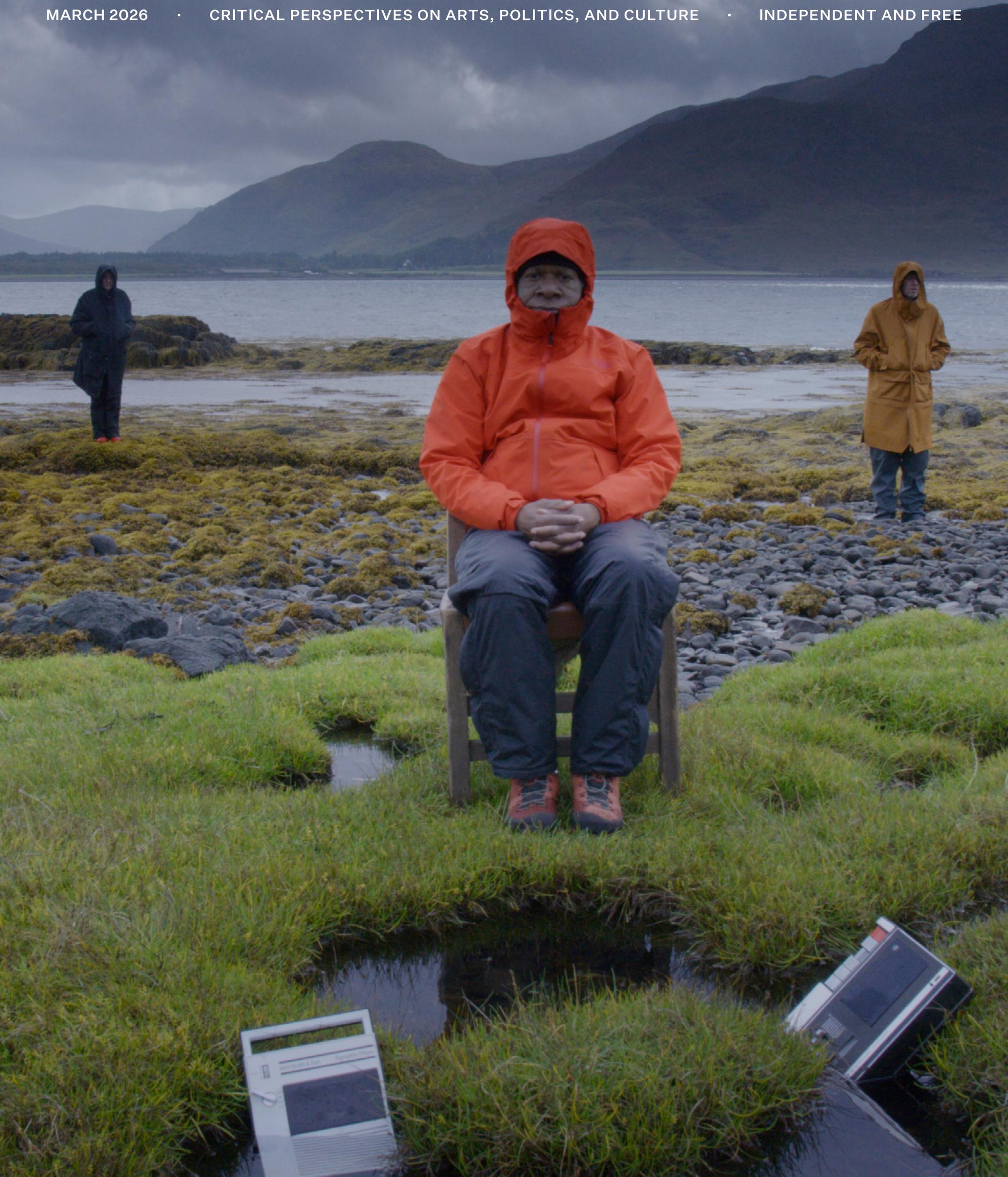


# BROOKLYN RAIL

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· CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

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collection (that's no surprise), its literal separation from the vast array of Therrien's output does two wonderful things: first, it reinforces how much it has become beloved by audiences that aren't fixated on who made it as they might be the Andy Warhols, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jeff Koons, etc.; and second, it heightens the synaptic impulses of many of the other works on view in the exhibition two floors below.

