

Masako Kamiya – paintings
Jaclyn Salvaggio – photographs
Gallery NAGA
67 Newbury Street, Boston
February 7 – March 1

Review by Michael Cochran

It is an atmosphere of softness that permeates the interior of Gallery NAGA. The conceptually different paintings by Masako Kamiya and photographs by Jaclyn Salvaggio inhabit the space quietly and gently, but still actively entice the viewer to move closer and look deeper into their surfaces and subtle forms. Each step closer to the work increases one's cognitive awareness until the eye becomes saturated and it becomes necessary to retreat and re-examine, certainly not from revulsion but rather for renewal.

Kamiya's work from a distance appears to be color field paintings of subtle concentric circles or overlapping arcs on wood panels that slightly float off the wall. They are small in scale, 10" X 9" and 17" X 16", always slightly more vertical than horizontal in proportion. However, moving closer to each painting, what appear to be small dots on the surface are actually built-up nodules of gouache, carefully constructed mounds of layered color that cast gentle shadows on each adjacent form. They are like microcosmic mountain ranges of pigment, laminated color planes dripped slowly, accumulating until they extend from the surface. When looking at each painting, it's as if one is flying over snow-capped peaks at over 40,000 feet when the sun is low in the horizon and the mountains and hills are casting tiny yet dramatic shadows over the earth's surface. And then, when the viewer retreats to re-examine the macrocosmic view of each work, the subtle structure and organized rhythm of each painting re-asserts itself. The paintings are intimate and vast, simple yet extremely complex.

Jaclyn Salvaggio's square sepia-toned silverprint photographs call to the viewer to look deeply into private ethereal spaces. Each untitled photograph is of a woman gesturing from within a gauzy vignettted environment. The woman appears to be unaware of the photographer and viewer but rather caught-up or contained within her own thoughts and actions. We are voyeurs peering into this dream-like space, not quite invasive as we are kept at a safe distance by the gauzy scrim that filters the outer reality. Salvaggio creates these wispy images by tearing apart paper prints and using the fragments as negatives, a process similar to the recreation of dreams. The work appears so enigmatic and yet Salvaggio describes her intention so clearly. "The moment you wake up in the morning and you remember a dream, and you can't quite remember it, but you remember little pieces – that's what I'm interested in."

These are two very strong young artists who have a clear understanding of their direction and more importantly, a sense of their own vision in an art world full of derivation and appropriation. Their styles and methodology are well developed, carefully balanced and very appropriate for the content. We should watch closely as this delicate and sensitive work further evolves in the future.