

Atsushi Kaga
Ukiyo-e
2022- 2023

Encounters, Art Basel Hong Kong 2024

Ukiyo-e is a multi-panel painting, staged within a theatrical structure that references a small late-Edo period Kabuki theatre. Resembling traditional Japanese architectural tropes, it includes a raised Tatami mat floor and paper lanterns. Designed as a stylised seasonal landscape, the work depicts the artist's alter ego 'Usacchi', a classic pooka rabbit who embodies his experience of living between Japan and Europe.

Seated at a table placed at the heart of a golden garden, Usacchi is amongst food and metaphoric objects that reference Kaga's late mother, Kazuko, with whom he made formative artistic collaborations. Connecting different states of consciousness, Usacchi grasps an aubergine and cucumber, Japanese symbols of loss. The painting's composition and gold leaf surface evoke the work of painter Itō Jakuchū and the luminous grounds of the 18th century Kyoto Rinpa school, which were environments of immersive entertainment.