



Blum & Poe: Parergon

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"Parergon," a two-part exhibition at Blum & Poe, puts a spotlight on an influential yet unfamiliar era of Japanese contemporary art of the 1980s and '90s that was shaped by political, economic, and social upheaval. Curated by Mika Yoshitake, the show offers a fresh look at Japanese artists whose dark humor and experimentation are equally relevant today. Part one includes works by twelve artists, with several pieces showing in the U.S. for the first time.

The era's trenchant commentary is evident throughout. Yukinori Yanagi's installation *Ground Transposition* (1987/2019) turns a critical eye on US-Japanese relations. The simple, balloon-like forms, reassembled for this show, emerged from Japan's long tradition of political art. One balloon is covered in soil from the World War II internment camp in Manzanar, California where people of Japanese ancestry were sent. The other balloon is covered in soil from land occupied by the U.S. military in Japan's Okinawa prefecture.



Tsuyoshi Ozawa, *Jizoing: Haneda (Tama River Series)* [Tokyo], 1988. C-print, 10 7/8 x 7 3/4 inches framed. © Tsuyoshi Ozawa / Courtesy of Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo

Other standouts include Tsuyoshi Ozawa's installation *Jizoing* (1993/2019) where politics and parody combine. The artist presents a stereotypical vision of Japan with a mound of futon cushions in the shape of Mt. Fuji that visitors can climb to view the accompanying photos. Each photo contains a small, oddly cute image of a *jizo* (Japanese bodhisattva figure) and was shot on location at a site following a political or social struggle, such as Tiananmen Square.



Parergon: Japanese Art of the 1980s and 1990s, Curated by Mika Yoshitake, Installation view, 2019, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, Courtesy of the artists and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo. Photo: Heather Rasmussen

At once apocalyptic and satirical, Noboru Tsubaki's nine-foot-tall, bright yellow pod, *Fresh Gasoline* (1989), represents all that



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At the opposite end of the spectrum is Yukie Ishikawa, with paintings that are among her most striking. These were created using photographs from advertisements, newspapers and books that she distorted using a projector, and then traced onto canvas. With the identity of the original composition obfuscated, the abstract images could be a commentary on the consumerism and shifting economy of the period. Ishikawa, though, prefers not to explain her work. But the boldness and abstract beauty of the pieces speak loudly of her creative genius—and the need for exhibiting more Japanese women artists.

"Parergon: Japanese Art of the 1980s and 1990s," Part 1: February 14 – March 23, 2019, Part 2: April 6 – May 19, 2019, at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles, 2727 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034. www.blumandpoe.com

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