



Namazu Gravity, 2008, Acrylic on Canvas, 92 x 100

Eske Kath - Namazu-Event

November 22, 2008 – January 3, 2008

Opening reception November 22 6-9pm

In *Namazu-Event* Eske Kath highlights the paradox of development being born at the peak of destruction as well as the ruin inherently residing at the core of expansive growth. Kath also shows us as being caught within the maelstrom of these paradoxes, at once both the beneficiaries, as well as the unfortunate victims of horrible consequences and events impossible to control.

Kath uses the figure of the Namazu as a recurrent protagonist in his tightly organized but turbulent universe. According to Japanese folk religion, the Namazu is a giant catfish that rests in the mud under Japan and is only kept in check by a large holy stone held into place by a god. Whenever the god has to let go of the stone, the Namazu is free to flick its tail and thus cause an earthquake. After the great earthquake of 1855 struck the Tokyo area (then Edo), a large series of Namazu-e (images and woodcuts of the Namazu) were produced. These were seen as both story-telling and informative works. Here Namazu (and by default earthquakes) was not depicted as inherently evil and destructive, but also as a benign and repenting character catalyzing economic growth and development for the survivors in the wake of the earthquake.

Kath also draws upon the natural sciences, as seen in the tectonic events and stylized nebulae, where the remnants of supernovas are transformed into new stars, chemical elements and thereby the very building blocks of life. Houses float in these environments, recalling human presence and reminding us of the way mythology, religion and natural science attempt to embrace human conception, while at the same time control nature itself. However, Kath also highlights the impossibility of these attempts as they are continuously countered by the random and unintentional destructive capability residing within Namazu and nature.

For *Namazu-Event* Kath has produced his own series of Namazu-e, as well as a major installation piece in which the back of the Namazu can be seen breaking through the fragmented gallery floor. In addition to this, Kath will be making his first performance on the opening night. The performance will be centered on the depiction of Namazu as a man with the head of a catfish– he will build a city, which will slowly surround and trap him.