

nara roesler

asuka anastacia ogawa



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b. 1988, Tokyo, Japan

lives and works in Los Angeles

Born in Japan, Asuka Ogawa spent part of her childhood and teenage years in Brazil, completed her studies in Sweden and graduated from Central Saint Martins in London. The cultural diversity that permeated her formative years had a strong impact on her artistic production, which incorporates different visual references, beliefs and traditions.

Her dreamlike paintings, with monochrome and vibrant backgrounds, feature frontal representations of androgynous, doll-like children, constructed with great formal economy, with carefully constructed faces and almond-shaped eyes that seem to look beyond the painting. The construction scheme of these pictorial compositions, which due to their formal economy and chromatic intensity carry a certain aura of mystery, ends up bringing them closer to images of a spiritual nature. There is a strong reference in her poetics to her own ancestry, which combines Japanese and Afro-Brazilian elements. In the artist's words: 'Although I don't have a theme when I paint, I'm always thinking of my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and of the beauty, strength, struggle and love of our ancestors.'

This ancestral legacy is visible in the other elements that make up Asuka's paintings, such as clothing, props, objects and animals. The situations in which these characters are inserted are quite enigmatic and even banal, everyday scenes such as a wash or a game between children, in Asuka's paintings take on metaphysical contours, loaded with symbolism that connects the artist to her various roots.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Melinha*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2024)
- *Pedra*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, USA (2023)
- *Tamago*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, USA (2022)
- *Feijão*, Half Gallery, New York, USA (2019)
- *Soup*, Henry Taylor's, Los Angeles, USA (2017)

selected group exhibitions

- *Room by room: concepts, themes and artists in The Rachosfy Collection*, The Warehouse, Dallas, USA (2023)
- *Co-responses: Brazil and abroad*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2023)
- *5471 Miles*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, USA (2020)
- *Don't Eat Me*, Deli Gallery, Nova York, USA (2018)
- *Early 21st Century Art*, Almine Rech Gallery, Londres, Reino UK (2018)

selected collections

- Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, USA
- Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, USA
- X Museum, Pequim, China



Moon, 2023
Acrylic paint on canvas





exhibition view *pedra*,
2023, Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Sai Tripathi





exhibition view
Asuka Anastacia Ogawa, 2021,
Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Dan Finlayson



exhibition view
Asuka Anastacia Ogawa, 2021,
Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Dan Finlayson



The artist, however, reduces her characters and figures to their essential forms, using an enormous economy of means. The result is highly silent paintings. The abstract background of the scenes seems to place them in a timeless universe, with a dreamlike and fantastic aspect. Although there are interactions between the characters, they are often suggestive.

Asuka populates her compositions mostly with black people, often solitary. Constructed through strong formal reduction, they resemble children, whose sexuality is sometimes ambiguous or undefined. Their almond-shaped eyes stand out, giving them an oriental appearance. These characters are often depicted from the front. This form of representation, combined with the characters' expressive gazes, makes them appear to be looking directly at the viewer. When they interact with each other, they may be portrayed in profile and the emphasis is on the exchange of glances between them.

Baby Mushrooms, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas

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exhibition view
Tamago, 2022, Blum & Poe New York
Photo: Genevieve Hanson

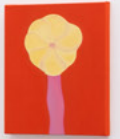


exhibition view
Asuka Anastacia Ogawa, 2020,
Blum & Poe Tokyo,
Photo: SAIKI

Bath Time, 2022
Acrylic paint on canvas



exhibition view *pedra*,
2023, Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Sai Tripathi





Agosto, 2022
Acrylic paint on canvas

Murasaki, 2022
Acrylic paint on canvas
61 x 76 x 3,8 cm
24 x 29.9 x 1.5 in



exhibition view *Melinha*,
2024, in galeria
Nara Roesler São Paulo



Kaori, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas
175 x 205 x 4 cm
68.9 x 80.7 x 1.6 in



The silent, dreamlike atmosphere of the works is charged with a strong spiritual component. In *Listening*, a character leans on a tree and tilts her head to the left, as if listening to it. Mysterious spirits seem to come out of the tree. The same spirits appear again in *Kaori*. In this work, two characters, a male and a female, appear very close to each other: while the woman is lying down, the man is kneeling, holding a small element that seems to shoot out a jet of white color, which ends up dividing the composition. Spirits are coming out of both their heads, and they seem to be heading towards each other.

Listening, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas
186,1 x 188 x 4 cm
73.3 x 74 x 1.6 in





exhibition view
Melinha, 2024, in galeria
Nara Roesler São Paulo



Mizu, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas
121,9 x 183,2 x 3,5 cm
48 x 72.1 x 1.4 in

exhibition view
Melinha, 2024, in galeria
Nara Roesler São Paulo





No More Soup, 2023
Acrylic paint on canvas

exhibition view *pedra*,
2023, Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Sai Tripathi



The head as a spiritual component is a common element in religions of African origin, especially Candomblé, which is widespread in Brazil through Bahia. In this cosmology, the head, also called Ori, is the soul of the person, their spiritual essence, and also the dwelling place of their protective orisha.

Another element from African religions that can be traced in Asuka Ogawa's work is the question of ancestry, since many of her works mention ancestors and ancestors of ancestors. For these beliefs, especially those of the Yoruba trunk (the most present in Brazil), existence is not restricted to the material plane, but also continues in the spiritual realm. As the African cultures that share this type of belief were based on orality and not writing, the ancestors played a strong role in passing on knowledge and maintaining cultural values.





Ishi, 2023
Acrylic paint on canvas



Ageru!, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas
183,5 x 190,5 x 4 cm
72.2 x 75 x 1.6 in



exhibition view *pedra*,
2023, Blum & Poe Los Angeles
Photo: Sai Tripathi



exhibition view
Asuka Anastacia Ogawa, 2020,
Blum & Poe Tokyo,
Photo: SAIKI

Ao, 2024
Acrylic paint on canvas
190,5 x 170,5 x 4 cm
75 x 67.1 x 1.6 in



Aspects of Japanese culture also appear in several of the artist's works. In addition to the characters' slanted eyes, Asuka explores cultural aspects such as Ikebana: the art of making floral arrangements that explores elements such as linearity, rhythm and color. This element, which arrived in the eastern country through the Buddhist religion, appears in works by the artist such as *Hi Flower* (2022).



Hi Flower, 2022
acrylic paint on canvas





exhibition view
Tamago, 2022, Blum & Poe New York
Photo: Genevieve Hanson

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