

## News Release from Milton Keynes Gallery

4 Oct – 13 Nov 05

### Kristian Ryokan

Admission free

Preview: Tues 4 Oct | 17.30 – 20.00 | All press & media welcome



Left: 'Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (zen)' (2003) Above: 'Painting No.40' (2003). Both images courtesy the artist and Albion, London.

Milton Keynes Gallery (MK G) presents the first solo exhibition in a UK public gallery by the British painter Kristian Ryokan, showing a selection of recent paintings intricately crafted in oil and acrylic on canvas. Ryokan plunders with an energetic enthusiasm from the world around him, using a range of everyday objects, images and signs such as Monopoly boards, designer furniture, Star Wars toys, telephone cards and racing cars.

Informed specifically by the influence of Buddhist teachings, Ryokan's paintings are often constructed with a visual play in mind. A painting of a flock of pelicans in diamond formation is entitled '747' (2001) for instance, and 'Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (zen)', (2003) depicts a D-type Jaguar seen head on. The analytical attention to detail is exquisite, the rendering of metallic and painted surfaces reveals a discerning draughtsmanship; everything is convincing until one notices the car manufacturers' name has been replaced to simply read 'zen' referring to Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki the zen master. The subtlety of Ryokan's 'intervention' is characteristic, for his painting is less a staging of an ideological clash than an analogical mapping of one powerful 'technology' onto another.

Images and symbols of modern life; designer furniture, luxury yachts, and Superbikes are Ryokan's subject matter. They are at once objects of desire and examples of precision engineering, refined design and quality craftsmanship. They are also portals, objects that may physically or psychologically take you elsewhere, they transport and transcend. Ryokan's subject matter often relates to a contemplation of time, escapism, and activities that remove oneself from day to day routine; motor racing, sailing or playing games. Even the board-game that Ryokan chooses to depict, Monopoly, evokes a certain capitalist thread. But with all its street names erased however, it is reduced to a pattern discernible only through the familiarity of the sequenced colour squares, to become an object of contemplation. It connects with another of Ryokan's recent paintings, 'The Buddhist Flag', (2003) – a painted image of the Buddhist colours, an implicit reference to Jasper Johns' seminal flag paintings of the 1950s. Ryokan's work explores how the seemingly contradicting belief systems of spirituality and materialism can co-exist within modern life.

Kristian Ryokan (b.1976) studied at Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University and later at Chelsea College of Art and Design (Painting MA). He lives and works in Wales and France. There will be a Limited Edition Print and fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Martin Herbert to accompany this exhibition.

### **Related Event**

#### **In Conversation with Helen Stephenson**

Wed 20 Oct | 19.30 | Tickets £5 (£3 concs.) to include a glass of wine  
With more than 20 years experience in Buddhist meditation, teaching internationally in Switzerland, Belgium and Russia, Helen Stephenson discusses ideas of spirituality and meditation with references to the art of Kristian Ryokan. Ring 01908 676 900 for details and bookings.

### **Sunday Film Screening**

#### **Shaun Gladwell: Storm Sequence**

This is the first UK film screening of the Australian artist's remarkable DVD, 'Storm Sequence'. It shows the balletic performance of the artist, twisting and turning on his skateboard set against the rain-drenched backdrop of the Sydney coastline. There is a wistful romanticism in this lone figure, as he becomes at one with the rhythm of his own body and the surrounding elements.

**Press Information** | For further information, press images, or interview requests, please contact Katharine Sorensen on Tel: 01908 558 302 or Email: [k.sorensen@mk-g.org](mailto:k.sorensen@mk-g.org)

**Admission free** | Open: Tues – Sat 10.00-17.00 | Sundays 11.00 – 17.00 | Closed Mondays | **Late Night Thursdays until 20.00**

Ends | Date of issue: 7 September 2005