



Gaku Tsutaja, *Spider's Thread Daily Drawings Day 11: 230 Million Dollar Village*, 2020, sumi ink and graphite on canvas, 11 x 14".

NEW YORK

### Gaku Tsutaja

ULTERIOR GALLERY  
172 Attorney St  
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If recent months have taught us anything, it's how deeply entangled our lives are with others across the globe—revolutions and microbial pathogens can sweep through continents, propelled by social media and airborne particles. Gaku Tsutaja's current exhibition here addresses this interconnectedness, ensuring us it's nothing new. When the pandemic hit, Tsutaja was researching the Manhattan Project and its devastating nuclear impacts, in Japan as well as the Native American homelands, portions of which have

been co-opted by the United States military as test sites. Illustrating a butterfly effect of consequences across space and time, her densely symbolic paintings and drawings have only become even more timely amid current events.

On the gallery's website are two majestic sumi ink and charcoal paintings. Both *Spider's Thread: This Landscape* and *Spider's Thread: That Story* (all works 2020) are packed with allusions to aerial bombings, toxic pollution, and collective states of fugitivity and loss. The tableaux are set in Sanzu-no-Kawa, the mythological Japanese "River Styx," envisioned as a landscape marred by nuclear fallout. The translucent leg of the titular arachnid descends from above in each picture, piercing through its narrative layers.

Tsutaja also produced forty-seven drawings, created under quarantine and posted virtually on several of the gallery's social media platforms throughout the show's run. These function like a filmic storyboard for her larger works and make space for the viewer to engage as active witness to each imagined episode. In *Spider's Thread Daily Drawings Day 11: 230 Million Dollar Village*, an enormous hand places a small workhouse into an architectural model of the Hanford Site, a nuclear production complex in Washington state that was fully deactivated in the late 1980s. In *Spider's Thread Daily Drawings Day 10: Intruder*, we join a group of zoomorphic characters styled as members of the Wanapum tribe, who were forced off their land by the US when Hanford was being erected. And in *Spider's Thread Daily Drawings Day 12: The Birth of a Monster*, we look up across a cavernous laboratory, where a spherical creature—a kind of mutated, engorged virus or chrysalis—looms over our heads. With spindly, threadlike limbs, it hangs delicately from the ceiling, like a bomb about to drop.

— Allison Young