



Art

Aya Takano, “Reintegrating Worlds” A Murakami mentee strikes out on her own

Time Out New York / Issue 740 : Dec 3–9, 2009



Aya Takano has a vivid imagination. Her colorful paintings—wide-eyed, androgynous waifs caught up in surreal fantasies within expressionistic realms—distinguish her from the rest of the workers in Takashi Murakami’s Kaikai Kiki studio. Initially hired as Murakami’s assistant, Takano rapidly rose through the ranks to show alongside her mentor in his curated “Superflat” exhibitions, as well as with his Paris and Los Angeles dealers. Poetic and personal, Takano’s dreamlike works are fashioned from her overlapping interests in manga, science fiction, traditional Japanese culture and early European modernism.

Takano’s first New York solo show offers 15 canvases, ranging from medium to large in a variety of shapes. *On The Hill, Beyond That Fence, She Leads An Army Of Cats* is a tondo featuring a long-legged Lolita who struts through a park in a short, red dress with one nipple exposed and a bird on her head; she is followed by an entourage of diversely colored felines. *Sweetness In The Light* is a diamond-shaped canvas that depicts two tattooed girls, surrounding a parfait-eating nymphet wearing a sort of demon mask-dress while balancing a still life with animals on her head. The more typically rectangular *YokohamaKamakura* captures a blinged-out young geisha, being pulled in a rickshaw on a fantastic journey through a dynamic urban street.

Made in an immediate, illustrative manner, Takano’s paintings are like pure, sensual thoughts, emanating from a visionary mind. Lively and contemporary, they create a picture of people, animals, spirits and nature living in harmony. — Paul Laster