

AN EVER-CHANGING EVOCATION

Jacob Hashimoto's Middle Eastern debut brings colour and beauty to complex systems

By Laura Egerton

There are times when art truly takes your breath away. Titled *The Eclipse*, Jacob Hashimoto's Middle Eastern debut at Leila Heller Gallery certainly has this effect, while also offering insight into the practice of this fascinating artist who creates artworks of intense beauty whilst astutely commenting on our 21st century world.

A dense forest of black and white kite-like forms, built up from fragile layers of pieces of cut paper, each bound by bamboo and hung by a thread, ripple through the largest gallery in the UAE.

"Spaces with these kind of monumental dimensions are difficult to address," the artist admitted. "It's interesting to watch pieces change in different venues. Here it is about sculpture, how to make it feel on a human scale."

The human element is integral to *The Eclipse*, on both a practical and cerebral level. "The pieces change with me," Hashimoto explained. "Because they exist momentarily throughout my life, you can watch my aesthetics change, my expectations shift. The nature of being alive changes the work."

Islamic patterns are frequently found in his designs. "The relationship to abstraction is significantly different here than in the west," said Hashimoto. "In the process of building complex networks of space, using repeating modules to create complex systems, dealing with compound curves and shifting dimensions, there is an appreciation for the language that I work with which might not exist in many other places in the same way."

Hashimoto's relationship with the Far East is more circumstantial. Aged 16, he worked with a Katagami printer, cutting patterns and carving woodblocks, later becoming interested in Eastern religion, meditation and Chinese ink painting. These early years impacted his choice of technique, which is intensely time-consuming. The artist also continues to foster relationships with dragon kite manufacturers in

China and paper mills in Japan. Challenges include a constant battle with colour fading, which alters the impression that a work gives. Through a meticulous process of cooking paper in UV light, Hashimoto found that pigment-coated paper gave best durability, providing him with the option of using any pantone; hence the kaleidoscopic character of works such as *This Lost Love*, *Wonderfully Unwound into a Spacious Dream of Freedom*. The wall works are ostensibly flatter, more static versions of the installations; individual units of bamboo-wrapped paper fixed in rows, seven layers deep, with wooden rods at the top and bottom of each line. Initially, they were monochrome but it is through his use of diverse colours that they really sing. Because each work is made up of a collection of fragments, the

viewer doesn't necessarily expect to find an overall compositional framework, but when you step back, one often materialises.

This is where his two prime areas of inspiration - landscape-based American abstraction and scrolling video games - come together. Sharing an immersive figure-ground relationship, paintings by Elsworth Kelly or Mark Rothko can be all-consuming whilst Nintendo screens, as the artist explained, "allow you to build new vectors

of activity and anticipate space, as the eye and the mind move off screen or out of the picture plane". Today we have a sophisticated awareness of complex spatial relationships because of the proliferation of three-dimensional modelling and computer-generated imagery.

Hashimoto is encouraged that in an age of infinite possibilities of the digital, unique artworks have become ever more popular. Another human touch comes in the evocative titles of the works, taken from sources as diverse as Robert Coover, Carl Sagan and mathematical doctorates. "You approach an artwork thinking of it as a beautiful object, which is limiting," the artist mused. "The title can help you see that it is an object in the world." ■

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above: *The Eclipse*, 2017, installation view at Leila Heller Gallery Dubai

below left: **Jacob Hashimoto**, *The Invisible, Immutable Geographies of Time*, 2017, bamboo, acrylic, paper, wood, and Dacron, 167.64 x 152.4 x 20.95 cm

below center: **Jacob Hashimoto**, *Slow Motion Sequences in Free LoopSpace, Soaring Miles into the Sky*, 2017, bambo, acrylic, paper, wood and Dacron, 167.64 x 152.4 x 20.95 cm

below right: **Jacob Hashimoto**, *This Lost Love, Wonderfully Unwound into a Spacious Dream of Freedom*, 2017, bamboo, acrylic, paper, wood, and Dacron, 167.64 x 152.4 x 20.95 cm

