

# ARTFORUM

## Yuki Kimura Jenny's

On a rocky, overcast beach, waves are crashing against mossy boulders. This scene appeared in Kyoto-based Yuki Kimura's *Untitled #01 (AUG77)* (all works 2025), a lenticular print in which the drama of the ocean is captured via interlaced images of water shoaling, breaking, and falling. This and *Untitled #02 (AUG77)*, a similar work on the opposite wall at Jenny's, were each composed of three Kodak C-prints dating from August 1977, which the Kyoto-based artist acquired during a visit to United States in the early aughts. For her spare solo exhibition "*Des treize*" (Of the Thirteen), Kimura transposed slivers of these generic seascapes—the kind one might purchase from a tourist shop—into Jenny's twelfth-floor Midtown Manhattan space. Geographically and tonally dislocated, the pictures resemble souvenirs from a nondescript elsewhere, a place out of time.

The same commitment to humble materials found in Kimura's previous installations—of wooden wardrobes at New York's Artists Space, for instance, or bottles of Jägermeister at San Francisco's CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts—came through in her latest presentation. But unlike, say, Ser Serpas or Tolia Astakhishvili, who tend to play up the mess with their repurposed consumer detritus, Kimura streamlines her junk into an uncannily Minimalist display. The two seascapes were patrolled by the only other work on view, the show's namesake: a small, motorized robot that slowly traversed the floor in the manner of a museum security guard making the rounds. This piece, the artist's first foray into kinetic sculpture, was realized with the assistance of a high-school robotics team. It featured a transparent Plexiglas bubble (which the artist found, in a set of thirteen, at a surplus warehouse in Minnesota) cupped around a hefty beige battery. Both of these items rested on a wheeled base that carried a bundle of red, yellow, blue, and green wires.

Advancing continuously in a circle at about an inch per second, the robot appeared charmingly diligent, if a bit hapless. Lacking sensors, it could neither respond to other objects in the room nor alter its course to avoid them. Its polished, spherical body called to mind a solitary planet: a symbol, perhaps, of a mechanistic world, à la Thomas Hobbes or René Descartes, perpetually moving on a preset path.



According to the gallery's press release, the exhibition's title originated from nineteenth-century French novelist Honoré de Balzac's 1833 trilogy *Histoire des treize* (History of the Thirteen), a tale of Parisian society operating under the influence of a mysterious cabal of men who are well-versed in espionage, abductions, and cover-ups. Moreover, we learned that twelve other robots—fashioned from the remaining orbs Kimura purchased at the warehouse—were also circling a floor at Midway Contemporary Art in Minneapolis, where the artist had a concurrent show. From the perspective of a viewer in Manhattan, most of Kimura's mute robots existed, like Balzac's secret brotherhood, in the realm of rumor and myth. Simply the knowledge that there were more of them elsewhere—just as there are invisible networks of power in contemporary society, and beaches in undisclosed locations with violent waves and slick green rocks—drew out the mood of conspiracy latent in the exhibition's seamlessly moving parts.

—Jenny Wu

Yuki Kimura, *Des treize (Of the Thirteen)*, 2025, Plexiglas globe, plastic wheels, roller ball bearings, geared motors, ESP32 microcontroller, motor driver controller-board module, battery. Installation view. Photo: Jason Loeb.