

Boyer, Jake. "Exclusive: Mariko Mori, Explorer of the Multiuniverse," *Milk Made*, March 24, 2015.

Milk MADE

EXCLUSIVE: MARIKO MORI, EXPLORER OF THE MULTIVERSE



The cosmos and the complexities therein seem an awfully weighty subject for a sculptural gallery show, yet that is precisely what is on view in *Cyclicscape*, the latest work from much-lauded artist **Mariko Mori**. A native of Tokyo, Japan, Mori began her artistic career with photographic series depicting herself as hyper sexualized women of the future, be they alien or robot or both. As time went on, Mori became increasingly invested in large-scale installations, such as 'Wave-UFO,' an enclosed dome that projected computer enhanced paintings visible only to the viewer within. *Cyclicscape*, a two-floor exhibition that opened last week, is comprised of imposingly large sculptures shaped as interwoven variations of the Mobius strip, as well as plates of glass visualizing molecules on the atomic level.

Milk Made's *Jake Boyer* spoke to Mori ahead of her gallery opening, where she greeted him in her now customary attire: a crisp, white two-piece suit and hair in tightly wrapped buns, coming across as the millennial translation of **Princess Leia**. She spoke at length on the origins of her latest show, as well as her thoughts on the string theory of particle physics, interconnectedness (or lack thereof) with nature, and her aspirations for the future of mankind.

So let's talk about 'Cyclicscape'. What was some of the thinking behind this show?

I was inspired by the book *Endless Universe*, written by Paul Steinhardt. It deals with the multidimensional aspect of string theory and the 'hidden dimension'. It's a really, really micro world, even smaller than primal particles. So we were all taught in school that the universe began with a Big Bang, but because of the introduction of string theory, this suggests the possibility of a world before the Big Bang. In a way, a big bang could happen anywhere and we could have multiple universes. And the idea of an 'endless universe' is very similar to the Buddhist philosophy of reincarnation. There's no death, just life, just constant rebirth, and I was very interested in visualizing this. I wanted to use a Mobius form to describe it because it has both front and back. It's what we see, and what we don't see; it can be reversed, and it can come back again. I wanted to use a Mobius form as an endless circulation of the life of a universe, how the fluidity of the energy is continuously flowing. And with the title of 'Cyclicscape,' I wanted to introduce landscape to the multiverse. So in a way, each sculpture represents an entire universe, but a different type of universe. It can have its own circulation of life. So the show as a whole represents this imagined life cycle of the universe.

Do you think that the theory of the multiverse is a fact?

Yes! It's impossible to have just one universe. Even with the variation in our lives and the richness of life on Earth, what we see is just a small percent of existence. 96% of the Universe is invisible, so we really don't know what 96% of reality is. So why would there only be a mono-universe? If there's a world before this, in another universe, life would be continuous, endless. There's such a limitation in what we can observe, the only thing that I know and can tell is that we are all connected by life and sustained by every single life with energy in the world. Our life only came into existence because of a super nova, the death of a star which brought all the heavy atoms to the Earth. Life on Earth seems to me to be sustained by different kinds of elements in the universe, or on the Earth. So, it's all part of a connection.

That's part of what Buddhism tries to obtain is it not? Meditation as a form of tapping into the collective unconscious?

Yes, yes. We are all connected. Even the human mind or the outside of the skin is not a part of you. You are a part of the world outside your skin. So in water, there's a separation between the body and water, but the water is part of us, so there's no separation or boundaries. We're all connected, but our minds want to say that we are separated, or individual. That of course is based off of Eastern philosophy and Buddhist theory, but I was so excited by this new idea and this new theory. It's really getting closer to the idea and it seems that the mind is expanding to accept the knowledge and connections of the world.

Space and its exploration have always been a very present part of your work. What do you think first attracted you to it?

Well, I remember very well when the first man landed on the moon. I was very little, two or three or four, really small. But it was still the biggest news ever. I don't know if it was because of that, or before, but when I grew up in Tokyo the animation on TV was quite futuristic. We are the 'Age of Astroboys.' So many things reflected in pop culture at the time really stemmed from man landing on the moon. All images lead up to that, so I'm sure it had some impact on my childhood. And all the visions that were depicted at the time, or even later on, with films like *2001: Space Odyssey* or *Blade Runner*, it's all happening now. I think we are responsible for what we are imagining for the future, and that, I think, is leading us to a vision of the future. It's leading us to the reality of the future.

Are you hopeful or are you worried about the future of humanity?

I worry now, but I can't worry about the future, because we are responsible for it. If we can make it so, it will be a better future. We have to know how to make it a better future, but we have to visualize the better future first. That's first, and when we do that, it will be reflecting and influencing others to make it. I think it's already happening, I can see that it's already happening. Things are changing. Of course there are certain things that are constant, we inherited things that are out of our hands, so we have to think about to solve those kinds of problems.

Do you think you would go back to more performative kinds of art that were expressed in your earlier work?

In my previous work, my body was inside the work. I decided to remove my body, but still have a consciousness in the work. That produced the large-scale installation from that period. Now, I've kind of separated it. It's hard to have consciousness in a topic like the universe. But there's work downstairs with computer graphic images based on my drawings that I do every summer for one month on Okinawa Island, where I sit in front of the ocean and make drawings. I try to visualize the invisible energies of nature and draw them. It's very focused on the micro level. I try to be the ocean, to try to remove the boundaries between the ocean and me when I draw. Aside from that, I try to maintain a performance aspect, but separately. So I will be doing a performance with the work tomorrow, but that will be the extent of the performance for this show.

Do you think we've become too separate from nature in today's world?

When I first started drawing on Okinawa in 2003, I saw the enormous respect and honor for nature, every aspect of it, in traditional culture. They really devoted themselves to it and dedicated time for nature. I realized then that I was really detached from nature. So I turned to the sea; I realized that I'm part of this rhythm, and I began to acknowledge the fact that I am also nature. Whenever I got back to nature, and to drawing, I gradually start to reconnect with it. I think it's important to have this practice in order to understand nature, because somehow we've lost that. We don't know how to maintain scenes from nature that support our life. The remote ancestors and the native people knew how to balance that. I think with our intelligence, we should be able to do it. So that's what I'm hoping that our future world will be.

Cyclicscape will be running until May 2nd, 2015 at the Sean Kelly Gallery 475 10th Ave, New York, NY 10018

Photography by Jason Wyche



