

Jody Zellen. "Takako Yamaguchi: New Paintings," *Art Now LA*, February 9, 2018.

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Takako Yamaguchi is a skilled and accomplished painter. Her early works (mid 2000s) were abstract landscapes inspired by monumental seascapes of 19th century European Romanticism and Japanese Kimono design that investigated the relationship between masculine and feminine. Other paintings re-imagined the building blocks of land, sea and sky in terms of human customs such as fabric weaving and hair braiding.

The works in her current exhibition are a departure, as Yamaguchi has abandoned the landscape in favor of enlarged and tightly cropped paintings of women's clothing. These garments are worn by the artist solely for this purpose. It is assumed that Yamaguchi chooses the outfit— be it a trench coat, a sheer red blouse or a ribbed light blue cardigan— and wears it for a photograph which is then used as the source and referent for the creation of the painting. Surprisingly, the works are more about the precision of the representation than femininity, desire or the personality of the sitter. They are self-portraits that are not exactly about the exploration of self.



The paintings are framed within the discourse of Photorealism in their dependence on a photograph, yet they also refute that categorization. Yamaguchi is conscious of the spontaneity, proliferation and immediacy of cell phone photographs and the growing presence of the selfie. A photograph might be the catalyst for the works, but in the end these paintings are slow, deliberate and time-consuming labors.



On view are nine modest-sized paintings. Six are vertical and 48 x 36 inches, three are horizontal and a bit bigger, 42 x 50 inches. All but one depicts a close-up view of a clothed woman from just the base of the neck to mid-torso and focuses on the texture, color and details of the varying fabrics of the garments. The paintings suggest but do not dwell on the body as the tonalities of the skin and the shape and size of the breasts are less important to Yamaguchi than the exactitude of the depiction of the clothing. The works are formally composed and balanced. In *Crochet Top*, *Purple Cardigan* and *Blue Cardigan*, the composition is divided down the center by a zipper or row of buttons. The symmetry is deliberate, whereas

in the painting entitled *Blue Coat*, one button is missing and creates an imbalance. The works are abstract in their insistence on flatness. As depictions of fabric on canvas, they embrace abstraction and the illusionistic.

While Yamaguchi's paintings picture a wide range of women's clothing, they are not making a statement about fashion. These items (perhaps, some from the artist's wardrobe and others purchased for the project?), depict an array of designs and types of clothing a woman might wear ranging from plain to fancy.

In many ways, Yamaguchi's latest paintings appear to be a departure from her past work, but upon reflection her concerns are similar— how to merge shapes and textures into a seamless composition. Here, she references the body as a landscape, rather than the landscape as a body. These paintings capture the softness of fabric that adorn a woman's body, presenting them as photorealistic fragments.