

## In Japanese Sculptor's US Solo Debut, a Phantasmagoria of Color and Motion

by [Bansie Vasvani](#) on October 14, 2015



Teppei Kaneuji, "Teenage Fan Club #66 – #72" (2015), plastic figures and hot glue (courtesy of the artist)

Entering the world of Tokyo-based Japanese sculptor Teppei Kaneuji is like walking into a funky workshop gone awry. Quirky combinations of tools, surreal snow-caked household objects on barbecue grills, towers of Claes Oldenburg knockoffs, and black and white stuffed toys collide to create a phantasmagoria of color and action. In his first US solo exhibition, *Deep Fried Ghost*, Kaneuji's inventiveness, seen through five series of works made from 2004 to the present, reevaluate the significance of assemblage by taking sculpture to new levels of amusement, fascination, and serious thought.

In the series *Ghost in the Liquid Room* (2014), spooky-looking contraptions defy definition. Made up of inkjet print, paper, wood, urethane coating, and clamp, angled and intertwined curvaceous shapes evoke unexpected feelings of angst and unease. Inkjet prints of smooth flowing grey liquid laminated onto wavy wood resembling rapids are combined with dark curvy snake-like shapes and a tangle of metal with pointed ends like spears. These mundane forms transmogrify into slithering, tensile objects. In *Ghost in the Liquid Room* (2015), strange protruding hands holding slimy goops of apple-green paint evoke ghouls — inducing nothing but the jitters.



Teppei Kaneuji, "Ghost in the Liquid Room (foundation) #2" (2015), inkjet print, paper, wood, urethane coating, clamp, 31 x 16.75 x 3.0625 inches (courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery)



Teppei Kanji, "White Discharge (Built-up Objects #36)" (2014), wood, plastic, steel, resin, 75 x 43 x 30.5 inches (courtesy of the artist) (click to enlarge)

Kaneuji's technique and process is paramount to his ability to arouse dread and bring unpredictable emotions to the surface. Influenced by Japanese manga art and anime that imbues cartoon imagery with three-dimensionality and life, the element of surprise is best seen in his *White Discharge* series (2014), which consists of poured white resin over an assemblage of household objects. Resembling snow-capped Christmas trees from afar, kitchen utensils, toys, and dollar-store knickknacks are amassed to form large drippy white mounds. Erected on foldable tables and plastic containers, eerie ghost towns and frozen abandoned homes loom large. Simple readymades are transformed into the perplexing and bizarre. In Kaneuji's realm, objects take on different meanings, oscillating between the banal and the extraordinary, the playful and the grave — nothing and everything at the same time.



Tepei Kaneuji, "Muddy Stream from a Mug" (2009), wood, clippings of coffee stains and printed material, 27.56 x 27.56 inches (courtesy of the artist)

In the *Muddy Stream from a Mug* series (2009–15), which was inspired by coffee stains, meticulously cut-out splotches in shades of smudged nutmeg, coffee, saddle, and camel brown merge to morph into large dry landmasses. Despite the humor and whimsy of these sculptures that emanate from the artist's humdrum observations, Kaneuji's works reverberate with deeper ecological concerns. Again and again his sculptures invoke blizzards, drought, and disaster in a dysfunctional environment destroyed by mass consumerism.



Teppei Kaneuji, "Games, Dance, and the Constructions (soft toys) #18" (2015), screen print, cotton fabric, polyester stuffing, acrylic box, 43.5 x 63 x 2 inches (courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery)

Kaneuji demonstrates his mastery of the surreal in his series *Games, Dance and the Constructions* (2015). A medley of screen-printed black and white objects on cotton fabric are individually cut, stuffed, sewn, and arranged in dizzying permutations in encased boxes. The Daliesque distortions and combinations of everyday objects that are made to resemble the real thing unleash a dream world that accesses the unconscious mind. These lookalike clocks, bones, toys, bits of scenery, pipes, telephones, nature, food, and myriad other pieces use mundane items to reveal a tumultuously repressed world of fetishism and desire.

Like the inhabitants of the manga world, Kaneuji's objects embody larger themes and ideas. Though amusing at first glance, these original and provocative works are noteworthy for their ability to straddle multiple levels and unpack layers of meaning. Made in the era of postmodernism when non-prescriptive structures define art, the artist's work is a commentary on materialism and our appetite for surprise. His aesthetic, defined by disquiet and violence, make his Kafkaesque combinations as much about novelty as about our current state of mind.



Teppei Kaneuji, "Games, Dance, and the Constructions (unfinished plywood) #7" (2015), screen print, unfinished plywood, aluminum structure, 47 x 83 x 2 inches (courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery)



Teppei Kaneuji, "Muddy Stream from a Mug" (2009), wood, clippings of coffee stains and printed material, 27.56 x 27.56 inches (courtesy of the artist)



Teppei Kaneuji, "Ghost in the Liquid Room (foundation) #2" (2015), inkjet print, paper, wood, urethane coating, clamp, 31 x 16.75 x 3.0625 inches, (courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery)

**Deep Fried Ghost** continues at Jane Lombard Gallery (518 West 19th Street, New York) through October 17.