

Ronin Gallery

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Sebastian Masuda Foment's a Kawaii Rebellion at Ronin Gallery in New York

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Sebastian Masuda

THANK YOU ALL #2, 2016

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This fall in New York, Ronin Gallery hosts a *kawaii* explosion with “True Colors,” a dazzling new show in conjunction with Asian Contemporary Art Week. While *kawaii* is often simply translated as “cuteness,” the artist Sebastian Masuda aims to reveal the nuances of this Japanese term while demonstrating how the concept is, as he says, “close to the spirit of the punk and the hippie, representing the fashion of rebellion against the present state of society.”

Sebastian Masuda

Future, 2015

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Masuda has been embodying and spreading the true spirit of *kawaii* for decades. In 1995, at 25 years old, he opened 6%DOKIDOKI, the now-iconic shop he stocks with items that further his kaleidoscopic vision. Masuda has since expanded his activities to include music videos for the likes of J-pop superstar Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, design work for some of Japan's leading brands, film and theater sets, and art. Among his major ongoing projects is *Time After Time Capsule*, for which Masuda distributed enormous time capsules to 10 cities worldwide and asked residents to fill them with meaningful items. In 2020, the capsules will be united and displayed in Tokyo for the Olympics, connecting people around the world.

“The word *kawaii* works as an adhesive between our vast contemporary culture,” Masuda has said. “It unites objects, fashion, and art from seemingly totally different genres. From Hello Kitty, to lunch boxes, to Harajuku fashion, all are connected by *kawaii*.”



Sebastian Masuda

Peach, 2015

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Sebastian Masuda

Destroy #1, 2016

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At Ronin Gallery, Masuda brings a selection of his *kawaii* collages, which take the form of rectangular and tondo-shaped wall pieces whose surfaces are jammed with a riot of trinkets and toys—costume jewelry, stuffed animals, plastic food, fake fur, Legos, etc.—in every shade of the rainbow. At once delightful and overwhelming, this cacophony of stuff and color is a form of rebellion for the artist.

“My work rebels against our era with no colors—colors that have been stripped away by terrorism, war, stressful societies, and meaningless life,” he has said. “The reintroduction of color frees us. It is better to be free.”

—Karen Kedmey

“True Colors: Sebastian Masuda” is on view at Ronin Gallery, New York, Oct. 27–Dec. 2, 2016.

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