

Surface of Being Keiko Miyamori



4.22. - 5.15. 2015

Introduction By Toshiharu Omuka (Professor, University of Tsukuba)



In literature, we have the term “reader.” A reader can be anyone from an ordinary person to an expert, and there is no fundamental hierarchy implied by this word.

In the world of contemporary art, what do we call the “reader” of this medium? The word “audience” is better suited for the theatre and other performing arts. If we say “spectators,” it evokes an image of a crowd experience, completely different from an individual’s enjoyment of art. It’s difficult to think of an appropriate term that expresses the singularly private, personal experience of standing before a painting or a sculpture.

It is well known that the activity evoked by the term “reader” – that of silently reading text alone – is a modern concept. In earlier times, reading out loud was the norm. Modern painting is not any different. In the early Meiji period, the Aburae-jaya (“oil painting tea house”) of Asakusa was set up like a carnival spectacle. Or in even more recent history, for their Hiroshima Panels (Genbaku no Zu), the artists Iri and Toshi Maruki directly acted as guides explaining their artwork.

To speak in literary terms, I am not a “good reader” of Keiko Miyamori’s work. That’s all I wanted to say in the beginning and have somehow gotten off track. My difficulty in discussing art using language may be traced back to my own shortcomings, but this problem is not just an individual one. Much of the focus in art is directed at the artist, so much so that there is barely a proper term devised to describe the viewer. This points to an underlying issue in the history of critical linguistics. I’m not making light of this failing, and I understand that I myself am hardly free of blame.

This is the second time I’ve written about Keiko Miyamori’s work. About 20 years ago in 1996, Seiichi Watanabe passionately curated a show, “Dialogos 1996 - Conditions of Contemporaries” at the Contemporary Art Center at the Art Tower Mito. I had nominated two young artists, Keiko Miyamori and Ayumu Kondo, for this show and was asked to write some words for this occasion. At that time, Miyamori was in the US for a residency, but I never thought that she would continue to base herself out of America. I also never imagined that she would later move from Philadelphia to New York, and would continue to produce art there. I’m sure Miyamori herself never intentionally planned such a path for herself when she first visited the US.

Would it be too much to say that this new exhibition, taken as a whole, expresses what these last 20 years have been, and also what they have not been? I’m not saying this to be irresponsible. Ever since I saw her small show at the University of Tsukuba, I’ve known without a doubt that Miyamori’s work continues to tell the story of her present (and her past).

20 years ago, I ended my introductory writing on Miyamori with these words:

“I’m no fortuneteller, so I won’t try to predict Keiko Miyamori’s future. That said, if she continues to move along the path of her destiny or allows herself to be lead that way, she will faithfully continue to be a creative artist.”

(From “wall” to “gate”: an essay on Keiko Miyamori, Dialogos 1996 exhibition catalog)

I’ve had the opportunity to see Keiko Miyamori periodically in the years following that exhibition; at our house in Tsukuba, and also last year and the year before that in Manhattan. So I know that my words have not been proven false. At this show, I look forward to reaffirming that faith, not just as an individual viewer, but as part of a collective of viewers.

Work 1



《Arizona Dream #3》2014

Branch, stone, washi, charcoal, mixed media 13.7 (cm) x 19 (cm) x 2.8 (cm)

The Arizona Dream series was made from materials I collected during my trip to Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico in December 2013. Four stones and four branches were selected from each site.

I then covered them with rubbing paper, which was also made from trees at each site (the location is written on the objects). I learned that "Four" is a meaningful number for the Native American people.

During the trip I felt nature's vast scale and that time has various ideas, that philosophies are united between different locations and populations, and that human history and religious activities are ambiguously, both beautiful and ignominious.

The branches and stones can be combined to form various shapes, including a pyramid.

Work 2



《BOX_Semi-Sweet Baking Chocolate Bar Night Becomes Day》 2015

Used Box, tree bark, washi, charcoal, shell powder, Indigo, acrylic, goldleaf(23.75K) 15.3 (cm) x 7.5 (cm) x 1.8 (cm)

The subtitle of this work is “Night Becomes Day.” It is the same title I used for an artwork I created in 1998 of two chairs connected by a tree branch.

The wood's surface is colored by a tree rubbing on washi paper and is tinted with Japanese indigo on one side. I normally don't color objects laminated with tree rubbings but I wanted use the color blue to stress “change.”

