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NAOTAKA HIRO (Two new video works & a new collaboration with Sid M. Duenas)

Naotaka Hiro

The Box

805 Traction Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90013

May 10, 2008 - June 7, 2008

Bodyscapes

by Catherine Wagley

Naotaka Hiro covered the front windows of The Box gallery with plywood in order to better control the light in his installation. The plywood planks are surprisingly lyrical. Their grain complements the bodily, earthy hue of Hiro's work and the covered windows make the space feel like a makeshift, underground theatre.

Bodily fluids and body parts in art used to be risqué. But nothing about Hiro's show is scandalous. In Hiro's work, bodies are enthralling because of their uncertain, rhythmic qualities and because of their sense of time and space.

In her essay *Atlanta*, Miranda July talks about her first apartment: "From the stains on the mattress it was clear that people had died on this bed, slowly, over the course of a lifetime. How great, I thought. How wonderful to be part of such a long history. What would I do in this bed?" July's quiet sense of excitement, fueled by the stains of living, isn't too far removed from the detached wonder with which Hiro addresses human anatomy. His work explores what role new bodies play in the ever-evolving history of stains, fluids, and body parts.

In *It on It (Skinny Wire Neck)*, the video documentation of a performance, a nude Hiro applies sticky rice to a skull, which has been

suspended at waist height so that it hides his genitalia. The video plays upside down, making the morphing shape of the skull more prominent than Hiro's naked thighs. Sometimes during this rice application process, it looks as if Hiro is making love to the skull. At other times, the video looks like an art school scene in reverse: instead of posing for the class, the nude model has become a sculptor.



Hiro built two towering pedestals for *Night and Fog, Two Penises*. The two channel video piece responds to Alain Resnais' gruesome 1955 documentary about the

Holocaust. Resnais' film showed footage of dead bodies while Hiro's shows cheesy plastic replicas of body parts. Fake ears, dentures, penises, hands, feet, and packs of dirt sit statically on the screen while fog sifts through the scene. Nothing about Hiro's video seems impudent. He doesn't undermine the weightiness of Resnais' project, but he does suggest that these plastic stand-ins are another way of exploring what happens when parts are severed from the whole body and left to fend for themselves.

To and Fro, Hiro's video collaboration with Sid M. Duenas, has an opposite effect, talking about how the body becomes whole rather than severed. Projected in the gallery's basement, the video chronicles a growing, lulling oneness with the environment as the two artists repeat rhythmic, patterned phrases that intuit bodily wholeness.



Hiro proposes an open, process driven approach to bodily

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identity. In his three rhythmic videos, he creates microcosms in which our own uncertainty about our physical existence merges seamlessly with history and with the natural world. In Hiro's work, uncertainty, vulnerability, and nakedness are perpetually, naturally beautiful.

-Catherine Wagley

(Images top-bottom: Naotaka Hiro, *It on It (Skinny Wire Neck)*, 2008, Originally shot with Super-8 film transferred to DVD, Single Channel, 3 minute; Naotaka Hiro, *Night and Fog, Two Penises*, 2008, Originally shot with Super-8 film transferred to DVD, 2 channels, Loop; Naotaka Hiro and Sid M. Duenas, *To and From (Ocean)*, 2008, Single channel DVD, 15 min. All images courtesy of Artists and The Box, LA)

Posted by [Catherine Wagley](#) on 6/1/08

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