YUMIKO IREI-GOKCE

works on paper: then and now

Robert T. Wright
Community Gallery of Art

♦ College of Lake County
The Urge of Growth: The Germination...II, (detail)
1996, Monotype
24” x 18” (image), 41” x 31” (framed)

Private Collection
YUMIKO IREI-GOKCE

works on paper: then and now

INTRODUCTION

Yumiko Irei-Gokce’s artwork stands as an aesthetic bridge between two disparate cultures. Irei-Gokce, a native of Japan, has resided in the Chicago area for many years. Her prints and mixed media works on paper balance her Japanese sensibilities with a Western approach. She has said, “I fuse a Japanese perception of art; a sense of texture, space, color, materials, and methods into the ways of American expressionistic art-making…” There is indeed an overall Abstract Expressionistic quality to Irei-Gokce’s compositions that roots her to that American art movement. However, she also includes representational images, particularly sprouting plants. This infuses her works with a Zen-like quality; contemplating the microcosm to enter the field of the macrocosm. The Buddha was said to have silently held up a flower to his disciples. Only one disciple understood the Buddha’s intent; that spirituality does not rest on words or scriptures, but is a direct experience of the underlying unity of all things. Yumiko Irei-Gokce’s works need to be more than just viewed, they require quiet contemplation. Then, as with the Buddha’s flower, an image may be a key to gaining deeper insights. The Robert T. Wright Gallery is pleased to present her work in a setting conducive to personal reflection.

STEVEN JONES
art gallery curator

Botanical Reverie, Volume II, (detail)
1998/reconstructed in 2008
Collagraph prints, suspended scroll
157” x 77 ½” double-sided
20 prints in one side, total of 40 prints
Once I was beautiful tree, (detail)
1992 (reworked in 2006)
Mixed media / collage,
Sumi-ink, pigment & pencil on
Washi paper mounted onto canvas
53” x 72”
EXEMPLARY PRACTICE:
The Art of Yumiko Irei-Gokce

ESSAY
by Prof. Dana Saulnier

Yumiko Irei-Gokce conceives the spaces of her work as zones of movement and transition. She speaks of dualisms: micro- macro, growth– decay, and eternal– temporary. To conceive these works as representations of nature is to miss their status as evolving structures, the acts of a mind locating itself in movement. Irei-Gokce identifies her attitude with eastern philosophy and the mind of Zen. This makes a great deal of sense. To grasp the potency of her work we must understand it as a thing born of process. For the maker, small inflections of concept orient difference. Thinking generates form. Making generates difference.

A consistent dialogue with paper informs her extensive array of procedures. Gampi paper, very thin but strong, along with Lokuta paper from Nepal are often elements in works constructed from multiple layers that act as an analogue to flesh. In *Once I Was a Beautiful Tree*, the fluid, wrinkled, sheets set in motion a series of alternative responses, producing the dissonance and differences so vital in her art.

Yumiko Irei-Gokce has consistently explored ‘all over’ composition. Her frontal luminous fields hold marks and texture in restless continuity. The individuality of specific marks is measured with the marshaled energy of repetitive marks as well as those marks dependence upon the luminous spatial envelope of the whole. These fields produce a fragile continuity, a situation ready for movement. Yumiko is frequently taking things apart and putting them together. In this sense, her Collagraph print is a touchstone. The artist prepares the textured, incised and pasted plate used to produce the Collagraph print.
We see her extending her sensibility with mixed media when she makes her assemblages on canvas, as in *The Moment; His Departure to the Star*, where the artist enlarges her vocabulary to carefully depicted hands in a work that successfully communicates a personal loss. Her technical range leverages her abstractions, allowing a responsive, vital, sophisticated, de-stabilizing play of interpretive meanings. Her art is a space where time moves; a space of becoming. This is where she works. This is where she thinks.

