

Warren Hoyano and **Heather Midori Yamada** have such sure and intimate knowledge of paper – its beguiling resilience and expressive yield – that their artworks brim with acclamation of paper’s properties and potential. They’ve brushed, rubbed and scraped watercolour and acrylic paints on paper surfaces to determine their absorbancy and compatibility. The artists’ relationship with paper is calculated and exploratory, respectful and transgressive.

The title *Look for Banners to Rise* may conjure images of court pageantry in Heian Japan, or feudal armies flowing into battle formations in a Kurosawa period film. Given that the artists are sansei, however, the pervading influences in their works are more likely to be found in American art of the 1960s than the trappings of traditional Japanese culture.

Hoyano’s banner sculptures remind us of Jasper Johns’ stars and stripes paintings which are among the highlights of Pop Art. Yet, he critically revitalizes the flag motif by crumpling his striped paintings into three-dimensionality and infusing them with social conscience and political concern. Many of them suggest body-shapes. The rigid, monochrome banners lie on the floor, lean on walls, or they drape over a chair or tripod. Each one is completed with the addition of individualizing items, such as a small porcelain doll, a backpack, a coloured string, and bits of swept-up floor debris. Hoyano conveys his provocative views on patriotism through the aggressive fashioning and placing of his flags, but his disquieted sentiment is almost counterbalanced by the gentle artlessness of his carefully chosen accessories.

Yamada’s long, vertical and horizontal banners are brocade-like streams of energy. Rapid markings and colour-stains merge and scatter as if sprung by emotional impulse -- or as simulations of the spontaneous transformations that occur in nature. She blends the vaporous atmosphere that characterizes certain kinds of traditional Japanese landscape painting with the multi-directional strains of mid-20th Century abstract painting exemplified by artists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Tobey, and Hans Hofmann. In smaller paintings, she disperses squares and rectangles across grounds of saturated colour and often links them with circular gestures (versions of the zen buddhist symbol, *ensō*). Yamada brings her training in Buddhism and the Japanese arts of *shodo* and *ikebana* into apposition with her educated sensibility as a contemporary printmaker and painter of abstract images.

Bryce Kanbara (5/8/17)

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