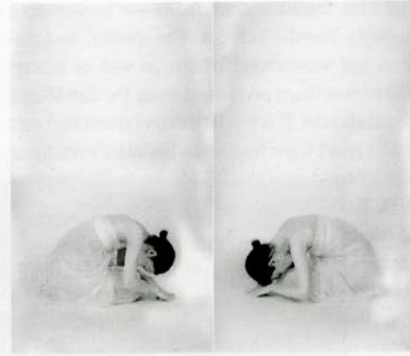
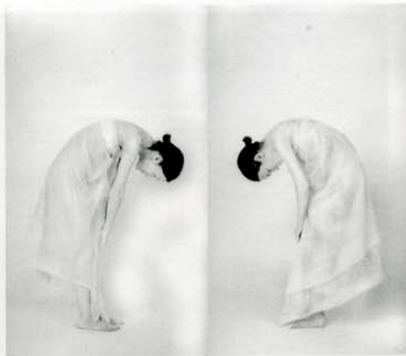


## Mimi Kato: Dance of Communication

C-Art

Catherine Walworth



Mimi Kato, *Dance of Communication*, 2004  
Digital prints on paper; Edition of two  
50 x 30 inches

Japan, as a nation, first opened up to outside influences in 1853, when American Commodore Matthew Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay and forced a wary Emperor Edo to end two centuries of seclusion. Our two countries have demonstrated a mutual obsession ever since.

In Mimi Kato's case, however, "East meets West" is an existential condition. The Japanese-born artist's solo debut in San Antonio, *Dance of Communication*, is a very personal acknowledgment of the self: both her Japanese self and the persona that developed during her years attending art school in America.

Kato's photographs at C-Art are black and white digital prints on long sheets of paper, hung in pairs from the ceiling at eye level. This could have created a scroll-like appearance, but ultimately, the work relates more to pull-down film screens, giving the succession of images a cinematic quality. The black ink of each print is soft—emergent rather than indelible. A faded quality is perfect in this setting: white walls and ceiling and a white brick fireplace covered with a faint dusting of ash.

Every pair of Kato's self portraits, hung face to face, represents the artist's Eastern half meeting her Western half. In each, she stands barefoot and bare-shouldered, wearing a makeshift gown of gauzy white material pulled tight at the bust.

In terms of her figure, Kato's waifish angularity is both attractive and defensive: sharp elbows seem to hold the viewer outside the frame. Her

hair is backswept into an imperfect little knot, with bobby pins visible. Tiny digital crystals in her hair mimic the fireplace ash dusted about the space. This texture gives each work a kiln-fired quality.

As one weaves in and out of the photographs, taking in images on both the front and back of each print, a beginning and an end emerges. By the front door, figures stand in greeting. In each progressive set, the figures follow a succession of subtly different poses that concludes in a final bow low to the ground.

Because you cannot see every pose at once, the series of stations that leads to the artist's final earthbound pose occurs to you gently. If these photographs were hung along the wall, the sequence would be easily apparent, but the experience of the images would lack a sense of revelation.

Kato's work is self-absorbed but not in a narcissistic way: her identity simply does not rely on the viewer's gaze to make it whole. Instead, her two selves are isolated in communication—whispering to the other, listening intently and, at times, giving a subtle palm-up gesture of receiving whatever the other half is offering. The work is the complete antithesis of the way we are used to seeing images of women—as fetishized objects intended for the gaze of others.

There is a growing clutch of women artists from Japan who use photography to create feminine spheres of identity. Kato uses herself as subject but in a way wholly unlike the slick, hyper-bubblegum

fantasies of Mariko Mori or Miwa Yanagi's *Elevator Girls*, which presents young Japanese women as elevator operators dressed uniformly and stuck in a role of limited faculty.

Yanagi, however, eschews this stilted sense of identity in the recent series *My Grandmothers* in which she asked young Japanese women where they would ultimately like to be in life and then staged their fantasies, prematurely aging her models through photographic manipulation in an uncanny manifestations of becoming and attaining.

Similarly, Kato's interiorizing photographs are beautiful in their imperfections and faded patina. Her diptychs are wrapped in a wholeness that doesn't allow room for insecurity or anxiety, which are both so much a part of contemporary art and culture. The mental wellness in Kato's work may also be a facet of beauty's reemergence, a counterpoint to pop-culture phenomena like *Extreme Makeover*, which dissect the surface from substance.

While it might be bad feminist form to compare women to vessels, the way Kato portrays herself, bobby pins and all, shares the *wabi sabi* of a salt-glazed stoneware pot. In a Japanese tea ceremony, a crack or a chip makes a vessel more highly prized.



