



New York, Shanghai
136-20 38th Avenue, 4th Floor (Main Street & 39th Ave) Flushing, NY 11354
Telephone: 212-359-4333 <http://www.crossingart.com>

For Immediate Release

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Kotaro Fukui: Ostriches and Silent Flowers

Press preview: Thursday June 19th, 2008 2:00 - 4:00pm

Opening reception: Saturday June 21st, 2008 3:00 - 5:00pm

Artist Demonstration: Saturday June 28th, 2008 2:00pm

Exhibition Dates: June 21 to July 26, 2008

(NEW YORK, NY- June, 2008) Crossing Art Gallery proudly presents *Kotaro Fukui: Ostriches and Silent Flowers*. In his solo Crossing Art Gallery debut, Kotaro Fukui imparts a wide array of works that address themes of nature, body and eastern spirituality.

The *Ostriches and Silent Flowers* exhibition is anchored by the eloquent *Flightless* series which investigate movement through line while portraying an ostrich and the *Silent Flowers* series that parade luscious blue Iris motifs across brilliant, majestic gold backgrounds. These two distinguished bodies of work will be accentuated by the display of Fukui's Kimono paintings, the infamous fashion masquerade body painting photographs and his *Ostrich Eggs* and *Abstract Ostrich* series.

Fukui compels the audience to ask questions by investigating the spaces that divide light and dark. We suddenly find ourselves surrounded by the areas in between, an interim space that illustrates contrasting notions such as, 'Black and White', 'Big and Small' and 'Straight and Curved'. The unique way Fukui captures these spaces allows for new forms of reality. He produces new found truths through the expression of conflicting opposites or paradoxes. The rotund shape and rich black coloring of the ostrich's body in juxtaposition to the linear shape of the bird's extended neck set the stage for the magnetism of opposites. Kotaro's vision and talent unfolds through a range of materials, lyrical expressions, and historical influences of traditional Japanese art. His work is notably steeped in the tradition of Nihonga and the modern Japanese avant-garde.

***Kotaro Fukui: Ostriches and Silent Flowers* is curated by Luchia Meihua Lee. She has curated numerous exhibitions and events internationally. Lee has also organized and participated in a variety of lecture series' on Asian Art in America.**



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Artist Background:

As a fourth generation artist, Kotaro Fukui grew up bounded within the traditions of Nihonga and the avant-garde of the Japanese modern art world. His father was active in the passionate Japanese modern art movement of the 1960s and 70s. His great-grandfather, Koutei Fukui, was a master of Nihonga (Japanese style painting) and an important figure in the Japanese art world. Koutei Fukui was an esteemed professor at the prestigious Tokyo School of Art, (the precursor to Tokyo University of Art). During the late 1800s and early 1900s there was a major social upheaval in Japan, which was rapidly Westernizing and disregarding Japanese traditions. Consequently, Nihonga and other styles of Japanese art fell out of favor domestically. Many Japanese masterpieces wound up in American collections like the work found in the Boston Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Kotaro Fukui saw this lack of domestic patronage as a crisis and in response worked feverously with his mentor Kawabata Gyokusho (1842-1913) to categorize Japanese Nihonga as a unique concept distinct from Western painting. Given this family history, the hidden but broad potential of art as an enduring conversation between the past and present has been etched into Fukui's psyche.

Exhibition Layout:

The Ostrich

Fukui has been greatly affected by the work of famous and innovative Japanese artist, Matazou Kayama (1927-2004). Even though influenced by Kayama, Fukui has found a subject and theme uniquely his own, the ostrich. Fukui was fascinated by the beautiful eyes and the shape of the ostrich. The ostrich paintings, in a certain sense, are not concretely related to the ostrich. The ostrich acts as a metaphor for an underlying meaning. Fukui uses the ostrich as a body in which to convey the existence of opposites and as a means for the exploration of opposites. To Fukui, making an artwork is not about making memories because sentimental stories don't resonate in his paintings.

Silent Flowers

The changing sunlight, as revealed each hour of the day, characterizes the direction of the *Silent Flower* series. The way that an iris blooms reflects the natural movement of the sun. When overwhelmed by sunlight the flower opens, lacking light the flower closes. Fukui attempts to mirror the way in which natural light moves and its consequential effects on the natural world.