A dark night becomes a bright morning, then a busy day returns to a peaceful night. The routine of our daily lives is established in these cycles and what may be considered an ephemeral event is also part of something eternal.

I wanted to create an object that symbolized not only the daytoday surfaces in my life but also has connections to deeper, nonvisible layers of being.

Work 3



《BOX_S.O.S》 2015

Used box, 17 tree branches, washi, charcoal, acrylic, shell powder, goldleaf (23.75K) 13 (cm) x 8 (cm) x 6 (cm)

S.O.S is a famous steel wool brand in the United States. It is for scrubbing things like burnt frying pans and barbecue grills. I used the package for this work.

The inside of the box is gilded with goldleaf and 17 branches are stored in it. I found the branches walking around Central Park and on sidewalks throughout New York City. The branches were covered with treerubbed Japanese washi paper. To acquire the unique print, the washi paper was pressed against trees and rubbed with charcoal to trace the patterns. The trees used for the rubbings were from countries I visited in North and South America, Africa, Australia and Japan.

The box appears to have a rough white surface. I painted the exterior white, except for the lettering, which was painted little by little so that it eventually became harder to see. Also, the rectangular shape of the box was made more conspicuous. However, upon a closer look, the outline of the letters on the white background is visible (please experience it for yourself at the gallery).

The box surface for Work 2 "BOX_Semi - Sweet Baking Chocolate Bar night at noon" was made using the same process as the S.O.S. box.

Work List 4-14



4. Box_Table Talk 10.7x10.7x3.7cm



5. Box_DEMERARA sugar cubes 8.7x10.5x5.5cm



6. Box_Baking soda 10.8x9x5cm



7. Box_TGRANADAISA ANCHOVIES 10.5x5x2cm



8. Box_JeLL-O Green 8.3x7x2.7cm



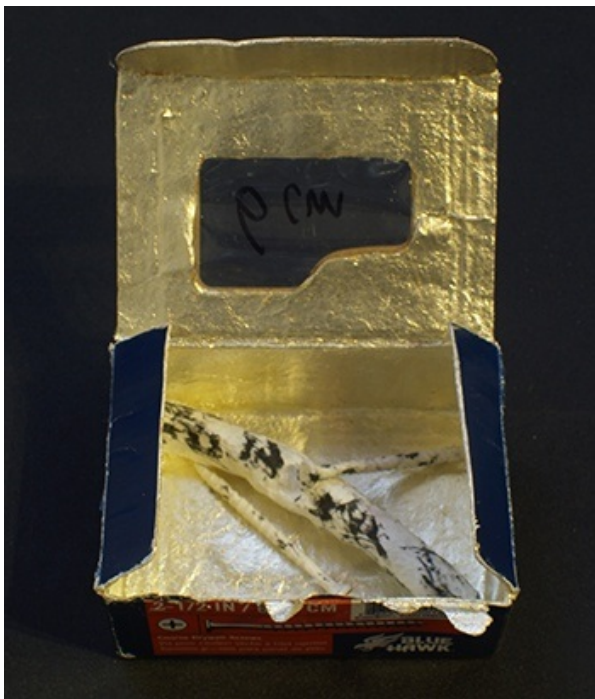
9. Box_JeLL-O Cherry 8.3x7x2.7cm



10. Box_Maggi Chicken Flavor Bouillon 9.8x5x1.5cm



11. Box_Maggi Beef Flavor Bouillon 9.8x5x1.5cm



12. Box_Blue Hawk 2-1/2IN 8.3x7x2.7cm



13. Box_CONSTRUCTION FASTENERS 3/4 Inch 8.3x7x2.7cm



14. Box_Colgate Total 10.5x3.3x3cm

Drawing Shadows of the cloud

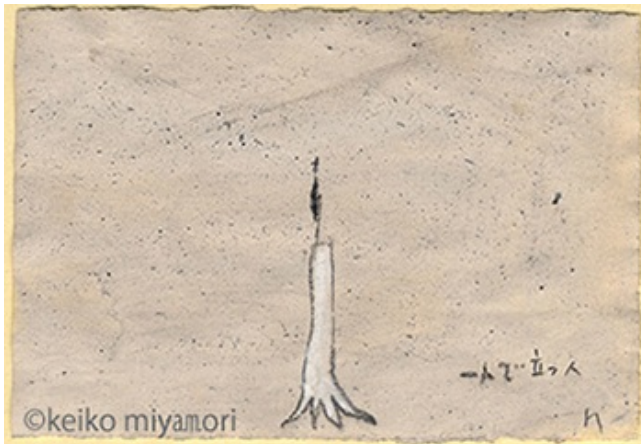


《Shadows of the cloud》 2015

Tracing paper, acrylic, color pencil 9 (cm) x 13.4 (cm)

