

Merlin Carpenter

Vintage

15.05.-29.05.2025

In conversation with Merlin in a taxi ride in Busan last year about the drawings he did in 2006 in Beijing of Karl Marx's birthplace, Trier, it struck me as relevant that that my intrigue about these works was because they felt vintage.

Tokyo must be the capital of vintage. Vintage stores are treated like museums here, each item is repaired, cleaned and so curated. I love the thought of the buyers gleaning a suburban Goodwill or Humana once a year, filling up boxes with weathered reunion t-shirts and college jumpers and restoring them to Japanese standards, and re-selling them at prices surpassing their original tags. And trendy young Tokyo boys and girls, blend Eurotrash with Americana and West Coast hiphop, blurring genre boundaries in a seamless fusion. Its the beginning and end of genre.

The highly produced newest songs by k-pop super group *New Jeans*, effortlessly reference B'more Club, UK garage and Jersey Club with immaculately pitched teen voices that transcend mere music, reaching the pinnacle of sonic perfection. It's perfection till the point that it feel like the the end of music.

I particularly remember going to the new gallery space, when it was still a bar, as a teenager circa 2015 on a electro-swing night, which already during its peak was considered a bad genre that blends vintage jazz swing and house.

Now, below the gallery, there's a Barry McGee throw up. Alongside a large commission he did under the Ebisu rail tracks. This kind of commissioned street art is the epitope of gentrification. Probably his little graffiti throw up was driven by this guilt he feels.

Tenko Nakajima