

Tam Ochiai

Team Gallery, **New York**

The work of Tam Ochiai, a young Japanese artist who has lived in New York for several years, reveals a strong interest in contemporary Western culture. His art is inspired by themes ranging from French literature and the films of Godard and Truffaut, to the world of fashion and advertising.

The result is installations, videos, photographs, and paintings rooted in the same symbolic language. The last series of work in the show is a cycle of thirteen paintings. A free interpretation of the book *Histoire d'Oeil* (Story of the Eye, 1928) by French writer Georges Bataille, they present images and words from the text without following a story line. As in past works, these new pieces are characterized by an obsessive repetition of particular elements. Each painting has three titles. One is inspired by the French text. Another is relevant to the subject of the piece itself. The last plays on the assonance of words, such as "cut" and "cat," or the free association of ideas. The canvases depict close up images of



Tam Ochiai, *the legs of fly: hair cat 100: shooting star*, 2000, acrylic, pen, pencil on canvas, 152 x 152 cm.

"Lolitas," who might easily have just fled from a fashion designer's sketchbook. Their thin faces are sketched with only the barest of pencil marks; their gaze quite impenetrable, never meeting that of the onlooker; their appearance lofty, unapproachable. Combined with a marked similarity in their facial features, and the imposing scale of the canvases, these young adolescents are transformed into icons of contemporary culture. On closer examination, we can make out some sentences scrawled in pencil on the surface of the paintings. In them, the artist makes fun of his own creations, and provokes the observer at the same time, with expressions such as: "do you need a hair cat?" "cat need hair cat," "I want to cat my hair," and "can you cat my hair?" Prominent in the composition are the bright blotches of paint forming the clothes and hairstyles. At times these are executed with nervous and disjointed brushstrokes, at others with steady uniformity. In both instances, it's possible to make out the influence of American Color Field painting and pop culture, in particular advertising posters and design. As though we are leafing through the pages of a book, each work seems to become richer and more complete as a direct consequence of our passing from one painting to the next one hanging at its side.

Micaela Giovannotti