

Rie Nakajima

“Dots”

In Rie Nakajima’s “Dots,” we have both an installation—with discrete works—and a performance piece. Nakajima allows the pieces to exhibit a menial movement of a modest object to its transformation into instrument; through the object’s sound-making ableness—in clinks, clangs, and dings, triggered by battery; when the work functions as a performance piece, there is a grand cohesion and expression with other humble objects until they, too, become orchestral. This aural motion, populating the space, much like poems or figures constructed on a page or on canvas, Nakajima’s objects keep arresting the viewer’s notions of what is being heard/seen and this keeps renewing its (and Nakajima’s) function to call up wonder. As I have already stated, the work is both an installation and performance, and one can see how the objects are individual sonic works and then are part of a larger ensemble.

In essence, these “Dots” are (figuratively speaking) figurative dotterels or dotty madrigals, where the voices (sounds) come from things we take for granted. In time, this sonic intensity that accumulates is what you experience: a lore into simultaneity and in unity when part of the performance. I use the term orchestration (or orchestral) loosely (realizing I am not a composer or musician nor have had training in this field) but by orchestral, I mean as both the space and time wherein we experience the sonic unity of her disparate objects generating their obfuscated and succinct harmonies. In all the discrete works on display in her installations, Nakajima’s sonic magnificence is in how her objects alter from quotidian to sonic arrangements through repetition and accumulation: objects low-slung on view, who find their accord with other unlikely objects, battering away with a repeating sound, such as a triangle, a battery, a paper cup, aluminum foil, and sticks, for example. Like an army of them, they accrue and are soundings, and the experience of the work is wholly majestic.

It is this that keeps me in thrall with Nakajima’s works. And writing this as a poet seeing and experiencing this sound installation, I find a way to translate the nonverbal of Nakajima’s symbols to the poetic line that progresses; her objects are like noun and verbal phrases that find worthy and magnificent modifiers. Her sonic piece is assembled like a poem, forcing you to the marshaling of sounds as if they were diagramming a sentence for

you to see and comprehend word by word, phrase by phrase, dutifully finding the descriptive speech. With “Dots” the objects conceive of a unity—at the sentence level. We see the means of Nakajima’s exploration of her sound maxims create modulations and modifiers for the description of sound—how it forces us to pay attention and listen to values through the nearness and arrangement and pleasure-ratio of sound to object.

--Prageeta Sharma