

VENUS OVER MANHATTAN

Press Release

KEIICHI TANAAMI: MANHATTAN UNIVERSE

September 8 – October 8, 2022

Opening: Thursday, September 8th, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venus Over Manhattan

55 Great Jones Street

New York, NY 10012



(New York, NY) – **Venus Over Manhattan** is pleased to announce its first exhibition with revered Tokyo-based artist **Keiichi Tanaami** (b. 1936). Breaking rank by bridging traditions of manga and *ukiyo-e* with Pop in the postwar period, Tanaami shocked the collective nervous system by incorporating Western contemporary cultural references drawn from animated cartoons and commercial advertisements, giving rise to a truly modern visual language that continues to exert international influence. Opening September 8th, this exhibition includes new monumental paintings; intimately-scaled canvases from the artist's compulsively constructed *Pleasure of Picasso* series; and the recent video work *Red Shadow*—all in Tanaami's optically dazzling style. His deployment of blazing color, dizzy-

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ing layers of imagery, and canny mixture of American and Japanese cultural references capture the movement and energy of a society at once in constant motion and in search of desperately needed peace.

Keiichi Tanaami: *Manhattan Universe* will be on view at the gallery's 55 Great Jones Street location through October 8th, 2022.

Rising to prominence in the 1960s, Tanaami found success early on, creating images that are now deeply forged in the cultural landscape of both Japan and the United States, reinforced through their influence upon the Superflat movement that is embodied by Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara, among others. Tanaami's work first registered the influence of manga, and the Neo-Dada movement in Japan, mingling with his childhood experience of the Second World War, a recurring motif via images of air raids, flares, and blasts of white light from the detonation of explosives. His paintings also reflect memories of *kamishibai*—public theater productions for Japanese children—that beguiled his mind and eye as a child.

Tanaami's artistic practice is likewise characterized by an intensive cross-pollination between modes of production—drawing, painting, collage, graphic illustration, film, and sculpture. In his large-scale works, American pop iconography is placed into complex conversation with historic forms of Japanese illustration, such as traditional *ukiyo-e* wood-block printing. Through these techniques, familiar American-born icons—Betty Boop,



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Western cowboys, and Superman, among others—are transformed into characters in the surreal and enveloping landscapes of the artist's imagination.

Pulling from Neo-Dada's rejection of formal artistic hierarchies, Tanaami's subject matter reflects his long fascination with cultural exchange and various modes of production. He cites such American contemporaries as Warhol and R. Crumb as key influences in his dedication to methodology over medium. And with his simultaneous daily practice of making small paintings that emulate but distinctively reinterpret the innovations of Picasso, Tanaami expresses his dedication to powerful traditions that reverberate across cultural divides. On the evolution of his artistic practice since the late 1960s, he has stated: "I decided then not to limit myself to any one medium, to just design or fine art, but to instead do what I wanted using a variety of methods."

Evocative of the motion and narrative of the films that amazed him as a child and continue to exert sway, Tanaami's motion-dense paintings exemplify a unique mastery of interwoven forms. Citing movement as a key theme across his *oeuvre*, Tanaami has explained, "in my paintings and drawing, whenever I'm drawing something, the thought of 'What would happen if I put this in motion?' becomes the major premise. I am always conscious, albeit unconsciously, of movement."

Exploring the tension between disparate forces, such as the East and the West, violence and innocence, and commercial imagery and high art, Tanaami has emerged as a form-giver for generations of working artists.

ABOUT KEIICHI TANAAMI

Tanaami graduated from Musashino Art University in 1960. His work has been the subject of numerous international solo exhibitions at both public institutions and galleries, in-

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cluding recent presentations at Nanzuka Gallery, Tokyo; Gary Tatintsian Gallery, Moscow; Kawasaki City Museum, Kanagawa; Karma International, Zurich; and the Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art, Shizuoka, among others. Tanaami's work is frequently included in major group presentations, including exhibitions at Pioneer Works, New York, NY; Jeffrey Deitch, New York; Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles; the Ludwig Museum, Budapest; the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; and the Tate Modern, London, among others. His work is held in the permanent collections of public institutions around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Kawasaki City Museum, Kanagawa; Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama; the Art Institute of Chicago; the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C; National galerie im Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum fur Gegenwart, Berlin; the Tokushima Modern Art Museum, Tokushima; Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art, Ito; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, among many others. Tanaami lives and works in Tokyo, Japan.

For further information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at info@venusovermanhattan.com

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55 Great Jones Street
New York, NY 10012

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

PRESS CONTACT

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IMAGE CREDITS

Ecstasy of Eyes, 2022. Pigmented ink, acrylic silk-screen medium, crushed glass, glitter, acrylic paint on canvas; Diptych, each panel: 57 x 39 3/8 in (145 x 100 cm) Overall: 57 x 78 3/4 in (145 x 200 cm).

Indication and Emergence, 2021. Pigmented ink, acrylic silkscreen medium, crushed glass, glitter, acrylic paint on canvas; Triptych, each panel: 78 3/4 x 39 3/8 in (200 x 100 cm) Overall: 78 3/4 x 118 1/4 in (200 x 300 cm).

Pleasure of Picasso – Mother and Child No. 135, 2020-2022. Acrylic on canvas; 16 1/4 x 12 1/2 in (41 x 32 cm).

Still from *Red Shade*, 2021. Digital animation, with sound, 6' 44".

All artworks by Keiichi Tanaami: © 2022 Keiichi Tanaami. Courtesy the artist, NANZUKA, Tokyo, and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.