

Austin American-Statesman

At Grayduck Gallery, a pair of shows go for wry laughs

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By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin - American-Statesman Staff

Plenty of sly, clever laughs emerge from a pair of nicely matched solo exhibits at Grayduck Gallery that spotlight San Antonio artist Hiromi Tsuji Stringer and Austin artist Casey Polacheck.

With a deft blend of humor and insight, Stringer lays bare the misunderstandings that come from navigating in a new language and a new culture.



Casey Polacheck's "Trophy Hunter 3"

In "Fish," fork-wielding samurai battle it out as they hover above Miss Manner's instructions for the proper way to eat fish at a formal dinner. (Note: No chopsticks.) And in "Knives, Forks and More" a deep-sea diver in an old-fashioned bell helmet navigates clumsily with knives and forks in an underwater world where a page on table manner serves as a backdrop.



Hiromi Tsuji Stringer's "Fish" incorporates a page from Miss Manners book on the proper etiquette of eating a fish.

A rough-and-tumble ocean fisherman proudly holds up an itty bitty shrimp. A man and his bird dog pose proudly with the tiny hummingbird they've caught. With a high-powered rifle in one hand and binoculars around his neck, a grinning hunter strikes a classic trophy pose with a bumble bee.

Polacheck's criticism of unsportsmanlike hubris is loud and clear.

But his gentle yet no-nonsense sense of style, his masterly draftsmanship and his a sense of quirky humor combine to make his "Trophy Hunters" series a thoroughly humorous artistic snapshot of human behaviour.

"Hiromi Tsuji Stringer: As a Manner of Fact... Graphiti for Civilized Tranquility" and "Casey Polacheck: The Trophy Hunters"

When: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, noon to 5 p.m. Sundays through Aug. 9

Where: Grayduck Gallery, 2213 E. Cesar Chavez St.

Cost: Free.

Information: 512-826-5334, grayduckgallery.com

A native of Japan, Stringer had little direct exposure to English before immigrating to the United States. Among the few English language books she read as a teenager in Kyoto was "Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior," a treatise Stringer found confounding without any knowledge of the context of particular American social situations.

And so Stringer uses pages from the Miss Manners guide as the basis for a series of deftly crafted mixed media drawings that are at once beguiling and wonderfully absurd.

In "Fish," fork-wielding samurai battle it out as they hover above Miss Manner's instructions for the proper way to eat fish at a formal dinner. (Note: No chopsticks.)

Stringer's show at Grayduck comes as the prize for winning the "Eyes Got It" contest that's part of the East Austin Studio Tour. Loosely based on reality television creative competition, "Eyes" has artists defending their work in front a panel of judges and a live audience. The winner receives a solo exhibit.

Stringer's comely, refreshing drawings at Grayduck — her first exhibit in Austin — prove the value of "Eyes," never mind its cheeky inspiration.

Like Stringer, Polacheck serves up satirical drawings.

Mining found online photographs, media images and his own imagination, Polacheck mocks those hunters whose claims to be protectors of the animal world are minuscule compared to their egos.