

## Opening August 5: Reen Barrera, *Yes, Can Do!*

√K Contemporary (Root K Contemporary) is proud to host *Yes, Can Do!*, Reen Barrera's inaugural solo exhibition in Japan. On view from August 5 (Sat) to 26 (Sat), the exhibition will showcase a comprehensive range of Barrera's works; from the artist's universally beloved *Ohlala* and *Duge* works to his kinetic *automata* wooden sculptures and experimental abstract paintings. Further highlights include an artist-led gallery tour, which will be held on the first day of the exhibition.



*Hold My Hand*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
152.4 × 240 cm

The internationally celebrated artist has held solo exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the Asian and American continent, and Barrera has recently collaborated with Phillipine's largest provider of mobile money services, GCash, on an *Ohlala* NFT Collection. Gaining great traction over recent years, the artist has amassed a great following of international collectors as a leading emerging artist.

Barrera's works are compassionate at heart. Perceptive and benevolent, these works are, both, a work of soft social critique and a letter of hope for future generations. Having grown up a "toy-deprived" child, Barrera would use found objects to make his own toys to play with. In retrospect, these innocent acts would subsequently bear fruit to the creativity and imagination sublimated in his current work. Inspired by the artist's very own childhood experiences, one driving appeal behind Barrera's works is their reflection of the artist's conviction to create his own destiny, overcome socio-economic barriers and leave his mark behind.

■ **Artist Statement**



Off The Bat, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
121.9 x 121.9 cm

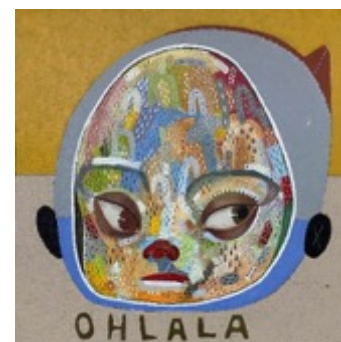
The "Yes, Can Do!" mindset refers to a positive and proactive attitude where individuals believe in their abilities to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. It's about being confident, resourceful, and willing to take on tasks or responsibilities without being deterred by obstacles or difficulties. This mindset is particularly relevant when discussing the socio-economic status of children.

Encouraging the "Yes, Can Do!" mindset helps them develop resilience and the ability to bounce back from setbacks.

Reen Barrera

■ **Ohlala & Duge**

Much of Barrera's works feature his characters, Ohlala and Duge. A visual inference of the phrase, "It's written all over your face", Ohlala's faces are vibrantly rendered in a mixture of patterns and painterly gestures. Often adorned in various types of hoods made from canvas cloths. By providing these characters the freedom to render their own symbols on their hoods, the artist alludes to the notion of how one can, both, design and be the author of their own fate- regardless of their economic standing. Duge, another character who frequents Barrera's works, refers to the word 'dog' when pronounced in Visayan, an indigenous Filipino language. A tribute to the accent of the language his family used to speak, the character is an ode to the artist's roots.



Left to Right, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
61 x 61cm

■ **Artist | Reen Barrera**



Reen Barrera was born in Paris, France, and raised in the Philippines. As a child, the artist would repair wood carvings in church and began collecting wood scraps to make toys.

Barrera would subsequently begin to collect various found materials, such as cardboard and paper, to create his own toys and figurines. This experience would later prove crucial

to his later artistic career. His works often reference childhood memories, vernacular phrases, and streetscapes and are characterized by their charming, "outsider art" aesthetic. In recent years, the artist has presented his works at solo and group exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout Europe, the United States, and Asia.

Artist Instagram | <https://www.instagram.com/reerustart>

■ **Artist-led Gallery Tour**

A gallery tour led by Barrera will be held on the opening day of the exhibition, August 5 (Sat).

For those who wish to attend, please feel free to join us during any of the times below. Reservations are not required.

Gallery Tour | Saturday, August 5 (Sat) ① from 3 pm / ② from 5 pm

\*Approx. 30 minutes per tour

Please note that event details are subject to change.

Please be sure to check the gallery website and social media pages prior to your visitation.

Website | [https://root-k.jp/exhibitions\\_en/reen-barrera\\_yes-can-do/](https://root-k.jp/exhibitions_en/reen-barrera_yes-can-do/)

■ Exhibition Details

Exhibition Title | *Yes, Can Do!*

Artist | Reen Barrera

Dates | August 5 (Sat) to 26 (Sat), 2023

Venue | √K Contemporary (Minamicho 6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo)

Organizer | √K Contemporary

Co-Operation | Vinyl on Vinyl

Website | [https://root-k.jp/exhibitions\\_en/reen-barrera\\_yes-can-do/](https://root-k.jp/exhibitions_en/reen-barrera_yes-can-do/)

About √K Contemporary

With an ethos guided by its experience with traditional Japanese art, √K Contemporary presents art from the early 20th century to the present. Driven by a desire to innovate, the gallery organizes exhibitions and events that aim to provoke, stimulate, and inspire new thinking. In conserving its acts, the gallery hopes to place and pave its way toward the future art scene. Designed with these ideas in mind, the 300 sqm gallery was envisioned as a “gallery from outer space”, where works are presented with new values and viewed with new eyes.

Official Website: <https://root-k.jp/en>

TW: @rk\_contemporary | FB: @rootkcontemporary | IG: @rk\_contemporary

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