We live in story after story, and we live in room after room. Therrien's relationship with "the room" is as crucial as his relationship to shape and association. For example, right away in the first, *No title (stacked plates, white)* (1993) and *No title (pitcher relief with yellow spout)* (1990) come together like a vernacular poem to establish just how attuned Therrien was to the productive agility of form and situation—as opposed to the comparative brutishness of a lot of contemporary sculpture—and what that agility can provide us to make meaningful connections to what we are looking at during the moments of our direct experience. The dizzying optical effect that occurs while we circle an oversized stack of dinner plates doesn't collapse into gimmickry largely because the proportions of the room, along with the simple-yet-expansive wood pitcher relief attached to the wall like a painting, create in tandem a gentle gravity. It's the anchoring that almost always comes to the rescue of Therrien's work. Not that it needs saving (anything but), but instead to facilitate even the most manic moments, relatively speaking, of another major work also in this room: the almost Looney Tunes-vortex of *No title (large telephone cloud)* (1998) that is part Tasmanian devil and part snowman, a communicative cloud just before we got the Cloud.

Quite like my assessment of the de Kooning retrospective (see the October 2011 *Rail*), I find myself utterly convinced by nearly every work in this abundant display of Therrien's. Like my irritation with most of de Kooning's 1960s work, I can quibble here with a few things of Therrien's. For example, the baby's head emerging from one end of *No title (Soapy, pink)* (2017), because its weirdness entraps the sculpture's form. Then, two works that borrow extensively from the impactful sculptural interventions of the under-recognized Glen Seator (b. 1956, d. 2002) who, like Therrien, showed work at Gagosian in Beverly Hills in the late 1990s: *No title (room, panic doors)* (2013–14) and *No title (sidewalk)* (2011). Since, again, Therrien's work lives so fully in story after story and room after room, these two works, for me, disrupt—slightly, to be fair—the simultaneous expansiveness and intimacy that infuses seemingly every single other thing Therrien made. (Seator got past such detours by literally upending his

and our perspective, demonstrating that he and Therrien were two very different types of artist.) Put another way, all but a few works in this beautiful exhibition look as if they are just getting started, and I can't think of a better thing for anything in the world.

Terry R. Myers is a writer and independent curator based in Los Angeles, and an Editor-at-Large of the *Rail*.

## JAMES ROSENQUIST

BY SAUL OSTROW

*Waiting for an Idea*  
Off Paradise  
January 21–March 21, 2026  
New York

James Rosenquist becomes newly legible when he is approached not as a canonical figure of Pop art, but as an artist tracking how social experience is reorganized by a world of proliferating images. In this light, his decontextualized representations slot directly into a larger argument about realism after modernism, in which "reality" arrives through the circulation of images rather than as stable objects or narratives. The exhibition *Waiting for an Idea* at Off Paradise compresses the arc of his project into a compact—almost meta—diagram, showing how his billboard pictorialism, translated into prints, reveals itself less as a spectacular celebration of commercial imagery than as a spectral form of Pop-Surrealism. In these works, Rosenquist begins to look less like a classic Pop artist and more like a prescient postmodernist: the prints anticipate a condition in which originality gives way to iteration, authorship to recombination, and the work of art functions as a node within an expanded network of visual exchange.

As such, he appears as a kind of reluctant formalist for whom images function less as signs than as compositional components.

