

Yui Yaegashi (b. 1985, Chiba, Japan) is a painter who lives and works in Tokyo. Her exhibition, titled *To and from home*, features twenty-two new paintings on view at Midway. While loosely inspired by the patterns and colors of textiles, these small works are more reflective of Yaegashi's reserved and carefully considered processes.

She works within self-imposed systems, establishing parameters for each painting such as a limited palette or a rule of only three layers of paint. This strategy of restraint was inspired by the Japanese writer Shinichi Hoshi's very brief science fiction stories, which he called "short-short" stories (a form generally known today as flash fiction or palm-sized fiction). Hoshi relied on a series of cards that had single words written on them, selecting a card or two to prompt each of his texts, which number into the thousands. Yaegashi began using similar strategies when she started painting while in school. The combination of chance, accident, and concision inspired by flash fiction remains at the center of Yaegashi's work.

At a grander scale, these "short-short" paintings would have too many plot lines and characters to maintain their brevity. By maintaining maximum restraint, Yaegashi displays an almost ceremonial sensitivity to the process, beginning with the construction of the surface. Building up layers of parallel and intersecting lines and fields of color, she maintains a minimal yet very personal touch. She tends to the slight accidents that occur throughout her process, and after careful consideration, sometimes allows imperfections to remain. In other instances, she will almost completely paint over a very carefully built up pattern, leaving only the slightest hint of the initial layer.

Sean Scully once said that "The stripe was the signifier of modernism." While one painter would 'own' the vertical stripes, another would claim the horizontal ones. Some even attempted both. While acknowledging this tradition, Yaegashi's work also resists it in oftentimes humorous ways. She uses titles sparingly, but when she does, she is literal to the point of satire. One painting's title is simply  $\uparrow\downarrow\uparrow$ —the sequence and directions of the brush strokes she used to make it. More frequently, she will title works with the size of the brush used to make the painting (*Brush No. 15 of Sekaido*), an acronym of her paint colors (*MPCG*), or the standard canvas sizes available from a Japanese Art supply store (*crustF3* and *crustM3*). Throughout Midway's gallery, library, and office Yaegashi has installed and loosely grouped these works to emphasize their their difference and commonalities, a collection of palm-sized stories.

Yui Yaegashi's work has recently been included in *The way of painting* at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo (2014), *Truth – Art in the Poor Age*, hiromiyoshii, Tokyo (2009), and in solo

exhibitions at MISAKO & ROSEN, Tokyo (2014 and 2012) and Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago (2015).

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