

PRESSBOOK

Maria TANIGUCHI

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Installation view of **MARIA TANIGUCHI**'s exhibition at Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong, 2016. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Perrotin.

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WEB REVIEW BY CHARLOTTE CHANG
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In the brightly lit side room of Galerie Perrotin, five of Maria Taniguchi's brick paintings line two walls, creating a stark visual contrast of black on white against the gallery's expansive view of Victoria Harbor. In the Philippine artist's first solo show in Hong Kong, new works from a distinctive, ongoing project are untitled and devoid of figuration, highlighting the architectural boundaries of the space with their imposing scales and uniform brick-patterned composition. They are shown alongside *Fountain Model 1* (2016), a bare installation that channels water over a sluiceway shaped like split bamboo. Taniguchi's five paintings recall the meditative space in Houston's Rothko Chapel; the two locations differ only in that Galerie Perrotin is flooded with natural light. Background sounds from her installation's streaming water add to this pensive atmosphere.

The cerebral nature of the show shines through, however, once the brick paintings reveal themselves to be much more than opaque black expanses. Up close, individually painted bricks—Taniguchi's unit of construction—become visible with different gradations of black. The works' subtle inconsistencies in density and insistent iteration of the grid, along with their varying dimensions and physical placement—propped against walls, not hung—evoke a time-consuming and labor-intensive painting process. These elements converge to blur the boundaries between non-representational, flat surfaces and solid entities imbued with weight. In the exhibition catalog of *"Oceanic Feeling"* (8/20–10/16) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, curator Susan Gibb wrote that Taniguchi's brick paintings are "neither wholly image nor object": the works are flat, but since they rely on discernible bricks instead of pure abstraction as their compositional framework—and only lean tangentially against the limiting surfaces of walls—they are believable as brick walls in real space.



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From afar, the disparate dimensions of the paintings become apparent. Two canvases facing the entrance are shorter than the other three, which almost kiss the ceiling. The placement of the taller trio, whether by design or accident, calls forth a triptych, with the center panel overwhelmingly broader than those flanking it. There are no sweeping allegorical scenes or figures of worship; instead, viewers must contemplate the individually painted bricks and confront how often we overlook manual undertakings. Perhaps Taniguchi's lengthy process—the compositionally simple paintings take an average of two weeks to create—serves as commentary on the undervaluation of labor in the artist's native country and Southeast Asia, a theme touched on in previous works such as *Figure Study* (2012–13), a video in which two men collect clay only to have the result of their drudgery condensed into two slabs. Undervalued labor was also a central concern in "Afterwork," a group exhibition Taniguchi took part in at Para Site this year, which highlighted the plight of migrant laborers from her home region.



MARIA TANIGUCHI, *Fountain Model 1* (detail), 2016, plexiglass, UV resin, pump and PVC tubing, 100 × 700 × 70 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong.

Fountain Model 1 (2016) is the only titled work in Taniguchi's show. Flumes shaped like split bamboo channel water into a square pool—a paddy field of sorts—giving the installation the appearance of a primitive irrigation device built by hand from natural components. However, *Fountain Model 1*'s materials—UV resin, plexiglass and PVC tubing—betray the allusion. Here, the painstaking labor put into Taniguchi's brick paintings is absent; an electric pump ensures that water flows endlessly, mirroring the resolute repetition in Taniguchi's paintings in an automated, mechanical process.

The endless trickle of water also transforms the core of her painting process—manifested in her works' insistent visual iteration—into perpetual sound and motion that cannot be dismissed. This aural and kinetic element enlivens the viewing experience of an otherwise sparse exhibition, underscoring the tensions between abstract and pictorial representation, flatness and solidity, and labor and automation.

Maria Taniguchi's solo show at [Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong](#), is on view until December 21, 2016.

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