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San Francisco

Takeshi Murata

RATIO 3

2831A Mission Street

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Takeshi Murata's latest animation, *OM Rider*, 2013, is dark, funny, and perhaps one of the most bizarre works by the noted video artist. Inspired by Murata's longtime interest in campy horror films—think *Dawn of the Dead* or films by Dario Argento—this eleven minute and thirty second video stars a synthesizer-playing, motor-scooter-riding, pot-smoking werewolf and a smartly dressed, haggard old man. The werewolf occupies a wide, bluish expanse dotted with coconut trees and mountains, where he rides his scooter and plays music, while his counterpart contemplatively sits in darkness at a wooden table, only briefly getting up to climb a suspended circular staircase to reach yet another table.

Murata alternates between these two scenarios in order to increasingly build tension and suspense, a quality heightened by musician Robert Beatty's skillful use of a Shepard tone on the sound track: At the video's most suspenseful moment, fog and a bluish light waft through the old man's chamber while he chops a banana. He pauses, lifts up his switchblade, and sees the werewolf's reflection right as the beast reaches over and grabs hold of his neck. In the following and final scene, the werewolf clumsily plays "Taps," a song played during military funerals, on a trumpet underneath a palm tree; the absence of any dialogue gives a mime-like quality to the video's already playful clownishness.

Like Paul McCarthy or Mike Kelley, Murata is an artist who addresses pop culture intuitively, mining its excesses by drawing attention to the capacities and restrictions of simulation. While McCarthy and Kelley were deeply responsive to the spectacle inherent in the golden age of television, Murata's practice hints at what deranged, comical subversion might look like now that the mainstream is hypernetworked and crowd-sourced. If Ratio 3's maximal treatment of *OM Rider* in a gigantic, IMAX-like screening room is any indication, the answer is to present the big, the bad, and the ugly of the American subconscious in HD.



Takeshi Murata, *OM Rider*, 2013, single-channel video, color, sound, 11 minutes and 39 seconds.

— *Ceci Moss*