

in exhibitions and share a studio in Beijing. Despite their identical backgrounds, the two have divergent styles; Zhaoyu tackles a broader view of the world while Zhaohui creates intimate works.

The depictions of vast, open spaces in Zhaoyu's paintings conjure up a melancholy world that is lonely and at times tragic.

Out the Window, from his "Airport" series (2008), is an otherwise mundane scene and disturbingly depicts a fire at an airport terminal. His series of "Horizon" paintings from 2007 successfully capture the anonymity of modern urban life. A small lone figure, painted in the same dark tones as the foreground almost disappears in one painting as he looks out onto a distant urban landscape. The perspective makes the city look small and nondescript, creating a sense of isolation, a feeling that is enhanced by the hazy sky colored in soft, mauve tones. The sky is dominant throughout his works and is used variously to represent both hope and dread; clouds and smog are punctuated by beams of sunlight, faint rainbows and the wane of twinkling stars. The grander Zhaoyu's vision, the less viewers can actually grasp.

In contrast, Zhaohui's intimate portraits depict hands and other body parts in extreme close-ups. Curator Yaji Huang compares his works to the photography of British artist John Coplans, whose images of his own interlocking fingers are echoed in Zhaohui's paintings. But unlike those of Coplans, Zhaohui's images are flat and the colors are monotone, bathed in a fluorescence that renders the subject stark. Pain and alienation are apparent throughout but are most obvious in his fragmented portraits of body parts. An untitled piece from 2007 shows a woman's skeletal torso, criss-crossed with scars, her belly bathed in a bleak, clinical lighting that highlights her flaws and pallid skin. If it were not for a slight sign of life—the headless subject's hands pulling down her underwear—it would be possible to mistake her for a corpse. Despite the images' implied acts of suffering and violence, the masterful way that Zhaohui uses the light to suffuse the subject makes the painting seem lit from within, lending the painting a strange and haunting beauty that makes it all the more poignant.

It is this quiet beauty that sets the brothers apart from the pack. For much of their young careers, the brothers have worked and exhibited together and their strong bonds will likely preserve that. But artists are bound to carve their own paths. For Yin Zhaohui, the time is now, as he was chosen for a "The Revolution Continues: New Chinese Art" at the Saatchi Gallery in London this October. ■

MANILA

Gina Osterloh: Shooting Blanks

GREEN PAPAYA ART PROJECTS

GINA FAIRLEY

Gina Osterloh's first exhibition in the Philippines certainly didn't draw blanks. Visiting Manila under a Fulbright Scholar Fellowship to research surrealism and contemporary art, this young Filipino-American artist produced a suite of lambda prints that meld performance, sculpture and photography.

"Shooting Blanks" centered on the fusion of physical and psychological space. Using bond paper, which comes in only four colors in the Philippines—candy pink, blue, yellow and green—Osterloh created room-sized stages made of paper. Inserting either anonymous sitters or cast papier-mâché mannequins into these diorama-like tableaux, she transforms the human subject of her surreal photographs into a prop, devoid of identity.

In the standout image *Mute* (*Shooting Blanks*) (2008), Osterloh challenges the boundaries of self and environment. A woman lies face down in a small room of pink, irregularly shaped paper cut-outs that resemble a wallpaper of oversized fish-scales. Her legs sink into the wall's paper membrane. Paper patches cover the prone figure's eyes and her mouth is stuffed with the same pink paper. Here, the concept of blankness acts as a metaphor for Osterloh's own displacement or lack of identity

in her new environment of Manila.

What sets Osterloh's new work apart from previous series is that she is no longer the protagonist in the performative aspect of the work. This purged connection, or "blankness," escalates through the series as Osterloh eventually removes the body completely from the room, leaving a vacant space as in *Empty* (*Rash Room*) (2008). Has the body been totally consumed by the paper environment, or is the room pregnant with the anticipation of action? The focus transfers from the actor to the set itself.

These unsettling images are heightened by their sickly pinkness and obsessive collage. Osterloh pushes this further in her second suite of photographs, "Cut Room" (2008). Combining the four colors of paper in a shredded wall design, the environment overloads the viewer with textural stimuli. Unlike a tangible installation that the viewer can physically experience, this reality is once removed through the photographic medium. Similarly, Osterloh's interest in camouflage moves beyond the language of war, calling instead on its contemporary application as a street fashion. Osterloh usurps the stylized pattern with her ludicrous palette. In *Dots* (*Shooting Blanks*) (2008), a mannequin positioned on all fours is covered with dots, mimicking the room's surface and yet out of register with the wall's stripes.

This is perhaps where Osterloh's observation of the Philippines is most accurately set against her Filipino-American heritage. These photographs blur places and ideas, dimensions and media, giving them a curious spark. ■



GINA OSTERLOH — *Mute* (*Shooting Blanks*) (2008) Lambda print, 30 x 40 in. Courtesy of Soto Gallery, Los Angeles.