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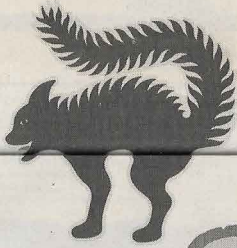
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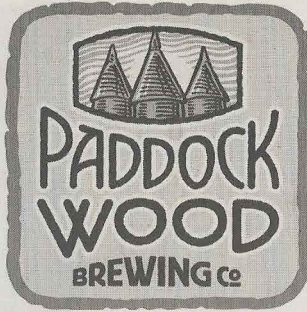
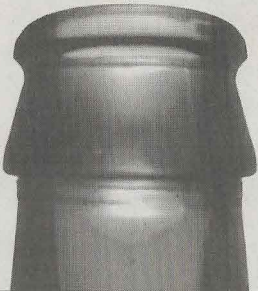
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A GERMAN-STYLE
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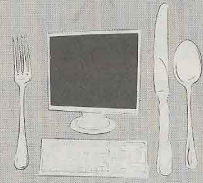
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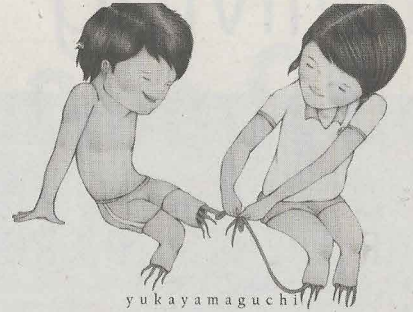
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yukayamaguchi

The Beauty Of Grotesque

**YAMAGUCHI'S WORK BLURS
LINE BETWEEN HUMOUR,
HORROR** by Bart Gazzola

**PERSONAL : POLITICAL
YUKA YAMAGUCHI,
DAVE GEARY
MENDEL ART GALLERY
RUNS TO SUNDAY 3**

Yuka Yamaguchi is currently exhibiting at the Mendel Art Gallery, through an ongoing gallery project titled "Artists by Artists." The project pairs an experienced artist (in this case, Yuka is paired with noted Saskatoon artist and frequent *Planet S* contributor extraordinaire Dave Geary) with a more emerging one, with the resulting work exhibited in the lower space at the Mendel.

Over the past few years, the concept has been interpreted in different ways by the different participants: sometimes the result features solely the work of the junior artist, and other times a collaborative installation takes place. In regards to the current installation, Yamaguchi explains on her website that the pair made the decision to collaborate on *Personal : Political* because Geary's work, with its propaganda motifs and socialist imagery is the latter, whereas Yamaguchi's work seems to be very much biographical—a personal narrative that is being shared with the viewer.

Yamaguchi was also one of a number of artists who exhibited at the now-defunct Royal Red Gallery; her small, delicate drawings immediately pulled the viewer in, even in that massive space—and they're as well-executed as they are disturbing. Her bio describes her as a self-taught artist, from Kobe, Japan, stating that "her drawings are inward-looking, reaching both extremes of cute and grotesque." Very simply done, with coloured pencil or ball-point pen—and always seeming to be part of a larger whole that Yamaguchi is pointing towards—her works are indicators that sometimes

art school can be the worst thing for a potential artist. Her unique, bizarre vision could easily have been lost there, or subjected to the usual problem of instructors wanting to create younger versions of themselves.

Works such as "New Heartbeat", where a young girl holds her very anatomically correct heart to her ear in a gesture of love or listening, or "After All...", where a boy is partly flayed by what looks like a common kitchen utensil, easily fit within the grotesque. But "Chicken Fight", or "Self Portrait, Age 17", are both... well, cute. Not a word I use often, but it applies here.

Some works incorporate both of these seemingly disparate concepts, such as "Inseparable", where a cute, pre-teen couple are tying themselves together by their respective hanging tendons and muscles, which hang in ribbons from their severed calves. Both are smiling, and seem pleased with the arrangement, and I am reminded of the Japanese horror film *Audition*, which was really a love story, with the classic admonition that "you must love only me." "All I Can See" is both creepy and very, very funny, and will make some men reconsider before they carry on a conversation with a woman's breasts instead of her face.

On her website (www.plastique-monkey.com) she explains that her latest endeavour is the "turn everything around you cute and fun" project, and her sense of humour is clear in her work, although sometimes that humour at play is somewhat black. This juxtaposition, creating a place where we can neither be only horrified or simply think happy, cutesy thoughts makes Yamaguchi's work both enjoyable and memorable.

HAVE YOUR SAY:
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