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Tuesday, February 9th, 2010

[Tomokazu Matsuyama at Frey Norris, San Francisco](#)



(All Images via Frey Norris Gallery)

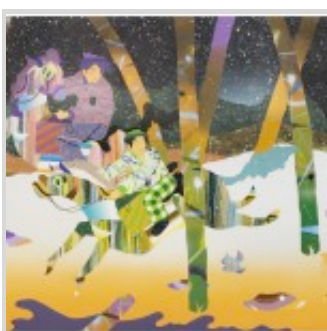
Around the turn of the century 20th century, the U.S. embarked down a road of increasingly restrictive immigration policies, including the Chinese Exclusion (1882) and Emergency Quota Acts (1921, 1924). Such foreign policy effectively stifled the influx of immigrants, while appeasing growing nativist concerns. Included here was the Gentleman's Agreement (1907), a mutual arrangement whereby the U.S. would not extend such restrictions to Japan, as long as the island empire agreed to cut off all further emigration to the U.S. And while the goal was partly to cool relations between the two nations, competing imperialistic hungers eventually reignited tensions that sparked the Pacific front of the Second World War. By 1942 FDR had signed Executive Order 9066, forcibly relocating over 100,000 Japanese-Americans to internment camps. It was only in 1988 that the federal government acknowledged the prejudice of its past policy, paying over \$1.5 billion in reparations.

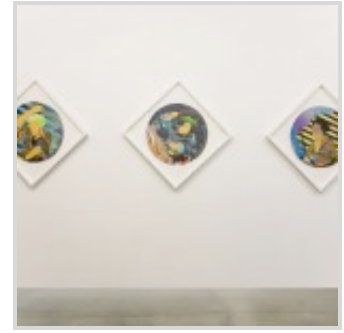
With *In Case You're Lost*, **[Tomokazu Matsuyama](#)** not only works towards reconciling the cultural tensions

of his own Japanese-American identity, but addresses larger issues of nationalism and global relations. Here is a complex mix of autobiographical and socio-political commentary.

Surrounded by new paintings are the show's centerpieces – two large-scale sculptures that contemplate notions of cultural heritage and nationalism, flip-flopping symbols of American and Asian identity. *Wherever I Am*, a life-size reworking of Frederick Remington's *Bronco Buster*, recasts the famed late 19th century American sculpture with a Japanese-pop sensibility, replacing the iconic cowboy rider with a Playmobil character. *Chogen*, based off the [original](#) 13th century Japanese treasure, substitutes the praying monk's prayer beads for beer cans and cigarette butts, and his original meditative state, for a glazed-over drunken one.

Speaking of the new sculpture, Matsu notes, "I wanted to keep that rigorous, very expressionistic feature but flip to an American context, so what I did was I made him an alcoholic – like a drunk man in a sports bar... From a distance, he looks somewhat fanatic like its original. Close up, you'll see his eye focus is gone and he's just drunk. The eyes are actual glass eyes, made of gold leaf inside with the addition of my painting color scheme of neon pink and dark brown. The sculpture looks aged and few centuries old but the material used to paint it looks like 70s auto paint...[colliding] aged with the contemporary art material."





Tomokazu Matsuyama - *In Case You're Lost*

[Frey Norris Gallery](#)

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San Francisco, CA 94102

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