

GAJIN FUJITA

Drawings

13 MARCH - 26 APRIL 2014

RECEPTION FOR THE ARTIST:
THURSDAY, 13 MARCH, 6-8PM

Venice, CA – L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition of works on paper by the Los Angeles-based artist Gajin Fujita. Made over the past 7 years, the drawings feature a full range of subject matter -- geishas, samurais, demons, fish and flowers -- that has become synonymous with the artist. Including nine drawings from 2007-2014, this is the first exhibition dedicated to Fujita's works on paper and features two drawings produced for *Southland Standoff* (2013), his most ambitious large-scale painting to date.



Gajin Fujita, *Study for Southland Standoff (Blue Warrior)*, 2014 (detail)
Pencil, spray paint on archival paper, 69 7/8 x 64 1/4 in. (177.5 x 163.2 cm)

In his works, Fujita blends a rich diversity of influences, which range from traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* and contemporary manga, to American pop iconography and the culture of the Latino East-Los Angeles neighborhood where he was born and raised. Fujita also combines a variety of techniques and materials in his richly layered paintings that include gold leaf, graffiti, and spray painted images achieved with the assistance of his unique stencil drawings.

Fujita begins each painting with a preparatory drawing, or drawings, through which he determines scale, composition and palette. He then actively uses the drawing to make the painting: cutting away its components to create intricate stencils. After gold leafing wood panels and tagging with graffiti, Fujita lays the stencil over the painting's surface, securing its placement with small weights. He then sprays through the stencil, building and layering color until he achieves the desired result. (This process is akin to the traditional Japanese art form of *ukiyo-e* woodblock printmaking, which employs a form of color separation.) After Fujita has finished using the stencil, he reunites it with its cut-out components to form the original drawing composition, and mounts it on a paper support.

Imagery in the drawings takes shape from the remnants of spray paint that trace the stencil edges, and is intensified by triangular and rectangular voids that result from the small weights placed on the stencil during the painting process. The stencils also include delicate pencil lines and artist notations, providing the viewer with unique insight into the creative process. In contrast to his paintings, the drawings bring compositional elements into focus, and encourage viewers to seek out the imagery, which is not always immediately identifiable. While the paintings are highly controlled, the drawings leave room for chance, resulting in subtle effects and ambiguous imagery.

Fujita signs the finished drawing by stamping his signature in red ink using a traditional Japanese hand carved stamp (*hanko*). The stamp bears his first name, Gajin, and the symbol of the rat (Fujita's Chinese zodiac sign).



Film still from *Gajin Fujita: Study of Drawing*, 2014

Encouraged by his mother Chitose Fujita, a conservator of Japanese antiquities, Fujita first considered his drawings as independent works in 2000. Mrs. Fujita worked with Gajin to develop a process for mounting the drawings, which is now accomplished with the assistance of the artist's brother Richard Kanshu Fujita.

A film that documents the drawings in production will be available to view online beginning Tuesday, 11 March 2014 at youtube.com/lalouver.

Gajin Fujita (b.1972) received a BFA from Otis College of Art and Design, followed by a MFA from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2000. His drawings were first seen publicly at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in *Contemporary Projects 9: Gajin Fujita and Pablo Vargas Lugo*, curated by Ilona Katzew in 2005. Other prominent museum exhibitions include *Gajin Fujita: Ukiyo-e in Contemporary Paintings*, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA, 2012; *Zephyr: Paintings by Gajin Fujita*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas, MO, 2006; and *Floating World Redux: Gajin Fujita and Yasumasa Morimura*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC, 2002. Fujita's work has also been featured in *Gold*, Museum of Belvedere, Vienna, Austria, 2012; *Edo Pop: The Graphic Impact of Japanese Woodblock Prints*, The Minneapolis Art Institute, Minneapolis, MN, 2011; *Beyond Bling: The Influence of Hip Hop Culture in Contemporary Art*, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL; *Prospect. I*, curated by Dan Cameron, New Orleans, LA, 2008; *POPulence*, curated by David Pagel, Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, TX; *Outlook International Art Exhibition*, curated by Christos M. Joachimedes, 2003; *Talking Pieces: Text and Image in Contemporary Art*, Museum Morsbrioch, Leverkusen, Germany; and *Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitan*, curated by Dave Hickey, *Site Santa Fe's 4th International Biennial*, Santa Fe, NM, 2001. Fujita's work is also currently on view in *L.A. Heat: Mouth Altering Condiments* at the Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles (13 March - 8 July 2014).

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver

Kienholz: Berlin/Hope

Historical assemblage sculptures dating from 1975-1979