



## NEW YORK

### Tepei Kaneuji

#### Jane Lombard Gallery

Entering the world of Tokyo-based sculptor Tepei Kaneuji is like walking into a funky workshop gone awry. Quirky combinations of tools, surreal arrangements of household objects on barbecue grills, towers of Claes Oldenbura knock-offs, and black and white stuffed toys collide to create a phantasmagoria of color and action. In "Deep Fried Ghost," his first U.S. solo exhibition, Kaneuji displayed his inventiveness through five series of works (made from 2004 to the present) that re-evaluate the significance of assemblage by taking sculpture to new levels of amusement, fascination, and serious thought.

In the "Ghost in the Liquid Room" series, spooky-looking contraptions defy definition. Made of inkjet prints, paper, wood, urethane coating, and clamps, angled and intertwined shapes prompt unexpected feelings of angst and unease. Images of smooth-flowing gray liquid laminated onto wood with a wavy grain resembling rapids combine with curvy, snake-like shapes, tangles of metal, and pointed, spear-like ends as these mundane forms transmogrify into slithering tensile objects. In *Ghost in the Liquid Room (slime and foundation)* (2015), strange protruding hands holding slimy goops of apple-green paint evoke ghouls—inducing nothing but the jitters.

Kaneuji's technique and process are paramount to his ability to arouse dread and bring unpredictable emotions to the surface. Influenced by Japanese manga and anime, which imbue cartoon imagery with three-dimensionality and life, his "White Discharge" series consists of household objects covered in poured white resin. Resembling snow-capped Christmas trees from afar, kitchen utensils, toys, and knickknacks purchased from 99-cent stores are amassed to form large drippy white mounds. Erected on foldable tables and plastic containers, these eerie ghost towns and frozen abandoned houses loom large. Simple ready-mades of Duchampian descent are transformed into the perplexing and bizarre. In Kaneuji's world, objects take on different meanings and oscillate between playful and grave, the banal and the extraordinary, nothing and everything at the same time.

Similarly, in the "Muddy Stream from a Mug" series—inspired by coffee stains—meticulously cut splotches in shades of smudged nutmeg, coffee, saddle, and camel brown merge into large, dry land-masses. Despite the humor and whimsicality, Kaneuji's sculptures reverberate with deeper ecological concerns. Again and again, his works invoke blizzards, drought, and disaster in a dysfunctional environment destroyed by mass consumerism.



Above: Tepei Kaneuji, *Teenage Fan Club #66-72*, 2015. Plastic figures and hot glue, dimensions variable.

Left: Tepei Kaneuji, *White Discharge (Built-up Objects) #40*, 2015. Wood, plastic, steel, and resin, 71 x 30 x 30 in.

Kaneuji demonstrates his mastery of the surreal in the "Games, Dance, and the Constructions (Soft Toys)" series. Black and white objects screen-printed on cotton fabric are individually cut, stuffed, and sewn, arranged in dizzying permutations, and encased in boxes. Kaneuji's Dali-esque distortions and images of everyday objects made to resemble the real thing unleash the unconscious mind. His stuffed creations look like real clocks, bones, toys, pipes, telephones, food, and myriad other ordinary items, revealing a tumultuously repressed world of fetishism and desire.

Like the inhabitants of the manga world, Kaneuji's objects embody larger themes and ideas. 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 post-Modernism, when non-prescriptive structures define art, they offer a commentary on materialism and our appetite for surprise. Kaneuji's aesthetic is defined by disquiet and violence, a quality that makes his Kafka-esque combinations as much about novelty as about our current state of mind.

—Bansie Vasvani