

Contemporary Japanese and Korean Artworks in the MIA's Collection

G374

Yoshitomo Nara, Japanese born 1959, *Your Dog*, 2001, fiberglass, edition 1 of 6, 74 x 48 x 97 inches, 2010.7

Born in 1959, he studied at the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music (1985–7) and then continued his studies at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf (1988–93).

Nara was raised in a Japan defined by working families. As such, Nara became a "latch-key kid," spending time outside of school with his imagination and pets for company. It is explained that, "He recalls his youth as a time of both loneliness and freedom, of coming home to his empty house, which was set in an open expanse far from others, with only a pet for comfort and company. In fact, one of Nara's recurring characters is a long-eared pup according to one story told by the artist, he abandoned a dog when he was a child, and the canine's presence seems to haunt him still" (V. Breuvert, ed., *VITAMIN P: NEW PERSPECTIVES IN PAINTING*, LONDON 2002, p. 232. Nara goes on to explain that, "My art represents my childhood experiences. It is not influenced by Japanese pop culture. I played with sheep, cats and dogs when I came home from school." Although parallels can be drawn to manga, the popular Japanese comic-strip form with child heroes and grim adult backdrops, Nara's tender and friendly dogs, as *Your Dog* demonstrates, offers absolution and tranquility.

Although they recall his own youth, Nara's images subvert conventional depictions of childhood as happy, simple and carefree. In the context of Japanese pop culture, they can also be seen as a critique of the extreme idealization of childhood known as *kawaii*. *Kawaii* is popularly used to describe anything cute, sweet and childlike. Exemplified by characters such as Hello Kitty and Pokemon, the cult of *kawaii* is commonly understood as a reaction to the extreme pressures that accompany adult life in Japan: a demanding school system, inflexible workplace hierarchies and highly conventional expectations for behavior and comportment.

<http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/07.21.04/nara-0430.html>

Yayoi Kusama, Japanese, born 1929, *Untitled*, 1967, oil on canvas, 2010.7

Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's work is widely diverse in theory and practice, including painting, drawing, sculpture, assemblage, performance, video, and installation. At one point, she ventured into the fashion world with her own clothing line. During the decade she lived in New York-1958 to 1968-she was especially known for her exuberant abstract paintings, which used a signature motif known as an "infinity net"-interlocking shapes painted with netlike patterns. In *Untitled*, Kusama added her characteristic polka dots over the infinity nets, creating yet

another dimension. This work was made shortly before she returned to Japan to seek treatment for the hallucinations and obsessive thoughts that had troubled her since childhood. Kusama has often said making art is the way she manages her obsessions. (MIA Label)

"...a polka-dot has the form of the sun, which is a symbol of the energy of the whole world and our living life, and also the form of the moon, which is calm. Round, soft, colorful, senseless and unknowing. Polka-dots become movement... Polka dots are a way to infinity.

Yayoi Kusama, Manhattan jisatsu misui joshuhan (Manhattan Suicide Addict), Kosakusha, Tokyo, 1978, (extract) reproduced in Hoptman et al., Yayoi Kusama, p.124

Yayoi Kusama, born March 22, 1929 is a Japanese artist and writer. Throughout her career she has worked in a wide variety of media, including painting, collage, sculpture, performance art and environmental installations, most of which exhibit her thematic interest in psychedelic colors, repetition and pattern. A precursor of the pop art, minimalist and feminist art movements, Kusama influenced contemporaries such as Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg. Although largely forgotten after departing the New York art scene in the early 1970s, Kusama is now acknowledged as one of the most important living artists to come out of Japan, and an important voice of the avant-garde.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRZR3nsileA>
<http://www.yayoi-kusama.jp>

Chiho Aoshima, Japanese, born 1974, City Glow, five screen animated film installation, 7 minutes (total running time), 21st century 2011.83 Bruce Ferguson, American, Collaborator

Chino Aoshima, born 1974, Tokyo, Japan) is a Japanese pop artist and member of Takashi Murakami's Kaikai Kiki Collective. Aoshima graduated from Department of Economics, Hosei University, Tokyo. She had a residency at Art Pace, San Antonio, Texas in 2006. This young graphic artist began in Murakami's factory with no formal art training. Aoshima's work often involves surreal scenes and dreamscapes, often including ghosts, demons, nature and young women. Aoshima mostly prints large scale images onto papers with heavy-duty printers, but she has also printed on materials such as leather and plastic surfaces to give her images different textures. Aoshima now lives and works in Tokyo.

