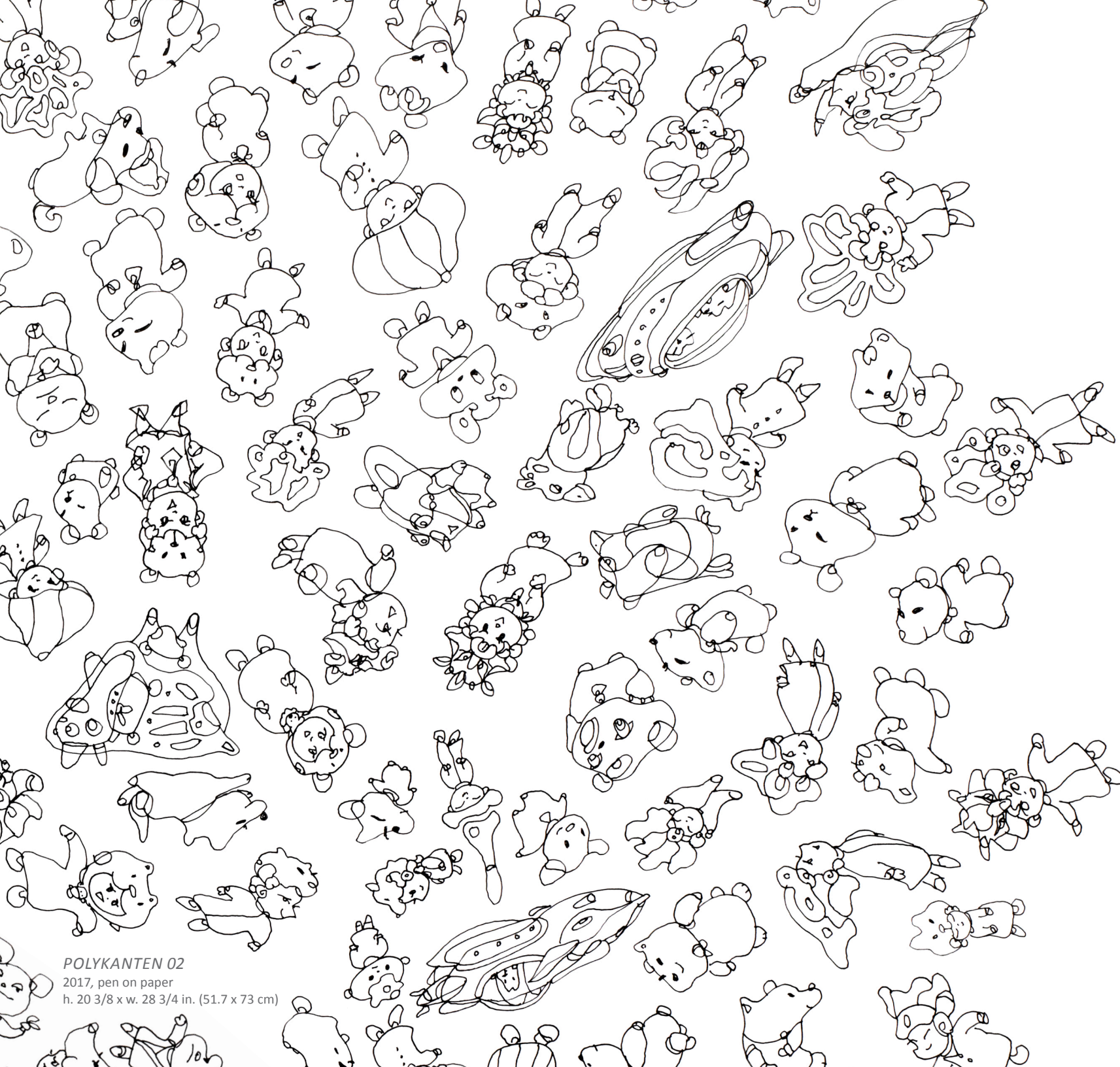




# NAOYA

THE WONDERVERSE OF  
**POLYKANTEN**



POLYKANTEN 02  
2017, pen on paper  
h. 20 3/8 x w. 28 3/4 in. (51.7 x 73 cm)

Japanese author Haruki Murakami is well known for artfully crafting stories of supernatural fantasy that are filled with familiar, mundane details of our everyday lives. His characters exist in multiple worlds, known and unknown, uniting impossibility with inevitability. In the tradition of famed Japanese creativity such as his, the work of artist NAOYA also blurs the line between fantasy and reality, between fiction and documentary. Like Murakami, NAOYA's sculptural characters emerge from magical narratives that tempt viewers to enter worlds of mystery, appealing to a universal desire to commune with the Other.