*The moment: His departure to the star*  
(full size and detail), 1993 (reworked in 2006)  
Mixed media, collage, Sumi-ink, pigments, pencil on Washi paper mounted onto canvas  
53” x 72”

Private Collection
Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds;
The Germination of Earth…Work-2, 2005
Monotype
25” x 18” (image), 37” x 31” (framed)
Yumiko Irei-Gokce’s singular monotypes seem to me to be a core practice in recent years. Here she most readily produces effective tensions. Yumiko frequently tests her ability by bringing an expanded vocabulary into play. We can see this in works that incorporate digital images, such as *Uprising: A New Era*, referring directly to recent political events. In another monotype, *Under a Spell, Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds* the most readily identifiable forms are vegetative, presented in a range of color that pulses towards saturation while standing in contrast to the luminous field. We are immediately conscious of the layered relational ordering principle when we confront her colored forms in this monochrome space. We must traverse this distance. In fact, everything in this work calls attention to variable perception, where the artist draws out our attention to time. The vegetative forms are specifically described, yet they are shown to us as ‘sprouts’, as ‘just about’ to become the relatively stable exemplars of our expectations: flower, stem, or stalk. They are potential. They are ‘not yet’. Their ‘being in flux’ is as important as any identification, any name we might give them. Fleeing, fleeting, but omnipresent time, unfolds for us as the artist gives us shifting movements of before, after, and not yet. Recognition and expectation, nearness and distance, play out in her highly specific choices of color, texture and tone.

The earth we think when we see her luminous tonal field of marks fluctuates between a winter earth that withholds with a fecund earth that gives. The withholding and giving of this earth is both the conceptual and visual ground of the artist’s thinking. In my view, this ground is her most compelling achievement: a space withholding/giving. At times burnt, inert, and resistant, then shifting, and rhythmically pulsing with energy, it engenders our expectations and projects a cycle of perception. We move through it to growth and decay just as the flow of our thinking, our transitory ideas and identifications do the same.

This achievement results from Yumiko Irei-Gokce’s intimacy with her material practice. To grasp what I am saying here let us metaphorically imagine degrees of such intimacy as moving from far to near. Nearness realizes multiple and dense connecting possibilities. Imagine viewing a riverbed from far above, airborne, seeing its general course and structure, then moving closer and closer, until we could navigate the most minute passages of seeping moisture in the most particular configurations of material interactions. We would move from the mainstream to the delta where dense and layered worlds fold upon one another. From such a close engagement a density of creative pathways radically expands. This example metaphorically indicates something of the masterful artist’s relationship with their medium. Yumiko Irei-Gokce has attained intimacy with her material practice: her medium. She is therefore in a position to provocatively nuance difference.
Her ability to cycle differences is everything. Yumiko does not give us an authoritative ideal world. She gives us a rhythm: temporary sense. The openings, gaps, and elisions occurring where we find only temporary categories and only provisional identities for what we are seeing. This structures our perception as movement more than category agreement. The folded, layered, flexible durations of her withholding/giving ground elaborate her technical operations. We see the artist’s marks, coalescing and enacting forces. Yet, at the same time the omnipresent subtle sheen of her luminous tone slides our thinking to a distant recognition: the vibrating visual surfaces of video and film. Her restless luminous field discloses an extended technology of seeing.

We wonder what sort of space is this? Is it natural or cultural? In recent years this would be a key question. Yet work such as Yumiko Irie-Gokce’s abstraction challenges the import of the distinction. Artists such as Terry Winters and Matthew Ritchie suggest themselves in this same vein. Doesn’t the limiting question between nature and culture derail our understanding of her space? Isn’t the call to classify this space suspect when this artist can give us both together? Not this or that, but this and this.

Contemporary abstract art has been energized by the recognition that it has long functioned as an example of the virtual. In contemporary culture we live in a world where internet technology increasingly structures our time and space. The habits of mind of the artist, the embrace of accident, change, and evolving structures take on new relevance in this practical situation.

‘Theory’, so often based in ideological debates surrounding representation, reveals its limitations in this rapidly evolving practical situation. Art claims a particularly relevant position. It too, with decisively distinct methodologies, is technique rhythmically structuring mind.

