

The Art of Baron Yoshimoto

Baron Yoshimoto

PIE International (Oct 1, 2019)

Hardcover \$49.95 (184pp)

978-4-75625171-8

The varied work of a Japanese manga artist-turned-painter is reproduced in the beautiful full-color book *The Art of Baron Yoshimoto*.

Yoshimoto's career in manga began in 1959, and he made a name for himself in that field during the 1960s and 70s. He began painting under the pen name Manji Ryu, finally unifying all of his work under the name Baron Yoshimoto in 2015. *The Art of Baron Yoshimoto* collects over a hundred of his works, the oldest dating back to 1969.

Some of Yoshimoto's art features nude or semi-clad men and women, often amid swirling, heavenly backgrounds, while other paintings focus on impeccably dressed individuals wearing rich, flower-patterned clothing. Yoshimoto incorporates weapons, animals real and fictional, and planets into his intricate canvases. Some showcase a more intimate approach, as with a painting from 1979 in which a woman looks up at the viewer, as if interrupted, while cutting her toenails. There are impressive examples of Yoshimoto's manga style included as well, and while these entries sometimes lack context, they impart a sense of the artist's development over time, making the book a true retrospective.

Perhaps most impressive are Yoshimoto's larger, more recent works, including his fusuma, or sliding door paintings, reproduced in vibrant color and fine detail. With some images, the dimensions of the original are reduced to fit on the page, but there are also photographs that show works as they appear in the rooms that house them, providing a sense of size, scale, and presence that is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate by listing a set of measurements.

The book includes an interview with Yoshimoto and fellow artist/sometime collaborator Katsuya Terada, as well as a timeline of Yoshimoto's career, an index of paintings, and photos of the artist. Nearly all text is presented in both Japanese and English.

The Art of Baron Yoshimoto is a gorgeous hardcover collection from a master artist who is always evolving.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2019)

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