ARTFORUM

Critic's Pick
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Greg Ito *Apparition*, 2021, Anat Ebgi, Installation view

Greg Ito's solo show here, "Apparition," assumes the form of an immersive installation and is suffused with yearning—for a deeper connection to the past or, perhaps, a better today. Augmenting the eerie, wistful atmosphere are symbols of growth and metamorphosis interspersed with allegories of destruction and climate change. Recurring motifs—burning homes, California poppies, falling gingko leaves—obliquely reference aspects of the artist's personal history as a fourth-generation Angeleno of Japanese heritage.

A one-chamber walk-in structure, *Home Sweet Home* (all works 2021), glows invitingly amid the ambient violet dusk created within the gallery. Inside this piece, one discovers that a side of the shack is dilapidated and burned. The walls and floor, however, are painted a shade of vermilion resembling urushi lacquer, making the space feel shrine-like, sacred. *Escape*, a sculpture of a diminutive house inside a birdcage, drives home allusions to the artist's grandparents' forced internment during World War II. The feeling of disorientation is heightened by a soundtrack of crashing waves.

Ito's panoramic acrylic-on-canvas-over-panel tableaux are filled with graphic blocks of vivid color embellished with meticulous detail. Despite the absence of shading, a curious sense of depth unfolds. His unique aesthetic recalls not only ukiyo-e prints and contemporary Japanese Superflat painters, but also Helen Lundeberg's representational hard-edge paintings. His emblems, too, bear double meanings: The red sun, a familiar sight in smoky California skies, additionally suggests the Japanese flag.

It isn’t long before one notices the live butterflies fluttering aimlessly about. Food is provided to them via sponges set on small plates that are placed discreetly before the paintings, evoking the Shinto ritual of presenting gifts to one’s ancestors. During my visit, I observed a butterfly flapping its wings against the surface of *The Ceremony*, as though wishing to escape via the fictive window portrayed within. Notwithstanding all the fire and smoke, Ito’s paintings are permeated with a sense of hopefulness so adamant and elemental that even an insect instinctively wants in.