Onishi Gallery is proud to present The Wonderverse of POLYKANTEN by NAOYA, a solo exhibition of fantastical artwork based on the mystery of space science and a re-conceptualization of Japanese artistic tradition. This exhibition, featuring futuristic sculptural figures and multi-media interaction, fuses reality with imagination through aesthetic projections of otherworldly beings. Gleaming white characters from alternate realities face viewers with aplomb, provoking questions of otherness and inspiring visions of encounter.

NAOYA populates the imaginary world that he designs, which he calls POLYKANTEN, with fairy-like children, animals with human personalities, and animistic goddesses. The creatures are all related, he says, though each one has its own reason for being. The main character, PEPO, loves marshmallows, is an only child, is shy, and can dance. PEPO travels freely through space-time, traverses the many different planes of the universes, and has a head visually represented by the Pepo-Kabocha, a type of squash. The symbolic meanings of the characters' visual forms reveal themselves as one learns more about their personalities and roles in the multiverse narrative. PEPO is accompanied by TOKO-chan, who loves apple pie, picture books, and is slightly stubborn; KIKO-chan, who gets cold and lonely easily, and dreams of befriending a cat on Earth; P-chan, who loves candy, taking walks, is resolute and sisterly; and many more. These unique characters all hail from the world of POLYKANTEN, this parallel place where boundaries and dimensions are fuzzy, chaos and order seem synonymous, and creative innovation seems unbounded.

The monochromatic figures, painted entirely in white, stare at viewers with curious and blank expressions, begging for questions about the other worldly places they occupy. Believing in the possibility and potential of multiple universes, NAOYA creates these characters to visit with us here on Earth. And, in this special exhibition, we have a fleeting moment in which to meet them and dream ourselves into another world through honed artistic skill and sharpened imagination.

Nana Onishi  
Owner and Director, Onishi Gallery

# ACROSS THE UNIVERSE: FIGURES FROM AN IMAGINARY REALM

## BY PAUL LASTER

We know that cities are part of states, states form countries, countries and seas configure the Earth, the Earth is part of the Solar System, the Solar System exists within Milky Way and that the Milky Way resides within the Universe, but what exactly lies beyond our observable world is a mystery.

Long before man began the exploration of space, he observed it from the Earth and envisioned all types of things that might be out there. Strange civilizations and parallel universes are the stuff of science fiction, yet these subjects similarly fall within the area of artistic and scientific inquiry. The award-winning Japanese artist NAOYA's creative practice ingeniously lives within this investigative realm. Centered on modern cosmological theories that the observed universe encompasses additional spheres and dimensions, NAOYA imagines a parallel world that he calls POLYKANTEN, which is inhabited by cute, animistic creatures. Mining this fantastical realm for more than a decade, he has drawn, sculpted and animated a cast of characters unlike any others in the world.