# The art capades

BY CATHERINE WALWORTH  
cswalworth@yahoo.com

It's FotoSeptiembre, which means most of the city's galleries are showing — you guessed it — photography [see "Feeling negative," and "I hate it! I'll take two," August 25-31, 2005]. While it may seem like a gluttonous monopoly, it is also a good chance to examine the medium through a myriad of interpretations. A good place to start is i2i Photography and Gallery where Alex Lopez curated *Untrue Lies*. Each of the three artists shows just a few works but the overall large scale is enjoyable. UTSA graduate student Mimi Kato is probably the next big thing in San Antonio, as soon as this and her C-Art solo show have made their impact. She exhibits powerful life-size self-portraits from her *Generations* series that explore traditional Japanese culture. The white body paint, mask, angularity of hands and figure, and haunting quality of her open mouth are ghostly frozen images with a Butoh performance quality. Her silken red-and-white kimonos relate to bridal finery but recall, with subtle effect, the Japanese flag.

In works from his *Hopes and Fears* series, George Ramirez poses three young females lost in thought. Two look like they just finished a soap-opera marathon and duly fainted; one stands at a crosswalk with no intention of taking a step — her face showing interesting complexity against a background steeped in vivid greens.

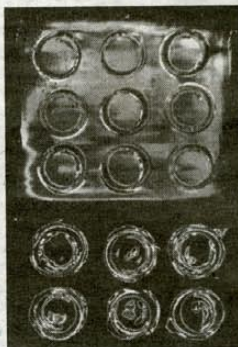
Patrick Putze, like Ramirez, has a thing for young women. His, however, are over-the-top, tricked out like strippers on schoolgirl night. He manages to surpass this, however, by putting them in front of a boarded-up, single-story house in "Occurrence #6." The composition, with its repetition of threes, bands of house and sky, and interplay of blues and greens, is sexier than the girls hanging around in front of the building.

Photography isn't the dull recorder it once was thought to be, and its bag of tricks gets bigger everyday. The UTSA Satellite Space uses its group photography show *Reconstruction: Making Pictures* to gather artists who stage their photographs using theatrical props and manipulation. Co-curator by Robert McAn, whose recent show at REM Gallery revealed his love of miniatures, and UTSA graduate student Julie Shipp, the show brings together several out-of-towners, and puts local artist Juan Miguel Ramos' images in a new context.

Kathy Lovas presents two installations that use old family photographs from an earlier era when it seems amazing that some of these people actually had cameras. In "Company House," images of small children posing on family land are applied to wooden two-by-fours leaning against the walls. Beneath the photos, words such as "river," "steps," and "water tower" name prominent back-



Clockwise from lower left: "#5" by Susan Kae Grant; "9 over 6" by Michael C. Howell; "Generations - Bride" by Mimi Kato; "Museum Peace" by Tom Wilson.



ground features with the look of vintage flash cards. The room, which you can enter, is filled with shredded *Wall Street Journals* like hay in a hayloft, recreating the lovely floating sensation of walking in shoes after skating.

Susan Kae Grant creates black-and-white silhouettes of little girls, floating cribs, babies mysteriously in mid-air, and men who resemble Jean-Paul Sartre in profile slinking existentially by. The artist softens the two-dimensionality with blurred edges and bent shadows, nuancing their adult fairy-tale charm.

Nearby Joan Grona Gallery features a solo show of Ricardo Romo's festive images of Mexico, all proceeds from the sale of which go to a Fox Tech High School scholarship. A second show brings together Michael Howell, Thomas Willome, his son Jason Willome, and Tom Wilson, who push photography to an almost unrecognizable form, each in their own way. Howell makes beautiful little "chemigrams" with a camera-less process related to painting. Both Willomes apply clear gel to their images, though in very different ways. In "What My Dream," Jason embeds home movies in a pillow that puffs out like an expectant tummy, claiming his lineage and running with it. Across the room, Tom Wilson uses suckers, medical trays, and World War I artifacts to structure his own photographs' meanings. •



## GALLERY STROLL

"Yokai zyukkei: scenery with monsters"

Joan Grona Gallery  
Blue Star Arts Complex, 1400 S.  
Alamo St., No. 112, (210) 225-6334  
Through Aug. 26

Japanese-born Mimi Kato revived some of the benevolent monsters she remembers from childhood tales for her UTSA master of fine arts thesis project.

Wearing masks and costumes, she plays all the monsters and other characters in her series of Contemporary computer-manipulated photographs. Set against mostly

white backgrounds, the animals and spirits dance and cavort in front of modern urban backdrops, including the skyline of Kato's home city, Osaka, as well as a construction site and a dump.

"I started by making the costumes and then doing a whole bunch of photo shoots," Kato said. "I used a blue screen like they do in the movies so I could blank out the background and add hand-drawn images. These images are all based on stories I grew up with, but the monsters were never really that bad. And they don't all appear in the same story. I wanted to bring my monsters into contemporary society."

