

art of england

Junko O'Neill: Fragments of Time at GV Art

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It is quite an undertaking to capture a sense of the non-physical within the four walls of a canvas, yet that is precisely what artist [Junko O'Neill](#) has achieved [in her solo exhibition](#), *Fragments of Time*. Facets of Japanese culture, primarily the spatial concept of 'Ma' and its relationship with perceptions of time, inform the development of O'Neill's work. A personal narrative combines with symbolism, informed in part by the novels of the acclaimed Japanese [writer, Haruki Murakami](#).

The consolidation of these significant Japanese influences reflects the refinement of intricate ideas, exemplified in other familiar aspects of the culture, such as pared-down interior design and highly wrought Haiku poems. The shared characteristic of apparent accessibility belies the inherent technical skill required to create such outcomes; so it is with O'Neill's paintings.



Winter Veil, Junko O'Neill

Perhaps the most striking element of the artist's figurative works is the scant attention paid to the painting of the figures themselves. Since they are central to the works' narratives, this is somewhat surprising, until one realises that the lack of detail is entirely symbolic of the figures' subordination to the depiction of non-physical depth. Exuding a quality not dissimilar to children's book illustration, many of O'Neill's compositions utilise familiar visual tropes, such as a view from a sunlit hilltop in 'Labyrinth', staring out to

sea in 'Dissolved' or through a snow-filled sky in 'Winter Veil', the use of generic climate characteristics and vantage points serving to shape our emotional response.

Canvas dimensions have been considered in order to adjust horizon lines and shift vanishing points, to accommodate unnatural viewing angles. In this way, O'Neill creates distance between the viewer and the paintings' protagonists; viewer becomes voyeur, always several paces behind the unidentifiable figure; the result is a set of experiential pieces in which the 'void' to which each protagonist looks, is filled with our imagination and the question, 'what do they see?' This is particularly visible in 'Songbird'. Far from being labelled as figurative paintings, these thought-provoking pieces may be more accurately described as portraits of space, populated in order to prompt our sense of relationship within it.



Labyrinth, Junko O'Neill

The mixed-media canvases of the artist's abstract paintings suggest that even the nothingness of negative space, is filled with *something*, although that something may be inherently transient: delicate colours swirl upwards into canvas corners and tumble softly down, like ink dropped into water. O'Neill uses painting medium as one would use paint, rather than as a perfunctory component of an artist's toolkit: the combination of this glossy fluid mixed generously with acrylic, oil, pastels and pencil in the abstract miniatures, creates a layered suspension of materials. O'Neill's sculptures echo this theme; methodically folded Origami cranes are captured in airless flight, immersed for posterity in slabs of transparent resin, itself contained by the parameters of a wooden frame.

The absence of human form in the abstract and sculptural works, renders the viewer less empathic than with the figurative paintings, though no less intrigued; in this exhibition we witness snapshots of single moments, each, dreamlike, lasting an eternity and without answers.

Fragments of Time, solo exhibition inspired by the Japanese concept of 'Ma' until 19 – 24 March 2013. Private View: 20 March 6.30-9.30, RSVP info@junkooneill.com GV Art, 49 Chiltern Street, London W1U 6LY. Visit <http://www.junkooneill.com/#!exhibition-junko-oneil/c1r5h>

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