

CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE

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PRESS DOSSIER

BETWEEN ART AND LIFE

Performativity in Japanese Art
28.11.2008—1.02.2009

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OPENING ON THUESDAY NOVEMBER THE 27th, 2008 FROM 6 PM TO 9 PM

The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is happy to present "Between Art and Life. Performativity in Japanese Art", a group exhibition including Atelier Bow-Wow, Taro Izumi, Yayoi Kusama, Yasumasa Morimura, Yoko Ono, Takako Saito, Tomoko Sawada, Shimabuku and Rikuo Ueda.

PERFORMANCE ART : SOME REFERENCES

Performance is an art practice which defines the artwork by the moment of its execution – an artwork in the shape of an "event". This practice has sprung from the enormous stockpile of cross-dialogues between film, theatre, architecture, dance, sculpture, painting, video, drawing, actions and music. Performance stems from realizing an idea through a gesture. In particular it has throughout its history been interested in showcasing the experiential, opening different kinds of engagement with meaning, transgressing the norm, questioning the art product and activating the spectator.

The vast area of interdisciplinary and multimedia collaborations that we call "performance art" has a history that covers over a hundred years, from the early actions of the Dada artists to the engaged performances of the 1960s and 1970s. The special re-mergence of the discipline in the post-world-war two period, described by American artist Robert Rauschenberg as a desire to "mind the gap between art and life" was, crucially, characterized by an interest in society and everyday life, bringing the spectator into the art work, and thus the art work into life.

THE EXTENDED FIELD OF PERFORMANCE : PERFORMATIVITY

The exhibition "Between Art and Life. Performativity in Japanese Art" intends to explore performance in its broader form, performativity. The concept of performativity is born in the sixties at the crossroads of social theory, linguistics and gender theory. The term refers as well to the "activation potential" of the artwork as to the devices, the material and the supports linked to performance. With this respect, objects of performativity open on the possibility of use and are less involved as formal "works of art" (in an autonomous and museographic meaning) than as kits, instructions, by-products, built situations and snapshots documenting, allowing and stimulating performative productions.

The artworks showcased in the frame of "Between Art and Life. Performativity in Japanese Art" are witnessing past performances and/or opening an activation potential for the visitor.

A NEW GENERATION OF JAPANESE ARTISTS

Japan today is a pivotal part of the renewed interest internationally for the live arts. A new generation of artists is re-thinking the history of performance and what is known as performativity.

As a matter of fact, the bond between gesture and idea is well established in Japan culture from its every day life to the most sophisticated forms of art expressions. Given its unique history in the field of performance art, Japan is particularly well placed regarding the current renaissance in the field. Urban groups such as High Red Centre and Gutai, active from the 1950s onwards, were pivotal in re-engaging art with society and the citizen. On an individual basis women artists such as Yoko Ono, Yayoi Kusama, Shigeo Kubota, Mieko Shiomi, Takako Saito, who moved to New York in the 1960s, helped define the nature of performance art, particularly its relation to the body, and other media such as video and music.

BETWEEN ART AND LIFE. PERFORMATIVITY IN JAPANESE ART

The exhibition “Between Art and Life. Performativity in Japanese Art” shows the work of different generations of artists born in Japan, whose practice engages with the national and world heritage of performance and performativity. The exhibition selection is necessarily subjective. It does not seek to define an entire nation through its cultural production; nor does it maintain that performativity is the only worth-while practice cluster in Japan today. “Between Art and Life. Performativity in Japanese Art” has the specific task to showcase the work of some of the most dynamic artists from Japan across different generations, some of whom are even based outside of their country and thus are engaging with a new set of cultural traditions. In particular, the exhibition showcases an area of artistic practice which is vitally contributing to the cultural energy experienced in Japan and reverberating around the world today.

