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Kurosaka Mari at Graystone Gallery

Tokyo-born painter Kurosaka Mari conveys a strong sense of the forces and cycles of nature in her highly textural canvases. Clearly influenced by a zen-like Eastern aesthetic as well as the frescoes and natural landscape of her present home of Italy, her abstract works on view at Graystone provide a thoughtful meditation on the interplay of entropy and harmony, balance, and imbalance.

Kurosaka's best pieces display an elegance, a serene balancing act of careful composition. An outstanding work is the minimalist *Pompeii*, a canvas of layer upon layer of reds, with indecipherable scribbles of words lost in washes of in-

tense color. There is depth in such simplicity; the red is a multi-layered symbol suggested in the piece's title: red is the blood, fire, lava that erupted with Mt. Vesuvius.

Another striking work is *Aquatic Landscape I*, a three-paneled piece that presents a wonderful play of textures: a thickly-woven, burlap-like canvas panel is sandwiched between two smoother canvas panels drenched in deep blues. The presence of unexpected reds, greens, and oranges captures the look of sun reflecting and shining on the ripples of a water surface, accurately conveying the delicate complexity of natural light.

Kurosaka experiments with color and layering of

paint to mixed results. *Aquatic Landscape II* presents double panels covered with both the expected and unexpected elements of the environment of the title: swaying lines suggest seaweed and coral, splashes of color suggest schools of fish floating by. The smaller panel is awash in the blue of the ocean; more challenging is the larger panel. While the bright yellow tempera is far from the color of sea water, the layers of paint convey waves and depth.

Sometimes Kurosaka's multi-layering of unusual color combinations falls out of balance. In *Fruits of the Earth*, her usual palette of primary colors gets so jumbled that the effect is

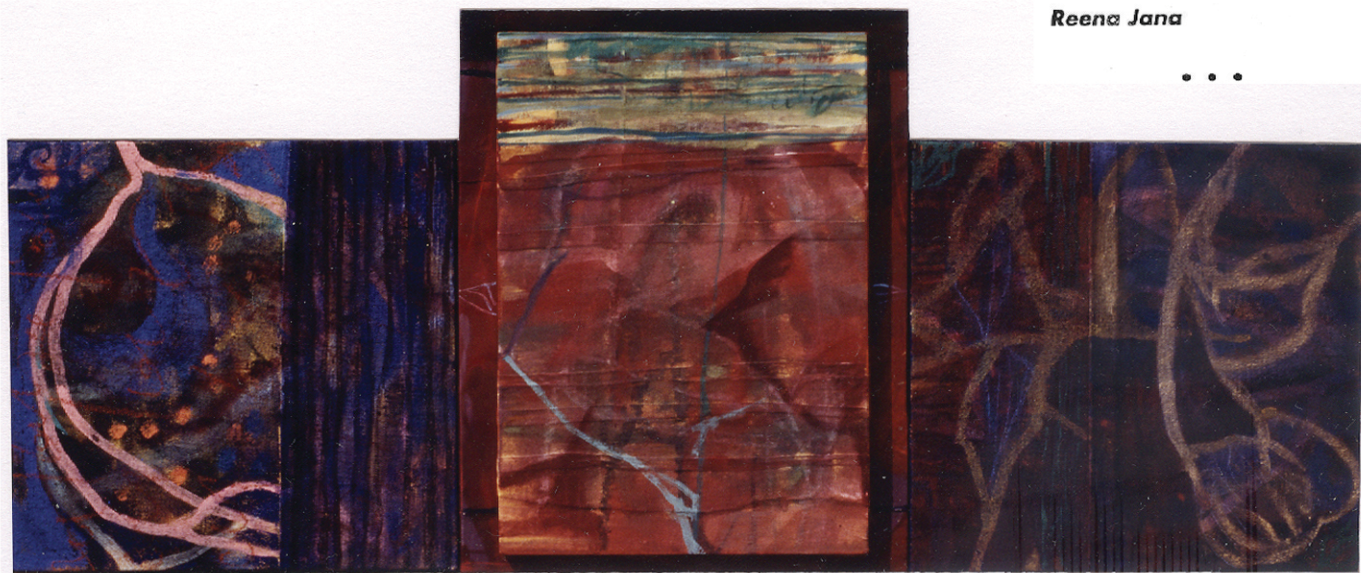
muddiness, not depth. *A Stone's Dream* displays the same chaos of too many layers; the result is a negation of color, a negation of perspective, a cloudiness.

One piece in which the muddiness of layer upon layer of pigment is carried off is the unusual *Water of Life II*. Consisting of four panels attached to one another in a frame-like construction, the mixed colors are balanced by consistent cobalt-blue and forest-green lines running through the composition. This is a challenging and yet serene piece; the viewer looks into the center of the square, in which the hanging wall is "framed." The panels and the deep colors flow together, suggesting a cycle, an elegance, a balance of elements.

Viewing both the balanced and muddy paintings together as a whole is, ironically, an effective study of the juxtaposition of harmony and chaos of color, texture, and perspective - in itself, a macrocosm of the effect that marks Kurosaka's best individual works.

Reena Jana

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Kurosaka Mari, *Fruits of Earth*, 1994, tempera on canvas (3 panels), 25 1/2 x 59 1/4 in.