Kato said she was partly in-



In 'Beach,' Mimi Kato's assorted monsters dance around a mound of trash as if it were a bonfire.

COURTESY JOAN GRONA GALLERY

spired by the 11th-century prints of Japanese artist Toba Sojo, who used free line ink drawings against a white background. He is also known for his frolicking animal prints, which are thought to be caricatures of Buddhist priests.

In her white and green costumes with animal masks, Kato was able to make herself appear different sizes, portraying characters from young children to elders as well as giant monsters. In "Beach," the monsters dance around a pile of trash resembling a bonfire, and in "Baseball" they play the game with the city sky-

line in the distance.

Kato drew in the images of steam shovels, skyscrapers and dump trucks, which resemble portions of scenes from an anime.

Playful and whimsical, Kato's large-scale photographic prints combine a contemporary sensibility with classical Japanese techniques for a stunning effect.

Kato made her local debut last year during Fotoseptiembre with "Dance of Communication" at the C-Art Space. The Dallas Center for Contemporary Art is currently featuring her work in its "Mix" series. She also was included in the

2005 New Orleans Triennial at the New Orleans Museum of Art, and she has a show scheduled to open in November at the Galveston Art Center.

In the second gallery, another UTSA graduate student, Brian Jobe, created a series of small sculptures corresponding to each letter in the alphabet. Using plastic ties, nylon thread, buttons, beads, beans and a gray plastic bag filled with plaster as the basic components, Jobe evokes clotheslines, bags of treasure, space aliens and other oddly decorative objects.

— Dan R. Goddard



# 'Nightmares & Dreams', suspense y terror en TNT

Hoy a las 8 pm se inicia esta serie basada en textos de Stephen King

RAFAEL CARBALLO

Un hombre llega todavía vivo a su propia autopsia, un asesino a sueldo es atacado por juguetes hasta matarlo, o bien, un escritor decide cambiar su puesto con el personaje que escribe y queda preso en su propia novela.

Estas son sólo algunas de las historias que podrá encontrar en esta nueva serie de TNT, *Nightmares & Dreamscapes* (Pesadillas y sueños) a partir de hoy 12 de julio.

Basada en textos del maestro del terror y del suspense, Stephen King, la serie consta de ocho capítulos independientes de una hora en las que se narran historias que, como el título presagia, pueden

confundirse con sueños o con verdaderas pesadillas.

## Sueño y mal sueño

Un sueño es la experiencia de imágenes, sonidos, voces, palabras, pensamientos y sensaciones mientras se está dormido. Una pesadilla es un sueño intenso que trata sobre cosas que para el soñador son particularmente perturbadoras.

Los cuentos escritos por Stephen King se mantienen en esa tenue línea que, a pesar de ser obviamente un producto de la imaginación o de un sueño, siempre mantienen esa conexión posible con la realidad.

Para lograr eso no hay mejor escritor que Stephen King y es esa conexión entre sueño y realidad lo que integra más al espectador y le hace permanecer al filo del asiento en todo momento.

En cada historia se demuestra la experiencia que tiene el escritor en el manejo del suspense. Basta con recordar películas como *Carrie* (1976), la primera vez que figuró un texto suyo para el guión de una cinta, o los sonados éxitos *Stand By Me* o *The Shawshank Redemption*, por sólo mencionar algunas de las más de 100 producciones en las que ha estado ejerciendo de guionista.

## Capítulo por capítulo

La serie tiene programados ocho capítulos y retoma el formato de viejos programas como *Night Gallery* o *The Twilight Zone*, en los que cada vez se presentaban historias separadas, con personajes y con temas distintos.

La ventaja de este formato es que hace más ágiles las historias.

Además, la producción tuvo la



**GRAN ELENCO.** La nueva serie de TNT cuenta con un reparto de primer nivel, con nombres de la talla de William Hurt (detrás izq.) y William H. Macy (en el centro).

oportunidad de contar con actores de primer nivel para cada capítulo. Por ejemplo, William H. Macy (*Magnolia*), Tom Berenger (*Platoon*) y William Hurt (*The Village*), quien protagoniza el primer capítulo,

'Battleground', que podrá ver sin cortes publicitarios hoy a las 8 pm, seguido del capítulo 'Crouch End'. Cada miércoles podrá ver dos capítulos seguidos, con repeticiones los jueves a las 10 pm.



**'EL DESFILE',** con Mimi Kato como creadora y protagonista de su arte.

MIMI KATO

## Mimi y los monstruos de la infancia

Una artista japonesa deslumbra a la ciudad con una exposición muy diferente

ENRIQUE LOPETEGUI

"San Antonio's next big thing (la gran promesa de San Antonio)", fue como describió el *San Antonio Current* a Mimi Kato, una artista multidisciplinaria japonesa cuya muestra tomó a todos por sorpresa: *Yokai zuyukkei: scenery with monsters*.

