

Rachel Stevens, FLASH ART, March-April 2004

Momoyo Torimitsu Swiss Institute

Momoyo Torimitsu's 'salaryman' reappears in a new installation at the Swiss Institute. In this playful critique of the machinations of the global economy, armies of doll-size mechanical businessmen are let loose to crawl around a vast miniature landscape populated with the occasional electrical tower, tree, or hill, and surrounded by a placid blue sky, recalling the pseudo-realism of a model train set circling a pastoral scene marked by signs of industry. The viewer can appreciate this kind of omniscience, watching the men invade one-another's territories and collide as 'corporate combatants.' The global capitalist economy has been reduced to a toy or game. Although described as "chasing each other," the men appear more to act out flocking behavior or swarm intelligence. Crawling relentlessly ahead, they interrupt one another's progress and end up in undulating, humming heaps in a self-organizing system.

The genius of this piece is how the machismo of the G.I. Joe doll readymade is detoured by the artist. The once-heroic stealthiness of the soldier during military combat becomes lowly, mindless crawling. If you don't want to get down on your hands and knees for a face-to-face encounter, there is also a short video offering another view: that of the close-up, the media op, of men heuristically edging forward in the hope of incessant economic progress.



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