

Maiko Kikuchi Artist Statement

Creating visible daydreams — this has been the consistent theme and purpose of my work since as far back as I can remember.

So, what is a daydream? In my own definition, it is something distinct from an unconscious dream. It exists on the threshold between the ordinary and the extraordinary — something born when imagination bends what we define as common sense or reality. It is a distortion of reality unique to each person.

The first time I experienced this sense of distortion was in the consultation room of my father's psychoanalyst practice where I often visited during my childhood. In his office, there were tools for sandplay therapy — a form of treatment in which child patients create miniature worlds inside a box filled with sand, allowing their subconscious to be analyzed through what they construct. I simply played with the sandbox, but I was captivated by how familiar miniatures — animals, people, buildings, food, vehicles — could be combined in new ways to form a “world I had seen before, but had never actually seen.” A world made up of how things I knew well could transform into something entirely different with the insertion of a single unfamiliar element. Stories that didn't exist one minute would suddenly be born the next, becoming timeless universes within the box. This stirred in me a mixture of joy, excitement, and fear — an unnamable emotion. Since then, I've wondered if I could deliberately recreate those daydreams I encountered in the sandbox, only this time outside the box and in a more intentional way.

Collage became a foundational technique for me, offering a clear means of placing familiar yet unrelated elements into the same space to create unfamiliar worlds. For me, the process of creating a collage — as one form of daydream — involves combining hand-drawn or photographic materials and sensing the exact moment a story is born from them. In this sense, I view the act of collage as a way of capturing, in a still image, the narrative that emerges when reality twists and becomes distorted.

At a certain point, I began to wonder what would happen if I zoomed out and observed the entire story beyond that single image. That led me to expand completed collage works into animated films. Later, I became motivated to create living daydreams that could exist not just in two dimensions, but in three — shared within the context of someone's everyday life. This became the starting point for my performance-based works on stage.

What is it that we call daily life, common sense, the universal? Through my creative practice, I seek to distort what we take for granted and pose that question — not only to myself, but to others. By encountering that distortion, I hope to provoke an experience of momentary disorientation, to invite others to feel a hidden part of themselves rise to the surface. My work is a continuous attempt to make that shared experience possible — and that, for me, is what it means to create daydreams.