

Sandra Ono
Kaeru

May 10 - June 22, 2024

Bibeau Krueger is pleased to present *Kaeru*, Sandra Ono's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Ono's recent work examines grief and remembrance through new sculptures that serve as offerings to her grandmother who passed during the pandemic.

Central to the exhibition lies Ono's connection to her grandmother, whose upbringing in a countryside town in Hawai'i and relocation to California informs the artist's material selections—shell necklaces, river rocks, towels, sand, keys, mochi from Little Tokyo in Los Angeles, Sanrio stickers, Laker memorabilia and good luck charms are mediums Ono deftly adapts as signifiers of remembrance. Ono's sculptures are inspired by the deep sea and her grandmother's eclectic handmade shrines, which included treasures such as mochi, ribbon leis and candies. Materials for sculpting are procured through a process of interrogating place and memory. *Untitled (2306)* is composed of shells from her grandmother's house alongside hand-built shell replicas and white satin ribbons, evoking the semblance of a human spine. Within the sculpture lies a small heart-shaped charm, reminiscent of one gifted by her grandmother.

Kaeru means "frog" and "to return" in Japanese. It embodies the cultural symbolism associated with luck and nostalgia, themes inspired by Ono's grandmother's penchant for collecting frog figurines and adorning her home with them. Furthering this, Ono confronts aspects of temporal erasure with her expansive view on objects as invitations that transcend historical remembrance. Raised with Buddhist and Japanese American practices woven into familial funeral rituals, Ono incorporates these traditional tributes and ceremonial rites into this body of work.

The impulse for *Kaeru* is located in honoring, preserving, and reinterpreting. There's an alchemy in the memorialization of everyday objects as they become offerings and an intimacy that is revealed through the labor that is exerted into creating them. The psychological weight of these items share an origin story through their material bodies. The artwork *Untitled (2404)* expresses independence and travel. A strand of luggage keys is mounted underneath a densely layered weaving in sterling silver wire—a sort of armor inspired by chain link fencing, and a reverential and metaphorical offering to the artist's grandmother. In *Untitled (2401)*, Ono has constructed a wall-mounted sculpture consisting of layers of bath towels, fabrics, shells, pearls, plastic bags, resin and mochi, veiled in washes of darkly hued dyes, resembling archeology or a tome, a repository for memory. The specificity of materiality amplifies the inherent duality in both utility and significance—a towel absorbs, cleans, comforts, and is used for self care. Ono's sculptures merge a celebration of life and contemplation of mortality, joy and mourning, and the internal and external experience of love and loss.

Sandra Ono (lives and works in Berkeley, CA) received her MFA from Mills College, following undergraduate studies at UC Davis and Imperial College, London. Ono's work has been exhibited at San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA; Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, CA; Et al, San Francisco, CA; Southern Exposure, San Francisco, CA; Personal Space, Vallejo, CA; Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA; St. Joseph's Arts Foundation, San Francisco, CA; Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Sonoma, CA; Transmitter, Brooklyn, NY; Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA; among others.