En la mejor tradición estética que combina el dibujo, la fotografía, las danzas *butoh* y hasta el cine de Akira Kurosawa (quienes vieron *Dreams* sabrán a lo que me refiero), Kato eligió un tema poco utilizado en el arte moderno.

"Los monstruos están desapareciendo de la imaginación de la sociedad contemporánea", explica Kato en su declaración de principios, que nos lleva a un mundo donde los monstruos "eran nuestros amigos", pero también algo temible. "Sus historias facilitaban la

enseñanza moral de los niños".

Pero esos monstruos no son ni Godzilla ni el Lobo Feroz, sino los 'zorros' de las leyendas japonesas.

"Los experimenté íntimamente por medio de libros de cuentos en mi niñez e imaginaba que se me aparecían", continuó Kato. "Pero ahora prácticamente no los veo en el mundo, como si estos monstruos no pudiesen adaptarse a la velocidad del mundo de hoy".

La exhibición consiste en cuadros (fotografías y dibujos) y un par de pantallas con videos.

"Con este trabajo trato de recuperar a estos monstruos y los muestro viviendo en un contexto contemporáneo".

La respuesta del público la sorprendió.

"Cuando trabajo estoy tan metida en el proyecto que no puedo hablar de él", dijo Kato a RUMBO. "Pero los comentarios del público me ponen muy feliz y me dan herramientas para entenderme mejor a mí misma".

Más información en [www.mimikato.com](http://www.mimikato.com).

## YOKAI ZYUKKEI: SCENERY WITH MONSTERS

Exposición de Mimi Kato

■ **DÓNDE:** Joan Grona Gallery, 112 Blue Star (Blue Star Art Complex en King William).

■ **CUÁNDO:** La exposición continúa hasta el 26 de agosto. Gratis.

■ **HORARIOS:** Se recomienda hacer una reservación llamando al 225-6334.

■ **MÁS INFORMACIÓN:** [www.mimikato.com](http://www.mimikato.com) [www.joangronagallery.com](http://www.joangronagallery.com)



## The Arts

# Friends and other animals



but also other creatures. In some stories fox spirits assume human form and hapless individuals find, belatedly, that they have married them, not always to their dissatisfaction. The term fox wedding, Kato explains, is used to describe sunshine through rain – a sun-shower – when it seems that nature is in a slightly different mode than usual and there's a bit of magic in the air.

**Visual Arts**  
**Aidan Dunne**  
**Fox Wedding.** Mimi Kato, Ballina Arts Centre, Barrett Street, Ballina until Sept 1 096-73593 **Cetorthinus Maximus**, Abha Teangal Studios, Dooagh, Achill Island, until Aug 28 098-43414 **Emerging Artists (and some old friends)**, Boyle Arts Festival Exhibition, King House, Boyle Finished Aug 11

Foxes loom large in Japanese folklore, and Mimi Kato's exhibition at the Ballina Arts Centre, *Fox Wedding*, draws not only the mythological role of the fox

In the three-screen performance video that gives her show its title, she presents a fox wedding procession making its way from right to left, playfully negotiating its way across each screen and the spaces between, before disappearing, like a dream vision. Wearing traditional animal masks and garbed in her own costumes, Kato is an agile physical performer and plays every part, weaving her way through space with dance-like movements that are both angular and sinuous, while the sound of heavy rain permeates the space.

She also features in a series of related photographic pieces that make up the balance of the show, embodying different animal spirits. Digitally created backgrounds evoke classical Japanese screen painting and fabric design. Although they



**Stage 1 (2006)**  
by Sinead Ní Mhaonaigh, one of the artists in the *Emerging Artists (and some old friends)* exhibition at the Boyle Arts Festival

are in a sense monsters, Kato's creatures are decidedly non-threatening. While they are derived from a pre-modern time, when demons were conjured out of the darkness and helped to make sense of a big bad world, she presents them in a variety of contemporary situations, and that is largely the point of her work.

In losing these old stories and the customs and superstitions underpinning them, she suggests, we have also lost some essential knowledge of our place in the world. If you knew what was good for you, you kept these spirits happy, but what kept them happy was, she feels, good for everyone. In her photographic tableaux she introduces various animal spirits to such contemporary activities as recreational sports and visiting the recy-

cling centre. She has a light touch – it is an exhibition that children would certainly enjoy – but never at the expense of trivialising the import of what she's saying. Her work is elegantly made and genuinely thought-provoking.