If his paintings are still read as engaged with the iconography of commercialism, his prints are more concerned with the way collaged, fragmented images promise meaning and then suspend it. Stripped of the physical scale and the photorealist charisma associated with his large canvases, Rosenquist's familiar repertoire—spaghetti, car fenders, cosmetics, anonymized faces—no longer reads as a satirical or critical incursion into capitalist society; these elements instead appear as familiar remnants of an already image-saturated culture. A clear instance is *Forehead I* and *Forehead II* (both 1968), a pair built from the same stacked images of spaghetti, a face, and a car grille. *Forehead I* is rendered as a five-color print in which the spaghetti appears in vivid color, and *Forehead II* is a four-color version in which the spaghetti drops into black and white. Here the mechanical, reproductive nature of the print medium dampens whatever auratic charge might cling to such motifs, so that they register as familiar imagery redeployed as abstract elements more than as communicative signs.

*A Drawing While Waiting for an Idea* (1966), executed on a paper towel, reads as a mordant acknowledgment that the traditional modernist notion of "the idea" arriving—whether as political program, formal breakthrough, or psychic revelation—had, by the 1960s, begun to feel systematically undercut and disposable, something to be used and thrown away once it had served its function, much like the towel itself. In place of an inspired, originary idea, Rosenquist substituted cut-and-paste procedures that expose how such "ideas," as floating signifiers, are subject to free association and endless recombination.

Here the print medium is not incidental but constitutive: layered processes of lithography and intaglio overprinting literalize the way images are compiled and reissued, so that the resulting composition becomes inseparable from, and to some degree about, its mode of production.

Compositions developed from small paper collages of mechanically reproduced images underpin much of Rosenquist's print work. The 1979 collage of sources for *Dog Descending a Staircase*, which initially read as an artist's study, reappear in editioned form as *Dog Descending a Staircase* (1980–82), making the passage from sketch to print an explicit part of the work's logic. Under these conditions, "ideas" are no longer concepts to be deepened so much as arrangements to be managed, rearranged, and recirculated. Rosenquist's montage technique thus functions as a diagram of realism's revised terms: where nineteenth-century realism claimed to reveal the social by rendering it, his work proceeds from the recognition that social experience is already image-mediated, and his procedures—cropping; splicing; abrupt scale shifts; slick, impersonal finish—no longer stand at a critical distance from the world they depict but replicate the very operations through which that world is already given to perception. In the prints, this replication is sharpened by the thinness of the support and the shallowness of the surface as the image sits almost flush with the paper, closer to magazine or poster than to oil painting, reinforcing the sense that "reality" arrives as a succession of flat, interchangeable images.

Seen in this light, the familiar conflation of Rosenquist with Pop's commodity fetishism looks increasingly inadequate. The prints still traffic in commodities, but not as isolated objects of desire; instead, everyday



James Rosenquist, *Dog Descending a Staircase*, 1980–82. Color lithograph/intaglio on cream wove Arches paper, 42 x 70 inches. Courtesy the James Rosenquist Estate.

things appear as interchangeable components within a larger circuitry of standardized, reproducible images. What repeats are not discrete “things” so much as formats and schemas, and the evident pleasure taken in technical variation underscores the shift from the commodity as object to the commodity as visual regime. Rosenquist’s cropped, decontextualized fragments refuse narrative closure—their specific referents hardly matter, so long as attention is captured, interrupted, and redirected. In this sense, the prints do amount to a kind of realism in that they register a world in which there is little “behind” the image beyond further images.

What emerges from these works is the fact that Rosenquist is neither simply the billboard painter who smuggled the vernacular into the museum nor the Pop master whose collage conveniently anticipates media theory. In these prints he appears as a latter-day surrealist of the commercial unconscious, a printer-painter whose methods coincide with both the sublimity and the banality of the culture he seeks to lay bare. The pertinence of the prints, given their scale, format, and materiality, lies in their distance from the glossy commercial operations of their sources, while at the same time they expose the thin, almost imperceptible gap that separates Rosenquist’s fragmented images from the narratives he derives them from. In this sense, the title *Waiting for an Idea* calls to mind Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*: what is at stake is not the arrival of some long-deferred “idea” that would redeem these images, but the recognition that nothing is coming to their rescue—that meaning is structurally deferred by the very circuits that produce and distribute images. If Beckett’s tramps wait in vain for a figure who never arrives, Rosenquist’s prints wait, equally in vain, for an “idea” that would stand outside the image-world they inhabit.