Aoshima has also done a sculpture piece and an animation, and she has recently revealed her largest image yet which measures 32.5 meters in length and 4.8 meters in height. In addition, Aoshima has her work on the walls of the New York City Transit. The images in the train station are part of her City Glow Series. She is also displaying her work in an exhibition in the Gloucester Road tube station in London and the 14th Street – Union Square subway station in New York City. Aoshima states

that, "My work feels like strands of my thoughts that have flown around the universe before coming back to materialize."

The works of Aoshima are considered to be superflat, the postmodern art movement which was founded by Takashi Murakami.

Target Wing Atrium 3rd Floor

Emily Allchurch British, born 1974, photograph, transparency on light box

Tokyo Story 9: Bankside (after Hiroshige), 2012.3.9

Tokyo Story 2: Bridge (after Hiroshige), 2012.3.2

Tokyo Story 3: Night Harbor (after Hiroshige), 2012.3.3

Tokyo Story 6: Shrine (after Hiroshige), 2012.3.6

Tokyo Story 8: Temple (after Hiroshige), 2012.3.8

Emily Allchurch, born 1974, is a UK artist, living and working in London. She completed her MA at the Royal College of Art in 1999 and has since established an international reputation with her back-lit transparency works.

In 2009, Allchurch travelled to Tokyo and journeyed around the city to the sites of Hiroshige's great inspirations. The result is 'Tokyo Story', a set of images in homage to Hiroshige's last great work, One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (1856-58). Here, Allchurch re-creates ten of these impressive works through her use of contemporary photographic tools, blending digital software to embrace the spirit of Hiroshige's imagery. This work is the culmination of Allchurch's long-standing interest in Japanese woodblock prints in the ukiyo-e tradition ('pictures of the floating world' produced between the 17th and 20th centuries).

One Hundred Famous Views of Edo is celebrated for its striking compositions; with a dramatically enlarged and often sharply cropped foreground object, set against a distant view and for its mastery of bokashi; luminous cross-fading effects created through the graduated wiping of the ink on the printing blocks. 'I'm captivated by the vibrancy of these works,' says Allchurch, 'and wanted to follow in the footsteps of Hiroshige to see if I could update the series, from a modern-day perspective, using contemporary photographic tools and my use of back-lit imagery.'

Her technique employs taking dozens of digital images of, for example, different aspects of an actual landscape and, later in her studio, building up a collage, digitally, of the original picture that's inspired her. Much of her work has been produced using a mobile phone camera.

<http://francishodgson.com/2011/05/13/emily-allchurch-tokyo-story/>

G275

Yuji Honbori, Japanese, born 1958, Eleven-headed Kannon, 2012, cardboard, wood, plastic, pigments

Trained as a sculptor, Yuji Honbori has always been interested in using discarded materials in order to make his work. His first sculptures were small portable shrines (zushi) that he fashioned from old wood he discovered from the dismantling and rebuilding of a Shinto shrine. He first began experimenting with cardboard from discarded boxes (fruit and vegetable crates from his local grocery store) in 2004. He soon became fascinated with the gossamer quality of the cardboard as viewed through the corrugation. Honbori realized that this quality could suggest Buddhist notions of impermanence and ephemerality. For the last few years, he has been producing life-sized works in cardboard based on famous historic Buddhist sculptures. This piece is based on an 8th century sculpture in the collection of Shorinji Temple in Nara. (MIA Label)

G276

Yasumasa Morimura (b. 1951), An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Hand Shaped Earring), Japan, 2001, color photograph on canvas , 2010.25

Yasumasa Morimura has appeared as the Mona Lisa, Marilyn Monroe, and even the artist Cindy Sherman in his exploration of art and identity. In **this** work, Morimura casts himself as Frida Kahlo, the Mexican artist known for her lush, surreal self-portraits. Morimura self-defines as a cross between actor and artist, transforming himself into iconic figures from pop culture or art history by using a mix of makeup, costumes, painting and occasionally digital manipulation. The image is remarkably similar to its model (Kahlo's *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Dr. Eloesser and Daughters*, 1940), although the artist has modified a few details that touch on themes related to world cultures, gender, and celebrity. Kahlo's Mexican shawl, for example, has become a stylish Louis Vuitton wrap, and instead of fresh flowers Morimura wears a garish tiara of artificial blossoms atop his head that might resemble a Geisha's hair comb. Of this series Morimura said, "The various elements of Dona Frida and myself mix into a muddle and a chemical reaction occurs, creating this imaginary Frida of mine." A hand-painted backdrop further enhances the play between artist and subject, painting and photograph, imaginary and real. (MIA Label)

Takashi Murakami, Panda, 2002, fiberglass with antique Louis Vuitton trunk, Collection of Gordon Locksley and George T. Shea

Takashi Murakami is one of Japan's leading contemporary artists, internationally recognized for both fine art and commercial products. The artist's diverse body of work explores the intricacies of the global market, brand identity, and consumer desire, especially within the context of Japanese pop culture.

Since 2002, Murakami has been collaborating with handbag designer Louis Vuitton on the production of goods that blur the lines between art and commerce. Panda is one of many works born of Murakami's relationship with the designer. The panda character has become a logo, of sorts, for the collaboration, and is printed on

handbags and featured in animated promotional videos. Perched atop a vintage designer suitcase, Panda draws attention to the relationship between art and commerce and the reality that art can be defined as just another luxury item, like designer luggage. In addition to creating fine art for wealthy audiences, Murakami's factory-like studio (reminiscent of Andy Warhol's) also mass-produces cheaper goods for a larger market. The contradiction in Murakami's work further forces us to consider the connection between cultural goods and economic products.

G263

Do Ho Suh, Korean born 1962, Some/One 20th century, 2005, stainless steel, military dog tags, fiberglass resin, 2012.77a-d

Suh was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1962.

BFA and MFA in Oriental Painting from Seoul National University fulfilling his term of mandatory service in the South Korean military, Suh relocated to the United States to continue his studies at the Rhode Island School of Design and Yale University.

Cambria (Headings)

When the artist first came to the United States to study art, he felt displaced by cultural differences in America. He said he felt as if he were living in someone else's body and didn't know what to do with the stranger's hands and feet. He could have returned home, where he already had begun to make his mark as a painter. Instead, he used his sense of disorientation to create artworks that forge a richly expressive link between historical and contemporary concepts of culture, identity, and politics.

Based on a coat of traditional Asian armor, this sculpture is composed from thousands of polished military dog tags. As the title indicates, the work juxtaposes the collective—represented by the armored sculpture—and the individual—symbolized by the dog tags, each representing a single soldier. The imposing, larger-than-life robe stands in contrast to the thin, vulnerable dog tags, which may also be said to embody the poetic symbolism of fallen warriors. (MIA Label)

The chilling figure of Do Ho Suh's "Some/One," 2005, presents a sense of grandeur and invincibility – it gleams, it towers, with glorious power. But, upon close inspection, its majesty is conjured by not one, or one hundred, but countless individual army dog tags. Individual people. Each, like the figure in "Warrior with Shield," small enough to be lost by the wayside. It is their great anonymous number, drawn together, that conjures the force of the magisterial general. In a globalized world, where troops are placed in far-flung, remote areas of the world, warfare is at a distance from many of us. Yet, even today, in an age of unmanned drone warfare, the battle line is still made up of individual men and women, sacrificing life and limb. (MIA Globalization Label)

Not on View

Tetsuya Yamada (Japanese born 1968), *Morices*, United States, 2007, glazed ceramic plywood, particle board, wood, 2011.33a-n

Tetsuya Yamada was trained in Japanese ceramics and has a deep comprehension of Western art. His *Morices* are part of an elegant and formal trajectory in that history, which links them to the innovations of early modern masters of both sculpture and conceptual art. A prominent and well-established artist living in Minnesota, Yamada is inventive by nature and constantly stretches the limits of his mediums to create pieces of rare intellect and ingenuity. In addition to their art-historical pedigree, they are remarkably compelling works in their own right. Standing at almost human scale, each object has a distinct, individual character. Their pure and polished white ceramic "bodies" represent a purity of form and spirit. When they appear as a group, their power is compounded. As if they were made to be together, they take on a fascinating aura as if guarding some secret history or memory. (MIA Label)