**CETORHINUS MAXIMUS** at the Abha Teanga Studios in Dooagh is the fifth exhibition by the Achill Artists' Group. Achill has played an important role in Irish visual art (Paul Henry's work was decisively shaped by his time there) and the basking shark, from which the show's title is taken, is closely associated with the island. When the naturalist Robert Lloyd Praeger first visited Achill over a century ago, it was a place of desperate, almost unbelievable poverty, and its transformation, very slowly at first and latterly very quickly, make it a microcosm of development in the West of Ireland generally, with all the ambivalent feelings that entail.

This makes it all the more important that the Achill Artists' Group exists at all and that it exhibits on the island, for Achill could easily be defined as being on the one hand a kind of heritage site and on the other a seasonal resort knocked sideways by unconstrained development, rather than a living, evolving community.

Sculptor John McHugh, born and based in the centre of Dooagh, deals directly with the legacy of the island's past. Previously he was probably best-known for constructed geometric abstract sculptures, so his pieces here mark quite a departure.

Each is a vertical, three-part compos-

ite. Irregular shards of rubble and concrete masonry are recovered from demolished houses and the pier. They form rugged bases for bog deal pedestals, atop which are mounted rusted fragments of farm machinery and other implements abandoned over time. McHugh brings to the shaping of these elements a rigorous formal aesthetic and they are beautifully judged. Each is like a monument to the island's past, but each is also full of a sense of inventive possibility and levity, so there is nothing maudlin or elegiac about them; they are as much about the future.

Margaret Morrison is known for her lush paintings of natural growth, often counterpointed by the idea of dryness or drought – think of a desert oasis. Her current work maintains a luxuriance of colour but is more sparing in its imagery, focusing on individual plants, all locally visible, and offering us episodic accounts of growth, flowering and decay, all indicated against nutritive, creamy grounds. Margo McNulty's layered photo-engravings explore the idea of mapping and suggest the many unknowable layers of individual human histories that go into the formation of a place.

Willem van Goor, who arrived on the island about 10 years ago, makes meticulously observed accounts of ordinary aspects of Achill with quiet precision. Ronan Halpin's sculptures draw on a range of associations with great fluency and wit, opening up endless interpretative possibilities; Amanda MacMahon's intensely coloured paintings address the nature of change in the West with brio; Mary Lavelle Burke's seascapes evoke the endlessly changing atmospherics of

the Western light and, finally, Camille Souter, Achill's most illustrious artistic resident, shows two small works.

This year's Boyle Arts Festival Exhibition *Emerging Artists* (and some old friends) was accurately described by its title. It actually featured a lively selection of work by emerging and fully emerged artists. All of the following showed really fine work: Ronnie Hughes, Alan Keane, Gillian Lawler, Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh, John Noel Smith, Barrie Cooke, Blaise Drummond, Sahoko Blake's shoreline studies, Diana Copperwhite, Jonathan Hunter, Willie Herron, Lynn Foster Fitzgerald, Bridget Flannery, K.K. Godsee, Pat Harris, Mary Lohan, Nick Miller, Tadhg McSweeney, Philip Moss, Elizabeth Le Jeune, Stephen Loughman, Bongsi MacDermott, Amy O'Riordan, Patrick O'Reilly, James O'Connor and Mark O'Kelly.

That is, by any standard, a formidable list in terms of range and quality. As with the RHA Annual, the show is always fairly crowded, so that most work can hardly be seen to its best advantage. But on the other hand one gets to see an enormous amount of work in a short space of time. And one of the virtues of the annual Boyle exhibition is its staunch independence from any curatorial orthodoxy.

You never know who is going to turn up there, which is refreshing.

It's true as well that the exhibition sells very well, not only because of the growing and very impressive Civic Collection but also because a significant number of private buyers regards it as a good opportunity to see new work by artists they collect.



# 613 arte fotográfico



Cuadernos de Arte:

Manuel Vilariño

Autores:

Peter Müller,

Alicia Reguera y

Juan de Toro,

Mimi Kato,

Axelle Fossier,

Pilar Pequeño.

Eventos: Fotoencuentro'08,

II Epson Digital,

Premio Mezquita





# Yokai Zyukurei "paisaje con monstruos"

Mimi Kato

La japonesa Mimi Kato trae en este portafolio una propuesta basada en el diseño al igual que ocurre con otros autores que presentan sus trabajos en este número de Arte Fotográfico, solo que en esta ocasión la imagen vectorial sirve de decorado a la escenografía que recrea unos paisajes encarnados por la propia fotografía, y que relata sus obra de esta peculiar manera:

"Los monstruos que vivían cerca de mi vida están desapareciendo de la imaginación de la sociedad contemporánea. Estos monstruos eran amigos del hombre, son algo de miedo a ser, y sus historias han facilitado la enseñanza moral de los niños. He experimentado en una forma íntima a través de los cuentos que leía en los libros durante mi infancia, sélo imaginar que aparecen delante de mí. Ahora, yo apenas veo en cualquier lugar de nuestro mundo. Estos monstruos no podía seguir el ritmo rápido y la vida moderna. Ellos se han ido junto con sus beneficios. Estos monstruos han contribuido a la conformación de la sociedad y la cultura. Como un niño que está familiarizado con ellos, el abandono de su existencia es como si algo muy precioso se deslizo fuera de nuestras manos. En este trabajo, me trajo de vuelta a nuestro tiempo, que les muestra que viven en un contexto contemporáneo."







