

ter-long *Bus Stop* (2007) shows faceless commuters in close proximity alighting from a dusty metropolitan bus. The figures pass one another, detached in the manner of urban living.

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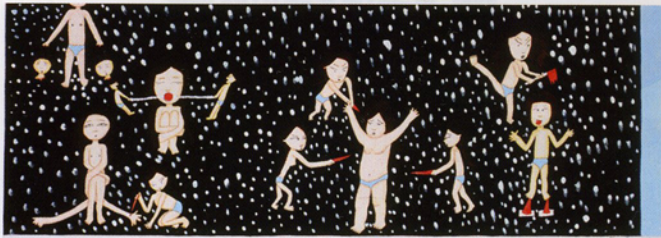
Olivier Pin-Fat at Kathmandu Photo Gallery

In *Ya-Ba*, Bangkok based British-Chinese photographer Olivier Pin-Fat exhibits a collection of dreamlike photographs based around his personal encounters with the highly addictive crystal methamphetamine *ya ba*. Translated from Thai as 'crazy drug,' Pin-Fat's series of color and black-and-white prints are an intimate exploration of the drug's potent capability and the destructive affects upon its users.

Typical of his *oeuvre*, Pin-Fat's photographs blur the distinctions between photojournalism and media art. This latest series was taken during Thailand's war on drugs when, according to Amnesty International, over 2,000 people were killed under suspicious circumstances during the first three months of the campaign. The Thai authorities are only now investigating the brutal deaths.

Submerged in the flickering, head-spin effects of the drug, Pin-Fat captures the staccato fragmentation of consciousness by pinning up a barrage of unframed prints of various sizes. Monochrome and color prints make for a frenetic mosaic across a single wall of the compact shop-house gallery. Many of the prints have scrawled, handwritten captions clarifying location, time, and circumstances.

Taken in Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, The Golden Triangle, and the Thai-Burmese border areas, Pin-Fat's images include personal, graphic scenes of drug-taking and its associated paraphernalia. Akin to peer photographer Jonathan Taylor's similarly timed series on Asia's drug culture, Pin-Fat's *Ya Ba—Speed Demons*



Kyung Jeon, *White Snow*, 2007, gouache, graphite, watercolor on rice paper on canvas, 44 x 63 cm.

is particularly disturbing. The recurrent image of a heavily pregnant, topless woman smoking her drug-filled pipe is indeed a powerful work.

Amidst the revealing experiences of personal drug abuse, Pin-Fat intersperses isolated everyday street scenes. Here the vernacular is intensified and the inconsequential is elevated to narco-fixated heights. Scenes include a lone mattress standing upright on a street, the nondescript entrance to a short-time, drive-in hotel, a sheet-shrouded car, an elevator entrance, and a bucket of water.

To show delirium, Pin-Fat often uses double or triple stops across a single frame, creating a blurred layering of images. In this trip-induced vision reality and distorted perceptions are indistinguishable. Pin-Fat's work moves from dark shadowy scenes of hidden intoxication and despairing withdrawal through to hyper-real colors and sensations of the broader landscapes, and on to more journalistic scenes of soldiers

confronting border trafficking.

Investigating the drug's effects from a broader socio-political perspective, Pin-Fat also weaves in images of soldiers in Burma's Shan State, Thai drug patrols with sniffer dogs along Thai-Burmese border, and horrifying scenes of AIDS patients wasting away in Thai hospices.

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Kyung Jeon at Teo + Namfah Gallery

In her first solo exhibition in Asia, Korean-American artist Kyung Jeon shows paintings of cute, playful children clouded by darker narratives of physical trauma and sexual deviancy. Based in New York, Kyung Jeon draws from her Korean cultural roots, using rice paper, calming patterns of traditional Korean blankets and patchwork handkerchiefs, or *pojagi*.

In *Delicate Division* Kyung



Olivier Pin-Fat, *Ya Ba*, 2007, photograph.

Jeon softens her more mischievous depictions, exploring subtler and more autobiographical dramas and pleasures of the human condition. Here there are expressions of romantic longing, personal fear, and the delicate nature of relationships, love, and desire.

At first glance Kyung Jeon's art is very feminine that might be perceived as stereotypically innocent girlishness. She achieves this through soft pastel hues, floral and patterned bordering, and playful, naïvely drawn characters.

Flatly executed in gouache on textured rice paper, the artist's compositions are illustrative. A flat foreground plays against simple backdrops of flowers and stylized landscapes with hills and sky, or bundles of cuddly toys as in *Stuffed Pile* (2007)

Kyung Jeon's figures seem physically underdeveloped but there are signs of adolescence moving into womanhood. Starting at such vulnerability may leave some viewers uneasy. Yet as one focuses on the dramas played out within the works, there is a realization that these naked girls are far from pure or innocent.

Evoking Japanese *manga* art and the corrupted Pop-style infants of Yoshitomo Nara, closer inspection of Kyung Jeon's narratives reveals violent undertones. In *White Snow* (2007) bloodied knife-wielding girls bully a portly peer, perhaps this is a comment on the violence at American schools today.

Another work with associations to schoolyard bullying is *One Fingered Duel* (2007), a topless, pigtailed girl sticks her long-pointed weapon-like appendage into the stomach of a small boy, while being watched by a gang of cute cuddly toys.

In the artist's more muted paintings such as *Daydreaming* (2007) there are feelings of isolation, contemplation, and longing. Reflecting the awkwardness of her upbringing in a predominantly white New Jersey neighborhood Jeon's central female figure often stares into space, lost, confused, uncertain.

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