

Adams and Ollman

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Kenji Ide: *American Friend*

at Adams and Ollman

January 20–February 17, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, January 20 from 2–4PM

Adams and Ollman is pleased to announce *American Friend*, a solo exhibition of new sculptures by Japanese artist Kenji Ide (b. 1981, Yokosuka, JP; lives and works in Tokyo, JP). The exhibition will include sculptures composed of wood and found objects that theatrically weave a narrative based on both the artist's imagined and real-life experiences. Ide's first exhibition in Portland, OR, *A Poem of Perception*, was curated by Matt Jay for the Portland Japanese Garden in 2022. His new exhibition at Adams and Ollman opens with a reception with the artist on Saturday, January 20 and is on view through February 17, 2024.

The exhibition takes its title from *The American Friend*, the 1977 Wim Wenders film that Ide knew of as a teenager growing up in Japan, but had never seen. With no knowledge of the narrative arch—Ide was only familiar with the title and the main character, the American actor Dennis Hopper—Ide let himself imagine the plot of the movie—fantasizing that the German filmmaker made the film as if he were sending a letter to Hopper, thinking of the America he longed to visit. Much as Ide created a storyline of Wenders' film with extremely limited information, his minimal sculptures provide a similar space for an imagined narrative, one produced collaboratively by both the artist and the viewer. In *American Friend*, the works operate as invented memories of a fictional American acquaintance and like the artist's past work, they create a basic structure that suggests an evocative narrative or experience while maintaining a poetic abstraction. Ide refers to this speculative process as "crystallization," materializing the immaterial, even if only briefly.

Restraint and precision characterize Ide's carefully considered sculptural works. Various components are positioned meticulously in relation to one another and call to mind models, toys or puzzles. Small-scale representations



of structures and objects that might be found in the built environment, such as a tower, ramp, or light post, suggest a stage, a place or a memory, their sensory building blocks distilled to their essences. Abstracted forms that hint at floors or foundations, walls, and beams serve to delineate and define space, while hints of interior structures conjure the association of private places where actions and gestures remain unseen or intimately experienced. Sometimes Ide's assemblages recall several objects at once, inviting ambiguity within their familiarity, or imply movement or interaction, hinting at some unknown function or logic, a barely perceptible past and future.

Within each of the structures, small interventions are carefully made—a hand sculpted ball is affixed to a horizontal element that resembles a balustrade, a scrap of fabric registers as a drape or flag, a small stack of carefully collected pieces of a torn up letter, perhaps, are neatly, but mysteriously arranged as accumulated thoughts or reminders. Carved into the wood are patterns such as a meander, a decorative border constructed from a continuous line recalling the walks that the artist takes for inspiration and to source his material. Tiny carved hands are theatrically placed throughout the works and imply a visceral but removed sensation or interaction.

Taken together, Ide's sculptures in *American Friend* create a stylized landscape in miniature resembling the carefully composed features of Zen gardens, which classically serve as an aid to meditation, creating complex ontological maps for considering the natural world and our relation to it. Philosophy and spirituality coexist with the physicality of natural elements, creating a tension that points directly to the thin line that separates reality from our imposed beliefs, meanings, and narratives about the world. Space acts as a void in which to consider the infinitude of possibilities, the

Adams and Ollman

passage of time, and ephemerality. In all of Ide's works, emptiness hangs at the edge of legibility, inviting personal reflection into the nuances of human relationships, and the role of imagination and projection in creating, mediating, and maintaining those relations.

Kenji Ide (b. 1981, Yokosuka, JP; lives and works in Tokyo, JP) received an MFA from Tama Art University. He has had solo exhibitions at The Portland Japanese Garden, Portland, OR; KAYOKOYUKI; Goya Curtain; and the Art Center Ongoing, all Tokyo, Japan. His work has been featured in group exhibitions at Wschód, Warsaw, Poland; KNULP, Sydney, Australia; Crevecoeur, Paris, France; Guimarães, Vienna, Austria; Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles, CA; and XYZ collective, Tokyo, Japan. Ide has participated in residencies at CAC, Chiang Mai, Thailand; 98B, Manila, Philippines; Kunci Cultural Study, Jakarta, Indonesia; and Taipei Artist Village, Taipei, Taiwan.

Kenji Ide, *A year later, I feel your behavior*, 2024, wood, sandpaper, watercolor, acrylic wax, soil, 23 1/4 x 7 1/4 x 6 1/2 inches, 59 x 18 1/2 x 16 1/2 centimeters.