

Excerpts/Images FROM: Naoko Haruta and the Contemporary Abstract

Painterly Modernity Part 3

--Steve Light--



{Life #134: "Borodin: Polovstian Dances", acrylic on canvas, 43" x 67"}



{Life #38: “Vladimir Jankelevitch: Music and Hours”, acrylic on canvas, 39” x 60”}

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{Life #34, acrylic on canvas, 43" x 67"}



{Life #142: “Abidjan”, acrylic on canvas, 43”x67”}

*And then cities sparkling even more than beneath there own noonday suns
and even more serene than beneath twilights and evenings where the wind is
only a voice and the dark the loveliest kind of recompense.*



{Life #130: “Dizzy Gillespie ‘A Night in Tunisia’, acrylic on canvas, 43”x67”}



{Life #143 "Venice#1", acrylic on canvas, 43"x67"}

...And this is one of the reasons why Naoko Haruta has felt all the more the urgency of taking the project of contemporary painting neither lightly nor tragically, but rather seriously in the sense given this word by the philosopher of kairos and hapax, of commencement and semelfactivity, Vladimir Jankelevitch, which is to say that she has understood better than anyone else that artistic speech must not fall into the more primary immobility of fear, the fear of artistic speech that has dominated the art world since the fraudulence of Donald Judd's notion that Jackson Pollock opened up an escape route from painting

This is the ever treacherous and decisive difficulty confronting anyone who wants to truly and substantially think about visual art practices in particular. How does one demarcate the difference between a painter who has taken up the challenge, within the advanced forms of our modernity, of the immanence of painting and its practice--Naoko Haruta within the field of abstract painting for example and Alain Silver within the field of figurative and surrealist abstract painting on the other hand--over and against painters and artists who have inserted their practice within the beyond and externality of gimmick,

gadget, and concoction? It is clear that the art-world has become an organized logic of indifferenciation which nevertheless knows very well how to identify and reject immanence. But on the basis of what? There is on the one hand an inevitably placed "sign" within the works of the indifferenciation of concoction, a "sign" which says: I am obedient. This is the immense circularity. The aforementioned "guidelines" posited by Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, Peter Osborne, Andrew Benjamin, Boris Groys, T.J. Clark, Thierry de Duve, etc. are precisely the circular guidelines of obedience. Artists fashion(!) objects to conform to these guidelines at the same time that these guidelines ("discourses") are formulated on the basis of the very artistic conformity to these guidelines evinced in the "works" of these artists. The massive defense formation that is the art world takes the form of a Moebius strip. The "sign" of obedience on both sides of this circularity is at once deterministic and completely random. Anything recognized already has posited this kind of "sign" at the same time that anything that is recognized is already by virtue of this recognition deemed to contain the "sign" in question. One more reason why there is no dissent among functionaries about Ryman or Twombly or Richter....or Julie Mehretu in an example which can privilege a decisive comparison. Everywhere where Mehretu binds her lyricism to the mechanical, to mechanism, to the mechanics of geometric reproduction and even more to the mechanization of pre-fabrication in a process that

ultimately speaks only in the future anterior tense--her forms always finding the state of the will-have-been and the already-having-been in which the paint itself is given no place to move, no place in which to become, indeed is frozen and denied its very raison d'être, its viscosity, its life--Naoko Haruta on the other hand does not bind her lyricism at all, but rather allows it to emerge as the very coming-to-be of the intentionality--the seriousness of intention!--of paint, line, drip, and stain. If, as Jankelevitch in his clairvoyance says, the good is never an already-having-been, never a substance or a goal, but precisely that which must be done, here and now, on the spot, tout de suite ou jamais, then we could say that this is precisely the nature of Naoko Haruta's lyrical and rhapsodic verve. The future anterior gives way in every instance to the present progressive. Everything in these paintings is always underway. To the Kantian impositions and dictations of time and space so evident in Mehretu's works Naoko Haruta has responded with the inexhaustible mobility of the Bergsonian intuition and elan.

And it is here in this mobility, in this painterly instantiation, in this kinesthetic will and affection resonating in Naoko Haruta's works, that our painterly modernity can find and perhaps even establish the sole possibility of saying, i.e. Yes!, to a difference, a demarcation, and a means of establishing an aesthetic judgment capable of escaping the indifferenciation of collusion in

which for 60 years the art world's works and discourses circulate and from which arise the art world's random and delusive hierarchies and recognitions .

In no period of the history of art can there ever be a differentiation that escapes the agon of dispute and disputed hierarchy, but never prior to the 1950s was there an epoch in which indifferentiation had breached all thresholds and become the materialized falsification of works and discourse. Everything and anything could be substituted without remainder or difference for anything else. The event, the courage, the fidelity of Naoko Haruta's works are such that they tell us that there is yet the possibility of a criterion of demarcation, of aesthetic demarcation, a criterion that would enable one to combat the collusion in which hierarchies resting upon absolute indfferentiation are presented as if fully founded. Her works themselves undo all the hierarchies, histories, and received discourses of the past 60 years and give us this gift of possibility. Yes, her paintings give us what Jankelevitch might call the atmospherics of charm, but they also give us this great Yes! of dilineation.

The mobility of elan and duree! True to this inspiration, Naoko Haruta has given us not even the "immediate givens of consciousness", but much more the immediate givens of happiness. And "Mediterranean Inspirations" too. Life #118: "Mediteranean Inspirations". Upon a wash of white with blue-pink and

pink tinges she has applied black, grey, and orange brush strokes prior to drip lines of yellow, light blue, dark blue, green, cream, and yellow, this yellow once again and always which she seemingly invents over and over again. How can we single out among the many virtuosity of these canvasses one virtuosity and yet among all the difficulties confronting our abstract painterly modernity there is the paramount difficulty of congealment. How is it possible for canvass after canvass to come together amidst these expansions of brush, drip, and color, come together in such a way that the aleatory, the contingent, and the necessary become the unity-in-difference of charm? This virtuosity of method and will that she has mastered speaks always at the moment of the work's completion in this emphatic epigraphic truth: "...the certainty of dawn!"

Inspirations Mediterraneenes. It is the title of a book of lyrical essays by Jean Grenier (a title previously used by Paul Valery) who elsewhere wrote so very beautifully about painting and abstract painting. And Grenier in another volume of lyrical essays, Les Iles, could well have provided a beautiful and apt epigraph and commentary for this particular painting of Naoko Haruta's: "And at the same moment on all the shores of the Mediterranean, from the heights of all the terraces of Palermo, Ravello, Ragusa, of Amalfi, Algiers, and Alexandria, Patras, Istanbul, Smyrna and Barcelona, thousands of people like me were holding their breath and saying: Yes. And I thought that if the

sensible world is only a flimsy web of appearances, a veil of changing chimeras that we tear apart at night and that our grief tries in vain to sweep away, still, there are men and women who, the first to suffer from it, fashion this web, reconstruct these appearances and, thereby, enable universal life to surge up again, a universal life which without this everyday elan would dry up somewhere like a remote mountain well."[5]



{Life #123, acrylic on canvas, 43"x67"}



{Life #165: “Hiromi Uehara: Place to Be”, acrylic on canvas, 43”x67”}



{Life #21, acrylic on canvas, 43"x56"}



{Life #116: “Bach: ‘Partita #2 in D minor, acrylic on canvas, 43”x67”}



{Life #136: “Paganini: ‘Violin Concerto #5 in A minor’”, acrylic on canvas, 43”x67”}



{Life #19, acrylic on canvas, 43"x71"}