

Bitter Sweet

Curated by Motoichi Adachi and Kyoko Sato

Artists:

Koyuki Sakamoto, Sugako Hamazaki, Tomo, Yoko Morishita, Joseph Fraia, Ola Rondiak

Monday, August 21 - Saturday, August 26, 2023

[21-24, 12-6pm | Friday, August 25, closed, reception only | Saturday, August 26, 12-3pm]

Opening reception Friday, August 25, 2023 6-8pm

Tenri Cultural Institute, New York | 43A W 13th St, New York NY 10011 | 212-645-2800

This exhibition is the second installment in a series of exhibitions that aims to collaborate with Emmy Award-winning writer Motoichi Adachi and Kyoko Sato, a renowned curator based in New York known for her expertise in Japanese culture. The overarching goal of this series is to showcase the talent of Japanese and global artists who produce captivating works across various genres and backgrounds, while integrating them into the forefront of the global art scene. By facilitating meaningful interactions and inspiration exchanges between these Japanese artists and leading figures in New York's artistic community, as well as those working internationally, the series aims to foster a dynamic and impactful artistic dialogue.

"I cut through the art world with the sensibility that has long been active in the world of Japanese television. We want to bring a new wind of free and unrestrained ideas to a world that values old traditions. Beautiful works are beautiful and interesting works are interesting, even if they are not from famous art universities or patronized by influential galleries. We want to let attractive artists run amok in the world. I would like to try an unconventional challenge this time." — **Motoichi Adachi**

When we translate the term "Bitter-sweet" into Japanese, it encompasses the essence of ambiguous Japanese culture and language. In Japanese, the translation of "sweet" does not have a direct equivalent, but rather implies a sense of "somehow" or "mildly." On the other hand, in English, the term "bitter" and "sweet" are used together to describe the simultaneous experience of pleasure and suffering that arises when contrasting tastes are combined.

Until now, our world has been understood in terms of dualism based on Western philosophy. Body and soul, yin and yang, moon and sun, woman and man, peace and war, front and back, success and failure, West and East, wealth and poverty, ordinary and extraordinary, positive and negative....

But can we really be divided by this dualism? In New York, same-sex marriage was legally recognized in 2011, followed by LGBTQ human rights. So this trend is right because everyone has the right to be happy no matter what gender they are. Children are also being educated about gender rights. And some children have the idea of "gender fluid". They say that regardless of the body they have, sometimes they are a woman and sometimes they are a man. In other words, they are in the middle, coming and going between genders, and cannot be divided by dualism. Perhaps our world is moving toward a world of "ambiguity," as in Japanese culture.

Koyuki Sakamoto, originally a pastry chef, has ventured beyond the realm of cakes to create a unique genre of sugar art on large canvases. While sugar is typically associated with sweetness rather than bitterness, her artistic creations transcend conventional boundaries. Her motifs predominantly draw inspiration from animals found in Oriental legends, such as dragons and Suzaku, without featuring any Western counterparts. The color palette she employs consists of pastel shades, exuding brightness and gentleness while intentionally avoiding any elements of darkness or harshness. Interestingly, the cake decorations she incorporates originate from the West, resulting in a fascinating convergence of Eastern and Western influences in her work.

Sugako Hamazaki, an artist based in Hiroshima, resides in a city deeply affected by the aftermath of World War II. Hiroshima, along with Nagasaki, experienced the devastating impact of the atomic bombs dropped by the United States, leaving a lasting shadow of cruelty in the lives of its people. In the years following the war, efforts were made to rebuild and bring hope amidst the darkness that enveloped the city. Hamazaki incorporates the "foils" that emerged during this postwar period into her paintings as artistic materials.

The central theme of her work revolves around capturing the last sights, represented by light, witnessed by those who tragically lost their lives in the river immediately following the atomic bombing, symbolizing the darkness of that tragic event. Through her paintings, she expresses the essence of light, serving as a testament to the resilience and spirit of those affected by the darkness of that period in history.

Tomo's artistry embraces the use of Japanese calligraphy ink, rooted in China, and coffee from Ethiopia, associated with Islamic culture, as her unique painting materials. This fusion allows her to incorporate influences from both the East (China) and the Middle East (Islamic culture). Furthermore, Tomo includes depictions of the Buddhist "Heart Sutra" originating from India, showcasing the cultural impact of South Asia. While historical focus was often on the exchange between the East and West, Tomo's artwork unveils a broader cultural presence. Her creations illuminate the profound influence not only of the East and West but also of the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. This recognition underscores the extensive range of diverse cultural expressions, illustrating the interconnectedness of regions and their valuable artistic contributions to the global stage.

Yoko Morishita's artistic theme centers around the "liberation of women's minds." Throughout history, our society has been predominantly male-centered, and breaking free from these long-standing conventions requires time, ingenuity, and concerted effort. Morishita's approach and artwork, shaped by her own Japanese background and personal experiences, go beyond portraying women as a mere contrast to men. Instead, she offers a direct and unapologetic exploration of female beauty.

Morishita's work is attuned to the growing recognition and appreciation of women in the art world. By aligning with the natural demands of the current era, her art serves as an act of empowerment and encouragement for women. It reflects a sensitivity towards the evolving role and visibility of women, contributing to the ongoing narrative of female empowerment and challenging societal norms.

Joseph Ralph Fraia, an American of Italian descent, holds a perspective that Eastern women are seen as exotic, mysterious, graceful, opulent, and seductive from a Western viewpoint. He believes this captivating allure will endure even as globalization blurs the lines between East and West. Against the backdrop of notable instances of violence targeting Asian women in pandemic-stricken America, Fraia's perspective on appreciating Asian women becomes particularly valuable. It offers insight into cultural perceptions, challenges stereotypes, and emphasizes the importance of respect and appreciation for diverse cultures in fostering a more inclusive society.

