the park. These presentations were complimented by a panel discussion on the Chinese art market and a lecture by Yoko Ono as part of the accompanying events program.



Taka Ishii Gallery, Frieze Art Fair in Regent's Park, London, UK  
Photo by Linda Nyland, Courtesy of Frieze | 14 October 2009

Of the Japanese galleries, the Tomio Koyama Gallery managed to command the most visitor attention. Conveniently situated near the entrance to the fair, visitors milled around the small stand, taking in the cutesy, whimsical, manga-influenced paintings, perhaps revelling in the unexpected playfulness of the installation, or perhaps reassured by the conformity of the works presented to their preconceptions of contemporary Asian art. The stand quickly sold out. The works presented by Taka Ishii gallery were both more tasteful and more challenging: the gallery filled its space with a curvilinear expanse of diaphanous white fabric that had to be negotiated in order to view the painted and sculptural works, all of exceptionally high quality. Work at Gallery Side 2 was of a similar high quality, showcasing exquisite nihonga-influenced works: small, jewel-like paintings on gold grounds; traditional landscapes presented with a clean contemporary economy and restraint.



Takeo Hanazawa,  
*Summer Breeze*, 2009, wood,  
plaster, tempera, gold leaf,  
19.6x12.2cms, and  
Yuko Muarata, *Untitled*, 2009,  
oil on canvas, 30.5x40.5cms,  
both reproduced courtesy of  
Gallery Side 2, Tokyo.

Zhang Hui, *Curtains*, 2009,  
oil on canvas,  
190 x 190 cm.  
Courtesy of Long March Space.



MeeKyoung Shin,  
*Embossed Dragon Vase*, 2009, soap  
and pigment, 64x34x34cms. Repro-  
duced courtesy of Kukje Gallery,  
Seoul.



Long March Space, Beijing, presented curious and intriguing sculptural work; a uniformed man with a siren substituted for his amputated leg, and a tinsillating metal rock by Zhan Wang in the park. But it was the paintings on show here that caught my attention. At the Seoul-based Kukje gallery, sculptural presentations took prominence, including a beautiful but useless decorative vase, rendered entirely from soap, by MeeKyoung Shin, and a three-metre long dog by Gimhongsok - also available in a smaller counterfeit version from the Stephanie Syjuco copyworks.