

ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA
"TOMORROW" 2020. ACRYLIC
ON CANVAS, 60 X 72 IN. © ASUKA
ANASTACIA OGAWA, COURTESY OF
THE ARTIST AND BLUM & POE, LOS
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ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA

IT CAN'T BE
CONTROLLED,
AND THAT'S
PROBABLY FOR
THE BEST

Written by Rae Niwa

A

POOL OF WHITE DIFFUSED LIGHT BEAMS ACROSS THE ENTRANCE of Los Angeles' Blum and Poe as Asuka Anastacia Ogawa enters. She walks with elegance and introduces herself with the joy and warmth of an old friend. We settle down in a private space affixed with chemex coffee, sparkling water, and an open space to hear and speak. There is an artful ease in her laughter that radiates the same kind of wonderment I appreciate in her work.

Ogawa is more than a painter and beyond a place. She was born in Tokyo in 1988, but moved to a rural farm in Brazil when she was three years old. She attended high school in Sweden and then moved to London and pursued her BFA from Central Saint Martins. She is currently based in New York and Los Angeles. In this way, she has cultivated a landscape and a space that is entirely her own through her saturated dream-like paintings, which exude a playful poetry interlaced with a specific sophistication.

In a recent work, "Baby Bells" (2019), the androgynous figure set against a playful pink background stares into the viewer's eye. There is an intensity to the gaze, but the soft edges and imaginative palette bring to mind the visual tradition of Japanese anime style illustration. The bells that adorn and trace the figure's outline call to mind a kind of halo quality with a continued ornamentation that highlights an element of fantasy.

The interlude between place and feeling is gracefully approached in the work. A mixture of dreamy tones seduce the viewer into a realm of comfort and wonder. The lines are soft, rounded, but intentional with a gesture and story bridging off of each canvas. In "Sand" (2020), there are two figures standing in tall grass holding a swaddled baby, and a deer-like creature car-

rying bread, eggs, corn and milk on its back. This painting is an ode to growing up on the farm in Brazil, its neutral background allows the eye to melt into the details. The balance of pastel in the natural elements with pops of red and blue create a layered and beautiful composition.

With her recent recognition, some have remarked an assimilation of mythology and ancestral lineage. Her work is a product of an intersectional perspective of how we can construct space that serves our identity.

In response to the prompt, "Where is home?" Ogawa replies, "I think about the people I love when I think of the word 'home'—having time to explore, and a place to paint, is when I feel most at home."

It feels like we are revealing bits and pieces of a greater narrative. As new faces and colors are unveiled, I seem to find myself wandering back to the principle of dreams. We learn to dream from the land we live in, the lineage of stories and the sky we breathed under. It could be mirrored back to genetics, that our dreams are hereditary and informed. But there's this moment of contemplative abyss within Ogawa's work that cultivates a string of questions that do not inundate, but perpetuate a sentiment of who, of what, of where do I want to be. There is an innate strength in imparting more with less.

This will be Ogawa's first solo presentation with Blum and

Poe, which is anticipated to open in 2020. An entire new body of paintings gives space for interpretation, while channeling her ancestral lineage. Her journey to this moment began in 2017 with Henry Taylor, who is also represented by Blum & Poe, and who offered Ogawa her first solo show in the US. Called *Soup*, the exhibition was curated by painter Cassi Namoda and staged at Taylor's LA studio. Soon thereafter, in June 2019, Ogawa had her first New York solo show with Half Gallery.

There is an element of cycle, of birth, and of return I've ab-



ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA "GARLIC BOY" 2020. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 60 X 40 IN. © ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND BLUM & POE, LOS ANGELES/NEWYORK/TOKYO



ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA "SAND" 2020. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 60 X 72 IN. © ASUKA ANASTACIA OGAWA, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND BLUM & POE, LOS ANGELES/NEWYORK/TOKYO

sorbed from her work; a strong duality that allows the audience to subvert any linear thinking and turn their attention to the underlying parts of how we live, how we connect, and how we are. In a meditative gesture, her process is rooted in a non-judgmental ode to the work. She allows people, certain words from conversations, environment and sound to layer and leave a palpable residue in the paint. Ogawa often has a starting point that changes and evolves when approaching the canvas; an idea evolves and she surrenders to that part, as if something is being revealed and she is the conduit to the story.

Ogawa confides, "I welcome unfiltered inspiration that isn't always understood or in need of being fully understood." This is an organic fluidity, exposing her unfiltered relationship to the work. How do you put words to that process? In an era when words and processes we articulate dictate how we move, relate, and understand, Ogawa's process is a subtle reminder of the pow-

er in letting things come and be as they are.

In "Lilly" (2019), a veiled figure stands in a peach garment with three glass bottles containing a milky liquid against a lavender background. A figure holds straws between their hands and an alligator rests upon their shoulder. The subtle balance between the colors is imbued with a mystical essence. Ogawa notes that the influences of her work are not directly definitive, but rather an assortment of many feelings and places.

With an undulating grace and imaginative approach to narrative identity, Ogawa offers a world that is more than her memory, giving us space to unravel, remember, and perhaps visually coerce an understanding of the intersectionality of being. With a playful decadence and modality not short of sophisticated color fields, she leaves the viewer in a seismic pool of wondering for more.