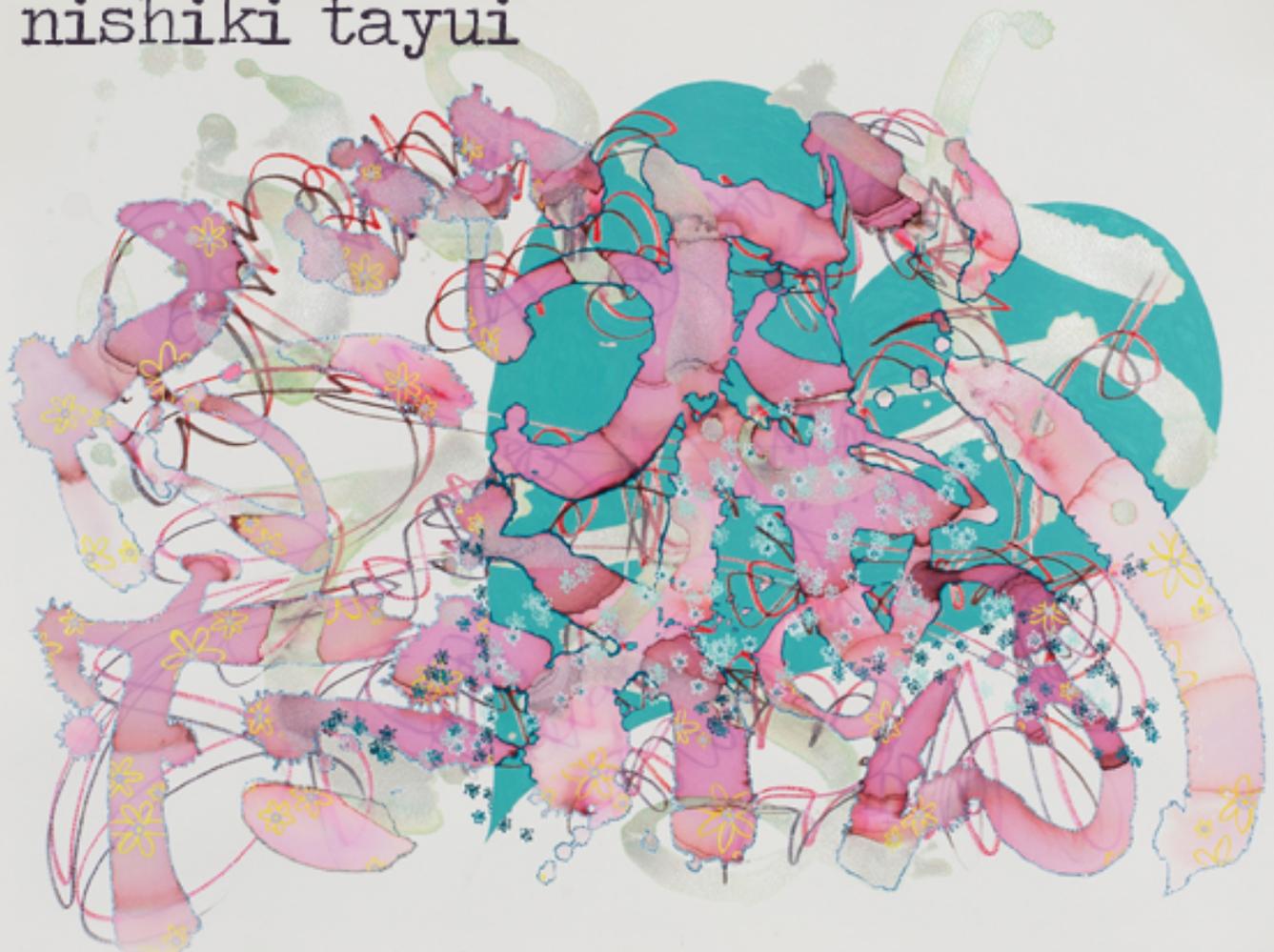


the
studios
gallery

Re:Word Within

nishiki tayui



8 august - 12 september 2014
preview thursday 7th august
6.30 - 8.30pm

the studios
12 union road
new mills
high peak SK22 3ES

+44 7753842861
info@thestudios.co
www.thestudios.co

The logo for The Studios Gallery, featuring the words "the studios gallery" in a lowercase, monospaced, typewriter-style font. The text is arranged in three lines: "the" on the top line, "studios" on the middle line, and "gallery" on the bottom line. The logo is set against a light gray rectangular background.

