

review

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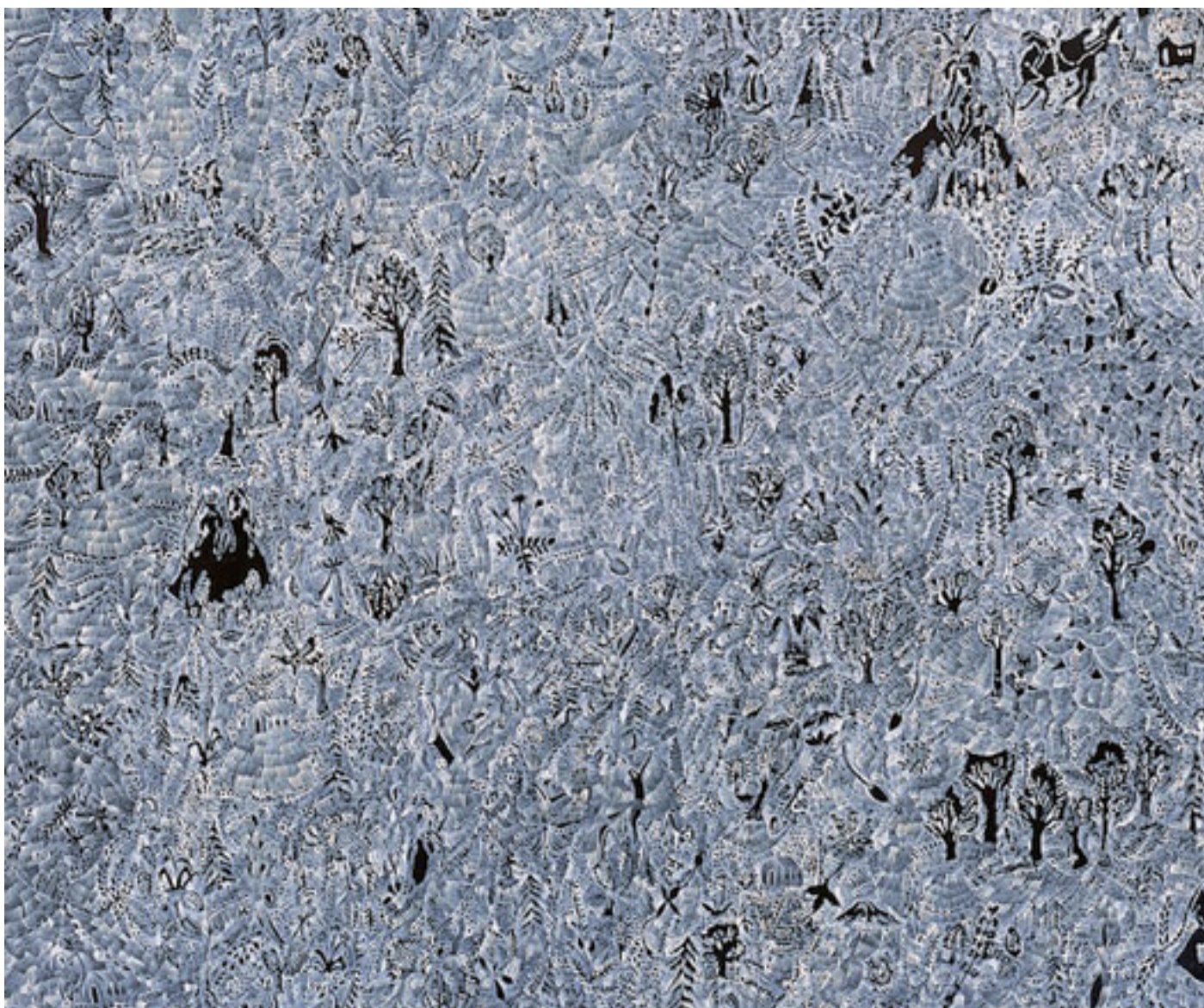
JAPAN AND ASIA IDENTITIES AT FRIEZE

Four Japanese galleries were represented at this year's Frieze: Taka Ishii, Hiromiyoshi and Tomio Koyama were all returning presentees, while Nanzuka Underground made a debut at Frame, the section of the fair dedicated to solo presentations. Nanzuka presented the work of the well-established and internationally-renowned Keiichi Tanaami, offering a condensed retrospective which showcased pieces from the 1970s to today. His most recent works are also his most ambitious: large-scale manga-esque paintings which reveal the influence of his childhood contact with textile making in their particular use of all-over pattern, and the influence of his days at Warhol's factory in their use of acid-inspired colours.



Keiichi Tanaami, *Mysterious Deliverance* (2010), acrylic on canvas, 200x300cm.

The Tomio Koyama gallery also focused on a single artist, presenting the technically innovative works of Nana Funo. Her large-scale, mixed-media paintings overlap patterns appropriated from wallpapers, tapestries and lace, combining motifs of different stylistic and historic provenances in richly-textured over-lapping and cut-away compositions. These eclectic influences are, surprisingly, successfully reconciled into a uniform aesthetic, one characterised by lightness, delicacy and femininity.



Nana Funo, *Cordelia's Story* (2009). Acrylic and oil on canvas, 162x162 cms.

Taka Ishii's presentation was, as usual, amongst the most impressive of the Japanese galleries, yet lacked the impact of their sculptural presentations of 2009. Some of the most interesting works on show here were rare autograph photographs by members of Jikken Kobo, an avant-garde group

formed in Occupied Japan under the aegis of the influential theorist Takiguchi Shuzo, and though these were not strictly contemporary art, they did make an interesting counterpart to the works of Yuki Kimura, whose re-presentations of vintage photographs, which demand that the viewer construct their own explanatory narrative, are both whimsical and intriguing.

In contrast to the extensive gallery space they enjoy in Tokyo, the Hiromiyoshi gallery this year crammed an eclectic assemblage of paintings by several artists into a limited exhibition space. Poor installation decisions detracted from the impact of the presentation, yet Yoshitaka Azuma's work still managed to stand out. In particular, his witty *Please do not look at me* (2009), a textural deployment of precisely painted details within the bold silhouette of an elephant, made a strong visual impact.

This year's winner of the Cartier award - which provides funding for a site-specific installation at Frieze - was the part-Japanese Simon Fujiwara. His *Frozen City* created a counterfeit archaeological dig, excavating a Roman society obsessed with consumerism and the pursuit of ever-more exotic pleasures. The installations have been presented as a comment on art collecting as expressive of an ancient human need to fetishise objects; or on the role of the art trade in a liberal, cultured and economically successful society. But these explanations overlooked a very obvious lampooning of Frieze itself that it was possible to read in the presentation: that societies which celebrate consumerism will decay; that our own society is now in a socio-economic state as far removed from the excesses of the art world over the last decade as it is from ancient Rome.

Fujiwara's fantasised *Frozen City* had trade links with Asia, inviting consideration of the increasingly international make-up of the fair, and of the possible contributions - or lack thereof - of diaspora artists to raising the profile of 'emergent' markets. The promotion of non-western galleries as 'new' and 'dynamic' serves the agenda of Frieze well, but it is clear that their putative 'dynamism' depends on some implied exoticism; something undefined which sets these galleries apart from their Western counterparts. This is at odds with the plain absence of referents to identifiably local aesthetics in several of the works presented. How can we reconcile enthusiasm for emergent art centers in Asia with acknowledgement that the works produced there may not be distinct from those produced in New York, London or Berlin? And might such broadly international fairs be inadvertently responsible for this globalisation and homogeneity in the art world?