Curator of the exhibition: Katya García-Antón

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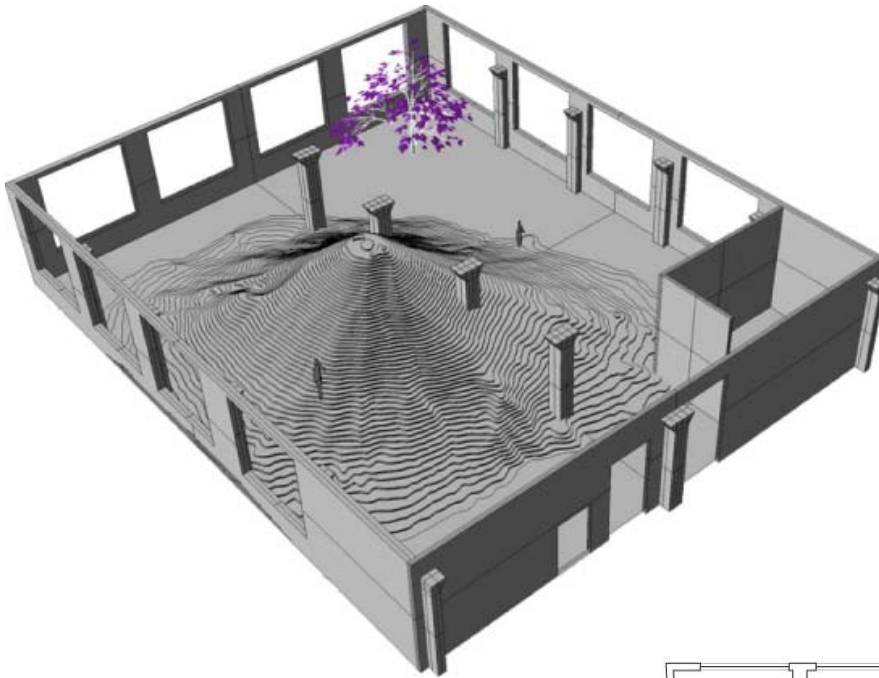
ARTIST'S SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

ATELIER BOW-WOW

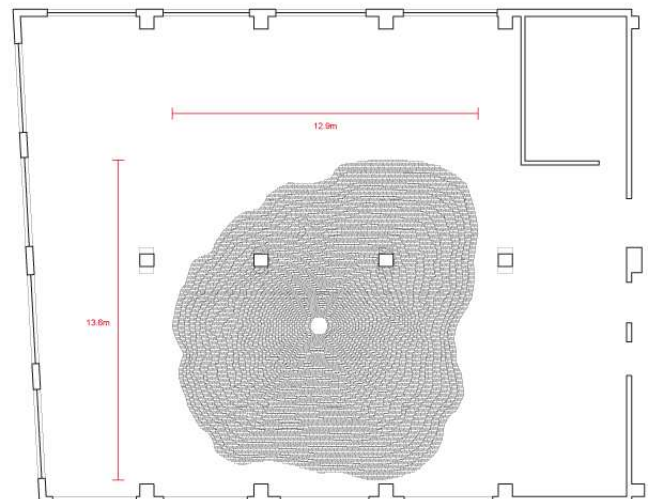
(Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, *1965, Kanagawa, Japan and Momoyo Kajima, *1969, Tokyo, Japan)
Live and work in Tokyo.

This group of architects works on a collective basis since 1992. They develop artistic strategies in a collective way by building up ephemeral, hand-made and very aesthetic structures, which intend to inspire moments of intimate humanizing. Tied up to the making of a better society through art, Atelier Bow-Wow explores the question of space as it both concerns architecture and contemporary art. Their monumental installations, often inspired by site-specific architecture, try to stimulate and strengthen the social dimension by inviting the public to participate. Their work has been presented at the Shanghai (2002), Venice (2003) and Sao Paulo (2006) biennials.

Atelier Bow-Wow's project for the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, entitled "Alpinism", proposes a reduced model of the Fuji-Yama, which would be built out of 37 tons of wood briquettes same as the building grounds.



Bow-Wow, „Alpinism“,
2008, site-specific project
for the Centre d'Art
Contemporain Genève



TARO IZUMI

(*1976, Nara, Japan)

Live and works in Tokyo.

Taro Izumi builds up playful, innovative and critical pieces. His videos and installations are mainly about of the self of the artist and showcases, in an ironic manner, his obsessions and his environment, in front of which he feels maladjusted.

In the frame of « Between Art and Life », Taro Izumi showcases fourteen videos (in particular « Hinging meat », « Low speed vendor » and « Water-flow Laundry »), one of them in collaboration with Shimabuku.



Taro Izumi, “Untitled”, 2005, video

YAYOI KUSAMA

(*1928, Matsumoto, Japan)

Lives and works in Japan.

Between 1957 and 1973, Yayoi Kusama lives in the United States where she participates, with Andy Warhol, in the psychedelic and the pop art scenes while developing a work precursory for performance and minimal art. She has been honoured by the Arts and Humanities Order by the French State and has received the « Premium Imperiale » in 2006, a price delivered by the Japan Art Association.

