



TABAIMO
Two, 2016 (video still)

291 GRAND ST | JAN 13 - FEB 25

Tabaimo

Clue to Utsushi

OPENING RECEPTION: SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 6-8 PM

James Cohan will present *Clue to Utsushi*, a new exhibition by Japanese artist Tabaimo. The exhibition will feature four works previously presented in her 2016 show *Utsutsushi Utsushi* at the Seattle Art Museum and a new work, *Shinju Trail*, created for this show. *Clue to Utsushi* is the fourth exhibition of Tabaimo's work at James Cohan. The show will be on view from Saturday, January 13 to Sunday, February 25. The gallery will host an opening reception on January 13 from 6-8 PM.

Tabaimo creates complex video works and spatial interventions that observe and incisively critique contemporary Japanese society. Her works are aesthetic feats, but a distinctly sinister ambience lurks under the technical polish of her videos. By conjuring this ominous mood, Tabaimo captures the tension between appearance and reality, revealing the imperfection of human perception. *Clue to Utsushi* further examines the idiosyncrasies of perception through the uniquely Japanese idea of *utsushi* – an artistic concept that has its origins in the pre-modern era.

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The nearest English translation of *utsushi* is “copy” or “reproduction” but *utsushi* surpasses either. True *utsushi* simultaneously captures the essentialness and spirit of an existing work but avoids exact reproduction. *Utsushi* insists on its own originality but acquires a deeper significance through proximity to an archetype. This expectation allows a new generation of artists to manifest their own creativity while learning from past masters. Initially skeptical of *utsushi* as an aesthetic practice, Tabaimo has come to regard it as an important binding agent, connecting artists and their ideas across long spans of time. She also employs *utsushi* to probe discourses of originality/authenticity and viewer discernment.

For her exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum, Tabaimo engaged with the museum’s existing collection of Japanese art. She allowed these works to guide her creative process as an homage to great artisans and the importance of *utsushi* in Japanese cultural production. This exhibition further explores the intricacies and variations of *utsushi*. *The Obscuring Moon* is a traditional *utsushi* of famed *ukiyo-e* artist Utagawa Hiroshige’s *Moon Cape*. She expands the narrative of his wood-block composition and transposes the work to her chosen medium. *Chirping* is an *utsushi* of scrolls in the the Seattle Art Museum, and likewise the cabinet coupling in *Two* is inspired by a similar pair in the SAM collection. In the latter example these twinned cabinets are also *utsushi* of each other - unique but intrinsically bound together. Tabaimo presents *Crow* as a metaphor for the process of *utsushi*. She envisions herself as the crow, privileged with an aerial view that allows her to contemplate the overall form. Tabaimo’s engagement with *utsushi* reflects her larger practice of mining Japanese culture to create works with a contemporary ethos.

Tabaimo (born 1975, Hyogo, Japan), represented Japan at the 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia (2011) and has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Seattle Museum of Art (2016); San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (2016); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2014); Yokahama Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan (traveled to the National Museum of Art, Osaka) (2009-10); Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (2009); Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain, Paris, France (2006); and Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2006). Her work can be found in the collections of the National Museum of Art, Osaka; Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; MUSAC, Leon, Spain; Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain, Paris, France; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Asia Society Museum, New York, NY; San Jose Museum of Art, CA; Seattle Museum of Art, WA; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Tabaimo lives and works in Karuizawa, Japan.

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