
Art Review

“Akio Takamori’s Women Are Round”

The female body is the Seattle sculptor’s landscape in his latest entrancing exhibition.

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By **Sheila Farr**



Image: **James Harris Gallery**
Akio Takamori, *Squatting Girl in Striped Dress* (front view), 2012, stoneware with under glazes, 38 x 25 x 16 in.

Akio Takamori’s women are round. They have full hips, curvy arms, curled bodies; even their hair is round—tucked into tight little buns at the back of their heads. Five of these earth-women sprawl along a pedestal in the main gallery at James Harris, their backs to us like a range of rolling hills. Adrift in sleep, each has a transparent white orb brushed over her face, her own lunar veil of dreams.

The female body is Takamori’s landscape in this succinct, entrancing exhibition. Unencumbered with personality or ego, the women are elemental. They embody the feminine principal, pure yin.

A professor at UW, Takamori has become one of the Northwest’s most distinguished and successful sculptors. Since he came to the U.S. from Japan in 1974, he has sought to balance his heritage and facility as a production potter with the traditions of Western art. In this show, titled *Ground*, Takamori once again succeeds brilliantly. He uses clay as both medium and metaphor. Clay is ground and women are Earth. **These sleeping females are primal, fertile, instinctual, placid, unfettered in their unconsciousness.**

Those qualities get magnified in the back gallery, where a single sculpture of a bigger-than-life girl is squatting. Again, we see her first from the back and it’s disconcerting to come upon her. **Is she peeing?** No, from the front we can see that her little ruffled underpants are pulled up, a bare crescent of skin exposed above them. Her two hands join in a single tight bun on her belly. *Squatting Girl in Striped Dress* is more a form than a person. You could trace a full circle around her. With an orange halo of hair, she’s her own planet, and the expression on her moon-face (which looks rather similar to Takamori’s, by the way) is unfathomable. Her primitive posture is one of rest, of waiting, of childbirth, of defecation, of sexual intercourse, of planting and harvesting. With that orange hair and her hyacinth blue slippers, all the bright, graphic Matisse-like colors and patterns of her clothing, she is pulled by her maker into the world of modern art.

In the final element of this satisfying show—a single multiprocess print called *Summer Dream*—Takamori demonstrates his stark, asymmetrical approach to two-dimensional composition. Here his sleeping woman loses her roundness. Takamori flattens her form erratically into slabs, spreads her fingers and toes flat instead of cupping them. The air around the figure is charged and jittery, and the only circles are transparent yellow bubbles bobbing in the atmosphere.



Image: **James Harris Gallery**
Akio Takamori, *Squatting Girl in Striped Dress* (back view), 2012, stoneware with under glazes, 38 x 25 x 16 in.

Akio Takamori: Ground
Thru Mar 30, James Harris Gallery