Yokai Zyukkei: Landfill by Mimi Kato

## Bi-ology

The Texas Biennial's second rising

BY NIKKI MOORE

In the gardening world, the word biennial is linked to a very different type of art from that which will be on display at the Dougherty Arts Center, Bolm Studios, Okay Mountain, and Site 1808 from March 1 through April 15. For botanists and flower-bed aficionados, biennials are known for their growth patterns. In general, they are plants that grow strong but unflowered until their second season, when they bloom, go to seed, and either reseed or die. In the case of reseeding, the plant is auto-reproductive. Given good soil, water, and appropriate light, one biennial can go a long way.

The same may be said of art biennials. They can connote anything from swank Midtown gallery viewings to open-air festival-style art exhibitions — some of the more famous species may be found in Venice, Italy, or in this country at the Whitney. But regardless of their locations, biennials usually signal that art and ideas are in bloom, as regions or galleries showcase what they believe to be the most innovative or provocative works of the season. With exhibitions of this type springing up left and

right, it seems that the strength of this botanical analogy has not been lost on the world of fine arts.

Or at least, it has not been lost on the fine arts and artists of Texas. This year marks the second Texas Biennial. The first was started by some of this year's hosts, such as the Bolm Studios' Sodalitas, the Art Palace's Arturo Palacios, and Gallery Lombardi's Rachel Koper, along with artists from the now-defunct Camp Fig and Eastside Artists Co-op, in the hope of showcasing some of Texas' young and emerging artists. Choosing the biennial name seems to have been a way both to incur guilt (i.e., success and glamour) by association and to mark out territory for an ongoing and more stable showcasing of new statewide work every second year. This year's Texas Biennial artists have been selected by an independent jury composed of Ursula Davila, the Blanton Museum of Art's assistant curator of Latin American art here in Austin; Fairfax Dorn, executive director of Ballroom Marfa in Marfa; Kate Green, curator of education and exhibitions for Artpace in San Antonio; Valerie Cassel Oliver, associate curator of the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston; and John Pomara, an artist and assistant professor of art at UT-Dallas. With a roster including some of the state's most active curators and art activists, this exhibition has the potential to be an important early career move for many of the accepted artists. Yet as this biennial is still in its infancy, its

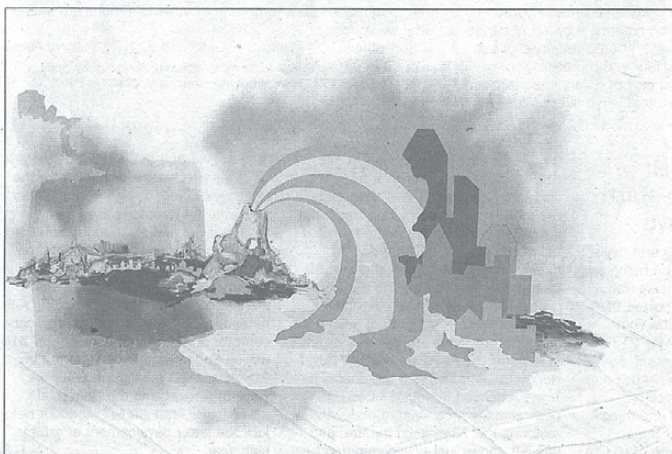
import is still up for definition. While posing itself for a modest but important influx of collectors, collection-building, and all-around art-loving, this year's Texas Biennial has set high stakes and hopeful expectations.

A recent graduate of the MFA program at UT-San Antonio, Mimi Kato is one of the emerging artists to watch in this year's Texas Biennial. Kato's work is unique in the way that it beauti-

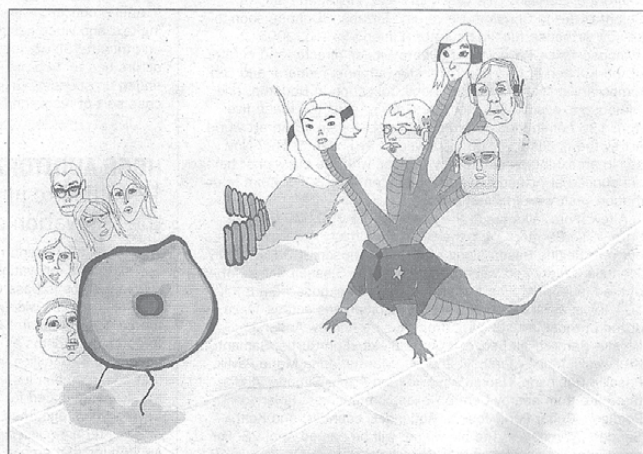
**The inaugural Texas Biennial in 2005 achieved its goal of showcasing some of the state's young and emerging artists. So the stakes are high for the sophomore run of the exhibition, which has the potential to be an important early career move for many accepted in it.**

fully and simply remembers, hopes, and questions. The piece she will show is from her collection "Yokai Zyukkei: Scenery With Monsters." As she describes it: "This series depicts monsters and animals from the Japanese folklore of my childhood. These monsters and animals are now disappearing from our contemporary life along with their charm, their tales of wis-

