

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Press Release 2012/06/15

Hara Documents 9 Masako Ando: The Garden of Belly Button

July 12 (Thursday) – August 19 (Sunday), 2012

Masako Ando paints children, animals and plants on porcelain-smooth canvas surfaces. Her works are characterized by delicate lines, multi-layered colors and a depth that seems to draw the viewer in. *Hara Documents 9 Masako Ando: The Garden of Belly Button* is the first solo exhibition at a museum of this superbly talented young artist who probes the interval between reality and unreality in search of moments that give rise to a picture. Gathered together are 17 works, most of which are appearing in public for the first time. We invite you to experience Masako Ando's rich narrative world of living creatures that breathe and exude a charm that can only be appreciated by the naked eye.



[1] *The Garden of Belly Button* 2010
oil on canvas mounted on wood panel 190 x 140 cm
©Masako Ando Courtesy of Tomio Koyama Gallery

Like the internationally acclaimed artists Yoshitomo Nara and Hiroshi Sugito, Masako Ando (b. 1976) studied under Nobuya Hitsuda. It was during this time that she began making paintings without regard for the prevailing trends and fast pace of production, with her own sensibilities as her sole guide. As part of her creative process, Ando meticulously collects and combines bits and pieces of memories, words and reality, carefully developing the ideas for her paintings. Because of the long gestation time of her works,

Ando has to date shown some 10 works and has participated in three exhibitions, including two group shows and one solo exhibition at a gallery (2004). For the current solo exhibition, her first at a museum, a total of 17 works will be on display, 12 of which were created after 2004.

Ando works in pencil and oil paints. In an age that offers a vast range of materials and methods, she makes do with these two mediums alone. She lavishes equal adoration on her various motifs, all of which are living things like children, animals, insects, plants and flowers. These things, which breathe and live in her paintings, cannot be encompassed in a single glance. Their surprising delicacy and subtle colors become apparent only through close examination of the various nooks and crannies within the picture plane. Each item is painted with equal affection, passion and concentration.

Pencil drawings, the artist says, allow her to "engage my feelings with ease." Images are set as they flow out from her fingertips. For her oil paintings, drawings serve as a base over which she lays down opaque lines and multiple transparent glazes as part of a dialog with the color image. She uses a brush or the palm of her hand to spread the pigment thinly and sandpaper to polish the surface until it is as smooth as porcelain. Ando's superb technical skills allow her to imbue her subjects with a textual quality that gives them a striking realism. And yet the polished surface eliminates all traces of the artist's hand, the pigment's physicality and other signs of tangible rawness, to impart an intangible, imaginary quality to the image, like that of a reflection in a mirror. In her paintings, this is the interval between reality and unreality in which Ando searches for moments that gives rise to pictures.

The name of the exhibition, *The Garden of Belly Button*, is also the name of an exhibited work. The title, Ando says, expresses a place "where something on the verge of being born permeates the air." At the Hara Museum, originally a private residence, the memories of many people precipitate within its spaces and small creatures and plants breathe within its gardens. Like the paintings of Masako Ando, it is a place filled with things on the verge of being born, a birth to be triggered perhaps by an encounter with the visitor. The things depicted in Ando's paintings are no mere icons. They have a power to draw the viewer into a world that is meant to be "experienced." We invite you to come feel this power.

[Exhibition Details]

Title: *Hara Documents 9 Masako Ando: The Garden of Belly Button*

Dates: Thursday, July 12 – Sunday, August 19, 2012

Place: Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (Galleries I, II and III)

4-7-25 Kitashinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 140-0001 Tel: +81 3-3445-0651

E-mail: info@haramuseum.or.jp

<http://www.haramuseum.or.jp> <http://mobile.haramuseum.or.jp> (Mobile site)

[http://www.art-it.asia/u/HaraMuseum/\(blog\)](http://www.art-it.asia/u/HaraMuseum/(blog))

Organized by: Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Supported by: Hara Museum Supporting Membership

Special cooperation provided by: Tomio Koyama Gallery

Hours: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Wednesdays until 8:00 pm (last entry 30 minutes before closing)

Closed: Mondays (open on July 16), July 17

Admission: General 1,000 yen; Students 700 yen (high school and university) or 500 yen (elementary and junior high); Free for Hara Museum members, students through high school every Saturday during the school term; 100 yen discount per person for groups of 20.

Directions: 5 minutes by taxi or 15 minutes on foot from JR Shinagawa Station (Takanawa exit); or from the same station take the Tan No.96 bus, get off at the first stop (Gotenyama), and walk 3 minutes.

Related event: Meet the Artist: Saturday, July 14, 2:00 – 3:00 pm (in Japanese only)

*Also on view: Selections from the Hara Museum Collection (Galleries IV and V)

[Points of Interest]

- ⤴ This is the first solo exhibition at a museum featuring the small but rarefied output of a highly gifted artist
- ⤴ A total of 17 works (9 oil paintings and 8 pencil drawings) will be displayed, including 12 created since her first solo exhibition in 2004.
- ⤴ This is a rare opportunity to view first-hand the material quality of Masako Ando's paintings which cannot be conveyed through a printed reproduction.

[Artist Profile]

Born in 1976 in Aichi prefecture, Ando received a BA (1999) and MFA (2001) from the Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music. She had her first solo exhibition at Tomio Koyama Gallery in 2004. In 2009, she was invited to participate in the group exhibition *Little Playground - Hitsuda Nobuya and His Students* at the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and Nagoya City Art Museum. She currently lives and works in Nagoya. <http://www.tomiokoyamagallery.com/artists/ando>

[What is *Hara Documents*?]

Hara Documents is an exhibition series launched in 1992 for the purpose of cultivating and promoting emerging artists and curators. Its goal is to introduce talented young individuals pursuing creative activities in a variety of genres not limited to the field of fine arts. Artists featured in the past include Miran Fukuda (1992), Kazz Sasaguchi (2002) and the doll designer Namie Manabe (2002). *Hara Documents* is made possible by the generous support of Hara Museum Supporting Members. This latest installment is the first to be held in 10 years.

[Images for Publication]

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[2] *Hybrid* 2008 pencil on paper 84.5 × 84.5 cm
©Masako Ando Courtesy of Tomio Koyama Gallery



[3] *Sphinx* 2007 oil on canvas mounted on wood panel 99.7 × 120.0 cm
TAKAHASHI COLLECTION ©Masako Ando Courtesy of Tomio Koyama Gallery



[4] *Dragon's Back* 2007 oil on canvas mounted on wood panel 120.3 x 130.0 cm
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