

Tomoko Sugimoto
The Unseen World
September 8 – 11, 2016
2 Rivington Street NYC
Opening: Sept. 7, 6 – 9 p.m.

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Tomoko Sugimoto, Japanese mixed media artist and core studio figure to Takashi Murakami since 1996, to show fresh body of work in NYC

The Unseen World will explore the post-war Japanese identity through through the use of blood-red cotton thread alongside delicate, traditional Japanese illustrations of idyllic childhood imagery

New York, NY – September 1, 2016 – Zahra Sherzad is pleased to present a cross-media selection of works by Tomoko Sugimoto, whose childhood in Tokyo combined with formal arts education in New York inform the cultural hybridity of her artistic practice. Sugimoto uses elements of traditional Japanese illustration—flattened pictorial space, whimsical figures, soft tints—to establish the serene and pleasant state that was punctuated by twentieth century warfare, the latter of which is thematically represented in her work by bright cotton thread sewn into canvas.

The Unseen World borrows its title from the centerpiece work, a six-foot-tall tent that represents the traditional living space of any native people (Great Plains teepee; Central Asian yurt; etcetera). For the exterior fabric of the structure, Sugimoto has reduced wartime photographs of bomb clouds to delicate, seemingly serene thread-on-canvas outlines; she had previously observed that when images of explosive clouds from warfare are depicted in their simplest graphic form, they are indistinguishable from clouds in the sky on a pleasant day. On the reverse side of the fabric, facing inward to the occupant of the tent as a byproduct of the sewing machine, crude red threads rain down from the clouds. Visually reminiscent of blood spatter, the threads in this case represent the threat from the Unseen World outside.

“The appearance is tranquil, peaceful, and livable from the outside, but threatens the lives of the local people inside,” said Sugimoto.

In another work, 108 circular canvases ranging in diameter from 3 to 7 inches address one’s journey to achieve a state of tranquility antithetical to *The Unseen World*; deriving from Sugimoto’s native Japanese culture and its Buddhist roots, the production itself is a meditative, repetitive process rooted in rhythmic flow. The number of canvases on which the circular process has been repeated represents the artist’s continual regard for mastery and control over the 108 earthly temptations one must overcome to achieve Nirvana.

Said Zahra Sherzad of the exhibition: “Sugimoto’s current body of work reveals a new perspective into her process by stretching the concept of the canvas. *The Unseen World* invites the viewer to examine the work from with in. The unbroken fluidity in Sugimoto’s stitching envelops one in a serene experience.”

Following an opening reception from 6 – 9 p.m. on Wednesday, September 7, The Unseen World will be on view daily from 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. through Sunday, September 11.