

Yuki Kimura

Harvest, Human Misery

13.03. - 18.04.2015

Gauguin's 1888 painting *Vendanges à Arles, ou Misères humaines* [Grape Harvest at Arles: Human Misery] shows the central figure of a girl sitting, head in hands, disheveled, at the foot of a hill of a vineyard in harvest. Behind her, two women are bent over, reaping fruit from the hills; another darker figure (an older sister?), looks down at her. The frothy red hills glow in sunset, but the girl's expression is sinister. Gauguin's original title for the painting was just *Vendanges à Arles*; the subtitle was appended later, lest the image's affective subtext be overlooked.

At Mathew, *Vendanges* is absented, and abstracted into space. Five silver gelatin prints render Gauguin's grapes in black and white. Borrowing from photographs found while on residency in Milan, Yuki Kimura has erased the images' backgrounds, replacing them with a blank white field. (In *Vendanges*, a length of white surface separates the girl from the grapevines, though its substance is difficult to identify.) While the image of grapes as a stand-in for fertility, cyclicity, and abundance—far pre-dating Gauguin and through to the present—is static, its various contexts expire. Divorced from their environment, the images of fruit deal almost in the language of advertisement, though their medium betrays their age.

In the corner of the room, a sculptural installation of 206 basalt stones forms a fractal grid. The number of stones corresponds to the number of bones in the adult human body. Basalt stones are produced for hot stone massage, and in commercial usage, they are selected for their smoothness, flatness, blackness, and symmetry—one looks for stones whose placement on one side of the body can be replicated in a mirror image on the other. While Kimura's photographs match Gauguin's grapes in perpetuity, the stones refer to the dark onlooker on the far left side of *Vendanges*. "Harvest, Human Misery" expands and sanitizes the natural drama of *Vendanges*, inviting the viewer to act as an interlocutor between discrete elements of a single painting.

- Tess Edmonson

Mathew

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