

GAKU  
TSUTAJA  
A TRIP TO  
THE MOON

SHERRILL  
ROLAND  
INERTIA

SEPTEMBER 10 - NOVEMBER 2, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 6 - 8PM

SHERRILL ROLAND *THE JUMPSUIT PROJECT* PERFORMANCES:

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 3 - 4PM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 5 - 7PM

SHIRLEY FITERMAN ART CENTER

81 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10007

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY

[www.bmcc.cuny.edu/sfac/](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/sfac/)



## GAKU TSUTAJA: A TRIP TO THE MOON

Gaku Tsutaja creates fictional narrative structures based on actual historical events through which she exposes the implications of imbedded issues of race, ideology, ethnicity, class, and politics. Using various media, including works on paper, video, and sculptural installations, Tsutaja mediates between differing versions of historical narratives.

As an immigrant to the United States from Japan (she moved to New York in 2006), Tsutaja in many ways attempts to reconcile both countries' cultural sensibilities. It is, in fact, the disparities between the two cultures and their divergent retelling of past events that she strives to negotiate. Her use of allegory and animal surrogates allows her to reframe difficult stories and create a non-threatening space in which to examine and discuss contrasting underlying political perspectives.

In ***A Trip to the Moon***, Tsutaja presents three bodies of work that establish a connecting line between three fundamental historical moments. The first of the series, entitled ***Kingdom of Kitai*** (2017), addresses Japan's post-war infrastructure projects of the 1960s (and the lead-up to the much later nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi in 2011). The development and use of the atomic bomb are portrayed in a group of works referred to as the ***Post-National Museum of Parakeet History*** (2017-19). Most recently, she explores the events of Pearl Harbor and the US mobilization anticipating the Allied Invasion, including the establishment of Alien Detention Centers (internment camps for detaining Japanese, Italians, and Germans living in the United States), through ***World War II Club*** (2019), which is based on the story of the internees at Fort Missoula, Montana.

Tsutaja's allegorical versions of these histories are imbued with aspects of animism and Surrealism and are populated with

animals and animal-human hybrids. These protagonists have no eyes or are blind, making them more anonymous, but also representative of fabled blind figures who traditionally can see "truth." In her re-constructions of the tragedies of Fukushima Daiichi, the history of the *Enola Gay*, and the interment of Japanese immigrants at Fort Missoula, the stories are observed and retold from the perspectives of moles and parakeets and other animal characters—thus making the histories neither American nor Japanese, but something different and fantastical. By erasing specific political history and establishing a distance from actual events, Tsutaja allows for a reframing of highly sensitive topics.

Tsutaja's own biography, and particularly her role as an outsider in America, greatly informs her multi-media formats and narratives. Having shaped her imagination as a child, the language of black and white comics is an important underpinning to her work. The ***Kingdom of Kitai*** series, in which the story takes place well before the Fukushima disaster (but anticipates its occurrence), refers to the original construction of the plant (begun in 1967 and completed in 1971). The comic-like mole characters who are building the underground tunnels represent the civil engineers who constructed the Japanese infrastructure in the post-war period—a reference that is also autobiographical, as Tsutaja's father was one of the engineers. Thus, her personal past becomes bound up in the often hidden issues at the heart of all of these stories.

# GAKU TSUTAJA: A TRIP TO THE MOON

## **The Kingdom of Kitai Series Nyukou-Shimeihyou**

**Tunnel Entrance Log: Worker's Tokens**, 2017  
Mixed Media

24 x 46 x 8 inches

**Statue of Dream**, 2019  
Mixed Media

28 x 30 x 57 inches

**The Track**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Moment**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**Claws**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**Yellow Interval**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**1300 Tons**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Wizards**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Unknown**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Intangible Journey**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Tunnel March**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**The Hope Inspection Team**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**Workers for the Future**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

