

# Keiichi Tanaami

## Memory Collage

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The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, presents 'Keiichi Tanaami: Memory Collage,' the artist's first US solo museum exhibition. Keiichi Tanaami (1936-2024, Tokyo) has been a pioneering figure in Japanese and global Pop art for seven decades, creating magnificently immersive works across media in order to consider American and Japanese culture in the post-war period. Tanaami anticipated the crossover of popular culture and fine art, and through his connections to design has taken a radical and critical approach to how images of desire and violence transform society. The works included in 'Keiichi Tanaami: Memory Collage,' from 1965 to the present, track the artist's use of collage to express the complex media landscape of our time.

Tanaami's life and work are deeply informed by his upbringing in Japan, the trauma of the Second World War, and the country's postwar reconstitution. Although the war had forced Tanaami and his mother to flee to the countryside in 1943, the massive United States air raids on Tokyo at the end of the conflict, as well as his experience in air raid shelters, had immense impact on the then-nine-year-old boy and continue to haunt his imagination. Tanaami's hallucinatory works brim with American airplanes, search lights, monsters real and imagined, and fleeing masses. Sexual images permeate his works across decades, as do synthetic colors; Tanaami records popular culture commercializing desire in order to suppress the devastation of war. Tanaami graduated from the Musashino Art University, Kodaira, Japan, with a degree in graphic design in 1960. He forged a successful career in design and advertising, working as the first art director of Japanese *Playboy* and creating record covers for Jefferson Airplane and the Monkees, which contributed to the introduction of psychedelic culture in Japan.

During the 1960s, Tanaami's artistic practice frequently took the form of exuberant collages overflowing with clippings from international magazines. These dense collages are fascinating indexes of postwar visual culture, drawing from Western and Japanese news sources, commercial forms, and chapbooks. Tanaami would also elaborate on these fantastic sets of images through engagingly musical, surreal, and psychedelic animations that today are classics of avant-garde film.

Combining disparate media, Tanaami creates worlds that explore how war distorts perception through fragmentation, nightmares, and hallucinatory visions. During the 1970s, Tanaami's iconic paintings combine idyllic landscapes with advertising, erotic imagery and anti-war slogans. Over subsequent decades, Tanaami would continually expand these worlds, quoting manga, theater and increasingly art history, from sources as varied as the sixteenth-century French School of Fontainebleau and Japanese woodblock (*ukiyo-e*). In recent years the artist has explored the role of the artist in visual culture through his *Pleasure of Picasso* (2020–) series, which make playful and technical use of appropriation and repetition while considering the flattening of social and commercial art and history today.

Additionally, the exhibition concisely surveys Tanaami's recent work, a period of great productivity and experimentation for the artist. In epically large-scale painting and complex moving image, the artist has deployed technology to scale his kaleidoscopic visions. Through these radically produced, digitally printed and visually saturated paintings, Tanaami reflects on a contemporary regime of pervasive images, and the ever-present specter of history.

'Keiichi Tanaami: Memory Collage' is organized by ICA Miami and curated by Alex Gartenfeld, Irma and Norman Braman Artistic Director, and Gean Moreno, Director of ICA Miami's Knight Foundation Art + Research Center, with the assistance of Donna Honarpisheh, Knight Foundation Associate Curator.