FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

365 Views of Mt. Fuji: Algorithms of the Floating World
Todd Shimoda
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Todd Shimoda's novel is a quiet marriage of an intricate literary effort and over 400 Hokusai inspired line drawings which pepper each page. The novel follows the life of curator Keizo Yukawa, a young professional who has left his stagnant job in Tokyo to accept the position of head curator in a private museum and the promise of a fresh, fulfilling life. The museum itself is devoted to the 365 paintings of Mount Fuji, the final works of Takenoko, a mysterious artist who died with the completion of his series over 100 years ago.

Yukawa becomes less of a curator and more a ringmaster as he is forced to deal with the three siblings of the Ono family. Each has come to inherit a portion of the collection, as well as a kind of insanity that seems to haunt those who possess the works. Further immersing Yukawa in the world of the Onos family are his affections for two Ono cousins, one a traditional Japanese woman, the other being of Western influence. The latter is ruled by technology and algorithm, evident in her thoughts (computer program format) and her sterile passes at human emotion.

Shimoda weaves an unorthodox web of perspective via brief character asides in the margins, which grant the reader a unique and far-reaching omniscience. This vantage point propels the reader by introducing related story lines often through fragmented flashbacks or emotive word associations. Character insights and interaction offer up the roots of their psyche and motivations.

Shimoda's style is lightly informal, almost deceivingly so, as the reader gradually awakens to the contemplation of not only the dichotomy in changing Japanese society, but of self and the elusive dividing line between genius and madness. Here, 365 Views become 365 degrees of perspective allowing a blinding, full-circle view, while reserving the final five degrees for ourselves.

Karen Wyckoff