

A DIVINE SPARK

ARTIST SHARON YAMAMOTO TO DO ONE WOMAN SHOW IN BOCA RATON

BOCA RATON, Florida - Drawing on fairy tales, myth and archetype, Sharon Yamamoto's paintings might spring from some nebulous corner of what psychoanalyst C.G. Jung called "the collective unconscious." Masked figures, voluptuaries, infant savants and humanoid beasts populate Yamamoto's surreal tableaux — a face blooms from a flower; a woman sets out on a mysterious journey by boat; The Fool in his pointed cap contemplates a "divine spark" hovering on his palm like a fallen star.

Yamamoto's paintings will be on exhibit at Ryals Gallery, One So. Ocean Boulevard in Boca Raton, from March 20 through April 30, 1999. Although her work has been widely shown in London, where she lived on and off for several decades, this exhibit marks her U.S. debut. Following formal training at the Art Institute of Chicago and Wesleyan University, the Japanese-American artist lived in London, where she met her husband. During her years in London she taught fine art at Queen's College and painted murals for Palladio Interiors, which brought her commissions ranging from Brent Walker Ltd. to the Sultan of Brunei. She now lives in North Miami.

An encounter with Yamamoto's work can feel like jumping through the Looking Glass; you're caught mid-serenade in a fairy tale. Viewers are encouraged to construct, or reconstruct, a narrative based on visual clues. These works raise more questions than they

answer: Who, for instance, is the naked, masked figure the boy meets in *Introduction Ritual*? What danger haunts the knife-wielding infant in *Defensive Child*? Yamamoto prefers to let her audience finish the story. "I really love and respect abstract art, but that's not what I'm about," she says. "I think there's a desire for more intimacy between viewer and image."

While Yamamoto's paintings have the weightlessness of dreams, their human inhabitants are sculptural; nude figures, heavily modeled as if from earth or clay, recall a welter of influences — Renaissance murals, Picasso's "Blue" and "Rose" periods, the self-absorbed children of Balzac, the poetic allusions of the Pre-Raphaelites. "I never really

know what the subject of any painting will be until it starts to take shape," Yamamoto says. "I start by wiping the canvas with whatever paint I have left over on my palette. Then I just stare at it until images start to emerge. It's an intuitive process."

Sharon recalls that she was "kind of an outcast" in elementary school until a teacher recognized her artistic skill. "The one thing I could really do was draw. When I got to high school, I'd just stay in the art room at school all day. After a while, it seemed like my way was set." Indeed, her



paintings often recall exhilarating solo flights of creativity in works like *Fearless Falling* and *Flying Lesson*, or the darker, contemplative isolation of the artist in *Looking, Listening and Become Story*, where human figures have withdrawn into a silence enriched by nothing more than the imaginary.

"I was born on April Fool's Day," Sharon says wryly, adding that she feels a creative affinity with the Wise Fools, the children, the neophytes setting out on their uncertain quests, who so often populate her paintings and drawings. If the allegories she details are as old as human consciousness, her renderings have the freshness of dreams vividly recalled in waking.

Sharon Yamamoto's work will be on exhibit from March 20 - April 30, 1999. A public reception for the artist is scheduled for March 20, from 5-8 p.m.



"TO A HIGHER GROUND" 46X56 Oil on canvas

For further information,
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