

Thinkspace (Los Angeles) - is pleased to present *Kioku No Hana (Flower of Memory)*, featuring new and recent works by Japanese artist Fuco Ueda. Ueda is renowned for her surreal narrative paintings of slight girls surrounded by all manner of lush hyper-colored flora and fauna. The artist's work conveys a feeling of ambivalent rapture, as her dreamy subjects are suspended in varying states of silent revelation and resignation; quiet witnesses to recondite mysteries. Drawing from the coexistence of oppositions, the sickly sweetness of Ueda's imagery is often offset by the inclusion of disturbing or unexpected juxtapositions. Her young girls are frequently staged in secret communion with sea creatures and land beasts, and appear in equal states of threat and calm. Beauty lives and thrives in Ueda's surreal universe - a place of unlikely kinships and unsettling recesses - as the artist forges a precarious harmony between light and dark, loneliness and friendship, emptiness and largess.

Kioku No Hana is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery. This body of work is largely based on the cultural motif of the chrysanthemum flower: a symbol of lamentation and grief in Japanese culture. Ueda draws from the recurrence of this symbol to create beautifully lush tableaux - at once rich and ornate, while also suggestive of absentia and loss. Throughout, Ueda's illustrative representation of the chrysanthemum is symbolically heightened to a supernatural pitch. While familiar and clearly derived from the recognizable world, her stylized renditions become beautifully excessive and seemingly imbued with a talismanic power beyond our recognition.

Ueda creates these highly saturated works with the meticulous application of acrylic washes and mineral pigments on paper, cloth and wood. Delicate, and yet simultaneously forceful and unsettling, the works seem to hover in a dream state of surfeit and exaggeration. Ueda's technique is distinctly her own, and her palette and imagery are undeniably iconic. In *Kioku No Hana* the artist weaves a visual imaginary of plentiful loss, as her work deftly hovers somewhere between joy and exquisite sadness.

Concurrently on view in the Thinkspace project room is *Seek My Fort*, featuring new works by Southern African artist Ryan Hewett. An accomplished painter with a vested interest in the expressive power of portraiture, Hewett paints with a freely guttural and expressionistic license. His rich oil paintings reconcile the representational with the abstract in a way that suspends their respective classifications as genres. Seeking the visceral power of mark making, while capturing an impressionistic likeness of a sitter, the artist reveals the fundamental power of paint and gesture. The paintings border on the sculptural, as their materiality dominates in the brutally forceful execution of the paint.

Hewett pushes the traditional tenets of portraiture, refusing the paradigm of verisimilitude in favor of the raw power of execution. The sitter becomes a vehicle for the artist's hand, rather than a primary subject unto itself. In Hewett's hands the work become about making and the arrest and translation of a fleeting moment of viewing. As a result, the works become powerful revelations of the inner workings of the artist, rather than vague suggestions of the identities of the observed.