

# Shimabuku

**Freedman Fitzpatrick**  
**Los Angeles**

*From top:*  
**John Miller**  
Untitled (2016)  
*Courtesy of the Artist and*  
*Richard Telles Fine Art,*  
*Los Angeles*  
*Photography by Marten Elder*

*"The Natural Order of Things"*  
*Installation view at Museo*  
*Jumex, Mexico City (2016)*  
*Courtesy of Museo*  
*Jumex, Mexico City*  
*Photography by*  
*Moritz Bernouilly*

**Shimabuku**  
Snow Monkey Stance (2016)  
*Courtesy of the Artist and*  
*Freedman Fitzpatrick,*  
*Los Angeles*

e Simple pleasures and little marvels have long preoccupied Shimabuku. Favorite subjects include food and animals. While the work often both documents and prompts a roving international itinerary, he brings a quirky poetics—rather than Romantic enthrallment or anthropological scrutiny—to investigations of nature, travel and local customs. A quiet and comic re-enchantment of the world.

The titular subjects of "The Snow Monkeys of Texas," the artist's first solo show in the US, are the descendants of macaques imported from Japan to a Texas ranch, in 1972, as exotic curiosities. His emphasis, however, is not so much on the extrinsic as on adaptation—how subsequent generations, raised far from their natural habitat, have made a home amid the dust. They eat cactus. They've Americanized, he says.

In the video *Snow Monkey Chow*, 2016, a still shot frames a pickup truck, its bed filled with boxes of bananas and bags of carrots. Over a couple minutes, monkeys come and go, devouring the produce and jostling with escalating physicality. Amid the ruckus, we catch glimpses through the back window of the truck, where the faces of a couple men can just barely be made out—a partial image that seems to distill Shimabuku's concern with the mysteries and pleasures of traversal and encounter.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?*, 2016, a twenty-minute video that, again, consists of an unmoving shot in which monkeys come in and out of frame. Here the action centers on a heap of crushed ice that the artist deposited in a stretch of ashen landscape. The monkeys pace around the pile, picking at it, eating shards. We witness the social—and power—dynamics of this primate community play out around the strange and diminishing mound of ice. It's mesmerizing at times. Yet the simple video simultaneously encourages and undermines anthropomorphic allegories of atavism and memory, displacement and defamiliarization, For all we know, they've seen ice before.

by Eli Diner