*continued on p.46*



Heavy Flow Day by David Ubias



Metropolis by David Ubias



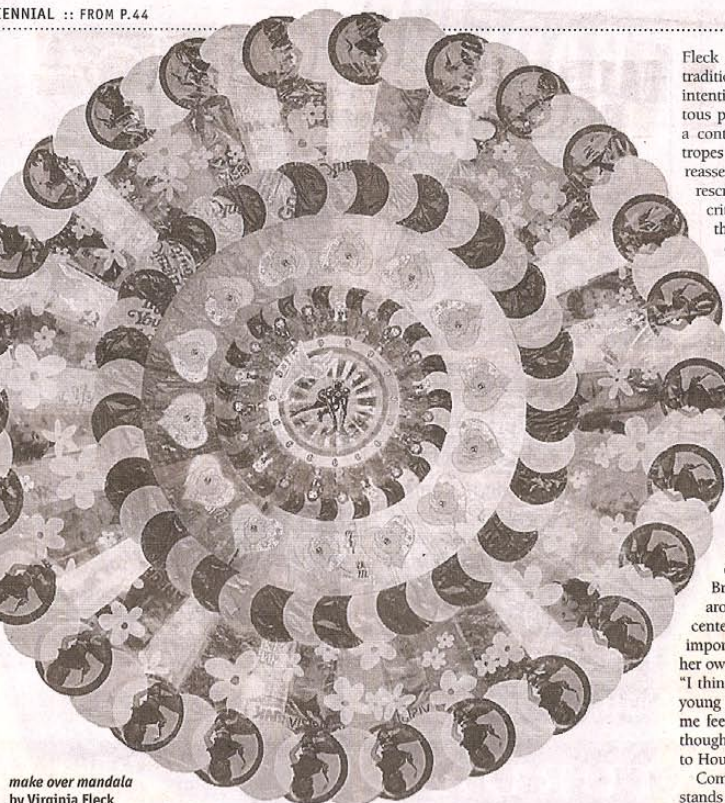
the arts :: VISUAL ARTS :: TEXAS BIENNIAL :: FROM P.44

dom, and the terms and language that relate to them. I brought them back through my work by depicting them surviving in contemporary time."

Kato says her work is influenced by the 11th century Japanese master Toba Sojo and points particularly toward one of his old scroll prints entitled *Chōju-giga*, or animal caricature. As Kato sees the original print, "The artist depicted scenes of hares and frogs doing humanlike activities, possibly to give a critique of the class system that existed in his time. By depicting weak animals such as hares and frogs fully enjoying themselves with no signs of predators, the artist showed his hope for the weaker class to gain the power to stand up against the superior class." Kato's work takes this connection and form of critique into contemporary times and laces it with images and familiar motifs from her childhood. The combination results in a clean, clear storybook image whose complexity is in its questioning rather than its visual form.

For Kato, the exhibition represents an invitation toward becoming a professional. On moving out of her master's program into the world of exhibiting and art-making via the Texas Biennial, Kato says, "First of all, I think this is a fun event! Second, I think this event connects art communities in different cities, making [the] Texas art scene stronger." Kato also says, "I met a lot of great artists when I visited the first Texas Biennial two years ago, and they helped me and supported me with my artistic career," proving that some of the first Biennial's seeds did drop on fertile soil.

While Kato has been working out the dancing of monsters, fellow Biennial participant David Ubias has been scrambling to make up for a little white lie on his initial application that promised 500 drawings for the exhibition. Boyish, blatantly handmade, and provoking at every turn, Ubias' drawings play with their



make over mandala  
by Virginia Fleck

own existence as they play with the viewer's expectations. "I think my work can get pretty ridiculous," Ubias says. "But at the same time I believe it is also very accessible. I try to use humor and color as a hook [for myself and the audience]. The drawings that I'm doing for exhibi-

tion function very much in the same manner as advertisements, logos, or comics would."