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Since ancient times in the Far East, it has been said that an iris is a powerful talisman against evil. In Japan, it was anticipated that by painting an iris on a soldier's armor and helmet, that he would be protected from evil enemies. The iris, as it stands up straight towards the sky, symbolizes longevity. The artist intuits human nature in the role of the plant. In addition, the blue of the petals is the color of the sky, the sea, the space where life is born and the color of the earth when seen from above.

Artist Statement for the silent flower

When complete peace comes,
How should I suffer?
In our heart and in the society, there exists the light and the darkness.
They never leave our hearts.
The Light and the Darkness exist within us
Whilst they fight each other, we slowly grow up having contained them
However, from a physical viewpoint, we grow in the darkness, take a little light, and then return into the darkness again.
I want to give off the light in the darkness, existing in the same place without change, linking the past, present, and future!
At the same time, I want to paint something that questions our existence, which investigates the truth in the light and darkness.
I paint, with these thoughts in my mind.
Working through the early morning light, the noon light, the light that is from the afternoon to the evening, the light of the candle, and the lamp at night has changed.
Now there lies only my work, the light that surrounds us, changing every moment just like our daily lives.
In Eastern philosophy "the light and the shade" or "the positive and the darkness" are divided by very vague boundaries.
Everything in nature is made from what its opposite supplements not by what it opposes and overcomes.

-Kotaro Fukui, 2008

Blank or Negative Space

The use and specific intention of negative space is generally one of the most critical differences between Oriental and Western style paintings. In East Asia, negative space is not simply decorative but has meaning, and is commonly referred to as "the beauty of



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extra white." When including negative space while painting nature, Asian artists attempt to express a world in the depth of space. In eastern philosophy, all creatures on this planet, human beings, mountains, rivers, animals, plants are seen as one in the whole space.

Materials

The materials used in traditional Japanese paintings are natural mineral pigments and Indian ink. The color of Fukui's iris is made from crushed lapis lazuli. This was also used for the eyes of the golden mask of Tutankhamen and in the famous Vermeer painting, "The Girl with a Pearl Earring".

" In the same way a man breathes, a Japanese painting breathe and has life."

–Kotaro Fukui

The raw materials for the paper consist of a mixture of plant fibers. Each individual piece is hand made, in contrast to western machine-made canvas. The tough nature of the plant fiber results in a very strong paper called washi, a traditional Japanese paper. The natural elements of washi allow the paint to "breathe" by first absorbing, then expelling moisture, which is suitable for both humid and dry environments. In Japan, the cycles of moist and dry climate make the washi breathe. This is a crucial part of the painting process. The combination of all these materials makes the painting alive. The basic colors that stay in a Japanese painting result from the use of gelatin in the glue. This specific gelatin is found in animal skin and bone collagen. This glue is water based, and like the washi also allows breathing.

Wall Painting Demonstration

On June 28th, at 2:00pm, artist Kotaro Fukui will begin a mural drawing on the ceiling of the Crossing Art Time Tunnel. Come watch the artist as creates a site specific wall drawing using free lines and natural curves along the tubular walls. Meet the artist and observe his immense concentration and movement while he works.



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About Crossing Art

Crossing Art 日新月藝 provides a new 8,000 square foot venue for contemporary art exhibitions and a wide variety of art events. It is a place where various cultures can meet and find common ground in art.

Art spans time and space, and blurs geographical boundaries because it allows free expression. This is vital for a diverse society to exist in enlightened harmony: the more we know about others express themselves, the more we will understand what is important to them. To facilitate this interaction, we have established Crossing Art, where we will host exhibitions, artist roundtables, and other cultural events.

Crossing Art reaches out to talent that, although recognized elsewhere, we have not yet had the chance to experience. Avoiding mainstream strictures, Crossing Art opens its doors to new ideas from around the world in its search for novel perspectives. From our New York base, and a sister location in Shanghai, China's most dynamic and open city, we will monitor the pulse of Asian contemporary art.

Unexpectedly located in a commercial building, Crossing Art aspires to become a destination for the next wave of artists and art lovers. In keeping with our vision, we have located Crossing Art not in Chelsea or Soho, but in Queens - the most diverse county in the United States, but otherwise peripheral to established art circuits.

Admission and Gallery Hours

Admission is free

Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11:00 - 6:00p.m. or by appointment

For additional Information contact:

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