

# Gajin Fujita **Made in L.A.**

13 October – 12 November 2011

Opening reception for the artist: **Thursday, 13 October, 6-8 p.m.**

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present twelve new paintings by **Gajin Fujita**. *Made in L.A.* is Fujita's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles in five years.

In his paintings, Fujita blends a rich diversity of cultural influences that range from traditional Japanese ukiyo-e to contemporary manga; from American pop culture, to East L.A. street-life iconography and graffiti. Fujita also combines a variety of process techniques and media. He begins with wood panels that he covers with platinum, white and yellow gold leaf in graphic patterns. Fujita then tags the panels, sometimes inviting members of his longtime graffiti crew, K2S ("Kill to Succeed") to tag larger-scale paintings. (These invited hands are identifiable by their tags as well as their signatures on the verso of the paintings.) Over the tagged panels, using his own paper stencils that are unique to each painting, Fujita creates intricate compositions, which feature samurais, geishas, dragons, tigers and fish, using spraypaint, paint marker and Mean Streak, in striking colors.



Gajin Fujita, *East vs. West* (detail), 2010  
spray paint, paint marker, Mean Streak paint stick, gold and platinum leaf on wood panel  
12 panels at 84 x 22 in. (213.4 x 55.9 cm), overall: 84 x 264 in. (213.4 x 670.6 cm)

This series of new paintings is remarkable for its broad diversity of scale, from the intimate 8 x10 inch single panel "Feel Cool" to the mural-size "East vs. West" which, comprised of a dozen wood panels measuring 7 x 22 feet overall, is Fujita's largest painting to date. Several works, including "High Voltage" and "Rising Sun," feature a more painterly touch with water conveyed in rich layers of paint that add dimension to the surface. Los Angeles, the artist's birthplace, home, and the site of the paintings' creation, is nearly ubiquitously represented: whether symbolized by the charging warrior of "East vs. West" dressed in L.A. Dodgers baseball attire, or discreetly referenced in the L.A. headband of the samurai in "Fearless" or with a nod to Hollywood, through the cartoon characters depicted in "Rabbit Season" and "Year of the Rabbit (Bugs Bunny)."

In his article [MOCA's 'Art in the Street' Gets the Big Picture Wrong](#), *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 2011, critic Christopher Knight describes Fujita's paintings as "the most important 21st century iteration of graffiti's influence on art." In these new paintings Fujita backgrounds the graffiti, while giving it compositional force: such as the throw-up in "Bewitched" and the dense conflation of tags in "High Voltage." The influence of wood block prints is also brought to the fore, and is especially evident in the structure of "Roof Top."



Gajin Fujita, *Feel Cool*, 2011  
 platinum leaf, spray paint, paintmarker on wood panel  
 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm)

A fully-illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Peter Goulds, founding director of L.A. Louver, and text by Scott Grieger, artist and professor at Otis College of Art and Design, is published on the occasion of the exhibition.

Born in 1972 in Los Angeles to Japanese immigrant parents, Fujita has been a member of two graffiti crews, first KGB (“Kings of Graffiti Bombing”) and then K2S (“Kill to Succeed”), making art in the streets of Hollywood, downtown L.A., and East Los Angeles in the early and mid-1990s.

In 1997, Fujita received a B.F.A. from Otis College of Art and Design, followed by a M.F.A. from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2000. Prominent museum exhibitions include *Zephyr: Paintings by Gajin Fujita*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, 2006; *Contemporary Projects 9: Gajin Fujita and Pablo Vargas Lugo*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2005; and *Floating World Redux: Gajin Fujita and Yasumasa Morimura* at the Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, 2002. Fujita’s work has also been featured in *Beyond Bling: The Influence of Hip Hop Culture in Contemporary Art*, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida, 2011; *Invisible City*, Instituto Cervantes, Madrid, Spain, 2010; *Plastic Culture: Legacies of Pop, 1986-2008*, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Lancashire, UK (traveled), 2009; *Prospect.1*, New Orleans, 2008, curated by Dan Cameron; *POPulence*, Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, TX (traveled), 2005, curated by David Pagel; *Outlook International Art Exhibition*, Athens, Greece, 2003, curated by Christos M. Joachimides; *Talking Pieces: Text and Image in Contemporary Art*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany, 2002; and *Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitanism*, Site Santa Fe’s 4<sup>th</sup> International Biennial, Santa Fe, NM, 2001, curated by Dave Hickey.

For a full artist profile and video of Gajin creating “East Vs. West” please visit our website: <http://www.lalouer.com/fujita>



Gajin Fujita, *Bewitched*, 2010, spray paint, paint marker, platinum leaf on wood panel  
 six panels: 72 x 108 in. (182.9 x 274.3 cm) overall

Concurrently on view in L.A. Louver’s second floor gallery and skyroom:

*Loose Canon* 13 October – 12 November, 2011

An exhibition of paintings and sculpture by contemporary artists, who draw inspiration from old master works, featuring Tony Bevan, Rebecca Campbell, Charles Garabedian, David Hockney, Ben Jackel, Tom LaDuke, Michael C. McMillen, Peter Shelton, Don Suggs, Elizabeth Turk, Matt Wedel and Tom Wudl.