

CRISTIN TIERNEY

January 8, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Mauricio Garcia-Miro Jeri, mauricio@crisintierney.com or 212.594.0550



Roger Shimomura *All American*

April 26 – June 8, 2024

219 Bowery, Floor 2
New York, NY, 10002

Cristin Tierney Gallery is pleased to present ***All American***, a solo exhibition of paintings by **Roger Shimomura**. The exhibition opens Friday, April 26 and will be on view through June 8, 2024. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York in over a decade and his first solo show at the gallery.

Through juxtaposition of contemporary America and traditional Japan, the artist employs images from both cultures to create a complicated layering of pictorial information and social observation. The paintings in *All American* are poignant, satirical, playful, and full of

CRISTIN TIERNEY

outrage, exemplifying Shimomura's career-long exploration of themes such as xenophobia and cross-cultural tensions. For more than fifty years the artist has been addressing in pictures the subjects that mainstream America is now just finding the language to discuss.

Two paintings in particular highlight how popular culture in the United States introduces and reinforces certain Asian stereotypes. Both *JAPAN*, 2012, and *RAMBO II*, 1978, illuminate the West's troubling history of appropriation and commodification of Japanese heritage. The first depicts the iconic Hello Kitty character adapting various conventional Western and Asian identities: baseball players, farmers, geishas, chefs, bakers, and even the Statue of Liberty. Always portrayed expressionless, voiceless (as the character has no mouth), and wearing a large bow, Hello Kitty is docile, passive, and diminutive.

RAMBO II—inversely, and as suggested by its title—revolves around violence. The central figure is a Kabuki actor in Kumadori stage makeup playing a theatrical warrior spirit. He is surrounded by traditional ukiyo-e depictions of other characters from Kabuki theater. By giving the work the name *RAMBO*, Shimomura invites the viewer to see his subjects through the lens of American military machismo. The result further westernizes an image that has long been appropriated by American culture, stripping it of its original meaning.

Taking these two works as a point of departure, *All American* points out the absurdity of two enduring Japanese stereotypes: the bloodthirsty, dangerous warrior and the sex-less, non-threatening cartoon figure. The ludicrousness of these two extremes is highlighted by Shimomura's use of the cynical, dispassionate style of pop art. Forgoing any expressive flourishes, Shimomura shines a cold light on offensive images, and asks us not to look away.

Roger Shimomura's (b. 1939, Seattle, WA) paintings, prints, and theater pieces address sociopolitical Japanese American issues of ethnicity. He spent more than two years of his early childhood in internment camps for Japanese Americans during WWII. In 1962, Shimomura was a distinguished military graduate from the University of Washington, Seattle, and then served as a field artillery officer with the First Cavalry Division in Korea. He received his M.F.A. from Syracuse University, New York in 1969 and began teaching at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS that same year. He has had over 150 solo exhibitions of his paintings and prints and has presented his experimental theater pieces at such venues as the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; and Franklin Furnace, New York.

Shimomura is the recipient of more than 30 grants, of which four are National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships in Painting and Performance Art. In the fall of 1990, he held an appointment as the Dayton Hudson Distinguished Visiting Professor at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. Shimomura has been a visiting artist and lectured on his work at more than 200 universities, art schools, and museums across the country. In 2004 he retired from teaching and started the Shimomura Faculty Research Support Fund, an

CRISTIN TIERNEY

endowment to foster faculty research in the Department of Art. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of the Arts degree from The University of Kansas in 2021.

Shimomura is in the permanent collections of over 125 museums nationwide including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum; Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; and the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Founded in 2010, **Cristin Tierney Gallery** is a contemporary art gallery located on The Bowery with a deep commitment to the presentation, development, and support of a roster of both established and emerging artists. Its program emphasizes artists engaged with critical theory and art history, with an emphasis on conceptual, video, and performance art. Education and audience engagement is central to our mission. Cristin Tierney Gallery is a member of the **ADAA** (Art Dealers Association of America).

Image

Roger Shimomura, *RAMBO II*, 1978. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 48 inches (121.9 x 121.9 cm).

Inquiries

Mauricio Garcia-Miro Jeri, mauricio@crisintierney.com, 212.594.0550