the
studios
gallery

Critique: Nishiki Tayui at The Studios Gallery, New Mills 7 August – 12 September 2014

At what point does the culture you arrive into assert itself so strongly that it dominates the culture you came from, perhaps to the point where the latter barely registers in one's creative work at all? Or, conversely, does the culture you came from become amplified, more profound, and even stronger in one's work due to a strong sense of nostalgia, memory or connection? These were just two of the many questions I asked myself looking at Nishiki Tayui's beautiful paintings at The Studios Gallery last week.

I was fortunate Nishiki was there to help me consider these questions and discuss possible answers, in terms of herself and how mixed cultural influences impact upon any artist finding themselves torn between reflecting the culture around them and feeling the need to assert a link to the culture they grew up in.

The debate is certainly appropriate in relation to this artist and this show...nuanced in fact by the circumstances of the show itself. The paintings were created specifically for the space at The Studios, so Lyn Bannister's vision for the show, as its curator, has become something of a collaboration: a show made in the US, heavily influenced by Japanese writing and cipher, and for a UK audience.

In *Equanimity* for example, a large triptych piece using acrylic and water colour on paper, a character or cipher in Japanese has been rendered over the surface, typically measured in its formation and precision as though crafted by the hand of a master Japanese calligrapher. However, I suspect even a fluent reader of Japanese would need to look hard to locate the character in the picture space because a whole process of layering and interaction has taken place in, over and around it. These layers interact with the formality of the original character in highly delicate and intuitive ways, as though the cipher prompts, nudges and entices the subsequent actions.

This more expressive, intuitive and informal response to such a particular starting point reflects the competing cultural influences imbued in the work. One might even call it Fusion Painting. The interesting aspect for the sensitive viewer of Art is the degree to which this 'fusion' opens up a completely new space, a higher space almost than the two 'places' the marks and gestures have come from.

There are so many little hints in Nishiki's pieces of a new language, a language that proposes something greater than what these cultural poles, separately, might be able to offer, and it is this, I think, that makes her work so beguiling.

Of course there is a different perspective a critic might take, one that involves suggesting that an artist's work such as this does no favours to either culture or tradition, that the influences cancel each other out and what's left behind is merely a pale parody of both. But in this case the argument is technical and academic – seeing these paintings in the flesh as it were reassures oneself that this work has real merit and significance.

The evidence for the merit lies not just in the confidence of the mark making but also in the finely calibrated combination of intellect and feeling emanating off the surfaces. The three smaller pieces titled *Trajectory (One, Two and Three)* help to illustrate this. In a relatively confined space we are treated to a symphony of formal marks composed with gentle precision, all created to provide a structure, a warp and weft if you like, for the overlaying of colour, tone and expressive elements. The synergy between them is perfect, and they remind me (if I can maintain a genuine thread with one of these cultural influences) of Haiku writing in that they provide a minimum amount of content to generate the maximum amount of imaginative response.

The layers in the work also rather neatly echo ideas about Time, the varied experiences we encounter and memories, all over-laid, built upon and relating to each other...the way that we ourselves might consider ourselves layered by what life throws at us, irrespective of the culture we have become used to. So in that sense these pieces are also like maps, admittedly abstract maps – but maps showing journeys of creation all the same, and that creation doesn't just come from being 'in the moment': it contains fragments from Time as well.

I was much taken too by the way paint and ink is absorbed into the thick paper, like the paintings are stained with the blood, sweat and tears of the person making them. But these aren't sad or melancholy pieces. Nishiki's work is profoundly positive and joyous, as if she has realised the possibilities she can draw from her life and the culture around her and wants to share that with us. Whether we can embrace that somehow in our own lives or travels is, I guess, up to us – but the message here is there is something to be gained from the best of different worlds, and whatever that thing is, it's very likely to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Brian Neish

August 2014