I was watching the shadows of the cloud on the wall at the building from the window of my art studio. The shape changed by followed the surface of the building, I drew it, because it was very interesting to see the dramatical changings spread front on the solid structure building. The shadows represented as if the cloud had a solid visible body. I wonder the various surfaces that I see, has a similar matter of this experience.

Drawing catalog 1-6



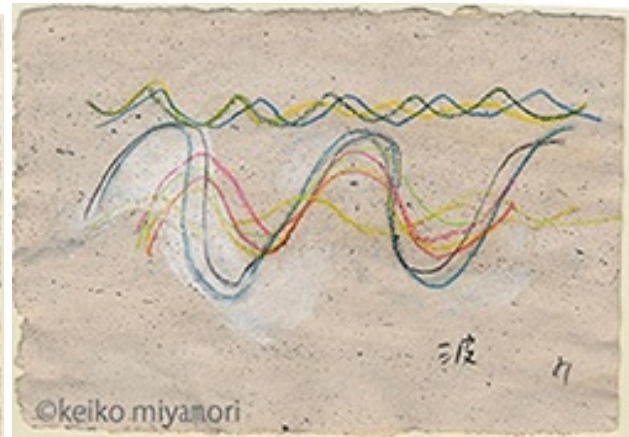
1. Standing alone 8x12cm



2. Hello 8x12cm



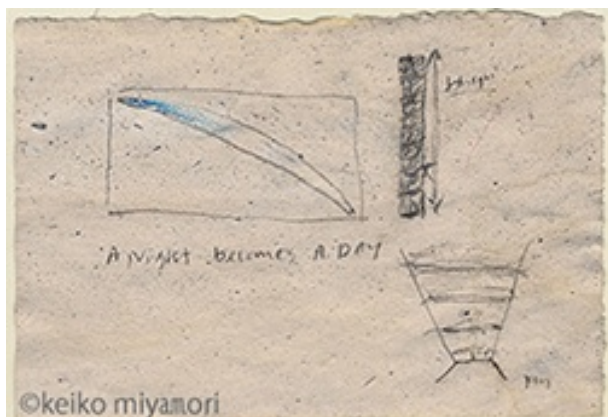
3. Two Chairs 8x12cm



4. Wave 8x12cm



5. A beard and a bird skating on bloody ocean 8x12cm



6. A night becomes a day 8x12cm

Drawing catalog 7 -12



7. White on white, inaudible voice and skating space, journey 8x12cm



8. Cutting my way with a C-cut 8x12cm



9. Pill out from the bear's pocket 8x12cm



10. There is a place to go 8x12cm



11. Pole, fire! night 8x12cm



12. Namahage and three young women 8x12cm



13. Stars 12x8cm



14. Text from AZ -M at Coffee Bean 8x12cm



15. orange-colored light 8x12cm



16. A cat named Cupcake 8x12cm



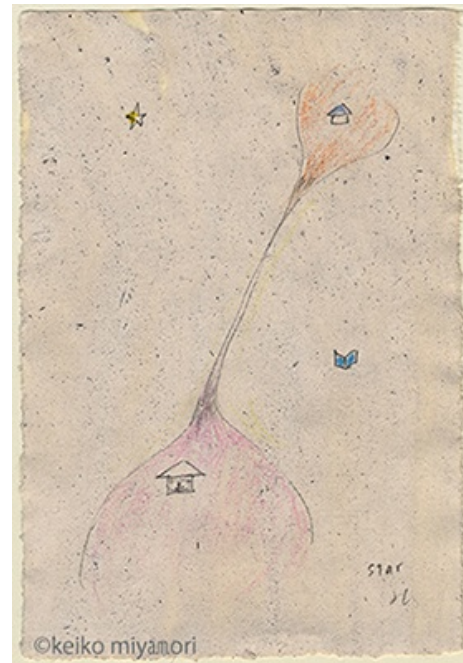
17. Cards on table 8.5x12cm



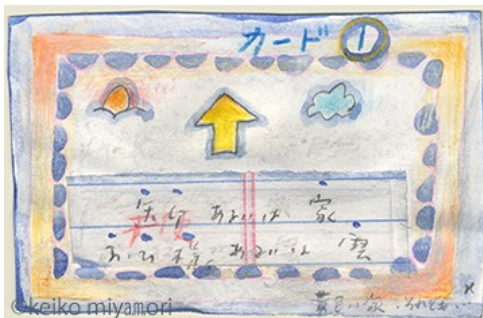
18. Pink, or orange, or... 8.5x11cm



19. Looking at the hole in the space 12x8cm



20. Star 12x8cm



21. Card① Yellow house, or... 6x10cm



22. Shadows of the cloud 9x13.4cm



23. Between audience, reporter and stadium 9.5x9cm



24. People dancing on the tree 9x9.5cm

Drawing catalog 25-30



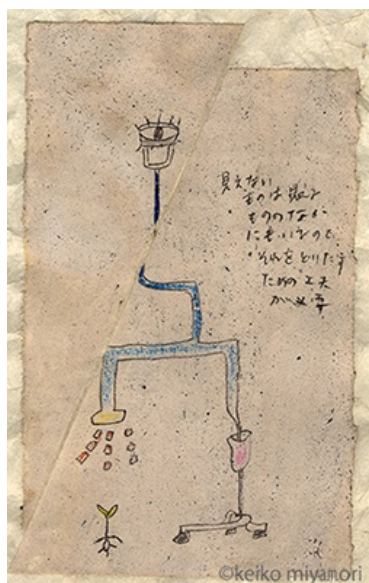
©keiko miyamori

25. RF 7.5x11cm



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26. Is the line bent? Everything is a wave, anyway.. 9x14.5cm



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27. Invisible things can exist in visible things,
so I need a device to take them out 9x14cm



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28. Untitled 21x11cm



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29. Baker's Semi-Sweet Baking Chocolate Bar 10x9cm



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30. Tower, something really tall 13.4x9cm

Artist Statement



Making tree rubbing on washi in Pennsylvania

By wrapping a tree in washi and creating a rubbing with handcrafted charcoal, I can capture the wood surface patterns. By using these tree rubbings to wrap various objects around us, a certain kind of unity is born, even if the trees are from varying locations or species.

