

Mr.

Sunset in My Heart

June 23-August 12, 2016

536 West 22nd Street, New York

#sunsetinmyheart | @lehmannmaupin

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 23, 5-8 PM



Whaaaaaat? Whyyyyy!, 2015, acrylic and pencil on canvas mounted on wood panel, 86.81 x 70.87 in, 220.5 x 180 cm. © 2015 Mr. / Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong.

New York, May 31, 2016—Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present ***Sunset in My Heart***, a solo exhibition of new work by **Mr.** (b. 1969, Cupa, Japan) who works in a variety of media including painting, drawing, video, performance, sculpture, and installation. Mr.'s most recent body of work exemplifies a maturation and growth within his practice.

While his aesthetic remains committed to the Superflat¹ style for which he is best known, the works featured in *Sunset in My Heart* highlight the influence that the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent nuclear disaster have had on Mr.'s work in the years since. **There will be an opening reception designed to recreate a Japanese summer festival with a performance by Mr. at the gallery (536 West 22nd Street) on Thursday, June 23, from 5-8 PM.**

For *Sunset in My Heart*, Mr. has returned to his expressive and experimental roots as a young artist, incorporating abstract elements like graffiti, and using distressed and sullied canvases. Mr. prepares the canvases by burning them, walking over them, and leaving them on his studio floor to collect dirt and debris. This new treatment of the canvas is directly connected to the artist's early interest in the 1960s Italian art movement Arte Povera that inspired his first *manga* paintings he produced on store receipts, takeout menus, and other scraps of transactional detritus. Mr. uses the distressed surface of the canvas as a base for cartoon renderings inspired by the online milieu of his *otaku*² community, or sourced from the artist's collection of magazines, posters, and advertising. These recent works reflect the artist's intensely personal reinterpretation of popular visual culture and the increasingly mediated ways we engage with one another.

Mr.'s oeuvre has elevated *anime* and manga subculture by embracing its cultural significance rather than critiquing its frivolity. In addition to painstakingly recreating the tantalizing graphics and slick finish of manga comic book characters, Mr. physically becomes the characters through cosplay performances—dressing up as fictional characters—at his openings and events. This recent body of work reflects Mr.'s impulse to push the seemingly kitschy nature of these imaginary realms into a gritty and abstract painting style in order to explore personal, global, and environmental themes of destruction. While the manga-style characters continue to appear in Mr.'s work, their significance has shifted from playing up *lolicon*—the fetishization of young, fictional female characters—toward a more platonic realm, known as *moe*, or love for an icon that does not carry sexual associations.

These new characters represent positive beacons of strength that overcome all adversity. This reflects the artist's creative impetus to embrace pleasure and beauty in diverse forms, instead of giving in to the personal and national despair that emerges after catastrophic loss and destruction, as it has in Japan since 2011. The title, *Sunset in My Heart*, reflects the simultaneous yet conflicting feelings of melancholy and hope, which also encompass the complicated nature of the human condition.

About the artist

Mr. (b. 1969, Cupa, Japan) graduated from the Department of Fine Arts, Sokei Art School in Tokyo in 1996. The artist has exhibited internationally in both group and solo exhibitions including *Animamix Biennale 2015-2016*, Daegu Art Museum, South Korea; *Live On: Mr.'s Japanese Neo-Pop*, Seattle Art Museum (2014); *Kyoto-Tokyo: From Samurais to Mangas*, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco (2010); *Animate*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan (2009); *KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art*, Vancouver Art Gallery (2008); *RED HOT: Asian Art Today from the Chaney Family Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts Houston (2007); and *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, Japan Society, New York (2005), among others. Mr.'s work is represented in numerous public institutions, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Seattle Art Museum, and private collections worldwide. The artist lives and works in Saitama, just outside of Tokyo, Japan.

About Lehmann Maupin

¹ "Superflat" is a word coined by artist Takashi Murakami to link two-dimensionality in traditional Japanese paintings, known as *Nihonga*, from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries with the flatness in contemporary Japanese visual art and animation.

² First introduced in 1983 by Nakamori Akio, "otaku" (translation: "your household") was used to define a then-new social demographic of individuals who partake in the subculture in their individual homes, isolated from reality.

LEHMANN MAUPIN

Founded in 1996 by partners Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin, Lehmann Maupin has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, working in multiple disciplines and across varied media. With three locations—two in New York and one in Hong Kong—the gallery represents artists from the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Known for championing artists who create groundbreaking and challenging forms of visual expression, Lehmann Maupin presents work highlighting personal investigations and individual narratives through conceptual approaches that often address such issues as gender, class, religion, history, politics, and globalism.

Current & Upcoming Exhibitions

Adriana Varejão, *Kindred Spirits*, through June 19, 2016, New York, Chrystie Street

Tracey Emin, *Stone Love*, through June 18, 2016, New York, West 22nd Street

Angel Otero, *Born in the Echoes*, May 26-July 2, 2016, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

For more information on Mr. or other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Marta de Movellan or Kathryn McKinney at +1 212 255 2923, or visit lehmannmaupin.com.

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