Ola Rondiak, born in the United States, belongs to a Ukrainian family with a rich history. During World War II, Rondiak's grandmother, Paraskevia Michniak, was imprisoned by Russian occupiers. Despite the harsh conditions, Paraskevia displayed remarkable ingenuity by using fish bones as needles and repurposing cloth and threads from her own garments to clandestinely embroider religious Ukrainian icons. Under the luminous nights of the northern latitudes, she devoted 13 years to creating a collection of intricate artwork, carefully concealing it whenever possible. After her release, Paraskevia smuggled the artwork to her family in the United States. Ola often incorporates motifs adorned by her grandmother in her own work. War is hell, and art is salvation.

—Kyoko Sato



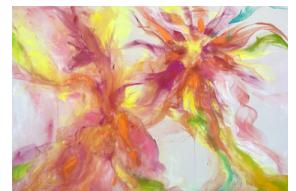
Koyuki Sakamoto, born in 1991 in Fukui Prefecture to a Korean father and Japanese mother, is a renowned artist and pastry chef. In 2008, she won the first BS Fuji Sweets Koshien competition and graduated from Kobe International Culinary Arts College of Confectionery in 2011. In 2018, while managing a cake decorating school in Fukui Prefecture, she began pioneering a new genre by creating sugar art on canvas using sugar as pigment. She held solo exhibitions at various shrines in Japan, including Hashiudo Shrine, Ryujo Shrine, Zenchidori Shrine, and Keya Kokuryu Shrine. In addition, she exhibited her work at the Hankyu Umeda main store in Osaka in 2021 and 2010. Since 2020, she has gained popularity for her live painting performances at World Art Dubai for three consecutive years.

Sugako Hamazaki, a distinguished designer, was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1960 and is currently based in Hiroshima. With a notable career spanning decades, she worked as a designer at Hakuholdo until 1991 and received esteemed awards such as the Chugoku Shimbun Advertising Planning Award and Tetra Pak International's "Design of the Year" Grand Prize. In recent years, Hamasaki has led the design course "Jugi no Sho" and contributed to the title production for the TV program "A Year at the Place of Prayer," centered around Hiroshima's atomic bombing. She has held impressive solo exhibitions at renowned venues, both domestically and internationally, including Hiroshima Mitsukoshi Gallery, Hakone Fujiya Hotel, Ueno Royal Museum, Gatoh, Iwasou, and Daishoin. Her international presence expanded through exhibitions at art fairs in Paris, Dubai, and SCOPE Miami Beach.



Tomo, born in Fukuoka, Japan in 1977, is an accomplished artist. Graduating from Daito Bunka University in 1999 with a BA in Chinese Literature and a teaching license in Japanese Language and Calligraphy, Tomo began teaching calligraphy classes in 2011. Notably, her artwork has been exhibited at Salon Art Shopping Paris (2021, 2022, Carrousel de Louvre), and she held a solo exhibition at Etienne Causans Gallery in 2022. She also participated in World Art Dubai (2022) and the group exhibition "JAPAN TIDE" at the National Museum of Singapore (2022). Tomo has upcoming exhibitions planned in Dubai and New York.

Yoko Morishita, born in Kagawa, Japan in 1972 and currently based in Tokyo. After graduating from Saga University of Art and Design in Kyoto in 1994, she embarked on her career as a designer and illustrator. Around 2017, she transitioned to becoming an artist, focusing on expressing women's emotional liberation, while also establishing her own company to empower women. Since 2019, Morishita has held three solo exhibitions and a performance in Tokyo, including the noteworthy "50 Onna no backs YOLO FES" exhibition (2022) organized by her company, Coco Designs, Inc. She has also performed at Kyojin Shrine in Kyoto and participated in the ATC OSAKA ART exhibition in Osaka in 2022. Additionally, she showcased her work at World Art Dubai and has upcoming exhibitions planned in Kazakhstan and New York. With 17,000 followers on Instagram, Morishita continues to captivate audiences with her artistic journey.



Joseph Ralph Fraia, born in Brooklyn, New York in 1976, is a talented artist who specializes in fine art photography. He is also an accomplished writer and storyteller. As a resident artist at the renowned Salmagundi Club in New York City, Freire has established himself within the art community. Additionally, he holds the position of chief editor and senior contributor at Livein Magazine, and he contributes as a writer and photo reporter for various international publications. Freire's photographic work encompasses a unique blend of styles and subjects, all with the intention of conveying profound and meaningful messages. His images seek to highlight the inherent beauty and purpose that can be found in every corner of our world.

Ola Rondiak, born in 1966, is a visual artist with bases in Kyiv, Ukraine, New York City, and Miami. Her artistic focus lies in contemporary portraits of women, which serve as metaphors of strength and determination. Additionally, her sculptures symbolize unity and healing. Rondiak has held solo exhibitions at prominent venues such as Ukrainian House in Washington, DC, The Gallery in New York, John William Gallery in Wilmington, Delaware, and Vodianov Studio in Kyiv, Ukraine. Notable group exhibitions featuring her work include LA Art Show (2023), Art Palm Beach (2023), Art Market Hamptons (2022), Palm Beach Modern & Contemporary (2022), Context Art Miami (2018, 2019, 2021, 2022), and the Hudson River Museum of Art (2020). Her artworks have been acquired by esteemed institutions, including the Museum of Revolution and Dignity in Kiev, Ukraine; the Embassy of Ukraine in Bern, Switzerland; the Shevchenko Museum & National Museum of Decorative Arts in Khaniv, Ukraine; the Embassy of Ukraine in Paris; and the Hudson River Museum in New York City. Notably, Rondiak's mural in Kyiv's historic district has become a symbol of the burgeoning street art movement in the city.



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