

Sweet & Bitter : 日本の<女の子写真>をめぐる考察

**J-WAVE USA**

**3 Days of Japanamericana  
at UCLA  
13-15 March 2008**

**Sweet & Bitter**  
Contemporary 'Girl Photography'  
from Japan

**Mikiko Hara**  
VISIONS OF contemporary art from Japan in the US have been dominated by the influence of Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara's 'neo-pop' art, an anime and manga inspired world of childish characters and cartoonish sexuality. Their 'superflat' vision reflects well the obsessions and anxieties of a now ageing post-war, predominantly male, 'otaku' generation, but it often misrepresents the rather different mainstream urban girls' culture of contemporary Japan. Murakami is certainly giving the West what it wants. His brand of neo-japanisme in fact sometimes seems the only way that Japanese contemporary art can get noticed internationally. Nearly all the contemporary women photographers who have made some kind of splash on the global scene have used a parallel kind of logic to push up their value and reputation: think of Mariko Mori's cosplay girls, Miwa Yanagi's elevator girls, or Tomoko Sawado's school girls... This is curious, because viewed from Japan, the circulation of these frankly orientalist conceptions often looks bizarre. And the western artworld largely overlooked another phenomenon in Japan that equalled the rise of the neo-pop movement, but did not spend much time translating itself for foreigners. The 'girl photography' boom of the late 1990s in Tokyo, discussed here by Hironori Nakamura, put cameras in girls' hands and captured a rather different, and certainly more realistic, vision of this society. Our two featured artists today – who both emerged from this wave but have now transcended it – represent this vision in different ways. There is an art of, by and for young women, that mixes high art aspirations with the sensibility of glossy fashion magazines and instant mobile phone snapshots.

**Mika Ninagawa** (born 1972) – who, by any measure, is a superstar in her native country – captures better than anyone the pure celebration of this urban Japanese girls' culture, for which she is a heroine herself. Clothes, sweets, cocktails, holidays, travel, friends – and never, ever, a boy in sight. Ninagawa, a fashion photographer by training, hangs out with her famous models, and documents her life as a photographer in photo diaries that themselves appear as features in the magazines and 'mooks' that line the bookstores of Tokyo. 'Woman' (2007), her stunning collection of iconic female portraits, that transformed the basement of Omotesando Hills into a rose strewn boudoir, capped a triumphant year on the rise in the artworld, most notably when one of her signature color rooms was adopted for Yoko Hasegawa's 'Space for Your Future' (2007), a major survey of contemporary installation/ design work at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Contemporary Art.

**Mikiko Hara** (born 1967) represents the other side of life and art in Tokyo. Hers is a subtle documentary photography, born of the city's suburbs of endless sprawl, way out at the end of interminable commuter lines. A mother-of-three, who lives out in this real urban Japan, she has steadily built a career through much travelogue and diary style work. Her photography captures beautifully the everyday look and feel of the vast conurbation and what it is like to live there, holding up a very different kind of mirror to gendered life in Japan. There is a life beyond the endless youth of Shibuya party girls, overshadowed by the doubts and constraints of an unappealing adult future. It is work now gaining attention in major international photography circles, with shows in Europe and New York, a recent feature in Aperture magazine, and the acquisition of works by the Getty Center and other collectors in the US.

We are delighted to be able to showcase today the work of these two remarkable emerging artists.

**Adrian Favell, UCLA**

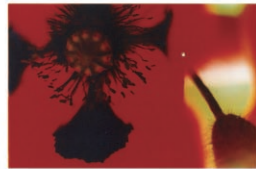
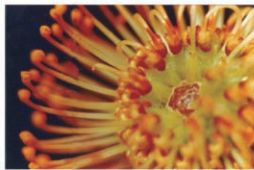
**EXCLUSIVE UCLA EXHIBITION, 14 March 2008, 4-9pm**  
*Mikiko Hara & Mika Ninagawa*  
Curated by Hironori Nakamura and Adrian Favell  
Anderson School of Management, Entrepreneurs Hall, Atrium C  
Sponsored by the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles



Mikiko Hara, *Untitled (Is As It)* 1996



Mikiko Hara, *Untitled (Creating a Vase)* 2001



Mika Ninagawa (clockwise from top left):  
Acid Bloom 03-43-82-4 2003  
Mika 04-05-82-1 (Aino Tsuchiya) 2004  
Acid Bloom 03-11-82-2 2003  
Acid Bloom 03-13-82-2 2003  
Mika 04-106-82-2 2004



14 Mar 2008

## Sweet & Bitter



**Hammer Lecture and Debate**  
with **Hiromi Nakamura & invited speakers**  
Hammer Museum, Lecture Hall, 1-3pm  
Introduced and moderated by **Adrian Favell**  
Sponsored by Center for Study of Women, UCLA



**CHARLOTTE COTTON** is department head and curator of photography at Los Angeles County Museum. Previously, she was curator of photography at the Victoria and Albert Museum and head of programming at The Photographers Gallery, in London. She was visiting professor at Yale University, and currently at the University College for the Creative Arts in the UK. She has also been visiting critic, including at SVA, Bard College, USC, and Cranbrook. Charlotte curated the exhibitions *Out of Japan* (2002) and *Guy Bourdin* (2003), and her books include *Imperfect Beauty* (2000) and *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (2004).



**LAURA MILLER** is Professor of Anthropology at Loyola University Chicago. Recent publications include *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics* (2006), *Those naughty teenage girls: Japanese Kogals, slang, and media assessments* (2004), and *'Graffiti photos: Expressive art in Japanese girls' culture'* (2003). With Jan Bardsley, she edited *Bad Girls of Japan* (2005); the two are now finishing *Manners and Mischief: Gender and Power in Japanese Conduct Literature*. Her new book in progress is *Girl Power Japan: Gendered Domains of Cultural and Linguistic Vigor*.



**SHARON KINSELLA** does research on contemporary Japanese media processes and cultural production and the interaction of cultural formations with governance, youth policy and law. She has published on cute, otaku, mens' comic magazines, lolita complex, girls' in-street fashion, journalism and visual cultural representations. Sharon previously worked at Cambridge University, Yale, and MIT, and is currently based at Oxford University. She is completing a book called *girls as energy: fantasies of rejuvenation*, and has a chapter on girls' art from Japan in global circulation called *'Who's That Girl?'* forthcoming in a compilation edited by Mary Steggle.



**YOSHITAKA MOURI** is Associate Professor of Sociology and Cultural studies at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Japan ('GEIDAI'). His research interests are postmodern culture, media, art, and urban culture. His publications include *Bunka=Seiji and Popyura Ongaku to Shihonshugi*, as well as the recent articles in English, *'Culture=Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the Age of Freeter'* and *'Subcultural Unconsciousness in Japan: the War and Japanese Contemporary Artists'*. In 2007, he worked as a director of *Kitakyushu Art Biennial*.

The three days of events were curated by Adrian Favell, Department of Sociology, UCLA, organized in association with the Japanese Consulate, Los Angeles, and sponsored by: UCLA Terasaki Center for Japanese Studies; UCLA International Institute; UCLA Department of Sociology; UCLA Center for the Study of Women; UCLA Dept of Asian American Studies; Hammer Museum at UCLA; UCLA Anderson School of Management; Japan America Business Association, Anderson School; Center for International Business Education Research, Anderson School; Japan Foundation, Los Angeles (funding for exhibition); Japanese Consulate, Los Angeles (funding for business conference and program); Modé Tea Café, Los Angeles; Marui Corporation, Tokyo.

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