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Transformer presents *Not only A, but also B* featuring work by five emerging Japanese artists:

Not only A, but also B May 12 – June 16, 2007

Part of *Big in Japan* cross-town collaborative exhibition with
Shigeko Bork Mu Project

Opening Receptions:

Transformer - Saturday, May 12, 7 to 9 pm

Shigeko Bork Mu Project - Saturday, May 12, 5 to 8 pm

Exploring the duality in Japanese art today, Transformer is partnering with Shigeko Bork Mu Project to present *Big in Japan* a cross-town collaborative exhibition featuring a diverse array of contemporary Japanese artists who interpret and respond to the tradition and popular culture of Japan.



Shigeko Bork Mu Project presents *Meditation Rooms*, featuring **Yumi Kori** and **Shinji Turner-Yamamoto**, whose works uniquely incorporate ancient Japanese tradition and contemporary culture. Shigeko Bork Mu Project is located at the Georgetown end of P Street & Wisconsin at 1521 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, # 2. www.muproject.com

Transformer presents *Not Only A, But Also B*, featuring work by **Aki Goto**, **Misaki Kawai**, **Chikara Matsumoto**, **Kazuyuki Takezaki**, and **Soju Tao** (work pictured here), each embodying the tensions affecting a new generation of contemporary artists in Japan. *Not only A, but also B* is being guest-curated for Transformer by **Atsuko Ninagawa**, curator, and partner of TAKEFLOOR404&502, Toyko, Japan.

“Japan is an elastic society where great extremes coexist. In terms of mentality, conservative values regarding family and hierarchy coincide with liberal attitudes regarding sexuality and morality; in terms of distance, a train ride from one place to another can take 15 minutes or it can take 45 minutes depending on which service you pick; in terms of economy, a bowl of noodles can cost 100 yen or it can cost 2,000 yen depending on the restaurant. While some artists respond to this constant state of flux by trying to impose the structure of one tradition - whether Japanese or Western, or the structure of one critical viewpoint - Aki Goto, Misaki Kawai, Chikara Matsumoto, Kazuyuki Takezaki, and Soju Tao embrace elasticity as a creative force. For them, the ultimate aesthetic is ‘hetauma’ - the notion that something that is “bad” or “failed” can embody incredible sophistication and self-confidence, while something that is “good” reflects close-mindedness or the taint of social-climbing ambition. The show’s title humorously references the many failed aspirations of Japanese youth to learn English, but it also contains a conceptual proposition - that an artist can be both young and mature, Japanese and cosmopolitan, edgy and innocuous, bad and good, and everywhere at once. “ - **Atsuko Ninagawa**

Biographical information and artistic approaches of Aki Goto, Misaki Kawai, Chikara Matsumoto, Kazuyuki Takezaki, and Soju Tao provided by Atsuko Ninagawa:

Born and raised in Tokyo, **Aki Goto** studied textile art at Tama Art University. Quoting imagery from import fashion, entertainment and subculture magazines, she makes drawings and fabric paintings, emphasizing the gaps and distortions created by globalized pop culture. The humour captured in her work recalls the early period of artistic assimilation when oil paints were first introduced to Japan.

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Showing at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, New York-based artist **Misaki Kawai** uses installation, drawing, video, collage painting and other media to create her own cosmos of everyday fantasy, surprise, and surreal humor. Kawai finely balances notions of "good" and "bad" art or skill, in the tradition of Japanese manga creators' Hetauma aesthetic. (Misaki Kawai was presented in Transformer's inaugural exhibition "Mica & Misaki" June 2002.)

Through enigmatic, animist imagery, Tokyo underground subculture VJ and animation artist **Chikara Matsumoto** creates scores of drawings inspired by transcendent experiences, which he then links together randomly to compose films. Disrupting linear thought processes and conventions, Matsumoto's films create the presentiment of a narrative always on the verge of beginning but never achieving any kind of resolution.

Based in Tokyo, painter **Kazuyuki Takezaki** works with motifs of everyday scenery and figures influenced by Japanese masters such as Hiroshige. Takezaki strives to capture instances of physical mutability and transience, hoping to preserve their immediacy. Using almost schematic approaches, he represents the way we perceive phenomena: light, air, humidity, and sounds.

After studying at London's Slade School of Art, **Soju Tao** established his own company, Okame Pro, which produces paintings, song lyrics, music, and sculptural installations. Moving freely between diverse identities, he assiduously explores the unlimited possibilities of meaning. His work reflects the activity of a childlike, playful mind.

Atsuko Ninagawa is a partner of TAKEFLOOR 404&502 located in Tokyo, Japan. She has independently curated exhibitions such as Tomoko Inagaki's "Dune / Trip" and the three-artist show "I am beautiful," featuring Yoshitaka Azuma, Yoriko Kita and Sakiko Kurita, at PH Gallery in New York in 2005-06 and "Whispers Behind the Wall," featuring Dale Berning, Chikara Matsumoto, Kazuyuki Takezaki, and Soju Tao, at Mehr (Midtown) in New York in 2006-07.

TAKEFLOOR 404&502 was founded as an artist-run space by Kazuyuki Takezaki in 2004 and has grown into one of Japan's most promising new commercial galleries with the partnership of Atsuko Ninagawa in 2006. The gallery's mission is to present a new generation of Japanese artists in an environment the best communicates their creative visions. TAKEFLOOR 404&502 participates in major international art fairs such as Scope Miami Beach and Scope New York.

Exhibition Hours for *Not only A, but also B*: Wednesday – Saturday 1- 7 pm, and by appointment.

TRANSFORMER is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c) 3 non-profit, artist-centered visual arts organization that connects and promotes emerging artists locally, nationally and internationally. Partnering with artists, curators, art spaces and other cultural entities, Transformer serves as a catalyst and advocate for emergent expression in the visual arts. Transformer's 2006/2007 exhibition series is supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.

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