

ARTFORUM

Tetsumi Kudo

ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY

525 West 24th Street

October 14–November 16

By Taro Masushio
October 2016



Tetsumi Kudo, *Prehistoric Monster in the Cage and People Who Are Looking at it*, 1971, painted cage, cotton, plastic, polyester, resin, wood, wire, 19 3/4 x 12".

Tetsumi Kudo's acid-colored sculptures work like chemotherapy in a carcinogenic landscape. The third presentation of the late artist's works here gathers many of his biomorphic sculptures or phallic pets—housed in brilliantly psychedelic birdcages—and pieces that deftly shape seemingly endless lengths of thread into sperm- and mandala-like forms.

Kudo diagrams a vision of reality grounded in hermetic pseudoscience and Kafkaesque metamorphosis—he was a Situationist-style maker who believed in turning mass culture's most banal cast-offs into viable psychic and antiauthoritarian expressions. In *Coelacanth*, 1970, three penile organisms are trapped inside a hot-pink cage, consuming tablets. These dicks—creepy, colorful things—seem able to survive away from a living body, utterly independent from any natural systems. In *Prehistoric Monster in the Cage and People Who Are Looking at it*, 1971, and *Votre portrait* (Your Portrait), 1974, however, there is a sense of injury and agony, as these alien creatures, made of electric bulbs, antennae, and circuits, among other things, seem resistant to their synthetic facture. Some of Kudo's titles are morphologically perverse as well, to stave off mediocre interpretations of his brutally designed beings.

Kudo's artworks are testaments to survival: He experienced Japan during and after World War II, in addition to the onset of its neoliberal machinations. Life evolves spastically via Kudo's radioactive vision. Making poison into medicine and junk into treasure, the artist transforms life's precariousness into trenchant and exquisite works of art.