the japan times
THE INDEPENDENT VOICE IN ASIA

CULTURE / ART

‘Mark Jenkins and Miho Kinomura: Glazed Paradise’

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Jun 19, 2008

Diesel Gallery, Aoyama, Tokyo

Closes August 15

“Glazed Paradise” (www.diesel.co.jp/denimgallery) is dubbed as “frozen hyperrealism,” and the exhibition evokes a peculiar chill while keeping you pleasantly amused. The pervasive theme in this not-so-perfect promised land is that of teenagers feeling lost in societies that encourage overindulgence. In front of a computer, a teenage doll with headphones sits with its face buried in the keyboard, perhaps suggesting the limitations of our obsession with the computer screen. Next to a spilled Sapporo beer can, a doll looking like a teenage girl lies on the shoulder of another doll whose upper body has been replaced with a garbage bag stuffed with newspaper articles, compellingly expressing the saturation of consumerism and information overload in society.

Miho Kinomura’s video shows Mark Jenkins putting the dolls together, winding saran-wrap and transparent packing tape around one. While the dolls do not raise too many eyebrows in a gallery setting, as the video shows, Jenkins also installs them in the real world — in a cafeteria, on the street, drowned in a river, stuck

in a wall at the neck, disguised as a homeless man in a hood, but without a head. How do we react to marginalized people? How do we react to marginalized dolls? The reaction of those who pass by is a mixture of fear and shock — replaced by laughter and relief at the realization that they are just dolls. Jenkins and Kinomura install other things in urban settings, such as a red carpet that leads to the sewers, brilliantly mocking the culture of superficial glamour.

We also see transparent baby dolls strewn across the urban landscape in Kinomura's video — in trash cans, in flowerpots, hanging from the muzzle of a rifle on a bronze statue. Even though each baby doll is inanimate, the settings we find them in trigger our emotions and cause us to relate to them.

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