The « Walking Piece » slide show documents the performance realized about 1966 in New York, in which the artist, dressed up in traditional Japanese clothes, walks through the city and its different places.



Yayoi Kusama, “Walking Piece” (slide show), New York 1966, Maria and Walter Schnepel collection, courtesy Victoriy Miro, London

YASUMASA MORIMURA
(*1951, Osaka, Japan)
Lives and works in Osaka.

Yasumasa Morimura excels in the embezzlement of celebrities portraits and pop icons. Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo, Mao, Fidel Castro, Yukio Mishima : the artist works, by cross-dressing himself, on the appropriation of identities and the gender performance.

His video « Seasons of passion / A requiem : Mishima » (2006) addresses the last hours of the famous Japanese writer and his manifesto discourse to the artists of Japan.



Yasumasa Morimura, « Seasons of passion / A requiem : Mishima » (still screen), 2006, courtesy galerie Thaddeus Ropac and of the artist

YOKO ONO
(*1933, Tokyo, Japan)
Lives and works in New-York.

Experimental and visual artist, musician, writer, film-maker, Yoko Ono is a key-figure for the Fluxus movement and mainly works on a performative mode.



Yoko Ono, "Wish Piece", 1996

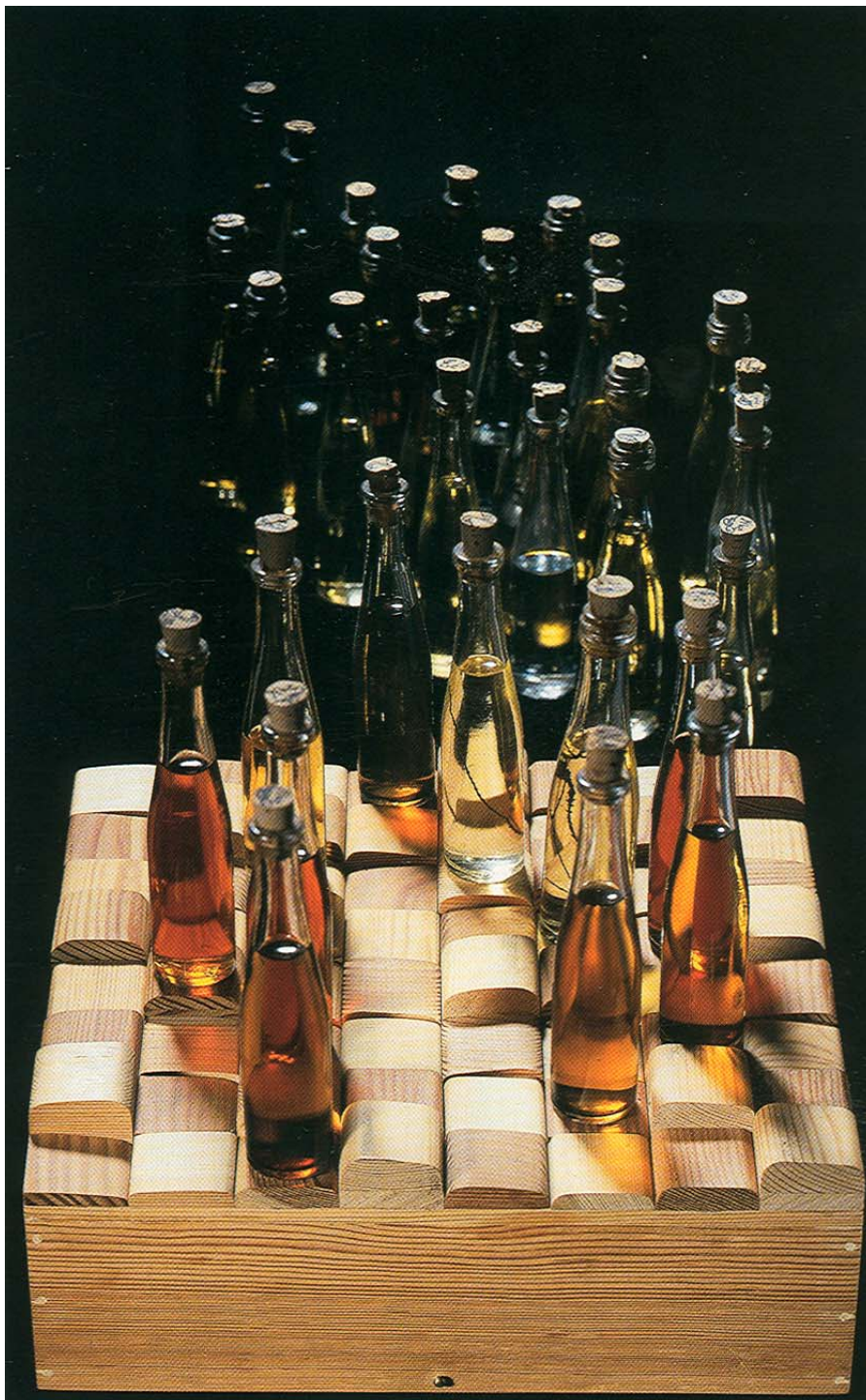
TAKAKO SAITO

(*1929, Sabae-Shi, Japan)

Lives and works in Düsseldorf.

As a Fluxus artist, Takako Saito focuses on the social value of the art work and proposes settings which stimulate the exchange, i.e. with her « Shops » which invites the public to contribute by producing or consuming. Her first pieces involving chess games came from her collaboration with Georges Maciunas in the 60ies.

“Liquor Chess” (1975) is designed as a double-bind invitation to inebriation and works on a paradoxical mode : on one hand, the chess game implies command, strategy and anticipation and on the other one, alcohol stresses loss of control and drift. A contradictory setting for a game which of the goal would less consist in winning things out than making them longer, and enjoy.



Takako Saito, “Liquor Chess”, 1975, coll. Maria and Walter Schnepel

TOMOKO SAWADA (*1977)