Saul Ostrow is an independent critic, curator, and Art Editor at Large for BOMB magazine.

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## THE HOUSE OF PIKACHU

BY COLLIN SUNDT

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Art, Anime, and Pop Culture  
Asia Society Texas  
October 17, 2025–March 15, 2026  
Houston, TX

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*The House of Pikachu: Art, Anime, and Pop Culture*, presented by the Asia Society Texas, explores the manifold associations of not only Pikachu but the scope of anime at large. Taking a sweeping view of its influence, most of the artists assembled by

Owen Duffy, Nancy C. Allen Curator and Director of Exhibitions, like him grew up in a world in thrall with this aesthetic and its evolution, experiencing the aftereffects of its dispersal. Animation and comics—anime and manga—reside in the realm of the infinite; as pure visuals, they can propel their narratives regardless of their language of origin, yielding meaning where other modes of expression fail. Anime can wear its heritage lightly, speaking not only to a moment of creation, but also to the economies from which it emerges. Although globalization tends to flatten history and context, amid this leveling of difference, anime has proven to be perennially popular, thriving in our ever more interconnected world, with the style not just becoming substance, but subsuming it.

Seen through Duffy’s selection, the global influence of anime is deeply intertwined with its sweeping fandom. The evolution of anime from niche interest to global phenomenon, enabled by an ever expanding marketability, has resulted in a singular aesthetic confluence, surpassing all limitations of origin and becoming an international style all its own. *The House of Pikachu* surveys the broader implications of the intense enthusiasm of an ever expanding anime fanbase and an idiosyncratic blend of art and commerce that has undeniably altered visual culture at large. Such love is not born in a vacuum; even in more market driven works, the worlds of anime series often reward attention paid with rich world building and multidimensional characters. While produced with equal commercial calculation, Disney animation frequently offers a circumscribed world of predictable outcomes, possibility appended for storytelling efficiency, while the realms seen onscreen in a Hayao Miyazaki film appear to be awash in potentiality, the golden light of a new day seemingly always raking across the characters. These are complicated stories with morality that is rarely binary, few clear resolutions, and lessons learned perhaps only partially or not at all. For a generation, Pikachu was undoubtedly an entry point into the world of Japanese animation and comics and their multi-platform fandom. Through this admittedly kid-friendly aperture, it was possible to catch a glimpse of a different world, a domain of sophisticated mature storytelling, but above all, for those whose attention was grabbed, it served as an entry into an intimate world of fandom. Although ostensibly built upon a Pokémon-centered framework, Duffy’s curation does not ignore the larger evolution of anime and its reception in the 1990s, as well as it attaining a global reach in its selection. Like the inspiring source material, the scope is vast.

The 1990s—formative years for many of the featured artists—while

marking the beginnings of the nascent growth of anime and Japanese culture as a world-spanning force, were a turbulent time in Japan. Although the decade would begin with the costumed romantic fantasia of *Sailor Moon* and the triumphal looping story arcs of muscular heroics in *Dragon Ball Z*, after the collapse of the real estate driven economy, to be swiftly followed by the 1995 Kobe earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyo cult’s Tokyo subway sarin gas attacks, a darker interiority could be glimpsed in some of the most popular anime being produced at the time. While not explicit responses to these events, Hideaki Anno’s 1995 *Neon Genesis Evangelion* chronicled the esoteric battles of a war-weary populace, and Masamune Shirow’s series *Ghost in the Shell*, explored the pains of digitally-defined existence. Both achieved explosive success, striking a nerve at a moment when Japanese society was enmeshed in upheaval. This febrile atmosphere also saw the rise of the original video animation (or OVA), enabled by the expanding world of home video, a new path toward monetization that allowed for increasingly lavish projects to be produced as well as the ability to make extensive back catalogues more easily available in foreign markets. For the budding anime fan, it was a golden era of discovery, if it was at times hampered by poor quality translations and hapless dubbing. In the sheer abundance suddenly available was an ecstatic newness, seemingly foretelling a world of greater permeability and cultural exchange through a medium that was able to speak in so many voices to so many people.

