

for centuries. One knows that the land will remain but the people and their memories, culture, and place will vanish.

By comparison Zhao Yuzhong's group shots are self-indulgent. They say little about today's world except perhaps its hedonism. Chen Jiagang's works speak to the Chinese *nouveau riche*, their ostentatious desires and pretensions. There is an arrogance and rough sense of entitlement about the new bourgeoisie in Chen's tableau-like photographs such as *Show Flat No.24* (2007). They speak to the kind of excesses and social and cultural arrogance that China fought to destroy in their Revolution. How fickle is memory and how corroding the power of money, for the more we change, the more we stay the same.

Miao Xiaochun has made a name for himself merging and deconstructing Classical Western artworks in which anonymous, naked, computer-generated figures replace the figures of the original work. Many of his dramatic photographic manipulations, which seek to make fresh discourse on subjective and objective

realities, questions of time, and empirical observation, have rightly gained critical acclaim for his sense of scale, content, and provocative vision. Miao's remarkable large C-print entitled *The Last Judgment in Cyberspace* (2006), for which he appropriated Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco, provokes the imagination through the use of his own image within the work and his photographing it from inside and outside the *Judgment*. In this show, however, Miao is represented by two 3-D animated videos entitled *Disillusion* and *Restart* (both 2010, 10 min. and 9 sec. and 14 min. 22 sec., respectively) and two photographs entitled *Similarity* and *H2O Bacchanal-S*.

Miao's 3-D animations are an extension of his photographic work. With his continuous and ever-changing animated narratives Miao is able to provide more information and livelier action for his viewers' imaginations than he can through the stillness and formality of his photographs. His animations draw out his tales of the contemporary world's woes, both collective and individual. By



Chen Jiagang, *Show Flat No.42.*, 2007.



Miao Xiaochun, *Similarity*, 2008, 120 x 208 cm. Images: Courtesy of Contemporary by Angela Li.



Paul Davies, Seidler, tree, pool, 2011, acrylic on linen, 153 x 122 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and The Cat Street Gallery.

being animated in black and white Miao can concentrate on his line and the sparseness of his figures and their activities, hewn from stone and set free to wander the world alienated and questioning. In his photographs *H2O Bacchanal-S*, which harks back to Miao's concern with classical Western painting, and *Similarity*, a surrealistic vision of the chaos and pain of contemporary society Miao is both the observer and the observed, the subject and the and object, the documenter and the documented. Through Miao's works we are looking at the past and the present, both of which collide in the viewer's mind to make for new questions about life and time, death and desire.

The photographs and video works in this show are by turns metaphors for the rest of the world and its ills, a record of past and present united in fanciful dream, an articulation of how we can create new photographic evidence of our struggles, and as witnesses to a rapidly changing era and its dynamic. The six artists here play with time and space in ways that alter our emotional perspective on what is real and what is false around us and within us. Through some of their artistic visions we come to ask questions of ourselves in our own time: that can be no bad thing.

Ian Findlay

Paul Davies at The Cat Street Gallery

Australian artist Paul Davies's exhibition *Void* comprises 15 linen canvases offering the instant appeal of clean and colorful visuals. Davies has an obsession with Modernist architecture (elegantly named a 'fascination' in the exhibition's short accompanying text) that is central to each work. He stencils and paints flat-roofed private residences nestled in beautiful parts of the world (or is it the houses that makes the spots beautiful?) and captures them—through a skilled play with light—as the main characters in snapshot narratives void of any humans or animals. The artist has recently visited examples of the architectural style in Australia and America. In this exhibition, some works focus on the house and some on the relationship between the house and nature.

The structure of these sophisticated homes turns intimidating environments, as in *Jervis Bay Dune Trees* (2011) (one painting in which there is no home, only Australian South Coast wilderness) into comfortable and somewhat luxurious locations from which to view a non-stop display of beautiful moments in time. The houses seem to cooperate, highlighting every positive quality that makes the location physically and atmospherically unique.

Specific trees are reproduced, and the sense of location is so powerful that it seems that it would make no difference if one were inside the house looking out or, as in these works, outside looking in, for either way where we are is the star. *House + Aspens + Lake* (2010) and *Empty pool, Forest, Home* (both 2010) freely evoke a reminder in anybody who has experienced the silence of snow or the cosiness of *après ski*. *Night forest, Modern home* (2009) will trigger memories in viewers who have stayed a night or two in forest or bushland beside a lake. Only the beautiful *Dragon Garden* is out of place here—not only a departure from the theme but also more poster-like, with less character and edge than the others.

In the controlled, luminescent perfection of each painting, there is the overwhelming sense that Davies likes things to be orderly. Even natural elements, whether it is ghost gums and snowfall or palm trees and cloudless skies, have been expressed with stark spaces, solid lines, and block colors giving the paintings a bold and attractive print-like quality. But for Davies it seems intentional that a house, swimming pool or fence inserts an element of 'man-made' into each scene through which the beauty of the natural surroundings can be appreciated all the more. And with (or despite) Davies's treatment, nature in these landscapes is certainly sublime. In turn, the architecture becomes another thing to marvel at, for causing so little obstruction to the environment in which it was placed.

