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CRITICS' PICKS



Kenjiro Okazaki, 背後にはなにも無い / *At the crossroads (tried to flag a ride)*

Kenjiro Okazaki

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Kenjiro Okazaki is perhaps best known in the US for his 2007 collaboration with Trisha Brown, *I love my robots*, in which his custom-designed cyborgs performed Brown's choreography. If the Japanese artist's latest works, small abstract paintings from his series "Zero Thumbnails," 2005–, seem a far cry from mechanized dancers, they still inhabit the nexus of technology and art. The sixteen paintings on view (all works 2020) are each based on at least one work from the art-historical cannon, their models ranging from Renaissance paintings to Greek sculptures and nineteenth-century Japanese woodcuts. Like the series's digital namesake, these works' diminutive scale belies the essential information contained in Okazaki's condensed images.

Okazaki corrals the sense of speed and expanse associated with action painting into a roughly seven-by-nine-inch format by painstakingly crafting his gestural brushstrokes and thick impasto. 蜂蜜の発見 / *Lo, drawn by the tinkle, winged things, bees follow the*

sounding brass is based on Piero di Cosimo's fifteenth-century painting *The Discovery of Honey by Bacchus*. Okazaki uses heavy applications of peachy pink, bright green, and turquoise to loosely suggest the central gnarled tree, grass, sky, and Bacchanalia of Cosimo's original. *背後にはなにも無い* / *At the crossroads (tried to flag a ride)* pays homage to Cézanne's terraced landscapes and perched villages. Inspired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *The House with the Cracked Walls*, 1892–94, Okazaki's composition features bold strokes of canary yellow and khaki, colors Cézanne used to represent light and shadow on the crumbling farm house and rocky outcrops. In each case, Okazaki has metaphorically scraped off, rehydrated, and reworked paint from the past to create digitally influenced but emphatically painterly *aide-mémoire*.

— Mara Hoberman

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