



Ancient Dragons and Pop Art Play on These Colorful Canvases

Japanese-American artist Tomokazu Matsuyama explores his hybrid identity in his new exhibition, 'Oh Magic Night.'



Tomokazu Matsuyama, *Oh Magic Night*

BY NATHANIEL AINLEY, FEBRUARY 2, 2017

Fluttering acrylics cover the surface of eye-piercing mixed-media compositions by artist Tomokazu Matsuyama. His new *Oh Magic Night* exhibition at the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation (HOCA) runs like a survey of his artistic development within the purview of certain themes in his work like mythological guardians, fictional tableaux, and ornate abstractions. The work in this show is influenced, both stylistically and thematically, on the artist's identity as a Japanese-American. Matsuyama creates a conversation between his childhood upbringing and his now-global experiences as an internationally exhibiting artist. Through a

distinct adoption of both eastern and western aesthetics, Matsuyama explores the impact of globalization on his artistic eye and cultural profile.

Matsuyama, however, doesn't want his work to be seen as an 'East meets West' reaction. Instead, he hopes to capture the uncontrollable intermingling of cultures. "For this exhibition, I wanted to really create an experience where the visitors feel the concepts of being domestic and foreign," he tells The Creators Project. "In other words, I want viewers get lost and wonder."

The artist blends stylistic cues from the Kano School,



the dominant painting mode in Japan through the 15th and 18th centuries, and blends them with motifs ascribed to traditional western art movements like Abstract Expression. Odes to Japanese heritage intermingle with symbolic representation of urban youth culture. Works like *Toys and Candy*, for instance, are based off 19th century prints and are riddled with conspicuous indicators of contemporary consumer culture. HOCA writes, “This subtle, playful appropriation of multiple cultural influences consistent of Matsuyama’s oeuvre, is an embodiment of global exchange and a visual manifestation of the fragmentation characteristic of contemporary experience.”

The duality that runs throughout Matsuyama’s work is underlined in the show’s title: *Oh Magic Night*. This phrase sounds like ‘o-maji-nai’ in Japanese, which translates literally to “good luck charm.” HOCA says the title acts as a subtle acknowledgement of the cultural allusions in his artworks as well as an appeal to the viewer to “contemplate assumptions of hierarchy and homogeneity in our postcolonial society.”

The show features over 40 paintings as well as 14 sculptures by the artist, including a new life sized mirrored sculpture that was inspired by Frederic Remington’s 1905 bronze sculpture *The Old Dragoons of 1850*.

Matsuyama has been working on this show for about a year and has designed nine different sections of the exhibition so each room has a unique installation aspect.

Oh Magic Night is slated to coincide with Art Basel in Hong Kong and will run from March 19th through April 9th at the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation. Find out more about the exhibition, [here](#), and check out more works by Matsuyama on his [website](#).