

Art: Junko O'Neill on the potential of emptiness

By Giles Broadbent on May 14, 2014 9:39 AM | Tagged with: art, Caroline Hall, eastleigh, espacio gallery, Gillian Holding and Jonathan Kelly Chapman, Jean Carabine, Junko o'neill, Rachelle Allen-Sherwood, reviews, the sorting office



WHAT'S ON

Japanese fine artist Junko O'Neill spent her formative years in Tokyo yearning for education in the arts like a young girl in love.

"It was like waiting for the next date with your boyfriend," she said. "I could never stand waiting for that next art lesson."

This ongoing love affair has seen the award-winning artist develop a fascination with the Japanese spatiotemporal concept of "Ma" – a theme that reflects human emotions within the curious emptiness of open space.

Ma is explored in new exhibition Space Unfolding being staged at Espacio Gallery in Shoreditch from today (Thursday) to May 20, and will feature a number of Junko's piece alongside works by five other British and international artists: Rachelle Allen-Sherwood, Jean Carabine, Caroline Hall, Gillian Holding and Jonathan Kelly Chapman.

"Ma tells us that space is fundamentally a void," said Junko. "We all think that space is eternal, but everything that fills each landscape we see is always ever-changing and transient."

"It's interesting to see how the other artists in this exhibition approach this theme in their work."

"For instance, it was fascinating to discover Rachelle is influenced by Japanese notions of space, too."

"Where she is concerned with painting elements with empty space, I paint empty space itself attempting to give a space of nothingness potential."

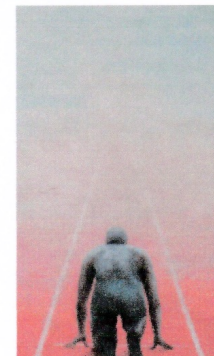
The Japanese artist builds her work around a person looking out into a vast wide open space. These figures become intriguing characters, with their emotional response to a beautiful landscape masked by their facelessness.

"What I try to display is a space with a sense of time passing," said the artist who is represented by Debut Contemporary in London and is supported by creative hub The Sorting Office in Eastleigh.

"I want to visualise the idea that we are separated from the space around us, not by a physical structure but by our constant desire to define everything."

Her artwork includes *Beginning* which places a mother and a daughter staring into a beautiful sunrise and *On Your Marks* (pictured) which sees an Olympic runner set to run into a foggy abyss.

Following a successful spell at The Other Art Fair, London's showcase of up-and-coming talent, Junko is thrilled to be returning to the capital for Space Unfolding.



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