Like advertisements, Ubias' work is centered around the participation and gaze of his viewers, as is his view on the upcoming exhibition. "Everybody loves the word 'biennial' in the art world," Ubias says. "It has so many distinguished associations, and it looks great on the résumé. But seriously, it serves as a real focal point for emerging artists in the state. Many of the names on [the] list [like mine] are relatively unknown. [The Biennial] provides the opportunity for some regional recognition, and I am glad to be part of it." With the subtle humor and poignancy that resonate throughout his drawings, Ubias closed our conversation with a note about "The Eyes of Texas." Just a quick run through the first stanza will make his point sing out.

Virginia Fleck is one of the more established artists to be invited to the 2007 Biennial. After and between residencies in Havana, New York state, and Texas, Fleck has shown her work throughout Texas. The project she will exhibit in this year's Biennial ebbs between the dichotomies of permanence and impermanence and rethinks both the nature of spiritual practices and the impact of commercialized media messages. Fleck's pieces are based on the making of mandalas, traditional Buddhist sand images that take weeks to create and are destroyed upon their completion, which emphasize the transitory beauty of all material things. Describing the inspiration for her work,

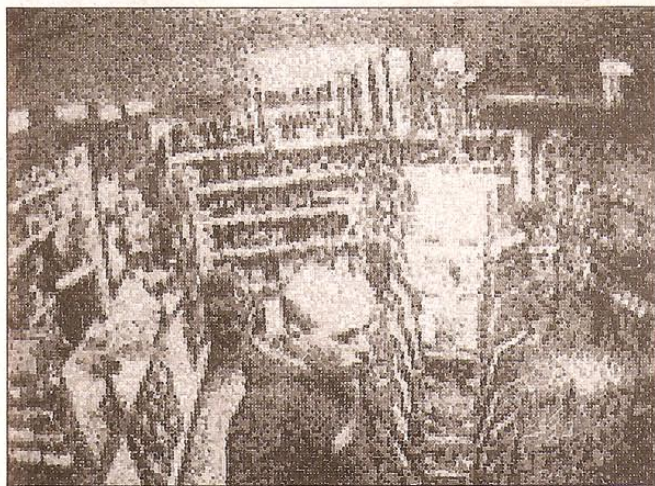
Fleck says, "While continuing the mandalic traditions of repetitive design and meditative intention, my choice of material [the ubiquitous plastic bag] imbues these mandalas with a contemporary narrative. ... Employing the tropes of current graphic design, I cut and reassemble the print on the plastic bags, slyly rescripting these consumer messages into a critique of their original purpose: seducing the masses into unconscious patterns of consumerist excess."

When asked about her favorite piece going into the Biennial, Fleck was quick to respond: "My piece *make over mandala*. [It] was inspired by many trips to Houston for art events. Gals in Houston have taken the practice of grooming and perfecting their physical selves to a whole new level — a level previously unimaginable to me, a simple girl from Maine. (FYI: a state filled with sturdy, pragmatic, no-make-up-wearing women.) This makeover mandala was made with images of altered women that I found on plastic bags — mostly little girl's party bags. I had the most fun on this one when I used the lips of the Bratz doll faces to create a circular border around a very buff Catwoman image at the center." Fleck didn't comment on the overall import of the 2007 Biennial, but regarding her own participation in the event, she did say, "I think that I might be showing with a lot of young people in this Biennial, and that makes me feel really hip and cool. But then again, I thought that I was well groomed until I went to Houston!"

Coming out of Houston, William Betts' work stands alone in making its second appearance in the Texas Biennial. Using a technology-based process, Betts repaints surveillance images creating canvases that hold anywhere from 27,000 to 50,000 drops of paint per piece. The process and Betts' outcomes raise questions about the role of technology in society, the nature of recorded "truth," of testimony, of eye witness, and also of watching itself. Betts' take on the Texas Biennial is based partly on his experience with the show and partly on his view of the larger art picture in the state. "This is the second Texas Biennial in which my work has been included. This is an important event for me as an artist because of the peer group with whom I am included and the quality of the jury. This is a vitally important event for Texas artists, as it provides a level playing field for all artists to be included in and recognized." Speaking from a place of knowing, Betts was enthusiastic about the Texas Biennial's potential. "I think it is great," he says, "that it is in its second incarnation. It is becoming more focused."

So it seems the Texas Biennial may begin to more fully embody its own name, rising stronger and more vibrant in its second year of growth. While this year's flowers attest to the growth of the idea itself, its seeds and long-term impact will have the most to say of its success.

The Texas Biennial runs March 1-April 15 in four locations: Buttrick Gallery at the Dougherty Arts Center, 1110 Barton Springs Rd.; Bolm Studios, 5305 Bolm #12; Okay Mountain, 1312 E. Cesar Chavez Ste. B; Site 1808, 1808 E. Cesar Chavez. For more information, call 385-1670, or visit [www.texasbiennial.com](http://www.texasbiennial.com).



Skinhead by William Betts