

# TAKE NINAGAWA

## Take Ninagawa

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For Immediate Release:

## **Soju Tao Bonnie the Dog May 15 through June 19, 2010**

Take Ninagawa is proud to announce the opening of mixed-media artist Soju Tao's first solo exhibition at the gallery, "Bonnie the Dog."

Soju Tao is known for making mixed-media drawings and paintings that combine figurative elements with obsessive, psychedelic patterning and the lyrics of poems and songs composed by the artist. Tao often creates alter-egos in producing his works, sometimes operating under the name of his own production company, Okame Pro, and other times using aliases such as Andy Watanabe, the Japanese Andy Warhol. These works often feature unexplained, recurring characters such as an elderly professor, a young girl and a boy.

In 2008, Tao was chosen by French artist Sophie Calle to participate in the CHANEL Mobile Art project. In consultation with Calle, Tao bought a CHANEL bag and the entirety of its contents from a woman he met on the street, Hiroko Tomiyama, and then constructed a quasi-anthropological environment of paintings, display cases, a light box and a bench that wove in and out of Tomiyama's personal circumstances and the artist's own interpretation of her effects.

"Bonnie the Dog" builds from this project, as well as a series of drawings made in 2009 about a fictional character, "Kissboy," to further explore approaches to narration in painting. "Bonnie the Dog" is a post-war black-and-white animation program of Tao's own invention. Creating all the characters and their backstories, including a teenage pig and his faithful companion, Bonnie the Dog, Tao then painted imagined scenes from the TV program. The resulting paintings, comprising over 30 small monochrome and color canvases as well as a wall-sized two-panel color canvas, are thus fragments of a non-existing fictional framework, which can be pieced together in infinite combinations by viewers, and will never cohere into a canonical narrative.

As with the CHANEL project and other earlier works, Tao turns the characters in "Bonnie the Dog" into deliberately flattened entities—ciphers for the hidden desires and traumas that inform all people. Like votive figures, their superficiality is what gives them depth. Also on display, odd, sculptural objects depicting the characters will be arranged on the floor of the gallery, which the artist has covered with rainbow-hued carpeting.

Born in 1977, Soju Tao earned a BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design, London. Recent solo exhibitions include Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery's "Project N" series of solo shows for emerging artists (2007). In 2008 Tao participated in the "CHANEL: Mobile Art" art exhibition (Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York), and received a Hara Museum of Contemporary Art Bloomberg BloomBus! special commission. In 2009 he was included in the annual exhibition of emerging artists "VOCA: The Vision of Contemporary Art" at Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo.