

FRAENKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

For immediate release:



KOTA EZAWA

Oct. 23 – Dec. 21, 2024

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by Kota Ezawa featuring a number of important new works. This will be his first solo show with the gallery since joining the roster last year. Ezawa reimagines key images from media, art history, and popular culture, translating complex visual information into its essential elements to explore the construction of shared experience. The Bay Area-based German-Japanese American artist has described himself as a kind of modern-day history painter, drawing attention to the emotional core of scenes that define the cultural narrative. Encompassing a range of media, the show brings together Ezawa's most recent output as well as works from earlier in his career.

At the heart of the exhibition are two new works: a digital animation and related print on wood that depict then-California Senator Kamala Harris questioning Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Other highlights include *Hand Vote*, an 8-foot sculpture celebrating the practice of democracy, and two recent lightboxes portraying the arrival of a cruise ship under the Golden Gate Bridge in 2020, carrying some of the first known cases of COVID-19 into the United States. An open house with the artist will take place on Saturday, November 16 from 12-4pm.

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In his new animation Ezawa focuses on an exchange from 2018 in which Harris asks Kavanaugh if he knows of any laws that govern the male body. Ezawa renders the C-SPAN video into flattened, simplified shapes, giving the subjects a mask-like appearance emphasizing the theatrical quality of the event. The significance of the moment has shifted over time, as Kavanaugh went on to help overturn Roe v. Wade. Ezawa began the works shortly before President Biden withdrew from the 2024 presidential race, and the impact of the exchange continues to evolve as Harris campaigns for President.

Anchoring the show with its oversize presence, *Hand Vote* pictures more than a dozen men and women with their hands raised in an act of civic involvement. The original tabletop-sized sculpture was created in 2008, in the runup to an earlier presidential election. Since then, larger versions of the piece have been featured in outdoor public art installations in Vancouver and Washington D.C. For the Fraenkel Gallery exhibition, Ezawa has created a version in a new scale.

Two lightboxes depict the arrival of the *Grand Princess* cruise ship into the picturesque landscape of the San Francisco Bay in March 2020. They evoke the anxiety and alienation that marked the coming of a global pandemic. In one, the huge ship attracts a small crowd, who watch as it enters the Bay; in the other, on view for the first time, the ship's passengers wave from their balconies. Images of the ship were viewed around the world, circulating through the media as the virus spread.

Kota Ezawa has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Baltimore Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, California; SITE Santa Fe; Mead Art Museum, Amherst, Massachusetts; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia; Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York; Vancouver Art Gallery Offsite, Canada; and the Saint Louis Art Museum, among others. His work is in the collections of institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Art Institute of Chicago; Musée D'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Canada; and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Ezawa received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award in 2004; a SECA Art Award in 2006, presented by SFMOMA; and a Eureka Fellowship in 2010. He participated in the Whitney Biennial 2019 and the Shanghai Biennale 2004.

Ezawa's 2019 video *National Anthem* is currently on view in the exhibition *Count Me In* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, through May 4, 2025. His work is also on view in *Made in Germany? Art and Identity in a Global Nation* at the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, until January 5, 2025.

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Image: Kota Ezawa, *Kavanaugh Hearings*, 2024

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