



[Left] Kohei Nawa, *PixCell-Deer #6* (2007) [Right] Mika Ninagawa, *Mika 04-106-B2-2* (2004)

## Tokyo Tremors Four New Waves in Japanese Contemporary Art

A lecture and discussion with Adrian Favell, UCLA  
June 11, 7pm

**WHAT:** Royal/T, the new playful collision of spaces— café/shop/art space— and Los Angeles' first Japanese inspired maid café presents its inaugural public programming event, a lecture and discussion with Adrian Favell titled, *Tokyo Tremors: Four New Waves in Japanese Contemporary Art*.

The global success of Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara has opened up a new visibility for Japanese contemporary art. As “otaku” impresarios, they have brilliantly channeled the groundswell of creative talent in Japan that emerged out of the economic collapse of the early 1990s, as young people have searched for alternatives to corporate lifestyles and traditional family roles. While some of this new generation have followed the influences of the “superflat” fusion of high art and pop culture and its provocative methods, others are charting quite different paths, drawing on popular girls culture, avant garde movements, and the opening of Japan to transformative pan-Asian and global currents.

Favell will present a guide to four new waves of Japanese contemporary art, which bring contrasting perspectives on Japanese culture and society. Along the way, he will present and discuss the work of **Mika Kato, Erina Matsui, Toshiyuki Konishi, Mika Ninagawa, Mikiko Hara, Miwa Yanagi, Pyuupiru, Tatzu Nishi, Chiharu Shiota, Tabaimo, Kei Takemura, and Kohei Nawa**, among others. Selected works by **Mika Ninagawa** from the recent UCLA exhibition and event, *Sweet & Bitter: Contemporary “Girl Photography” From Japan* will also be on show.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, June 11, 2008  
Reception: 7pm  
Lecture and Discussion: 7:30pm

**WHERE:** Royal/T: 8910 Washington Blvd. Culver City, CA 90232

**ADMISSION:** Free, RSVP required: [RoyalT@fyaworld.com](mailto:RoyalT@fyaworld.com)

**ABOUT:** Adrian Favell is Associate Professor of Sociology at UCLA. He has published books about multiculturalism, migration in Europe, and globalization, and is currently writing a book about the internationalization of Japanese contemporary art since the 1990s. He spent 2007 in Tokyo on a fellowship from the Japan Foundation. Contact/information: [www.soc.ucla.edu/faculty/favell](http://www.soc.ucla.edu/faculty/favell)

In a 10,000 square foot building in Culver City, Royal/T is inspired by the *meido kissa* (maid café) phenomena of Akihabara—Tokyo's electronic district. The highly conceptualized space of Royal/T reflects the interior realm of fantasy that strongly influences the artists included in owner, Susan Hancock's collection. Recontextualizing the underground otaku (geek) culture of Japan that celebrates cosplay (costume play) servers dress in Akihabara-style maid uniforms, with a Lolita-esque touch; the art space showcases curated exhibitions from Hancock's collection; and an inventive concept store emulates the collections' sophistication—a fusion of pop culture and high-end design.

On view through August, the exhibition *Just Love Me* explores the complexity of cuteness, and the yearning it reveals in artistic expression today. This exhibition juxtaposes works not only by Japanese contemporary artists but also by various international artists who explore obsessive human desire including; Ghada Amer, Stephan Balkenhol, Louise Bourgeois, John Currin, Yayoi Deki, Tracy Emin, Tom Friedman, Jim Hodges, Izumi Kato, Hideaki Kawashima, Yayoi Kusama, Takashi Murakami, Yoshitomo Nara, Mitsuhiro Okamoto, Chris Ofili, Wilhelm Sasnal, Cindy Sherman, David Shrigley, Aya Takano, Fred Tomaselli, Kara Walker, Keisuke Yamamoto and Lisa Yuskavage.

For more information, visit [www.royal-t.org](http://www.royal-t.org)



Pyuupiru, *Selfportrait #35 A Chewing Girl* (2005-7).

All images courtesy of the artists



Kei Takemura, *A.N.'s living room in Tokyo, premonition of an earthquake* [detail] (2005)

## **Tokyo Tremors Four New Waves in Japanese Contemporary Art**

**A talk by Adrian Favell, UCLA**

### **Summary**

**The global success of Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara has opened up a new visibility for Japanese contemporary art. Their work has been influential, as much for their provocative business methods and tough critique of the insularity of the Japanese art scene, as their creative reworkings of imagery from Japanese anime and pop culture. As “otaku” impresarios, they have also brilliantly channeled the groundswell of creative talent in Japan that emerged out of the economic collapse of the early 1990s, as young people have searched for alternatives to corporate lifestyles and traditional family roles. Adrian Favell, a professor at UCLA, this evening presents a guide to four new waves of Japanese contemporary art which bring contrasting perspectives on Japanese culture and society.**

**The first of these tremors illustrates a continuity with the seductive “kawaii” [cute] focused themes of the otaku generation, and its often disturbing psychological undertow. Often referred to as “Micropop”, this style privileges figurative and often fragile stylings, offering a intensely personalized refuge from the tensions of Japanese society, as well as an embracing a kind of passive–aggressive “neo-Japonisme” in the face of American cultural domination. Although this style is the most well know in the West, the three others are quite different. Here, Favell will discuss the work of Mika Kato, Erina Matsui, Toshiyuki Konishi and Go Watanabe.**

**A second wave focuses on the unique girl culture thriving in Japan today. While girls feature everywhere in Japanese contemporary art – particularly in the adolescent styles of Murakami’s Kaikai Kiki artists – other more independent women are striking a bolder, autonomous pose that is questioning gender identity and roles in Japanese society, while celebrating their growing consumer power. This art has used the camera as its main medium, influenced by popular street photography, as much as the extraordinary innovations of the Japanese fashion world. Key artists here include Mika Ninagawa, Mikiko Hara, Miwa Yanagi, Tomoko Sawada and Pyuupiru.**

**A third wave underlines the enduring influence of experimental “anti-art” and genre breaking work, that combines elements of fashion, music, architecture or video. Some of this centers on performance artists building on the influential antics of Mizuma gallery’s bad boy house artist Makoto Aida, while others have built their critique of Japanese society and contemporary art practice drawing on the European avant guard, particularly in Germany. Favell will present work by Chim Pom, Hiroko Okada, Tatzu Nishi, Chiharu Shiota and Tabaimo.**

**A fourth and final new wave is the emergent voice of a new generation, who have rejected the inward turn of otaku pop-art, and are instead exploring new material techniques and a re-connection with a confident pan Asian and global vision, that continues to rework a refined and distinctive Japanese aesthetic. Artists to be discussed here include Kohei Nawa, Kengo Kito, Ruriko Murayama, Midori Mitamura, Satoru Aoyama, and Kei Takemura.**