

Art is Not a Competition (Kaiga No Tabi '06-'16)

December 11 - January 28, 2017

Opening Sunday, December 11th, 2016

Redling Fine Art is pleased to present an exhibition celebrating the art and artists of Misako & Rosen, Tokyo. Misako & Rosen opened their doors 10 years ago; this exhibition will focus on the multigenerational, multinational program they've built during that time:

Richard Aldrich, Shimon Minamikawa & Ei Arakawa, Kaoru Arima, Fergus Feehily Maya Hewitt, Nathan Hylden, Miki Mochizuka, Trevor Shimizu, Hisachika Takahashi, Kazuyuki Takezaki, J Parker Valentine & Yui Yaegashi.

A statement:

It's November 14th, six days after Donald Trump was elected president of the United States after losing by millions of votes.

Tuesday was one of the worst nights of my life. The bottom fell out around 6pm as I watched the *New York Times's* jittering Geiger counter convey a growing confidence that Trump would win. My husband and I spent the night in tears, sick to the point of not being able to eat. A straight white man who lives in our building introduced himself to tell us that he loves us and will protect us if we need him to. I've never felt so threatened by and alienated from the civilization surrounding me.

Like many people, we took inventory— if it gets bad, where can we realistically go? My thinking inevitably returned to Japan, whose political alignments (unlike Europe's) do not echo our own, and to the time we spent in Tokyo a couple weeks before we got married at the beginning of this year. We lived with Jeffrey and Misako Rosen for a week or two, and I felt a deep, abiding safety and harmony in their home that I don't know we will ever accomplish for ourselves now.

The building, a cozy stack of three floors, has as its center of gravity a custom-made green kitchen table, the iconic Green Table. It is the background for countless photos of Whiskey bottles and a parade of delicious food and drinks at all hours, a perch for arms watching television (also at all hours), and a central meeting point for a tight-knit extended family of artists whose artworks populate the walls and shelves of the house.

Unlike most of the other households I know, which locate themselves along a spectrum from apathetic to intentional self-actualizing taste, the architecture and arrangement of the Rosen house is a fully integrated extension of the unpretentious lives of its inhabitants, free of any burden to signal anything to its visitors aside from the truth that they are welcome. It is as if there is no such thing as power inside the boundaries of their home.

The rhythm of each day, especially its reliable ending with a bath, felt civilized and hospitable. There was time for everything, including attention to the details of domestic life that allow for a special kind of intimate pleasure. Each meal they offered

us, each fashionable treat they unpacked from its lovely box and plated, each sip from Jeffrey's whiskey collection, diluted to near absurdity for my cowardly palette, was a gift, and an act of affection.

The Rosen's call their signature asymmetry of frowning, laughing banter their "Comedy Routine," a serial performance in which "Husband" Jeffrey comically fails to meet the expectations of hyper-competent "Wife" Misako. This trope has evolved with the arrival of "Daughter" Yoko this year: a new body of collaborative photographs involving the Rosen family reveal "Bad Dad" shirking his responsibilities, terrifying his daughter, and drinking on the job. Meanwhile, "Good Mom" completes the various duties of parenting with a gentle smile.

There is no one who sees these comedic scenes who does not appreciate them. I know this because they are available only to the self-selecting group of people who choose to receive them, which means they are at least on the periphery of the loose group of people spread around the world that unknowingly orbit the Green Table. Some are friends of the family or gallery artists. Some are colleagues and followers of Misako & Rosen Gallery, who are incorporated into the group as part of their overlapping corners of art world. Some are members of the broader Rosen family, who occasionally complain beneath the photos that Jeffrey hasn't answered their e-mails for such a long time. Each new image, to me, is both a generous transmission of cheerful warmth and an opportunity to affirm my enjoyment of it. When I answer each posting with a bright red heart, the Rosen's and I greet each other fondly.

I will choose to understand this exhibition in light of the idea that painting is inherently an expression of love, not just for the material or the act of painting, but for its tradition, and therefore the ancestors and peers that also practice it. To love painting is to love the painters that helped you fall in love with painting.

Today it feels, and maybe has felt for a long time, like there is no other justifiable reason to paint. There is no reason for aesthetic sensitivity, no reason to get lost in an esoteric history, no reason to revel in the generation of (rhetorical and actual) layers and complexity. In the brutal world of violence and confusion that now surrounds both the Rosen house and this exhibition, there is no causal chain that can completely justify the choice we make to live each day, to care about our lives, and there is no causal chain that can completely justify the decision to make a painting.

So for me, the premise of this show is admirably straightforward, then. Perhaps even more so in times of darkness, we need the people we love in order to survive. I don't want society to be full of enemies, siphoning away my confidence and peace of mind, filling its recesses with battles and equivocating demons. I want to think of strangers as consumed with parallel lives and Intersecting pools of interrelated people, and I want my posture as I walk among them to be a reflection of my trust in them, and my trust in their trust of me.

Across ten years, Jeffrey and Misako have carefully crafted a delicate web of associations between people, objects and history—a network, if you like. I'm looking forward to spending time inside of it, inside of this exhibition, once it's ready.

-Forrest