**Agreement**, 2017  
Sumi ink and acrylic on paper  
22 x 30 inches

## **Post-National Museum of Parakeet History Series**

**Parakeet Peace Hall**, 2017  
Found object, wood, paint, Indian ink, paper  
clay, LED light  
Dimensions variable

**Spirit of Tsurumanryo**, 2018  
Mixed media  
4 x 18 1/2 x 16 inches

**Study with the Moon**, 2019  
Sumi ink, house paint, panel, media player,  
monitor, speaker  
29 x 24 x 2 1/2 inches

**The Main Gate**, 2018  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**The Canvas Shroud**, 2018  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**Enola's Bomb Bay**, 2018  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**The First-Aid Tent Station**, 2019  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**Burns**, 2018,  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**Barrack**, 2019  
Sumi ink on paper  
11 x 15 inches

**The Swarm**, 2018  
Sumi ink, paper clay, plastic toy  
Dimensions variable

**The Spirit of Tiedemannia Canbyi**, 2018,  
Mixed media  
12 x 12 x 12 1/2 inches

**The Spirit of Wright's Marsh Thistle**, 2019  
Mixed media  
8 x 8 x 12 1/2 inches

## **World War II Club Series**

**Three Wise Monkeys**, 2019  
Sumi ink, house paint, wood  
40 x 48 x 2 1/8 inches

**Target**, 2019  
Sumi ink, house paint, wood  
41 x 41 x 1 11/16 inches

**9 Headed Dragon**, 2019  
Golf clubs, golf bag, house paint, paper  
clay, stones  
38 x 53 x 72 1/2 inches

**The Surrender**, 2019  
Mixed media  
21 x 4 x 57 1/2 inches

**Angle of Attack - Judge**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
18 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 37 inches

**Angle of Attack - Authority**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
29 x 8 1/2 x 35 inches

**Angle of Attack - Shadow**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
19 1/2 x 8 x 37 1/2 inches

**Angle of Attack - Attorney**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
23 x 7 x 33 1/2 inches

**Angle of Attack - Patrol**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
14 x 7 x 36 inches

**Angle of Attack - Interpreter**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
25 x 7 1/2 x 29 inches

**Angle of Attack - Investigation**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
18 x 8 x 37 1/2 inches

**Angle of Attack - Inspector**, 2019  
Golf club, house paint, paper clay, stones,  
mortar, glass lampshade  
9 1/2 x 7 x 40 inches

**Target - Impact**, 2019  
Golf balls, paper clay, paint, wood  
5 1/2 x 65 1/2 x 2 3/4 inches; 5 5/8 x 66 x 2  
3/4 inches

**Target - Missing Fathers**, 2019  
Golf balls, paper clay, paint, wood  
6 x 66 5/16 x 2 5/8 inches

**Target - Barrack Night**, 2019  
Golf balls, paper clay, paint, wood  
5 3/8 x 65 3/8 x 2 5/8 inches

**Target - Unreasonable**, 2019  
Golf balls, paper clay, paint, wood  
5 5/8 x 66 3/8 x 2 9/16 inches

**Target - Departing**, 2019  
Golf balls, paper clay, paint, wood  
6 x 65 13/16 x 2 7/8 inches

**Beautiful Sky Golf Course**, 2019  
Video  
Dimensions variable, Ed. 1 of 3

**The Secret Diorama**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
41 1/2 x 41 1/2 x 33 inches

**Beautiful Sky Golf Course**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
48 x 63 1/2 inches

**Infamy**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
47 1/2 x 62 3/4 inches

**The Location**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
48 3/4 x 63 inches

**The Funeral**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
47 1/2 x 63 1/2 inches

**The Long Game**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
47 3/4 x 63 inches

**Stone Fever**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
49 x 63 inches

**The Protectors**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
50 x 63 inches

**The Loyalty Hearing**, 2019  
Sumi ink and gesso on canvas  
49 3/4 x 63 inches



Gaku Tsutaja, *Study with the Moon*, 2019