

MURRAY GUY

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KOTA EZAWA

Lennon Sontag Beuys

September 9 – October 15, 2005
Opening reception Friday September 16, 6-8pm

Murray Guy is pleased to present Kota Ezawa's first solo exhibition in New York.

Kota Ezawa transforms iconic imagery derived from seminal moments in media history into vector-based animations that hearken back to classic cartoons. The material for his video works, films, slide projections and lightboxes ranges from the televised footage of the reading of the verdict in the O.J. Simpson trial (*The Simpson Verdict*, 2002) to Richard Burton's and Elizabeth Taylor's on/off-screen marital strife (*Who's Afraid of Black, White and Grey*, 2003).

For *Lennon Sontag Beuys*, the artist uses documentary footage of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 Amsterdam "bed-in" for peace, a 2001 lecture delivered by the late media philosopher Susan Sontag at Columbia University and Joseph Beuys' 1974 lecture at the New School for Social Research in New York.

Displayed side-by-side, the three animated characters speak simultaneously, as if competing for our attention. Lennon, surrounded by journalists, [...] touts the potential of nonviolent protest; Sontag [...] discusses how images of violence might be considered instruments of protest; and Beuys [...] expounds on his thesis of "social sculpture". What initially appears to be a cacophony gradually becomes – as each speaker's voice ebbs and flows and as the viewer acclimates to the individual dialects and accents – more distinct; it's a scenario Ezawa has described as being akin to the experience of overhearing fragments of conversations as one moves through a crowd. Ezawa sees Lennon, Sontag and Beuys not only as agents for social change but also as representatives of the historically entangled nations of England, the United States, and Germany and as ideologies for the musical, literary, and plastic arts. No single member of this triumverate fully articulates Ezawa's views, but collectively they synthesize his stated interests in "popular music, concerned seriousness, and German metaphysics" This juxtaposition – a kind of earnest yet skeptical relationship with popular culture combined with a wry sense of humor – reverberates throughout Ezawa's deceptively simple works.

Matthew Higgs: in *Openings: Kota Ezawa*, Artforum February 2005.

Kota Ezawa was born in Cologne, Germany. He studied at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie San Francisco Art Institute and Stanford University. His work has been shown at the Santa Monica Museum of Art and New Langton Arts, San Francisco. He has participated in the traveling exhibition *From Baja to Vancouver*, the 2004 Shanghai Biennial, *Seeing Double* at the Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh and *I still believe in miracles* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France. From November 3, 2005 - February 5, 2006 he will have a solo show at Matrix, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT.

Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday 10am-6pm. For further information please call 212-463 7372