If after contemplating this contemporary situation we can more thoroughly appreciate the question of ‘practice’, then we can understand that Yumiko Irie-Gokce is, in a very concrete sense, living in her working practice. Here we can begin to realize at a deeper level the dialogue she has been having with us. And, we can begin to glimpse the quality-- the sense-- of what it has been for her to traverse this world.

Yumiko Irie-Gokce has lived in the United States for many years, but she has also lived in Turkey and Japan. As she has traveled and made a place for herself across three continents she retains a fragile center in her Japanese heritage. If, in this essay we are asking what is at play in her work, what potency arises between nearness and distance, between growth and decay between time becoming and lost, then it greatly enriches our appreciation of Yumiko Irie-Gokce’s work when we take up her experiences as cultural migrant. What power and depth this brings to the work. What relevance to our global age when a masterful artist like Yumiko Irie-Gokce gives dimension to her world-- a world shared--a world entwined with her mobility.

Dana Saulnier
Copyright 2009.

Dana Saulnier is a painter who writes about art. He is also a critic, curator, and Associate Professor of Painting at Miami University in Oxford, OH
while earth germinates…
Protecting: Help or Harm, 2008
Monotype with digital collage, 37” x 31” (framed)

while earth germinates…
Ascending: Against All Odds, 2008
Monotype with digital collage, 37” x 31” (framed)
Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds; 
The Germination of Earth... .Work – I, 2005 
Monotype with ink and pigments 
21” X 49”, (framed)

Collection of Elizabeth and Harvey B. Plotnick
YUMIKO IREI-GOKCE  www.yumikoireigokce.com

Born: Osaka, Japan and currently resides in Inverness, IL, USA

Education: Graduated from Naniwa College of Design, Osaka University of Fine Arts, Osaka, Japan; Diploma in the Bauhaus method of graphic design Gakushoin; The School of Calligraphy in Tokyo; Studied printmaking at Contre Point (Atelier 17) in Paris; & The Ox-Bow of the Art Institute of Chicago

SELECTED SOLO and THREE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2009  Yumiko Irei-Gokce, works on paper: then and now, College of Lake County
2005  Yumiko Irei-Gokce’s New Works, Kraft Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL
2004  Construction and Revelations, Noyes Cultural Arts Center, Evanston, IL
2001  Private Sanctuary (three-person), The Chicago/Osaka Sister Cities International Program, Walsh Gallery, Chicago, IL
1999  Into The Future, Japan Information Center, Chicago, IL
1989  Yumiko Irei-Gokce: Paper Constructions & Installations, Gallery Vienna, Chicago, IL
1987  Tokyo-Osaka, Back-to-Back, Gallery Space 21, Tokyo & Amano Gallery, Osaka, Japan

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2009  32nd Annual ART on PAPER, Maryland Federation of Art, Annapolis, MD
2008  The Artist Projects Toronto, The Liberty Grand, Toronto, Canada
2006  The 3rd Print Biennial, Loyola University, Crown Center Gallery, Chicago, IL
2001  Art Scene Chicago, the Chicago Athenaeum, Schaumburg, IL
1998  Ink Show, Invitational, Walsh Gallery, Chicago, IL
1988  Art in Washi, Mexico International Exhibition, Mexico City, Mexico

AFFILIATIONS

Hartje Gallery, Brookline, MA
J.L.Kraft Fine Art, Wilmette, IL
The Arts Club of Chicago, IL

SELECTED PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL
Northbrook Public Library, Northbrook, IL
Abbott International Ltd., Chicago, IL
Confederation Life Insurance, Canada
Fuji Graphics, Tokyo, Japan
Gallery Space 21, Tokyo, Japan
Gleicher & Associates, Chicago, IL
The Bell Fine Arts Collection, Oak Park, IL

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2002  Polanski, G. Jurek, artscope.net,
Spectrum: Contemporary Art of Chicago
2001  Tania Ralli, Chicago Journal, Private Sanctuary
2000  ART SCENE Chicago 2000;
Crow Woods Publishing
Under a Spell,
Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds
....Work – 4, 2005
Monotype,
25” x 18” (image), 37” x 31”
(framed)
EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

CATEGORY: PRINT / Collagraph

01. *Botanical Reverie*, Volume II
    1998/reconstructed in 2008
    Collagraph prints, suspended scroll
    157” x 77 ½” double-sided
    20 prints on one side, total of 40 prints.

