



CHICAGO

Michiko Itatani: "Cosmic Kaleidoscope" at Linda Warren Projects

Even a maelstrom has some kind of structure. Michiko Itatani, born and raised in Japan and an artist and professor in the US since the 1970s, always mines that territory between the physical and the metaphysical, between what we think we perceive around us and what we suspect might underpin it, between the specific and the astral, as for Itatani, they always partake of each other. She's rather a force of nature herself; this exhibition contained 69 works from the last seven years, many of them large, and culled from her ongoing series such as *HyperBaroque*, *Pattern Recognition*, *Moon Jar*, *CTRL-Home/Echo*, *Cosmic Theater*, *Shoin* (a Japanese interior architectural form), and others. These, and this exhibition's title, convey a bit of the frenzy Itatani conceives to be seething around us, this strange and changeling yin-yang between chaos and order, between the specifics of the appearance of the world and the currents that surge in and around it.

Sometimes that world is indeed quite specific, as Itatani depicts the inside of what seems a large and comfy old library, shelves loaded with books, or the aforementioned *Shoin*, an elegant assembly room from centuries ago. Through these rooms, themselves usually depicted with a heightened and intense palette, various pictorial embellishments swirl, dots or kind of woven grids, evoking geometric patterns that both frame and extend these symmetrical spaces, respecting their

structure and offering them new auras. In many of her recent works, Itatani's world is more vorticed, a churning painterly mass of whirlpools and night skies; less palpable, with shifts toward deep space and a kind of vertiginous surrender to the cosmos. But even here bits of the real world—Fu dogs, bits of Japanese landscape, globes, etc.—seem tossed about in these visual tornadoes, literal *ukiyo-e*, images of a floating world. A few simple and poetic Japanese scenes, with images of a few buildings in a landscape slathered by the rain, depicted in black and white by Itatani, as if in memory of a Kurosawa film, were fine closing notes to this exhibition. I thought of Itatani when the tsunami hit her homeland, not just in empathy for her distress, but for how much it manifested her sense of the precariousness of permanence, the suddenness—though not always tragic—of change, how always, this is becoming that.

—JAMES YOOD

"COSMIC WANDERLUST" PAINTING FROM VIRTUAL EITOKU, 2013
Michiko Itatani, SUMI INK AND OIL ON CANVAS, 96" x 154"
 PHOTO: COURTESY LINDA WARREN PROJECTS