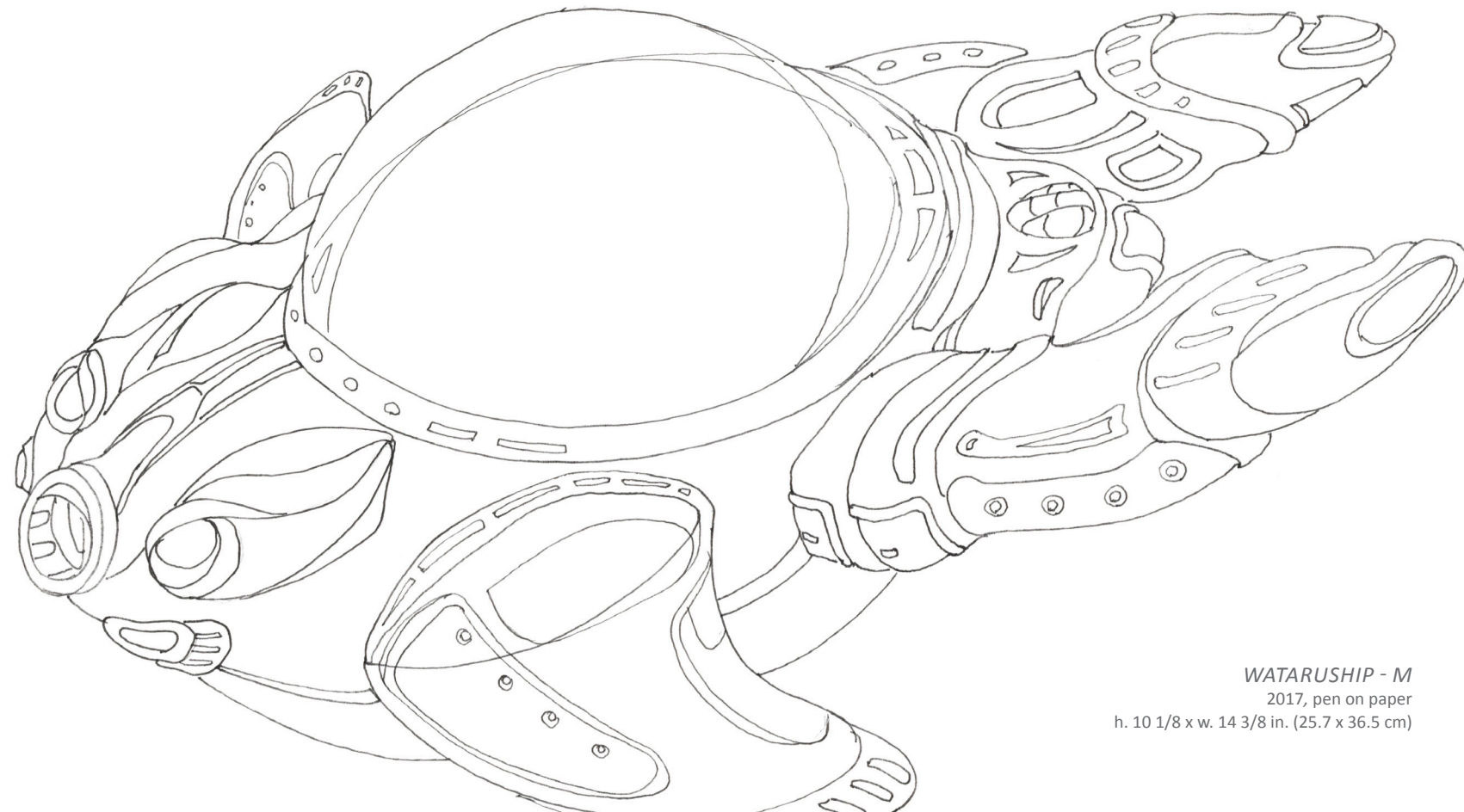
Like the comic book story of Superman—who was born Kal-El on the planet Krypton, before being rocketed to Earth as an infant by his scientist father Jor-El, just moments before Krypton's destruction—the individuals that occupy POLYKANTEN have equally unique names and personalities. PEPO is a shy, only child, who loves marshmallows and dancing. One of the main characters dwelling in this curious place, PEPO's head is shaped like a giant kabocha squash. GLUMON, who has big ears like a mouse, is PEPO's secret travel companion. GLUMON is good at blowing bubbles with chewing gum, collects rocks and loves to make people laugh.

KIKO-chan, who wears a bear hood, and RIKO-chan, who sports a dragon cap, are siblings. The quiet and considerate KIKO-chan fancies biscuits and riding the swing, while the energetic RIKO-chan enjoys singing and eating chocolate cake. Along with the lion-crowned TOKO-chan, who relishes apple pie and picture books, they make up a community that also consists of the clumsy, barbeque and ice cream loving Blaze-kun and his sibling Wolf-kun, who is cerebral and calm, but can run fast and do backflips.

White, monochromatic figures that come in various sizes, the residents are related yet each one of them is different. According to the artist, their interaction gives birth to new creatures, which keeps POLYKANTEN growing. Illustrating that reality, NAOYA pens overlapping characters on the base of the sculptures and makes captivating drawings of the worlds they inhabit—a two-dimensional realm that he's named FLATLAND.

Like the American painter and sculptor KAWS's Companion figure and the Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara's dog and kid characters, NAOYA's fairy-like creatures are influenced by popular culture, but where the formers' figures are rooted in anime and manga, the creator of POLYKANTEN also finds inspiration in the history and religious beliefs of ancient Japan.

