

ULTERIOR

The Kingdom of Kitai

Gaku Tsutaja

September 16–October 22, 2017

Opening Reception: September 16, 6–8 pm



Workers for the Future, 2017.
22 x 30 inches/ 55.9 x 76.2 cm. Indian ink on paper.

Ulterior Gallery is pleased to present *The Kingdom of Kitai*, the first U.S. solo exhibition by mixed-media artist Gaku Tsutaja. Tsutaja creates narrative-based installations composed of multiple parts. Each aspect of the installation functions as a detail of a greater allegory that is based on historical and current incidents and events, or experiences that Tsutaja has re-lived as a proxy in the story. Tsutaja's work is multivalent, combining disparate elements such as visual languages based on Manga culture, a colloquial-style text, and sculptures of common objects. In this exhibition, a sound installation comprised of nine segments will be the guide through an intricately interrelated group of drawings and sculptures which cumulatively form a portal to Tsutaja's story.

Tsutaja draws inspiration from post-World War II Japan, the years in which the country rebuilt its devastated infrastructure. Japan's quick recovery and technological and economic development since the 1950s took place against a backdrop of ruined nature and discarded lives. Tsutaja based her narrative on real events that occurred during these years as recounted by her father, a former civil engineer. Tsutaja explains: "I search into stories related to myself, and that led me to this unexpected vision that I set out to unearth in my work." Begun a year ago, Tsutaja's serial allegory evolves and expands in each iteration, the accretion of new stories in dialogue with the old charting the course of its development.

Inspired not only by Japanese folklore and traditions of animist worship, but also by the history of satire and storytelling in other parts of the world, Tsutaja weaves elements of humankind's complicated relationship with nature into her allegory. The anthropomorphic animals in Tsutaja's

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works, imbued with the transformative ability to travel between reality and myth, direct the emerging narrative. Ancestral modes of storytelling blend with true-life stories from the modern era, so that the past seems to contain the present and the present is revealed in the past. It is Tsutaja's attempt to search for a remedy for the contemporary world in the parallel universe that her story has created.

Gaku Tsutaja was born and grew up in Japan. In 1998 she obtained a BFA with honors from Tokyo Zokei University of Art and Design, Tokyo, Japan. In the same year, she was granted a Research Fellowship at the Center for Contemporary Art Kitayusyu (CCA), Fukuoka, Japan, and spent two years there as a resident artist. Tsutaja is currently a MFA candidate at SUNY Purchase College, Purchase, NY. Tsutaja's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions including: *Make a World*, Nitehiworks, Kanazawa, Japan (2012); *First Look 2010, Emerging Artist Series: New Tales for Our Age*, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ (2009); *Independent Drawing Gig 3*, Quartair Contemporary Art Initiatives, The Hague, Holland (2007); *Password*, Center for Contemporary Graphic Art, Fukushima, Japan (2004); and *Blind Date*, Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrik, Odense, Denmark (2002). She was also a member of the artists collective Gansomaeda, and exhibited work at *Yokohama Triennale*, Yokohama, Japan (2005), *CHANNEL_0*, Akiyoshidai International Art Village, Yamaguchi, Japan (2004), and other exhibition projects.

For further inquiries, please contact gallery director Takako Tanabe: takako@ulteriorgallery.com or 917-472-7784.