02. 12 Collagraph plates for display only
    Size of each plate: 24” x 16”

CATEGORY: PRINT / Monotype

03. *Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds; The Germination of Earth... Work 1*, 2005
    Monotype, 12” x 32”
    Collection of Elizabeth and Harvey B. Plotnick

04. *Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds; The Germination... Work 2*, 2005
    Monotype, 25” x 18”

05. *Under a Spell, Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds... Work 4*, 2005
    Monotype, 25” x 18”

06. *Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds; The Germination... Work 5*, 2005
    Monotype, 25” x 18”

07. *Perseverance Prevails Against All Odds; The Blossom... Work 6*, 2005
    Monotype, 25” x 18”

08. *The Urge of Growth: The Germination... II*, 1996
    Monotype, 24” x 18”
    Private Collection

    Monotype, 24” x 18”

10. *The Urge of Growth: Sprouting... I*, 1996
    Monotype, 24” x 18”

11. *The Urge of Growth: Sprouting... II*, 1996
    Monotype, 24” x 18”

CATEGORY: MIXED MEDIA with Monotype

12. *while earth germinates... Ascending: Against All Odds*, 2008
    Monotype with digital collage, 25” x 18”

13. *while earth germinates... Uprising: A New Era*, 2008
    Monotype with digital collage, 25” x 18”

14. *while earth germinates... Protecting: Help or Harm*, 2008
    Monotype with digital collage, 25” x 18”

15. *Wondering Seed; In Quest of Mother Earth, Work II*, 2007
    Mixed Media / Sumi ink, pigments on Washi paper, mounted onto wooden board, 35” x 27”

16. *Wondering Seed; In Quest of Mother Earth, Work III*, 2007
    Mixed Media / Sumi ink, pigments on Washi paper, mounted onto wooden board, 35” x 27”

17. *Wondering Seed; In Quest of Mother Earth, Work IV*, 2007
    Mixed Media / Sumi ink, pigments on Washi paper, mounted onto wooden board, 35” x 27”

18. *Wondering Seed; In Quest of Mother Earth, Work V*, 2007
    Mixed Media / Sumi ink, pigments on Washi paper, mounted onto wooden board, 35” x 27”

19. *Wondering Seed; In Quest of Mother Earth, Work VI*, 2007
    Mixed Media / Sumi ink, pigments on Washi paper, mounted onto wooden board, 35” x 27”

20. *Once I was beautiful tree*, 1992 (reworked 2006)
    Mixed Media / Collage, Sumi ink, pigment, pencil on Washi paper, mounted onto canvas, 53” x 72”

    Mixed Media / Collage, Sumi ink, pigment, pencil on Washi paper, mounted onto canvas, 53” x 72”

22. *The moment: His departure to the star*, 1993
    (reworked 2006)
    Mixed Media / Collage, Sumi ink, pigments, pencil on Washi paper, mounted onto canvas, 53” x 72”
    Private Collection
YUMIKO IREI-GOKCE

works on paper: then and now

Robert T. Wright
Community Gallery of Art
College of Lake County

July 10 – August 21, 2009

Gallery Summer Hours

July 10th – 31st
Mon-Thu 8:00 am-9:00 pm
Fri 8:00 am-4:30 pm

August 3rd – 21st
Mon-Fri 8:00 am-4:30 pm
Hours vary during college breaks

Gallery Information:

voice: 847-543-2240
e-mail: sjones@clcillinois.edu
web: http://gallery.clcillinois.edu/

The Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art is a Project of the College of Lake County Foundation. This program is partially sponsored by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Cover Art:
Yumiko Irei-Gokce
The Urge of Growth: The Germination ....II, 1996
Monotype, 41” x 31”