*Paul Laster is New York Desk Editor at ArtAsiaPacific and a contributing writer for Time Out New York, Harper's Bazaar Arabia, Garage, Cultured and Galerie Magazine.*



WATARUSHIP - M  
2017, pen on paper  
h. 10 1/8 x w. 14 3/8 in. (25.7 x 36.5 cm)



*PEPO #1.2.1*, 2015, FRP  
h. 33 × w. 17 1/2 × d. 16 3/4 in. (83.8 × 44.5 × 42.5 cm)



*Kiko-chan #1.1.1*, 2015, FRP  
h. 32 1/2 × w. 13 1/2 × d. 13 in. (82.6 × 34.3 × 33 cm)



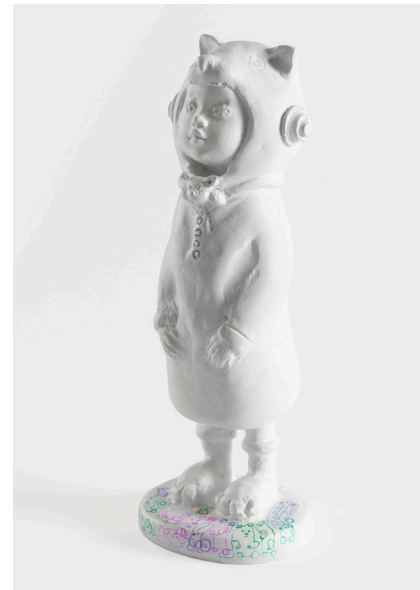
*Toko-chan #0.0.1*, 2015, FRP  
h. 33 1/2 × w. 12 5/8 × d. 12 in. (85 × 32 × 30.5 cm)



*Riko-chan #0.0.1*, 2015, FRP  
h. 34 1/2 × w. 13 × d. 13 1/4 in. (87.6 × 33 × 33.7 cm)



*GLUMON #0.1.1*, 2016, FRP  
h. 34 1/2 × w. 20 × d. 11 in. (87.6 × 50.8 × 28 cm)



*Kiko-chan*, 2015, FRP (TL)  
h. 9 1/4 × w. 3 1/2 × d. 3 in.  
(23.5 × 8.9 × 7.6 cm)

*P-chan*, 2015, FRP (TM)  
h. 9 7/8 × w. 5 × d. 3 3/4 in.  
(25 × 12.7 × 9.5 cm)

*Toko-chan*, 2015, FRP (TR)  
h. 9 7/8 × w. 3 3/8 × d. 3 in.  
(25 × 8.4 × 7.6 cm)

*Blaze-kun*, 2015, FRP (BL)  
h. 11 1/4 × w. 4 3/4 × d. 5 in.  
(28.6 × 12 × 12.7 cm)

*Wolf-kun*, 2015, FRP (BR)  
h. 11 3/8 × w. 5 × d. 3 1/2 in.  
(28.7 × 12.7 × 8.9 cm)





*Wolf-kun*, 2014, Bronze (T)  
h. 11 3/8 × w. 5 × d. 3 1/2 in. (28.7 × 12.7 × 8.9 cm)

*Blaze-kun*, 2014, Bronze (TR)  
h. 11 1/4 × w. 4 3/4 × d. 5 in. (28.6 × 12 × 12.7 cm)

*Toko-chan*, 2014, Bronze (BL)  
h. 9 7/8 × w. 3 3/8 × d. 3 in. (25 × 8.4 × 7.6 cm)

*Kiko-chan*, 2014, Bronze (B)  
h. 9 1/4 × w. 3 1/2 × d. 3 in. (23.5 × 8.9 × 7.6 cm)

# NAOYA

NAOYA (b. 1958) began his artistic career in Japan by assisting his father, Nagae Rokuya, a major figurative sculptor who worked in wood. Nurturing his creativity in this familial context, NAOYA soon cultivated his own style and creative concepts, shaping representational figures out of wood and later bronze and FRP (Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic) that express his own philosophical worldview. NAOYA populates the imaginary world that he designs, which he calls POLYKANTEN, with fairy-like children, animals with human personalities, and animistic goddesses. The creatures are all related, he says, although each one has its own reason for being. The monochromatic figures, painted entirely in white and made of FRP, stare at viewers with curious and blank expressions, begging for questions about the fantastical worlds they inhabit. Believing in the possibility and potential of multiple universes, NAOYA creates these characters from another world to visit with us here on Earth.

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 "The Wonderverse of POLYKANTEN," Solo Exhibition, Onishi Gallery, NY  
Art New York, NY
- 2016 Aqua Art Miami, FL  
Art Central, Hong Kong
- 2015 Scope Miami Beach, FL  
New Context Conference Tokyo in collaboration with Digital Garage Inc.
- 2014 Solo Exhibition, Seto City Museum, Aichi, Japan  
"Creators of Beauty," Shikinen-sengu Museum, Ise, Japan
- 2013 Solo Exhibition, Gallery Nuage, Tokyo, Japan

## SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Kawasaki City Museum, Japan; Seto City Museum, Japan; Daikanyama DG Building, Japan; Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing



Photography by Thomas Barratt

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