

"Spanish Allusions," a playful reference by Louise Kikuchi

Judith van Praag

Shown on the same floor as Dale Chihuli's glass art, Louise Kikuchi's work compares to his as water to fire, Prince's to Philip Glass' compositions, baroque to minimalism. And yet Kikuchi's sumi paintings are much more than merely dots in formation.

Kikuchi's new work is based on sketches the artist made during a recent visit to El Prado Museum in Spain –with more than 8,600 paintings, of which only 2,000 on view for the public– the largest art gallery in the world.

Throughout the ages artists have been inspired by earlier masters. In 1778, at the beginning of his career as court painter, Goya made his first series of etchings, copying seventeen paintings by Velazquez, thus showing his admiration of the greatest Spanish painter of the 17th century.

In 2000 Seattle's popular artist Fay Jones showed a series of watercolors based on Goya's allegorical "Caprichos" at the Grover/Thurston Gallery.

Louise Kikuchi responded to some of history's most celebrated works of art by extraction; representation returned to the essence, color and organization or composition.

Copies of notebook pages –following the artist's resume and work history– in the gallery's information binder, show simple sketches of master pieces, accompanied by color notations. Often an artist's sketchbook is considered even more interesting than the ultimate piece. In this case the artist's notations clarify the work and thought process. "Sumi image is composed of lines and dots. Individual dots can be likened to individual, human breaths. They are temporal, sequential, even and rhymed," wrote Louise Kikuchi about "Points of Reference" an earlier exhibition (1997) at Foster/White.

Seated in front of Kikuchi abstractions, your reviewer mused on the artist's minimalist approach; "The Infanta" in sumi and

gansai on paper, dots in gray tones alternated with rose/red; a meditation on all portraits of the Spanish King's daughters at El Prado. "La Noche" (The Night), dots of darkness in an illuminated sky, the negative of space, the universe turned upon itself. Deep in its supposed simplicity, the work presented under the title "Spanish Allusions" is Art for meditation.

Louise Kikuchi's work will be represented in "2002-2004 Fables of la Fontaine". She's one of 82 French, American and Italian artists interpreting the famed tales. (Publication Fall 2005 UW Press.)

"Spanish Allusions" by Louise Kikuchi. Spet. 2-30 at Rainier Square branch of Foster/White Gallery at 1333-5th Ave. Seattle, 10am - 6pm (Mon-Sat) 12pm-5pm (Sun).

Meanwhile, while waiting for that, no doubt interesting book, don't miss out on the presentation at Foster/White, Kikuchi's show an oasis of peace amidst the hustle and bustle of downtown.

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