

From Relation to Rupture: *Yoriko Takabatake: Fountain*

Reviewer: Ryo Sawayama

What to paint, and how to paint it? Yoriko Takabatake responds to these questions that every painter faces through development of new techniques. Her painting took the introduction of textile networks as a starting point. Takabatake overlays lines of thinly squeezed-out paint like a spider spinning thread for a web.

Before discussing Takabatake's work, I should mention that she is not only a painter but also a researcher on Anni Albers, who like her husband Josef Albers taught at the Bauhaus and at Black Mountain College. Anni Albers produced textiles as paintings, intended to hang on a wall and lacking any practical function. Takabatake shares with Anni Albers the intent to integrate and encompass the media of textiles and paintings. What Anni Albers did in her textile works was to make the support (usually meaning canvas) itself the means of visual expression. Black Mountain College student Kenneth Noland, and Helen Frankenthaler, who visited the college in summer 1950, were leaders in developing the technique of staining¹, which made the canvas as material one with the visual expression it contained. This technique would not have emerged without Anni Albers, although she does not get the credit she deserves.

Knit and woven fabrics are networks, and the canvas that serves as a support for many paintings is a woven fabric. Seen in this light, Takabatake's practice is like a reinvention of the support. Her painting creates another net(work) on the canvas, laying support over support and infrastructure over infrastructure. In other words, it abandons the traditional painting schema of figure and ground by placing a "fabric" made of paint on top of the canvas that supports it, and also by superimposing the two media of textiles and painting. In a sense Takabatake's paintings weave and intertwine these two media. Her nets are literally networks of multiple technical systems, and spaces where they are translated and transmitted.

Black Mountain College was just such a space. Notably, Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes, networks of identical units, were made for the first time at Black Mountain. The textile techniques of Anni Albers were not limited to textiles but related to, and were reinvented in, Noland's paintings, Fuller's domes, Kenneth Snelson "tensegrity" sculptures, Ruth Asawa's net sculptures and elsewhere. At Black Mountain there was a shared pursuit of aesthetics and structure, the possibilities of collaboration between

art and engineering. There was no distinction between technology and art, just as nature does not distinguish between beauty and structure. The development of techniques and re-invention of supports in Takabatake's paintings carry on this philosophy.

In this show we see new approaches added to the tradition of net painting. The nets are broken and chaotic. According to the artist, the new body of work features wire mesh pressed not against canvas, but against panels with oil paint applied, to produce a net support. After making a shallow water-storage channel around the support, she fills the panel surface with water and draws threads of paint across it. These float on the surface of the water and eventually sink. External forces like water flow and wind are applied before the submerged paint adheres to the support, scrambling the net in various ways. The exhibition title, *Fountain*, relates to this process. These works were created in collaboration with water, wind, gravity and other invisible forces.

The title *Fountain* reminds us of Marcel Duchamp and his work of that title, and also relates to his *Network of Stoppages* (1914), in which Duchamp dropped lengths of cord onto canvas. This network, like those of Takabatake, happens to illustrate the "subtle effects" of contingency and gravity. It should also be noted that Duchamp created a network of cords throughout the venue at the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition (1942), creating divisions and obstacles to the flow of the entire venue and interactions between the works. A network usually means relationship or connection, but Duchamp's was intended to subvert these.

If Takabatake has thus far sought to create paintings with tight, densely woven networks, what we see in this exhibition are breakages and stoppages, disruption and collapse, an aggressive retreat from "relation." It is not farfetched to relate this to our current reality of confinement and entrapment in networks such as the Internet. It is certainly incorrect to view Takabatake's work only in terms of textiles and crafts. In that respect, Takabatake's rupture of the net form creates a tension between bonding / connection and rupture / disconnection, and her paintings celebrate both of these contradictory phenomena. In these works we see the question, "Is it possible to weave connection and disconnection together into a single fabric?" This is a very contemporary and pressing issue, one that we all face and must overcome today.

Notes:

1. The technique of causing thinned paint to bleed into and stain unprimed canvas.

Translated by Christopher Stephens

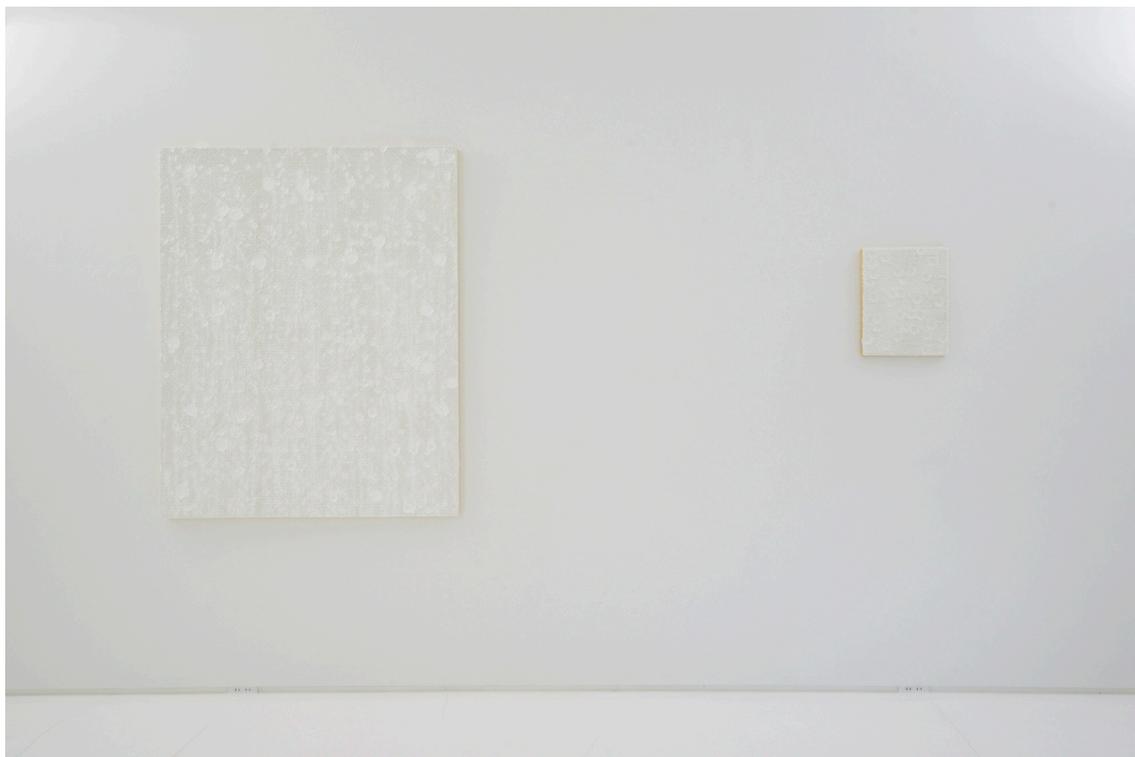
First appeared in the Bijutsu Techo website, 19th May 2018, Bijutsu Shupan-Sha Co.Ltd., Tokyo.

<https://bijutsutecho.com/magazine/review/15492>

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From left: 《Dust, lamp black 3》(2018), 《Dust, lamp black 4》(2018) Photo by Shigeo Muto ©Yoriko Takabatake



From left: 《water planet III》(2018), 《water planet II》(2018) Photo by Shigeo Muto ©Yoriko Takabatake



Yoriko Takabatake "Fountain" installation view, 2018, ShugoArts
Photo by Shigeo Muto ©Yoriko Takabatake

Yoriko Takabatake "Fountain"

April 14 Sat - May 19 Sat, 2018

ShugoArts (complex665 2F, 6-5-24, Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo)