

life and memory with equal ease and amusement. One such artist is the young Chinese painter Zhou Ying. The oil paintings that make up her exhibition, entitled *Trial Date of Fairy Tale*, have a lightness about them and are immediately engaging. At the same time, there is an uncanny sense of danger lurking behind her intimate narratives that possess the familiar dark tenor of the three *Toy Story* movies that began in the mid-1990s.

What strikes one immediately about Zhou's art is its bright pastel colors and the clearly delineated make-up objects that fill each of her pictures. Here is a world of adult charade. Here is a young female world of tiny dolls all of which are dressed and posed in a variety of clothes, at work and at play, but which speak to a bold, sexy future. Zhou molds her teenage dream worlds around large lipstick holders, perfume bottles, mirrors, and a variety of other fancy make-up products that tumble out of cosmetic pouches and across tabletops.

Zhou's world is also one of measured disorder that sug-

gests that a hand has just left the scene, good to go into the world with a freshly made-up face, a new identity that will last only until it wears off over time.

Zhou's fantasy is indeed a rich one, a singularly pleasant, quirky, surreal one that trembles with anxiety.

First glances into this world suggest that it is a place both of safety and pleasure but in works such as *Dance in Paradise – Summer No.3* and *Dance in Paradise – Summer No.4* (both 2007) there is a sense of menace present on land and in the water. The bright shiny world of things and the lush delight of fruit and cool water suddenly become threatening environments.

The search for beauty among girls begins early in life, as the does the desperate sexualization of girls imposed on them by others, long before they realize that they are being tricked, brutally persuaded by peers, advertising, and adults that their own natural beauty is not enough, that it is somehow wrong. People praise this natural beauty but are quick to

alter its very course just as they are seemingly only too eager to corrupt the innocence of childhood.

Zhou understands this very well indeed. Her smart, layered, surreal narratives such as *Fantasia without a Rest No.6* (2013) and *Fantasia without a Rest No.13* (2013) speak to tainted dreams and a corrupting world in search of perfection.

Ian Findlay



Nathan Slate Joseph and Taylor Kuffner at Sundaram Tagore Gallery

The decision to bring together Nathan Slate Joseph's painting and sculpture and Taylor Kuffner's elegant sound installation, a stimulating combination of traditional Balinese gamelan music and robotic technology, was an inspired one. A first thought was that the works of these two artists wouldn't fit together in any meaningful

aesthetic way. A second thought was that traditional Balinese gamelan music would be too clamorous in the enclosed gallery space. A third thought was that between these two artists' works there would be nothing complementary, nothing that would help the viewer to make a lasting aesthetic connection. Any worries on these matters for their exhibition, entitled *Eye to Ear*, dissolved as soon as one entered the gallery, which reminded one surprisingly of the restrained ambience of a small temple in an idyllic spot: The cacophony of the city's streets just a few steps beyond the windows was of no concern. Both artists' works have their own distinctive meditative, aesthetic, and narrative qualities, but placed together these qualities are strikingly enhanced.

Israeli-American painter and sculptor Nathan Slate Joseph has, over four decades, made art that speaks to a wide variety of aesthetic, cultural, global, and personal concerns. And he has done so with a directness that immediately engages the eye and the imagi-

nation. Among the most striking aspects of his studied geometrical abstraction are that they are mostly realized from found materials, especially steel, and that his attention to his colors, textures, and construction adds a tactile dimension that carries them beyond what one might normally think of as painting in the realm of relief sculpture: *Sari Blossom II* (2008) speaks powerfully to these things. The metal paintings are of colored squares and rectangles, welded and pinned in place to create a patchwork effect that reminds one of crafted quilts that suggest the sea and ships. And then there are other, often much smaller works, made of layered metal shards or spikes of rusted and colored steel that suggest thick, determined brushstrokes slicing across the surface, hinting that they are headed for infinite space. Such work speaks unflinchingly to the value of recycled materials, the extended life cycle through art. By doing this Nathan Slate Joseph creates a startling intimacy between his art and viewer, one where the reality of the cutting, welding, and painting do not intrude.

Where the eye dominates the appreciation of Joseph's art, it is the ear that captures Taylor Kuffner's subtle, tech-



Sundaram Tagore Gallery Hong Kong, Nathan Slate Joseph and Taylor Kuffner, *Eye to Ear*, 2013

nology-controlled sound art. A cushioned rod strikes each gamelan at a pre-programmed time and in that moment the soft notes that emanate from each instrument are seductive, soothing, fresh. Kuffner's instruments are artfully located on the gallery walls and are cleverly juxtaposed against Joseph's art. There is no visual jarring as one moves from Kuffner's art to Joseph's. Indeed one can easily

imagine the subtle sounds of distant boats upon the water, as the origins of some of Joseph's best early art were made beside the sea in Israel.

Kuffner is clearly concerned with how his music or sounds will be affected by the spaces in which his installation will be placed. The space here, which is relatively small, is ideal for his work. By studying the space and in many ways

"listening" to it, Kuffner is able to pitch and direct the sounds of his compositions for the best effect. In this instance the sounds are soothing and enter the mind stealthily, taking over the imagination, subtly turning one's attention to the paintings in the exhibition. *Eye to Ear* is a fine reality that has the nature of a diaphanous dream.

Ian Findlay



Above left: Zhou Ying, *Fantasia without a Rest No.6*, 2013, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm. **Above right:** Zhou Ying, *Dance in the Paradise – Summer No.3*, 2007, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm. Images: Courtesy of the Artist and EC Gallery.



Above left: Taylor Kuffner, *Gamelatron Bunga Kota*, 2013. **Above right:** Nathan Slate Joseph, *Sari Blossom II*, 2008, pure pigment on steel, 84 x 48 inches. All images: Courtesy of the Artists and Sundaram Tagore Gallery.