

Kaz Oshiro | *Republic*

Exhibition Title | **Republic**

Artist | **Kaz Oshiro**

Dates | **September 5 (Sat.) – October 24 (Sat.), 2020**

Location | **MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo**



Kaz Oshiro, *Orange Speaker Cabinets and Gray Scale Boxes*, 2009, acrylic and Bondo on stretched canvas, 73.7 x 76.2 x 37.5 cm / each

MAKI Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by the Los Angeles-based artist, Kaz Oshiro. The exhibition will be held in conjunction with the grand opening of MAKI on the first floor of the TERRADA Art Complex.

Oshiro moved to Los Angeles in 1986, where he received his education in fine art and remains active as an artist. (*Oshiro, Letter from Tinseltown*) He has lived within the context of West Coast art and experienced the changes it has undergone continuing to explore the possibilities of art against this backdrop. Drawing from art history – throughout which painting has faced many crises – he brings all of his expressive resources to bear, interrogating anew the meaning of painting.

The exhibition title, *Republic*, refers to a classical text by the Ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. In this work, Plato expounds his theory of the state, as well as his theories concerning the true essence of things,

particularly of the good and the beautiful. He explains that humans only look at the surface, that we are like prisoners trapped in a cave who have only ever seen the shadows cast on the walls and mistaken them for reality. Oshiro asks whether this might also apply to the art that has been praised and admired for so long. Have we been admiring the 'format' or 'appearance' of art, instead of art itself? Oshiro's artworks which to all appearances look like amps, cabinets and suitcases are the 'shadows on the walls of the cave'. The surprise that greets us when we see the back of these pieces, where the canvas and wood frame remain exposed, leads us out of the cave. It is there that the intellectual search for the true essence of things, which cannot be seen by the human eye, begins.

Furthermore, Oshiro questions the reception of art by society, alluding to Plato's *Republic*. The artist writes, "Now that the second wave of political correctness, this time global in its scope, has washed over society at large, it has callously swallowed up even those artists who had been determined to cast a critical eye on and turn away from the entire situation. The scenario that Plato had feared, in which art would be used as a weapon in the name of social justice, is taking place. All while we remain unaware. It has probable spread to many cities around the world already. History spirals as if continuing the old rhymes, repeating itself again and again." (Oshiro, *Letter from Tinseltown*)

Republic will be the inaugural exhibition at MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo. MAKI will open as space for reflecting on the place of art and our perspectives on it, from the ground up. As an artist who interrogates the nature of art, and particularly of painting, we can say that Kaz Oshiro is the ideal artist for the inaugural show. Included in the exhibition will be works that the artist has kept close by in his studio, as well as works from various series that he has created over the years. Oshiro's works give us an opportunity to investigate the true nature of art and question how it is perceived by society. We invite you to see the artist's representative works, his speakers, cabinets, *Still Life* series and *Steel Beam* series, which will be on view in a dynamic presentation at our gallery in Tennoz.

ARTIST

- Kaz Oshiro

Born in 1967 in Okinawa, Japan and currently based in Los Angeles, California, Kaz Oshiro received both his BA and MFA from California State University in 1998 and 2002, respectively. Oshiro references artistic movements including pop art, minimalism and abstract expressionism, investigating the true nature of the artwork through the lens of various dichotomies such as sculpture/painting, abstraction/figuration and reality/illusion.

To take the example of his most representative works, the faithful reproductions of cabinets, suitcases, amps, and so on, we cannot tell at first glance that they are artworks. However, once we realize that these are painted on canvas, our perspective is reversed. We might even feel that the canvas stretched over a wooden frame is proof that this is indeed an artwork. Furthermore, the signs of wear and tear, the stains and scratches that further emphasize the 'reality' of the artwork can be considered classical *trompe l'oeil*. However, by focusing more deeply on them, they begin to take on the appearance of the brilliantly calculated, abstract expressionist gestures of a Pollock or de Kooning.

In *Still Life*, a series of canvas works painted mostly in a single hue, the warping and wrinkling of the canvas entails that these, too, drift between sculpture and painting. In this way, Kaz Oshiro's works move between dichotomies, inviting confusion in the viewer. However, by the same token, they offer us an opportunity to re-evaluate the existence of, and definitions surrounding, a work of art.

Oshiro's recent solo exhibitions include *Steel Unforged*, galerie frank elbaz (Paris, 2017); *A STANDARD*, Honor Fraser Gallery (Los Angeles, 2017); and *Diffuse Reflection*, galerie frank elbaz (Paris, 2015). In 2014, his solo exhibition, *Chasing Ghosts*, was held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles). His work has been shown in group exhibitions at various institutions including The FLAG Art Foundation (New York, 2015), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, 2012), and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, 2005). In 2014, he participated in *Deception II: Into the Future*, a group show which was held at Bunkamura: The Museum (Tokyo), Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art (Hyogo) and Nagoya City Art Museum (Aichi). His work is in many notable public and private collections, including the Fonds national d'art contemporain (Paris), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA, Los Angeles), the Rubell Family Collection (Miami), and the Zabudowicz Collection (London).

ARTWORKS



Kaz Oshiro
Untitled Still Life
2013
Acrylic on canvas
360.7 x 121.9 x 53.3 cm



Kaz Oshiro
Untitled (Steel Beam)
2016
Acrylic on canvas
15.9 x 244.5 x 30.5 cm

*For further inquiries, please contact