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What to see in L.A. galleries: tiny paintings of breathtaking beauty, photographs of the super-smart

By DAVID PAGEL
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Yui Yaegashi's "Exchange," 2016, oil on canvas, 9.25 inches by 5.5 inches. (Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)

At a time when those who shout loudest seem to get more attention than those who speak softly, it's refreshing to come across Yui Yaegashi's whisper of an exhibition at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery.

Titled "Fixed Point Observation," the Tokyo-based painter's first solo show in Los Angeles fills the large rectangular space with the kind of silence that lets you know something important is taking place.

The soundless stillness that spills from Yaegashi's intimate abstractions has nothing to do with the silent authority of solemn situations or sacred spaces. It has, on the contrary, everything to do with those fleeting moments when you see something beautiful and your breath catches — not so long that you get lightheaded, but just long enough to notice that you are in the presence of something special.

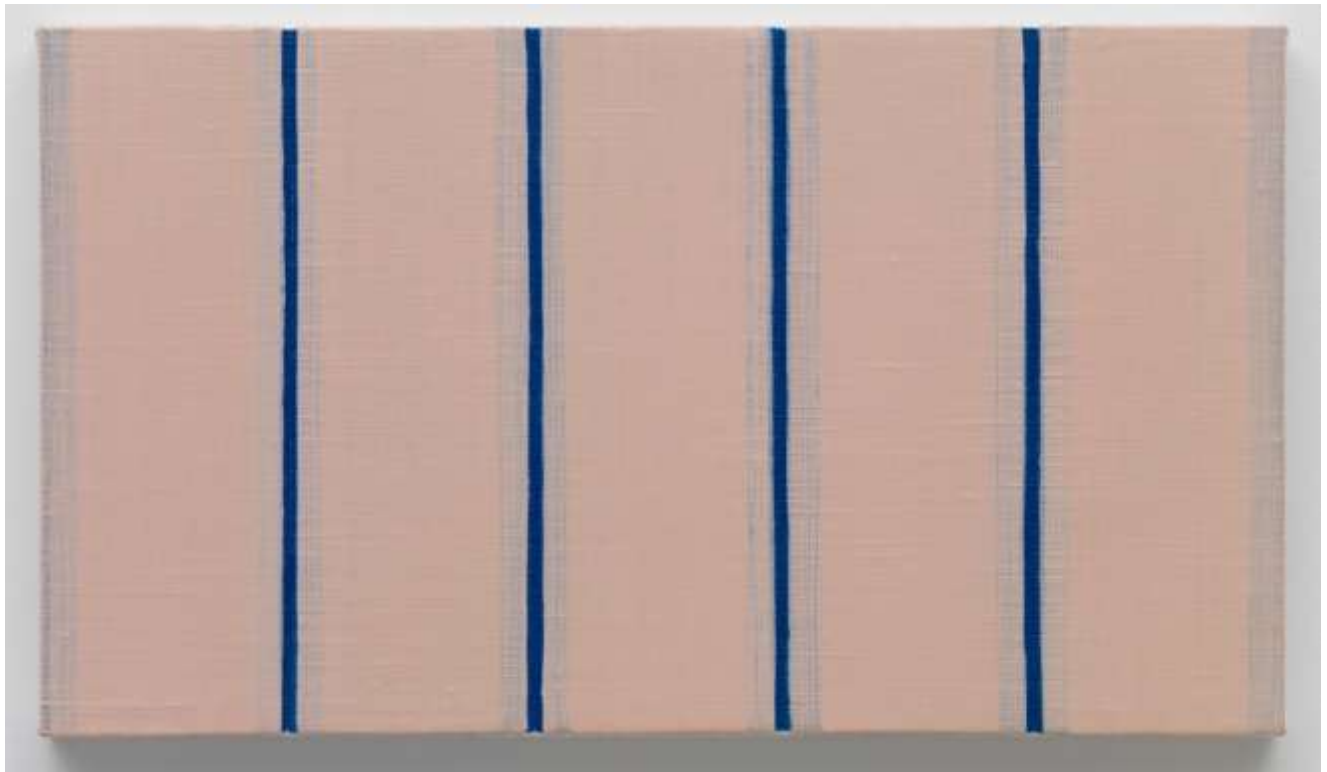


Yui Yaegashi's "White Line," 2016, oil on canvas, 4.7 inches by 9 inches. (Parrasch Heijnen Gallery.)

Part of the pleasure is that it is unexpected. The elusive beauty embodied by Yaegashi's paintings comes in canvases that are tiny, as small as 7¼ inches by 5 inches. Installed with a lot of bare wall between them, her 12 abstractions make the gallery seem cavernous.

You have to stand very close to each painting to see its subtle shifts in texture, color, luminosity, translucence and depth. Every brushstroke matters.

Sometimes Yaegashi uses only one color. But the direction she has dragged her paintbrush has created a surface that appears to be woven, its overlapping elements forming a complex pattern so granular that it seems to be made up of microclimates.



Yui Yaegashi's "Ground Work No. 3," 2016, oil on canvas, 7.5 inches by 13.2 inches. (Parrasch Heijnen Gallery)

At other times, she paints over previous compositions, leaving only slivers of what once existed. At still others, she establishes patterns that change as your eye glides across

parrasch heijnen gallery

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them, creating gentle visual turbulence. So refined is Yaegashi's paint-handling that the marks made by the individual bristles of her brush matter in ways rarely seen.

Casually elegant — and unselfconsciously gorgeous — her understated paintings strike just the right balance between restraint and abandon. Even better, they draw viewers into the action, their modest dimensions pulling the rug out from under the idea that bigger is better and loudest is best.

Parrasch Heijnen Gallery, 1326 S. Boyle Ave., Los Angeles. Through Jan. 21; closed Sundays and Mondays. (323) 943-9373, www.parrasch-heijnen.com