

Harumi Yamaguchi

*HARUMI GALS*

Sat 28 Feb - Sat 4 Apr, 2015

Opening Reception: Sat 28 Feb 18:00-20:00

NANZUKA

NANZUKA is pleased to announce our first solo exhibition with Harumi Yamaguchi.

Yamaguchi was born in Matsue in the Shimane prefecture, and graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts with a degree in oil painting. After working for the publicity department of Seibu Department Stores, Yamaguchi began her career as a freelance illustrator, participating in the advertising production for PARCO with its opening in 1969. Since 1972 Yamaguchi has depicted female figures using airbrush techniques, instantly establishing herself as an illustrator that symbolized the era.

The encounter between Yamaguchi and PARCO was an inevitable one. Tsuji Masuda whom served as the president of PARCO had established plans for creating a department store that functioned as a cultural facility, collectively combining platforms such as museums, theater, and publishing in addition to retail, and as a result had headhunted Yamaguchi for this endeavor. As could be seen in Masuda's decision of appointing Eiko Ishioka for the art direction, Kazuko Koike as copywriter, and Harumi Yamaguchi for the illustration, PARCO had soon focused on 'women' as a major driving source behind Japanese society of 1970s and onward, further succeeding in diverting this power to the business sector. Yamaguchi's female figures are far from notions of eroticism as portrayed allegedly through male eyes in the form of pin-ups. On the contrary, the women themselves appear to joyously celebrate their own sexuality and existence. Furthermore, the images of women partaking in boxing, baseball, and skateboarding which Yamaguchi had illustrated in the 70s, could be interpreted as an ironic gesture towards a male-dominant society at a time prior to the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1985; an era when women were unable to equally advance into society.

In the catalog published in correspondence to "Women of the 70s PARCO Poster Exhibition 1969-1986" that took place at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in 2001, Chizuko Ueno had critiqued Yamaguchi's works stating, "while appearing to adhere to the scenario of male-tailored eroticism, Yamaguchi deconstructs male desire through her exaggerative depictions. As a consequence, the female body is idealized to a realm unreachable by male hands." ("The Idea of the Woman")

Alberto Vargas, famous for his pin-ups for Esquire magazine and Playboy, is notably the international pioneer of airbrush illustrations. However, in the context of early '70s Japan there were no pre-eminent illustrators working with the airbrush medium with the exception Harumi Yamaguchi. It is certain that Yamaguchi's achievements will continue to receive acclaim as an inaugural figure of super-real illustration that took Japan's advertising industry of the 70s and 80s by storm.

This exhibition will feature a series of prominent pieces selected from a body of work centering upon Yamaguchi's airbrush illustrations created for PARCO.

An opening reception with the artist will be held on February 28 (Sat).

**NANZUKA**

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