

# KAZARI collector

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## Rat Daughter, Chocolate Geisha

contemporary expressions of Japan by two Australian artists

Opening at 6.30 pm on March 1st 2007

Kazari Collector is exhibiting two young artists from Sydney and Melbourne exploring, in a contemporary context, aspects of Japanese popular culture from an Australian perspective.

Having recently returned from living in Japan, where she rediscovered her love of illustration, Andrea Innocent (a.k.a innocentgirl) is an emerging freelance illustrator/artist now living in her hometown of Melbourne, Australia.

She illustrates bizarre and quirky stories in small detailed digital illustration. She borrows and develops characters found in newspaper articles, peculiar television shows, and symbols of pop culture. Innocentgirl traverses imaginative worlds from manga and the idiosyncrasies of otaku to folklore and reality in finding the eccentric stories for her work.

Benedict Ernst is a Sydney based artist recently showing in the highly exposed public art space Platform at Flinders Street Station with 'The ChocolateRevolutions' solo exhibition. He combines paintings of Japanese figures from the traditions of ukiyo-e - woodblock printing - and eroticised shunga scenes with collage and symbolism of consumer culture and propaganda imagery, providing interesting commentary of historical and cross cultural pressures. His work takes on a variety of forms including painting, collage, folding screens and bronze sculpture depicting curious creatures from the animated world.

### Breathing Apparatus Needed To Enter 'Floating World'

Benedict Ernst says that this exhibition is to do with the material world of the senses being fundamentally illusory. He finds parallels between the cultural role of an 18th/19th Japanese ukiyo-e, "pictures of the floating world" printed for a popular street audience, together with classical philosophy and contemporary consumerism.

Ernst is also inspired by the philosophical ideas of Umberto Eco's simulacra and Plato's Cave allegory, where what we experience in this composed combination of iconography are all referents or simulations of the real. From the graceful courtesan to the Toblerone wrapper Ernst explains:

**"The world we experience is all surface packaging, and our contemporary culture, like ukiyo-e, negates seeing this as a problem and embraces the superficiality of consumerism. In a way these works aim to show that ukiyo-e WAS the beginning of cheap mass produced imagery and the world that we live in is now an image saturated result"**

The tall, elegant figures of Ernst's pieces are re-appropriated directly from Utamaro's bijin-ga

series (beautiful women - courtesans, geisha and women from the brothels of the pleasure quarter)

Ernst refers to the transient nature of the pleasure quarter and to the Buddhist notion that experience of reality is transient. Ernst cleverly explores the part these prints played and the influence this kind of consumer imagery has had on our current image-bombarded culture which keeps us from experiencing our true essence.

In this show chocolate courtesans are shown with masks of Che Guerva, as the Queen and as Marilyn Monroe and questions the truth behind the relationships these images have with the real world.

There are two streetscape size works in this show, others are 'room sized', but all the subjects are thrown into a range of iconographic circumstances reminiscent of both communist propaganda and advertising billboards.

All works are collage and acrylic/charcoal on linen with a substantial collection of chocolate wrappers making up the collage plus some gold leaf.

Images, full CV and artist statement on CD

### Twin Sisters Lost On Mother's Errand

This work took its inspiration from a popular television series. "Hajimete no otsuka" a rough translation being 'My first errand'. Often, in Japan, when children turn three or four they are sent on an errand by their parents to go grocery shopping by themselves for the first time. The program itself is extremely elaborate, the camera operators have cameras disguised in briefcases, baskets, hats, etc and will follow these children on their successful or unsuccessful missions. Often children get lost on the way, buy the wrong items, fall asleep, talk to themselves and get side tracked by other more interesting ventures such as playgrounds or building snowmen.

The twins, 'futago' in Japanese, depicted in this work were the protagonists in one such episode of "Hajimete no otsuka". The two little girls "Shuna" and "Hina" dressed the same, finished each others sentences and seemed even to walk in unison until they reached a fork in the road, at which point they spent the next 30 mins arguing over which direction they both thought was the right way.



"Futago" Digital Print, Epson Piezograph on Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper, A4. Andrea Innocent, 2006.

### Innocentgirl Finds Strange Stories In Tokyo

As a self-confessed 'nipponophile' there is no denying the influence her exposure to Japanese culture has had on her work. Themes range from investigations into the cult of otaku to traditional Japanese folk tales and Japanese textiles and their meanings. Her inspirations can come from various sources such as newspaper articles, Japanese television, and advertising, books, music, toys, animals, the internet, or just from generally watching life unfold around her.

Andrea Innocent has previously worked within a broad range disciplines including fashion design, textile design, animation and character design, it was after studying her Masters of Multimedia Design and subsequent travel to Japan, that she discovered digital illustration to be the best medium to express the "pictures that appear in her mind".

Heavy in symbolism the illustrations fuse contemporary art and socio-political comment with traditional works. Aesthetically the works borrow heavily from the traditions of ukiyo-e, manga and subsequent contemporary styles such as 'Superflat'.

Combining a strong sense of colour and graphics and blending these with 'found' photographic and textural images her works become a collage of icons that tell a story to the viewer. It has been remarked that her pieces tend to float between both a Western and an Eastern art aesthetic. Among her many influences are, Yoshitomo Nara, Tomoko Konoike, Chiho Aoshima, Haruki Murakami, Osamu Tezuka, Mark Ryden, Troy Innocent, Nathan Jurevicius, the Pre-Raphaelites and her nieces.

manga = Japanese comic art  
shunga = erotic art  
otaku = obsessive geek subculture  
nipponophile = lover of Japan  
Anime = Japanese pop animation  
'Superflat' = artistic style of otaku subculture

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**MEDIA CONTACT**  
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Benedict Ernst Courtesan Blue 480cm x 205cm