I am conscious of all of the various surfaces that surround me. That is to say, surfaces are a clue into how I experience the world.

I am conscious of the flimsy layer of existence I inhabit, between layers of time and space. At the same time, I visualize the transparent yet solid thickness around me, or the surprising speed of the countless waves that connect me. Eventually, my surfaces link with other surfaces and I become a part of the connection. This seeps deep into me, and I can feel the one connection.

I work with the fibers and translucency of washi, the smell of burning wood, and artificial, clear plastic. Recently, I collected pebbles and rubble from man-made objects. It may be a flimsy world, but we who cling to its surface are sure to be a part of something deeper.

Biography

Keiko Miyamori is an artist from Japan. She majored in traditional Japanese painting at university and was awarded the Tamon Miki Award for Modern Painting the year she completed her graduate work. She then moved to the United States, where she enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania for one year under the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunka-Cho) Fellowship program. After that she returned to Japan, but in 2000 relocated to Philadelphia and set up a studio. Previously, Ms. Miyamori's work has been in group shows at the Ueno Royal Museum, Sompo Japan Museum of Art, Art Tower Mito, and the Miyagi Museum of Art, among many others. Her body of work encompasses paintings, sculptures and installation art.

She is presently based in New York City. Ms. Miyamori works with natural materials such as handmade washi (Japanese paper) and charcoal to create tree rubbings (tree surface patterns transferred onto washi) with which she wraps natural and artificial objects. Another representative category of her work suspends objects from nature or her own artwork within clear resin plastics. Although her health condition was once damaged due to many experiments and castings using liquid resin, she recovered and continues making art objects in her Brooklyn studio.

Making tree Rubbing with washi in Pittsburg



Gallery information

Exhibition title: Keiko Miyamori - Surface of Being

Artist: Keiko Miyamori

4. 23 ~ 5.15, 2015

Tuesday though Saturday 11:00 - 19:00, Close Sun, Mon, Holidays

5.15 (last day) close at 17:00

Opening reception: 4.23 (Thursday)18:00-20:00

Gallery t: 1-9-11 Yanagi-bashi, Taito-ku, Tokyo

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