

Keiichi Tanaami / Oliver Payne

Perfect Cherry Blossom

We're happy to present the exhibition *Perfect Cherry Blossom* by Keiichi Tanaami (*1936) and Oliver Payne (*1977). The exhibition title is not only a symbol for flourishing spring and peace but also the name of one of the most advanced and violent Japanese Bullet Hell Games. A video game made by gamers for gamers from a time before the gaming industry turned into a home entertainment device.

In the films by Keiichi Tanaami pop culture from east and west meet. Abstracted, post-traumatic impressions from the Great Tokyo Air Raid are combined with LSD fantasies and aesthetics of consumption merge with hallucinatory erotic desires. Tanaami is one of the most influential Pop Art artists of post-war Japan. His work had a great impact on a younger generation of artists working with pop aesthetics in Japan and abroad like Oliver Payne.

In Oliver Payne's collages stickers of Japanese Bullet Hell Games are arranged on torn out pages of an ancient Greek sculpture catalogue. Payne transforms the violent imagery of these videogames into psychedelic explosions of color. Greek statues serve as a background and a reminder of the fantasy worlds produced in Japanese arcade games, which often picture rural Europe. Sounds of an arcade field recording give a notion of manic playfulness towards the exhibited works.

The arcade has traditionally represented an idea of a "third space" for teens. Too young to go to bars, adolescents have so few places to hang. I like places like that — skate spots, graffiti halls of fame, arcades. Slightly sketchy places for teens to kick it. The arcade industry is on the way out and they really won't be around for much longer. I think places like these are important to document. An aural representation of them makes the most sense to me as the "noises" they create have these completely inimitable and unique quality. Nothing but an arcade sounds like an arcade — a completely deafening cacophony of bleeps, bangs, teenage yells and deposited tokens. It's a noise that I can hear many bands aspiring to capture — but always falling short of the mark. Perhaps due to the fact that they don't spend hours playing in arcades. Another motivating factor for the recordings is that it poses the question: Why are arcades on the decline? Why have they been shutting at an alarming rate? The lazy answer is that home consoles such as the PS3 and the XBOX360 are so good that they have brought arcade quality to the home. But arcades are still in full force in Japan. So why can the west no longer profit from dedicated gaming rooms? Oliver Payne

Oliver Payne collaborated with Nick Relph after studying at the Kingston University in London. They were exhibited in 2000 in the Serpentine Gallery London, 2004 in the Kunsthalle Zürich and 2005 at Gavin Brown's Enterprise New York. Since 2007 they focus on their individual work.

Keiichi Tanaami studied graphic design, produced Manga drawings and illustrated various record covers (including The Monkees, Jefferson Airplane and more). He worked with the Japanese neo-Dadaist Ushiro Shinara and collaborated with Robert Rauschenberg and Michel Tapié during their visits in Japan. In 1969 he visited Andy Warhol in his factory and was very inspired by Warhol's strategy of shifting commercial working practice into art production. Tanaami took on this hybrid role of being an artist and commercially working graphic designer at once. In 1975 he was announced as the first Art Director of the Japanese Playboy.