GAJIN FUJITA

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LOS Angeles, with its preparation of the United States to leap into the next century, has been a focal point for new graduate shows. Fujita, who joined the faculty of the Los Angeles County College of the Arts, has been a part of the city's vibrant art scene. He has produced a number of significant works, including his series "Redsight," which explores the relationship between Eastern and Western cultures.

At 34, Fujita is just leaving his student days behind, and has since

Image courtesy: the artist and LA8, Los Angeles, CA.
GAIIN FUJITA

Triple Play (1999)

105 Angeles, with its preponderance of art colleges, has become the epicenter of the United States for fresh talent. The New York Times recently devoted a full-page article to the spectacle of curators and gallery owners flocking to Los Angeles for every new graduate show, hoping to discover the next star. Young artists get signed before they've died on their student works, and as quickly are slapped and discarded if it doesn't prove commercially viable during the first show.

Fortunately there are artists who manage to stand out with such originality, in their time to mature to a bit of bravado with enough power. Gaiin Fujita is one East LA guy, schooled in the graffiti movement, who has realized a panoply of mists, video and pop culture into a multidisciplinary painting genre. He is now becoming known for paintings that combine graffiti painting and tagging, silkscreen, tempera on Japanese woodblock prints and graphic design into coherent collections of styles. It is the unique Los Angeles multicultural environment, where identities wildly overlap, that has allowed him to paint the way and, as Fujita himself said, "I could only have happened in LA. I would not have painted this way somewhere else."

Influenced by his father, a painter, and his mother, a conservator of Japanese antiques, Fujita started early with the KGB graffiti crew kids grew up, realized his life's work seen when he was painting, and finally arrived at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. It was there for he met his mentor, professor and artist writer Dave Holley, who became more of a life skills coach for Fujita's career. As Fujita said, Holley showed me there are two roads in art, smooth or rocky. Smooth was getting a degree, staying attached to college, maybe getting a job there, and having a nice life. Rocky meant to be an artist and take some real risks. So rocky was the way I went.

At 24, Fujita is just starting to hit his stride. His work unpretentious devotion at Soho Square in 2000, and has since been printed by LA Louver Gallery. His paintings, carefully wrought and well-crafted, take months to complete. A tidy play, Triple Play (1999), is one of a series exploring the original and graphic novel theme found in utopia. A man with an engorged penis approaches two white-knitted goddesses who want to be polluted. The words "hello play", printed large graphic style, is a visual device that creates some perspective and room. His painting in one fall swoop, bend, slide, binds of bits and pieces create a texture, and Fujita has had friends come in and tag the canvas. More than a nod to his comrades in street painting, it adds significantly to the process and the result.

Show Line (2008) is an allegorical duel between two somber warriors and exemplifies Fujita's technique. Using spray paint, acrylic, marker, pens and gold leaf, he has an array of stretching and retracting strategies putting layered objects on the surface and sprinkles over them to create negative shapes. The surfaces are often gold coated, which creates a distinct luster and luminosity. His street work, such as Redline District (2005), go further in stretching elements he sees in Triple Play, Fujita uses silver leaf as a highly polished surface, which his friends tag, and can build up layers and layers of paint with the gaudy of Japanese lacquers.

The really interesting thing about emerging artists with proven-exist is that they may go as they develop. Fujito wants to remain transgressive, keep the graffiti element, make some changes in scale and perhaps work with other popular-sculptor sources besides utopian figure. This blend of simple complexities fascinates him, as his work is starting to fascinate the Los Angeles and European art audiences.

Canton Campbell is an artist and cultural commentator who lives and works in Los Angeles.