In each painting the building cuts the spot where land meets sky, in variations of low, high, and centered horizons, as if the artist is following the Rule of Thirds. This and a high degree of realism cause the images to look slightly photographic. There is even a photorealistic quality in some parts of the works, such as in the empty and rusted swimming pools of *Mt Cameron House I* (2009). Overall, they look like less painterly versions of Hockney's works of similar

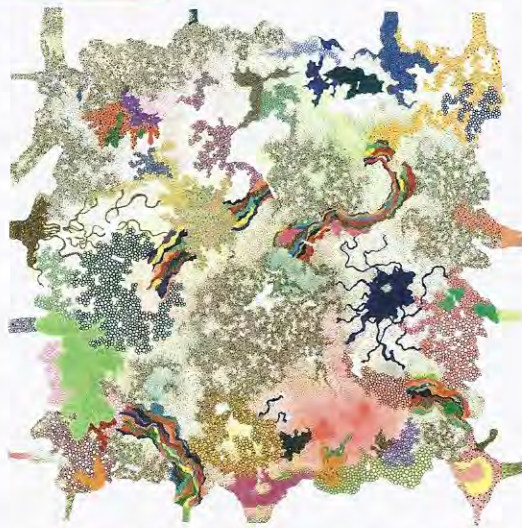
subject matter, especially *Home, Pool, Forest* (2010) in which electric blue trees are reflected in a swimming pool that fills almost the entire foreground of an otherwise white scene. The use of stencil provides the precision to integrate architectural drawing and painting on the one canvas, and to build a recognizable juxtaposition between manufactured and organic. Blacked out windows, seen often in building design, are there, but often in the form of shapes such as palm fronds, showing the building to be real and already brought into physical reality.

Davies constructs natural elements with something akin to camouflage print—many bright and unusual tones become diffused in their complimentary uses, sacrificed for the greater good of a captivating scene. Many of the colors he uses are as unnatural as the architecture shown and yet do not really look out of place. In fact, they appear like natural occurrences of sunlight, moonlight, and shadow announcing the time of day or night. Burnt orange and dark plum color tree trunks and grass, and lime green and violet color the glass-like surfaces of swimming pools. The artist's palette cannot be called pastel but there is clever muting; instead of blue there is turquoise, instead of green there's khaki, instead of yellow it's mustard, and instead of pink Davies uses peach. White is used extensively, a opportune necessity in the buildings, fences, and snow, and black as slick as oil makes everything pop. The result is appreciation of great design, natural or man-made, an improvement on the world in which we live without really changing a thing.

Kathleen Suraya Warden

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VIWA and Tomoaki Tarutani at Karin Weber Gallery

Although this small exhibition is entitled *Adding Dimension: A collaboration* by VIWA (b.1976



Tomoaki Tarutani, MICHIKO, 2011, mixed media print, 60.6 x 60.6 cm. Edition 2 of 10. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Karin Weber Gallery.

Saitama) and Tomoaki Tarutani (b.1984, Kyoto), it is essentially two separate exhibitions in one, with the unifying elements being their youthful works and experiences. These two young Japanese artists have created small works, intimate in scale. Both artists' paintings are informed by a juxtaposition of experiences of contemporary time and place and a sense of collective history through subject matter and forms.

There is a misguided perception among many people that contemporary Japanese art has become little more than a child-like curiosity, merely an extension of the world of *otaku* in which video and computer technologies, anime and manga comic characters dominate in various dimensions. Such things are certainly the norm among many contemporary Japanese art aficionados, but there are innumerable young artists like VIWA and Tomoaki Tarutani for whom art influences and inspirations are drawn from a much wider world, and not at all influenced by work of Takashi Murakami who has distorted

the traditional line between high and low art. But given that VIWA and Tomoaki Tarutani are still relatively young, it is not surprising that the immediacy of contemporary culture informs their artistic vision.

Although there were too few works to really represent each artist in this show, there were enough to gain some important things about their art. Both artists clearly love color and action, which is abstract for the most part. Tarutani is clearly contemporary in his vision; it is one that is not out of place in the neon-lit worlds in which the young congregate. VIWA's colors and line are more subdued and his forms suggest something of another artistic tradition.

VIWA's series entitled *Kinzi-Unsui-Kei* (2011)—acrylic and nonferrous metal powder on canvas—is, at first glance, lively and dramatically contemporary in its color and line. A closer look, however, suggests a number of decorative painting traditions on silk and for screens that were prevalent in Japan, Korea, and China for



VIWA, Kinzi-Unsui-Kei 1, 2011, acrylic AND nonferrous metal powder on canvas, 29.5 x 60cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Karin Weber Gallery.