

Joshua Liner Gallery

548 W. 28th Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10001
212.244.7415 joshualinergallery.com

For immediate release and listing:

Kenji Hirata

The Way Out is the Way In

October 17–November 14, 2009

Opening reception, Gallery I: Saturday, October 17, 6–9 PM

New York, NY. September 29, 2009 -- Joshua Liner Gallery is pleased to present *The Way Out is the Way In*, an exhibition of new paintings by the New York-based Japanese artist Kenji Hirata. This is Hirata's first solo show with the gallery.

Inspired by billboards, Southeast Asian signage, and the pop-cultural legacies of Futurism and Superflat, Kenji Hirata's unique form of hard-edged abstraction celebrates the dynamic interplay of color and form. These small-to-medium-sized, acrylic-on-canvas works explode with the artist's vocabulary of spaceship forms, overlapping organic lozenges, and stair-step effects, all activated by Hirata's signature color-wheel gradations of complimentary hues. Eschewing overt statements, Hirata engages in a pure, personalized form of visual play. In his exuberant experimentation with bright color, form, and the suggestion of action, the artist enacts a childlike fantasy of free movement between states of being and imagination.

In *Gesture Without Motion*, the central image of whirling star shapes is made dense and frenetic with a shower of tiny boomerang forms in white and a stroboscopic staccato of overlaid, repeating edges in value-graded hues. *The Way Out is the Way In* contains Hirata's zippy, elegant spaceship forms that suggest a hybrid of Verne's *Nautilus* and the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*. Here, the central image is even more abstract and diffuse, hovering in lovely contrast to the surrounding, shimmering "cloud" gradations of white and gray.

Kenji Hirata is a member of the Barnstormers collective, a group of New York/Tokyo-based artists who create large-scale collaborative paintings, films, and performances. The group formed in 1999 after a pilgrimage to the rural town of Cameron, North Carolina, where they painted barns, tractor-trailers, shacks, and farm equipment, and return often to paint new murals. A work by Hirata is featured as the cover of the book *Envisioning Diaspora* (Timezone 8, 2009), which discusses the post-'90s wave of New York-based, Asian-American art collectives, including the Barnstormers.

Born in 1968 in Nagasaki, Japan, Kenji Hirata currently lives and works in Brooklyn. Solo exhibitions of his work include: *Crystallized*, Contemporary Art International, Hamburg, Germany (2006); *Token 0.02*, Arcus Projects, Tsukuba, Japan; *Indivisible x 4*, Reed Space, New York, NY (2005). Selected group exhibitions include: *SITEings*, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston Salem, North Carolina (2007); *Ten*, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2005); *Beautiful Losers*, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2004); *Dream So Much 02*, Asian American Arts Centre, New York (2003); and *No Condition is Permanent*, Smack Melon, Brooklyn (2001).

Joshua Liner Gallery, located in New York City's Chelsea district, presents an exciting roster of young and emerging artists from the West and East coasts, Asia, and Europe.

Also on view, in Gallery II: Ryan McLennan, *The Strain of Inheritance*, October 17–November 14.

For more information, please visit www.joshualinergallery.com, or contact Tim Strazza at 212.244.7415 or tim@joshualinergallery.com.



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1. *The Way Out is the Way In* Acrylic on canvas 18 x 24 in. 2009
2. *Gesture Without Motion* Acrylic on canvas 48 x 48 in. 2009
3. *New Laughter Mode* Acrylic on canvas 18 x 18 in. 2009