
182 Artist Talk

Kensuke Koike

a new narrative

In a world where art imitates life, you can find contemporary visual artist Kensuke Koike. His approach is multidisciplinary, working with everything from stop motion video and analog morphing to self-portrait collages and switched vintage photographs. As for his subjects, they hide in the every day just as much as the olden day and these encounters are often overlaid with optical illusion. One paper cut at a time, a new narrative begins where the past, present, and future exist simultaneously.

In this exclusive interview with Le Mile, Kensuke Koike shares the wit, wisdom, and mystery to be expected of a self-proclaimed alchemist.

interview Hannah Rose Prendergast

How does it make you feel to be able to use existing materials and breathe new life or a new story into them?

Anything that surrounds us needs only to be moved. At that moment you have a different point of view, a different shadow which leads to slightly different colors and a different background. All you need to do is be aware of this fact.

As someone who works heavily with vintage photographs, what do you think can be learned from exploring the beauty of the past?

I don't choose the photographs because they are beautiful. I choose them because they are real. I like to use vintage photographs because I'm obliged to not make any mistakes, so I cannot work on a vintage photograph without having thought out the project before-hand. It's a sort of respect for the beauty of the photograph itself and, of course, what it represents.

You've spoken about how ghosts and monsters were always something that stuck with you as a child. How has this contributed to your art? Has creating helped you to confront and/or overcome monsters of your own?

Superstitious fear has always inflamed the imagination of ignorant men and imagination feeds back into fear. Through my works, I try to investigate how human emotions tick.

How big of a role does your Japanese heritage play in your work?

It's difficult to say what derives from my native country and from my acquired country. All my work is the result of my being born in Japan and living in Europe.

In a sense, your art defies the theory of predestination, do you believe that you were born to be an artist or was there something or someone that intervened to change things for you?

I'm simply curious. I became an artist because art is the way to satisfy my curiosity. Had I been less curious I probably would have been a scientist or a chemist. Now, I call myself an alchemist because I'm working with something that is not scientific; this poses a continuous challenge.

In keeping with this issue's theme, what does the absence of color ("Black") mean to you and your work?

My main medium is vintage photographs which happen to be in black and white.

How has your work evolved since you started creating and what can viewers expect to see from you in the future?

I started off with paintings, sculptures, and videos. Now, I'm transforming old photographs and certainly, in the future, I will be doing something else. Always inspired by that window hinge and flower stem, my evolution is an everyday thing.

Who or what do you consider to be your biggest inspiration(s)?

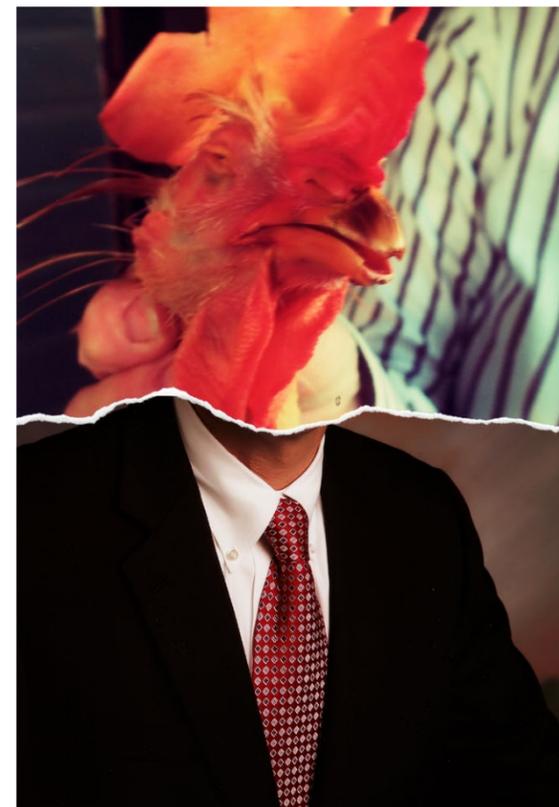
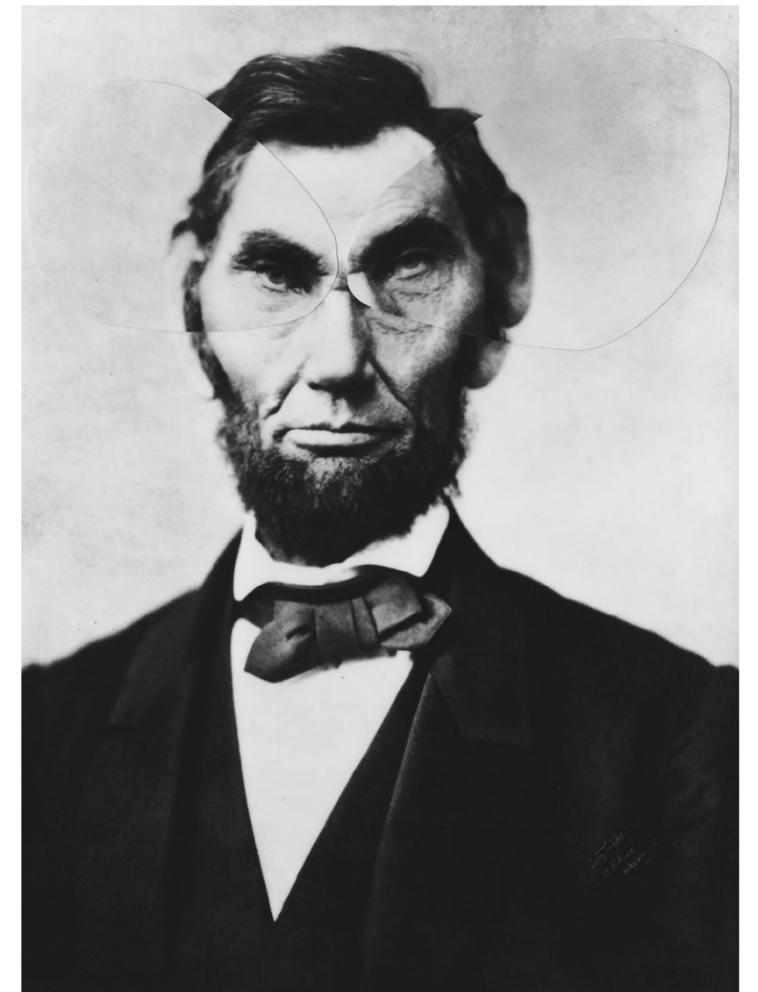
Everyday life. I don't look for anything special. I wake up and have a coffee. The things that surround me can always give me a hint, for example, how the hinge of a window works or how the stem of a flower bends.

You've experimented with so many different mediums of visual art, which are your favorites to work with and why?

I have no preference of medium but I tend to use paper because it is always accessible; you can find it anywhere and it is easy to experiment with.

The recurring theme in your work is that there is more than meets the eye, why do think this is so important to understand especially in the digital age?

Manipulating objects or matter can always lead to unexpected situations which wouldn't necessarily occur if you only used a computer.



Hannah Rose Prendergast speaks with Kensuke Koike

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