

# ULTERIOR

**Gaku Tsutaja**

*Pidgingo-no-Inko*

September 5—October 18, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, September 5, 5—8 pm



Gaku Tsutaja, *Einstein Letter*, 2024  
Sumi ink, Gouache, and color pencil on paper / 22 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 30 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (57.5 x 76.5 cm)

**Pidgin** [noun]

pi-jen

: a simplified speech used for communication between people with different languages\*

Ulterior Gallery is pleased to present *Pidgingo-no-Inko*, the fourth solo exhibition by Gaku Tsutaja. A Japanese artist based in New York, Tsutaja reinterprets historical trauma and established narratives through a contemporary lens. The exhibition opens on September 5, 2025. The opening reception will take place on Friday, September 5, from 5 to 8 pm.

The exhibition title, *Pidgingo-no-Inko* (*Pidgingo's Parakeet*) is also the title of the new video sculpture installation featured in the show. "Pidgingo" refers both to "pidgin language" and "after pidgin" ("go" meaning "language" and "after" in Japanese). The parakeet—an evolving character in Tsutaja's work for nearly a decade—functions as both a metaphor for immigrants who mimic language and a satirical figure that reflects the repetition of history. More broadly, "pidgin" denotes a contact language that naturally arises between local populations and foreign traders to enable communication.

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The video installation *Pidgingo-no-Inko*, will be presented alongside the two- and three-dimensional works that appear within it. In the video, the conversations are in English, but the names of countries, events, and places are rendered in a mixture of Japanese and local languages, mimicking how pidgin functions. The narrative unfolds through three voices: a child, a man, and an elderly woman. Rooted in the intimate setting of the family—the smallest unit of community in human society—this constellation also echoes Tsutaja's own family structure in the United States. She interweaves histories of war, colonization, and weapons development with fragments of personal anecdotes, weaving a nonlinear narrative that merges reality and fantasy. In doing so, she explores overlapping symbols and dialogues across time and space, seeking to dismantle fixed frameworks of thought and to invent a new pidgin language within her work.

The video is projected from a large sculptural structure resembling a human head, finished with ears made using traditional Japanese dry-lacquer techniques. Within this structure are miscellaneous elements: broken eggshells, tiny birds, an empty rib cage, and a monstrous black spider spreading its limbs in the center. Conceived as a planning model by the imaginary parakeets, the structure allegorically seeks to reorder histories of mass violence. These symbolic forms also reflect on the information technology industry and censorship—how information enters and exits our attention, and the skeletal systems through which it is monitored. Tsutaja draws inspiration from the overwhelming speed and volume of information circulating on social media, as well as from the simultaneous rise of voices from historically oppressed peoples and their interconnected struggles.

What do we see, what do we fail to recognize, what traps us, and what do we endlessly repeat—both historically and in the present? Tsutaja's work urges us to examine modes of communication, confront systemic violence, and engage collectively with the recurring patterns of human history.

**Gaku Tsutaja**, born in 1974 in Tokyo, Japan, earned her MFA from SUNY Purchase College in 2018; she is currently based in Queens, NY. Following the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and nuclear accident, she began investigating the history of nuclear development, uncovering the untold stories of atomic bombings and nuclear weapons testing through interviews with *Hibakusha* (nuclear victims in Japan, the U.S., and the colonies), as well as with experts on nuclear issues and war. Central to her practice is the act of bringing stories often excluded from mainstream history into an alternative collective memory platform as an artwork, while questioning how social structure may contribute to their erasure. Her work interrogates the influence of visual culture on censorship and propaganda, and the workings of international warfare.

Tsutaja has gained increasing international recognition, including solo presentations at Ulterior Gallery, New York, NY (2017, 2020, 2023); Maruki Gallery for The Hiroshima Panels, Saitama, Japan (2022); the Rubin Center for Visual Arts at UTEP, El Paso, TX (2021); and Shirley Fiterman Art Center at BMCC, New York, NY (2019). She also participated in the Hawai'i Triennial 2022, Honolulu, HI. Tsutaja's exhibitions and artworks have been widely reviewed in numerous outlets including *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Bijutsu-Techo*, and *NHK Broadcast*, among others. Currently, her work is featured in two major museum exhibitions in Japan: *Between Memories and Objects: Monuments, Museums, and Archives* at Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, and *The Myth of Tomorrow: Atomic Bomb x Art* at Taro Okamoto Museum of Art in Kawasaki City, Kanagawa.

\*from Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

**About the Gallery:** Ulterior Gallery, first established on Attorney Street on the Lower East Side of NYC, moved to its current space in SoHo in 2022. Founded in 2016 by Takako Tanabe, a gallerist originally from Tokyo, Ulterior is committed to the exhibition of works by an array of intergenerational artists from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Ulterior Gallery is located at 424 Broadway, #601, New York, NY 10013, on the top floor of a designated landmark building near the intersection of Canal and Broadway. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6 pm, and by appointment. For further inquiries, please contact Takako Tanabe: [takako@ulteriorgallery.com](mailto:takako@ulteriorgallery.com).