

Sep 13, 2011

Mika Tajima: After the Martini Shot



Installation View of *After the Martini Shot*. Mika Tajima's SAM Next exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum. July 16, 2011–June 17, 2012. Photo: Nathaniel Wilson.

Seattle Art Museum

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In Hollywood, "the Martini shot" refers to the last take of the day, after which the set is abandoned and props remain in place. Tajima is known for her installations that play off of film terminology and themes, creating active environments in which objects potentially become actors. At the [Seattle Art Museum](#), a large yellow roll of butcher paper used for photo shoots is rigged from a crude metal structure, onto which a video is projected from a ladder. Tajima uses other staging elements like freestanding lamps, mirrors, as well as paintings on wheeled structures that create a sense of movement and also blur the line between art installation and film set. Whereas the arrangement seems to be in a holding status, waiting for something to happen, Tajima's projected video, *Dead by Third Act* (2009) is all action—the video documents her 2008 performance in which the artist used a sledgehammer to destroy a car in the original Fiat Factory in Turin, Italy.

Again referencing jargon from the film industry, Tajima seeks to free painting from its "typecast" as a work of art. A monochromatic painting functions as a bulletin board for another work of art, while two paintings lean to form a sandwich board. In *The Extras (Seattle)* (2011), Tajima used a painting rack structure, which was featured in SculptureCenter's exhibition *Knight's Move*, as an archive of her work mixed with a selection of pieces from SAM's collection. In this crate-like cube, Andy Warhol's *Flowers* and a portrait of Mick Jagger are casually stacked with a print by Anni Albers and a modernist color study by Josef Albers—all leaning back to back with Tajima's silkscreen patterned paintings and an angled flatscreen playing a video of her 2009 performance at SFMOMA. Tajima references these artists in her work, amongst her past work, inside her current work. The artist claims that she holds the paintings captive, showing them not as they were intended, but as part of her visual vocabulary. In her installation, Tajima not only explores the intersecting languages of film and painting, but also allows works of art to "play against type."

In Tajima's installation at SAM, objects are scattered in scenario arrangements, doubling as actors in the wings or stored in racks on the side, waiting to be called into action. As the director, Tajima creates a space bursting with potential. --Misa Jeffereis