

LigaStudios

{ GREAT STUFF FOR COSMOPOLITAN TRAVELLERS }

HIROYUKI HAMADA

After making his way to the art scene of New York, Japanese artist Hiroyuki Hamada leaves audience and critics breathless after every single exhibitions. He talked to LigaStudios about his style, inspiration and his latest projects.



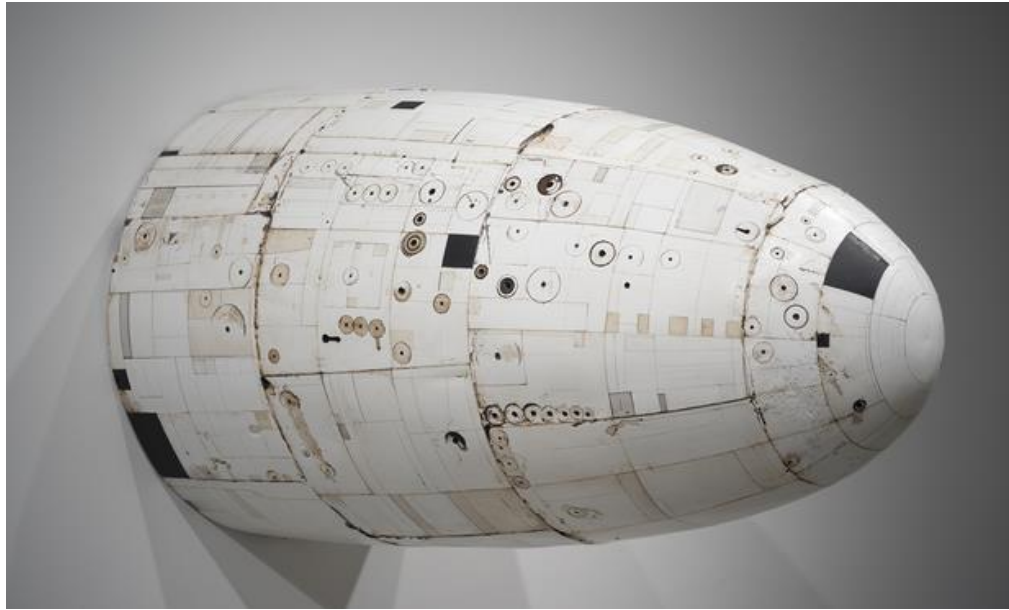
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How and when did you enter the art world?

I always liked making things when I was a kid, but didn't grow up in a family where that sort of stuff can be your job. I was 18 when my family had to move to the US for my dad's job and ended up being a minority in the foreign country and had to struggle hard to communicate. It was traumatic - I think this pretty much set me up for pursuing art. I learned some English and I decided to go to a local community college where I met a teacher who showed me what you can do with art - he showed me putting together lines and colors on a piece of paper. I was good with my hands but never knew how to put things together and make it really speak. This is how I got hooked. After that I was basically stuck in his studio drawing and painting all day. Then, after really knowing I would want to do something with art, I spent a couple of weeks looking for a cheap place in New York - which doesn't exist at all in the city - and after all settled with a good sized space across the river. It was one of the sweat shop buildings in a big Cuban community, so it was more of Cuba than of New York - I heard more Spanish than English, but had the chance to meet great people and get things to work out.

Do you have a special source to find inspiration for your work?

I think anything can be inspiring. I wake up, go outside and suddenly feel the sun hitting my face - these small things make me feel alive, fulfilled and very happy. It's just the same old sun and same old me in the morning but somehow the combination means something.



How do you prefer to work – alone, in a silent studio or with some company and music around?

I actually do both. I think music can shift my mood to get things going - rhythm can be nice to keep the physical work going, but there are moments I have to keep it totally quiet. My guess is that certain processes need certain brain activity and sometimes music interferes with that...

I grew up listening to lots of aggressive band music and I still have a soft spot for it, but lately catch myself listening to some classic things pretty often.

Do you have a favorite show-space in New York where you often go?

Well, I pretty much perceive the whole city as one big show space - I'd love to say this museum or that gallery in particular, but every time I am around the city I just end up walking, watching people, looking at interesting ads, graffiti or just at the buildings. The city life is an inspiration itself.

Do you as an artist have a favorite artist?

I think it's only in the past a few years that I'm becoming more open to seeing and enjoying art by others as I feel more grip on my own work. But I've always enjoyed Martin Puryear's work - I like the forms he works with, the way the work relates to you in the space. I think Basquiat is just a marvelous painter. The sense of color, the way he composes in such striking ways, the confidence in lines with such fragile subtlety and doing all that with such spontaneity is just amazing. And I also enjoy lots of figurative works - that's what I started out with myself.

You don't give titles to your work – why?

I'm really interested in what I get by combining visible things and I don't want to make it about stories, references, symbols and such, at least not on the conscious level. I want the visual language to hit your guts hard, not the theories, anecdotes, or background stories sort of making you feel something in wishy-washy ways. And also I don't want to limit the work inside of my narrow cultural and social constraints, so I figured the easiest thing I can do to put the focus on the substance is not to work with those things. Not giving them descriptive names is a way to make sure that it doesn't imply things aside from what the forms are doing.

Who are the most influential names in art today?

Things change today really fast - so does art. It is not the individuals, but I think TV shows and movies totally rule on that. And in terms of the impact and the quality too perhaps. I don't get to watch many but some shows I've watched are just amazing. Like Breaking Bad, Wire, Sopranos, or some episodes from Battlestar Galactica, for example. You get great writing, camera work, acting, set design, music, sound effects, visual effects and on and on - this is all art in a way too. I just think the total experience from them is the culmination of art history on the planet.

What are you working on right now?

Right now I have 4 pieces in progress. They seem to be freer into space and they speak a bit more as shapes. I'll see how the surface gets treated. I started out as a painter, so working with the surface is a very special and fun process for me. I've been also trying a few resin materials instead of plaster since the pieces are a bit bigger and more complex.



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