

Formalist Buffet

White Lotus Gallery strives for non-objectivity

Short art history lesson: In the late 19th century, European Impressionist painters and printmakers became heavily influenced by the flat, colorful Ukiyo-e Japanese woodblock prints in what would be called the Japonisme movement. Art ideas were spreading like wildfire thanks to the age of mechanical reproduction, and, not surprisingly, the influences spread both ways. So it wasn't long before 20th century Japanese printmakers were inspired by these European auteurs to establish authorship in their own work. Breaking from the collaborative process of Ukiyo-e, which established a clear division of labor, Sosaku hanga (as it would later be dubbed) took as its guiding principles the edict of *jiga, jikoku and jizuri* (or self-drawn, self-carved and self-printed), thus offering the Japanese artist a tool for self-expression in post-war Japan.

"Contemplation," a new exhibit of non-objective art from White Lotus Gallery's member artists and its own extensive collection, combines Sosaku hanga artists with a handful of other regional artists to show how

one common idea — and yes, non-objective art is certainly an idea on how art can be conceived — can so be widely interpreted.

Take the Haku Maki piece *Work 74-47*, for example. Featuring a textured white hilltop in front of a ink-black mountain with menacing clouds, the work is everything we've come to expect from a solid Asian

and mixing with a body of water against a setting sun (an obvious homage to the Japanese flag). It's a work of stirring beauty and painstaking execution that honors the art materials while still paying tribute to a country in recovery.

Whereas some paint a stark diet of black and white, others go for colorful whimsy. Fumio Tomita's *Connection 76-24* offers a soft, repeating pattern with an undulating rainbow-like streak that intrudes into the space freely, morphs and continues off the

Birthdays, Kazuko Miyagawa

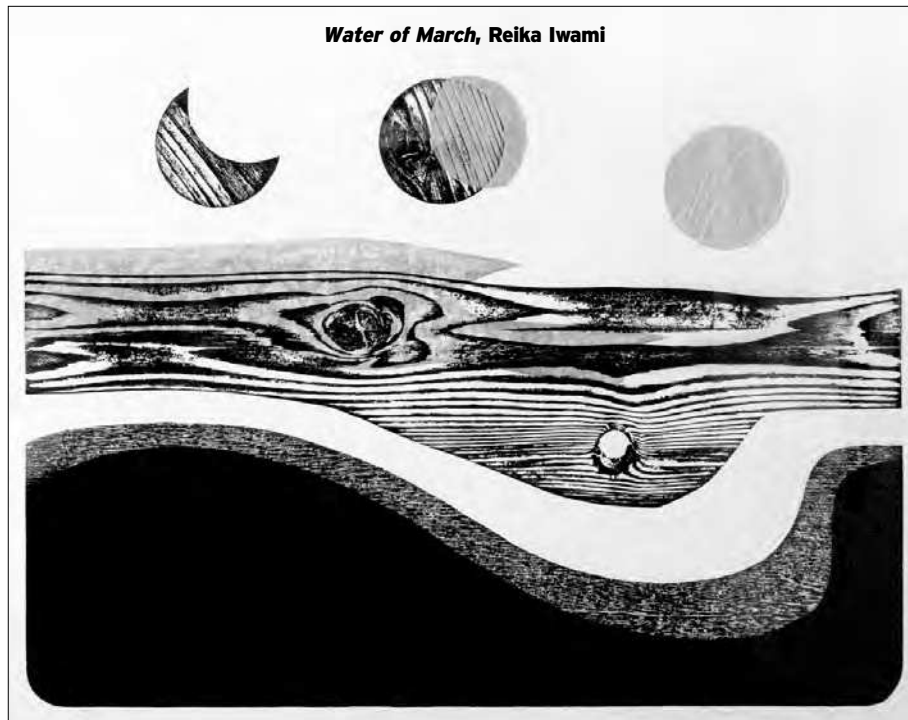


blues applied in a pointillist style with minimal shapes poking in from the edges, as if he took a Roy Liechtenstein and zoomed in on the barest of elements. His *Bee Series — V* is an explosion of warm yellows and cool blues confined in carefully arced lines, all utilizing the frame of the canvas to maximum effect.

For a more recent voice, southern Oregon resident Jamie Newton shows her acrylic pieces painted this year. Her use of rigid black or white lines to separate her paintings internally, capturing multiple movements, is impressive. Think of musical notations or a filmstrip, where an order is imposed on an abstract, continual expression.

Some of the artists had trouble following the non-objective dogma, instead choosing to place text and obvious shapes into their pieces (the word "mountain" in Newton's *4 Square Mountain*; the tacky star pattern in Chizuko Yoshida's *Dawn*; the obvious setting sun in Iwami's *Water Mirror*) or — a big no-no — use perspective (Kunichiro Amano's *Fossil 6*). But, these transgressions aside, the show sets a soothing tone that goes beyond art theories or stylistic hiccups.

"Contemplation" is on view through July 21. **EW**



Water of March, Reika Iwami

print of the contemporary era. The black-white contrast is as precise (and just as overdone) as a yin-yang symbol, but it certainly relaxes the mind.

In a similar mood, Reika Iwami uses the grain and texture of her woodblocks to make soothing monotone landscapes. Her *Musical Score of Water* reaches up to the heavens like organ pipes while *Water of March* is a moonlit dreamscape. Perhaps Iwami's best in the show, *Water Mirror*, features a teardrop of wood grain meeting

canvas. It's jarring but happy. Similarly, Chizuko Yoshida's *O and X* is a playful lithograph that looks like a tic-tac-toe tournament gone mad, with nice use of reds, oranges and blacks for visual emphasis.

The large-scale pieces in the show — the heavyweight champs, if you will — come from former UO professor Frank Okada. Before he passed away in 2000, Okada explored the non-objective world with a fine-toothed comb. Indeed, *Salt II* shimmers with still-wet oils, whites and



Work 74-47, Haku Maki

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