

Kosuke Kawahara

Without Innocence

May 14–June 20, 2026

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 21, 6–8pm

...we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system—from all work to all play, a deadly game (p 28).

– Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*

Stock images of hamburger meat grinders, women's hands cutting slabs of flesh with large knives, and meat hooks in slaughter houses are taped up as reference images in Kosuke Kawahara's beautifully organized studio in the heart of Times Square.

The show's title *Without Innocence* refers to a line from Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Originally published in 1985, Haraway's prophecies have all come to pass.

Kawahara's current body of work is about outsourcing or externalizing the sensory system. To outsource the visual is to possess a kind of second sight or a form of hypnagogia, seeing colors with eyes closed. Neolithic cult buildings were constructed for the purpose of having visions in the dark. The black forest, our own Umwelt.

You rely on other people or entities to have this other kind of perception. Kawahara describes how, using our phones and AI, we are already relying on something externalized to communicate. Whether via technology or our relationships, we are seeing through others.

Oedipus blinded himself out of shame, bringing down and sealing his fate. Kawahara's work is about un-sealing, de-evolving. As he describes his own work, the feeling is dark and grotesque but generative. He says, "When body parts are detached by cutting, we think the parts will die or be dead. But maybe these parts can live and start new lives by themselves. They each have a will to live". Western medicine begins with the dissection of cadavers, working with dead bodies. Classical Chinese Medicine begins with studying the organ system of the living body. The signature of the artist is symbolically represented by the stomach organ system; the eyes are connected to the stomach; the desire to devour the world through what we see. We cannot process all of the violence and porn we see every day on our phones, a kind of soul-vomit.

Kawahara's work is materially diverse: smaller photographs, large canvases, stainless steel sheets spray painted and scraped with an etching tool, encaustic oil paint, off-set printing stencils. Kawahara uses a lot of found materials, a way to collaborate with something you don't have control over. He creates frames and structures within each canvas, using a system of cuts and divisions to make space within the painting. Often, elements will go over these boundaries. Kawahara's drawn forms have a skillful precision and lightness. The use of neon color against darkness, metal or plastic surfaces, like entering a club void. The works, in fact, glow under black light.

Kawahara describes how we are defined by the environment that surrounds us and grows within us. In terms of survival, the whole species needs to go to the edge of things. The kind of experimentation that is only possible for individuals at the margins, the strangest place, is a feedback for the entire species and will be reflected in future evolution. Unconsciously, the fragile human species is evolving and devolving at the same time. Kawahara's painting of a dog with no

head on a leash makes me think of the delicate preserved woolly mammoth calf unearthed from the tundra's permafrost. A hand from outer space is descending and pulling out an important part of the creature but keeping the vessel alive. What spools out looks like grey matter, intestines, the marrow of the bones, ether, spirit. Someone could do this to you.

Kawahara's work feels tied, for me, to Timothy Pachirat's incredible text, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011). The "twelve seconds" refers to the average slaughterhouse's cattle-killing rate. His book explores the psychology behind the spatial design of a slaughterhouse, how sight-lines are constructed to segment the different sites of production, transforming living animals into objects, and controlling the inner worlds of the workers. This idea of "seeing" and the inability to see suffering.

People and creatures with missing parts, substituting vocabulary with intuition, gut feeling. The bacteria of the gut, our ancestors. Kawahara says, "We coexist with the bacteria of the intestine. They tell you what to do so that the system does not die". This exhibition draws out a procedure for disassembling the body, language, and hierarchy. A head becomes a satellite, quite literally the externalization of the sensory system into outer space, swirling with other human debris. Star systems, mining dark water, teeth at the bottom. *Without Innocence* marks a point of departure. Our night duty: De-Evolution Now. Leaving the constrained and dying systems. Once you give up everything, you're free to go.

– Violet Handforth

For all inquiries, please contact us at hello@rainraingallery.com.

Kosuke Kawahara (b. 1980, Kyoto, Japan) moved to New York in 2011 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. He received a BFA in Design from Okayama Prefectural University and an MFA in Painting and Drawing from Pratt Institute. Working through intuitive and impromptu gestures, Kawahara develops multi-layered compositions that generate site-responsive imagery. His works explore growth and decay, communication and perception, spiritualism, and interdependent relationships, reflecting on human behavior within constantly shifting environmental conditions. Kawahara has exhibited at The Armory Show, RAINRAIN, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA), Trestle Gallery, Paradise Palace, Susan Eley Fine Art, and Super Dutchess Gallery. His awards include the Café Royal Cultural Foundation Visual Grant (2022), the City Artist Corps Grant (2021), and First Prize in Works on Paper from the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts & Sciences (2021). He was an artist-in-residence at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Governors Island Residency Initiative and is currently a member of the EFA Studio Program.

Violet Handforth is a New York City-based writer, artist, and researcher in the Philosophy of Religion. Handforth's work focuses on the relationship of Religion and Art, a practical mysticism.