Julien Ceccaldi draws upon this profusion in his gallery-spanning *A Collection of Little Memories* (2025). In this near life-size composition, five figures stand on a gantry overlooking industrial ruin, extended into the space of sculpture with the addition of a steel staircase, paying homage to a towering reclining creature. One of the figures leans down to kiss the creature’s massive outstretched finger while another, sharply dressed, tosses an apple core toward it. Is this a pageant of desire or obligation? Are the offerings witnessed made out of devotion or terror? The figures in Ceccaldi’s tableau of lucid dread seem resigned to their own specific roles, while amid the creature’s rippling flesh, a limpid sexuality courses through the scene. Ceccaldi’s work, rife with scenes of collusive eroticism, makes use of many period-specific anime tropes, including the lanky battle-hardened bodies of Buronson’s *Fist of the North Star* and the spasmodic violence of Katsuhiro Ôtomo’s *Akira*, creating an insular iconography, both familiar and jarring. The monstrous figure, mostly seen as a swollen balding head pockmarked with veiny growths, stares out, his arresting gaze directed toward the viewer, eyes ringed with stylized

specular highlights. Participation with the work is reordered with the sculptural appendage, complicating the sexualized doomscape further while questioning the inherent tensions of gallery spectatorship.

The iconography of catastrophe, as well as the complicity of its viewers, plays an outsized role in many contemporary anime and is a primary focus of the work of Brazilian artist Yuli Yamagata, who often highlights acts of brutality through their deconstruction. *Bullet in the Forehead* (2024) transforms the titular violence into a gauzy spread of fabric, foam, and lamé, the gore restyled into a haze of sateen fibers, while the veins of the dying eyes are rendered as heavily stitched crimson seams. In this reimagining of an unsparing scene from the intensely violent anime *Genocyber*, the head is reordered into spiraling bulging masses of globular forms of fabric, the battling straining to contain the explicit violence, in the process attenuating the sequence with a near Duchampian glee. Although ruthless in its depiction of violence, the near obsessive detail with which the creators of *Genocyber* render it has long been considered a hallmark of anime, a practiced building of worlds with distinctive visual acuity often seen as lacking in Western animation and comics. This artistic rigor—the dizzying contrasts of the micro and macro it yields—has long inspired devotion, buttressed into a circularity of content through the ready availability of reams of tie-in merchandise. The underlying foundations of the expansive scope of this following form a core component of the work of Teppei Kaneuji and Yoshitaka Amano, both strongly represented. Though members of different generations, both artists have spent their careers creating work responsive to the ramifications of otaku-style fandom, exploring the pop cultural footprint of anime—in the case of Amano, often revisiting the imagery of series he had a hand in popularizing, and for Kaneuji, examining the expanded repercussions of its marketed legacy. In Kaneuji’s “New Teenage Fan Club” series, figurines are covered with the removable hairpieces of anime characters from collectible model kits, enshrouding them in the obsessive level of detail demanded by fans. The smaller scale of the figures used in *Teenage Fan Club #67–#72* (2015) call particular attention to the intricacy of the hairdos, their endless range of colors illustrating the sheer array of characters available. These works are both a rejoinder to the scope of consumerism as well as a celebration of the luxuriance in the attention paid to these series through their merchandise, with meaning accruing unexpectedly through calculated detail.

Amano’s storied career as an illustrator has mostly been witnessed through the endless reproduction of