Lives and works in Japan.

Tomoko Sawada uses her image in a photographic work in which she constantly rebuilds her identity. She sets up a questioning process about our individuality in the social frame. Her practice mainly lies on photographic self-portraits, which allows her to take on a large number of identities while exploring women's social status as well as the gender's and the nation's imageries. Her piece « ID400 » (1999), reminding of Andy Warhol's « Most Wanted Man » (1964), puts together about four hundred different identities.

In her series « Costume » (24 images, 2003-2004) and « Early Days » (52 images, 1996-1997), Tomoko Sawada uses the same proliferation and identity declension principle. Her video « Mask » displays sixty different face expressions, mechanically peeled off by the artist.



Tomoko Sawada, "Costume", serie of 24, 2003-2004

SHIMABUKU (*1969, Kobe, Japan)

Lives and works in Berlin.

Shimabuku is interested in myth-making and story telling; he puts that in shape by simple actions and by his engagement with specific communities. His installations and videos are built on narrative and surprising small events, which are intended as artistic canvases; they let bring out mythological structures from little stories. His work focuses on the participative and processing dimensions, linking contemporary art to everyday life.



Shimabuku, "Rubber Band", 2001, courtesy gallery Air de Paris



Shimabuku, "Catching octopus with self-made ceramic pots", 2003, courtesy Air de Paris gallery



RIKUO UEDA (*1950, Osaka, Japan)

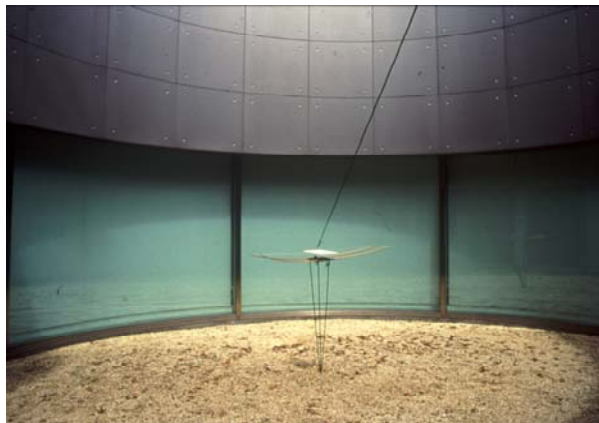
Lives and works in Japan.

Rikuo Ueda's work, which is mainly based on the relation between man and the natural world, casts a poetic eye on the performative side of the nature. Priority goes to a «collaboration» with the wind which the artist «collects», studies and classifies since decades. His "Wind Drawings" are realized with the help of mechanical devices using the energy of wind.



Rikuo Ueda, "Wind Drawing NY" & "Wind Drawing Indiana", 2000, artist's courtesy

"Wind Drawing", 1997



"Wind Drawing Hiroshima",
2000

