

# Reviews



## Masakatsu Kondo

**Zwemmer** West End

**L**ike countless painters before him, Masakatsu Kondo wrestles with the experience of nature in our culture-saturated times. But, while for some a sense of alienation is merely an excuse to obfuscate with pixilation, distortion and other effects of high-tech jiggy-pokery, Kondo is far subtler. The four paintings on show range from high-key Impressionism to near collage-like accumulations. In the small-scale 'Bush', staccato bursts of acid green and yellow paint denote a canopy of dense foliage in early spring. Painted in afterwards, however, the sky is a dull mauve, an oppressively late-summer addition that throws the entire image off balance.

Larger paintings use the desert land-

scape as a *terra incognita* in which disparate elements and various styles fight it out beneath a harsh, artificial light. While 'Saharan Vegetation' fails to undergo enough painterly transformation to engage, 'Withered Cactus' is more complex and rewarding. Painted in tones of red beneath a purple sky, the background reads as a computer simulation. Nudging up to it is a thick band blended through dark orange to almost white. On top sits a flagging cactus painted in a deadpan hyper-realism but crowned with licks of blue and yellow, as if the plant is melting from within. The image hangs together long enough to convince, then appears to dissolve into its constituent parts. Though this culturally mediated view of nature is nothing new, Kondo's intelligent eye unleashes surprisingly engaging results. *Martin Coomer*