

Nobee Kanayama — Intimate glimpses in urban settings

A new series of paintings by LA artist Nobee Kanayama showing at Timmons Galleries evoke a dreamlike atmosphere set in Los Angeles urban and interior spaces. Figures float in trams and trains, a very provocative woman in red shoes stands with her back to the viewer creating an intimate glimpse into ordinary moments. A sleeping woman, content animals lounging on a sofa and early evening landscapes of glowing buildings and homes create a serene but thought provoking experience.

Japanese born artist Nobee Kanayama came to the United States in 1977 at the age of 29 after working as a graphic designer in Tokyo. Kanayama recently reflected on his journey from Japan to the U.S.

“From the time I was in grade school I remember wanting to come to the United States. My father was a photographer and used to take me to see American movies such as ‘Bus Stop’ with Marilyn Monroe when I was just a kid. Moving to the United States offered me the freedom to dream and become who I really wanted to be. I felt that if I were to stay in Japan, that my life would be predetermined. It is difficult because I identify with many aspects of the Japanese culture and am grateful for that sensibility, but feel a greater kinship and connection to the American culture.”

It was at Art Center in Pasadena,

Calif., under the mentoring of instructor and impressionist painter Dan McCaw, where Nobee began to thrive as an artist. McCaw’s influence on Nobee’s work cannot be overstated. The teacher’s unique way of penetrating the heart and soul of many artists at Art Center are well documented, as he was considered their philosopher, teacher, and friend.

Most recently McCaw remarked about Nobee’s paintings and work for the *Rancho Santa Fe Review*. “Nobee’s paintings are an extension of a creative, compassionate and sensitive person. His art uncovers as much about himself as it does about the subject he is painting. He paints with his heart tethered by a passion trapped deep inside. I love his art and treasure his friendship.”

After graduation, Nobee worked with Helen Hacker, a noted ceramicist for 13 years. Their business and friendship flourished while Nobee spent his spare hours continuing his painting. When Helen passed away from cancer he began struggling with his creative direction and his jobs became varied in his quest to find his creative voice again. At the same time, her death gave him the strength to pursue his painting in greater depth.

“Helen’s love and support encouraged me to go on. I am grateful to her for introducing me to a very colorful American

Jewish culture, which is very close to my Japanese background. I was continually surprised by the wonderful similarities between the Jewish and Japanese cultures and their parallel views on family, children and life in general.”

Nobee began painting full-time developing a style that was influenced by the French Impressionist painter Pierre Bonnard.

“I am particularly attracted to the way Bonnard uses color and texture in his painting. The first piece I ever saw was a simple painting of a bouquet of flowers and a vase. I was astonished by the way it made me feel. When I look at his work, I do not concentrate on the subject matter as much as I appreciate the lingering manner in which it makes me feel. I am enamored by masterful way he uses color in combination with texture to communicate a sensation or feeling.”

It was Bonnard’s influence that helped shape Nobee’s snapshots of ordinary situations using a palate of warm pastels. The focus is more on the texture and pattern than perspective, a technique reminiscent of Japanese prints. The delicate strokes on *Sleeping Beauty* illustrate the importance of color to evoke feeling and as well as making the observer feels privileged to be invited into this quiet moment.

“Subject matter and ideas come natu-

rally to me; they are never forced. My paintings are triggered by when I feel an overwhelming sense of happiness. It is hard to say exactly what triggers this feeling; it can come anytime and at anyplace. The freckles on a woman’s cheek can inspire me, or the way the light falls at dusk on a busy city street. When it happens I always jot down the basic idea on whatever I can find near me. This becomes my point of departure for my painting. Later, when I get back to my studio, I start painting. I prefer to paint from my memory so that my brush moves directly and freely without becoming distracted by the concern with reconstructing physical reality. As long as I can hold onto to this point of departure, my drawings, colors and textures will follow my sensation.”

Nobee’s paintings are now on view at Timmons Galleries. Kanayama will be part of a group show starting April 28 with an artist’s reception from 6-9 p.m. For more information and to view artwork, visit www.TimmonsGalleries.com or call 858 756 8488.

Timmons Galleries is located in the Del Rayo Village Shopping Center at 16089 San Dieguito Road, Suite H-102, and Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067. Hours are M-F, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.



Works by Nobee Kanayama include:
Tram
30X30



Sleeping Beauty
30X30