

Invisible Energy

20 February – 27 March 2015, ST PAUL St Gallery

Meiro Koizumi
Erika Kobayashi
Hiroharu Mori
Yoshinari Nishio
Nobuko Tsuchiya
Masahiro Wada

Curated by Naoko Horiuchi, Charlotte Huddleston and Vera Mey

Invisible Energy takes its starting point from *Mediarena: contemporary art from Japan* shown at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth in 2004. The exhibition looked at the relationship between Japanese contemporary art and its engagement with new media as conceptual and physical terrain.

Retaining an interest in new forms of media, a decade on *Invisible Energy's* focus is on the social resonance of this media, and the effects it has on human interactions in a contemporary context. The recent 3/11 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami adds complexity to the challenge of how to read and interpret contemporary art from Japan. Contemporary Japanese art may be understood through its detailed and elaborate technique, subtle and nuanced aesthetic history dating back centuries, and within a social situation which has underlying tensions, affects and energies resulting from recent events. Exploring how these tensions realise themselves through an aesthetic or an attitude, *Invisible Energy* suggests a sociological connection between the artists' environments and their work.

In the video *Re: (2009)*, Hiroharu Mori uses text gleaned from an internet chat forum frequented by Japanese women. It opens with a woman's post revealing personal details, which culminates with a question about extravagance, and what kind of life one would like to enjoy. From numerous replies, Mori selected 20 and asked a female actor to perform them. The resulting performances include elements of narrative fiction and anonymity. Foregrounding the ambiguity of communication fora that fuse reality, aspiration and desire, the work offers an evaluation of the impact of social media on group psychology.

Meiro Koizumi's *Death Poem for a City (2013)* also works with contrasting confessions and desires. Within this piece we only ever know as much about the subject as the artist does: the confessor's gender and voice. Deploying a similar methodology to Mori – using the Facebook open call – the two-channel artwork is a cacophony of city images alongside contributors' confessions ranging from the lonely to the sadistic. Through this visual confusion of city and person, *Death Poem for a City* draws us to a closer inspection of the city and its underlying current that is neither visible nor comprehensible through the outward face of the citizen.

Extending the consideration of imperceptible yet very real forces that impact the present and future, Erika Kobayashi's installation *HALF-LIFE CALENDAR (2014)*, designed in collaboration with Mina Tabei, draws on her extensive research of the history of radium and radioactivity. The work consists of 1601 countdown-year-calendar-posters to take away. The edition number 1601 is the half-life years of Radium 226, an incredible length that could stretch beyond human history. Kobayashi has been researching the history of radium, radioactivity, and the life of Marie Curie for several years and her work has resulted in the book *Breakfast with Madame Curie* as well as installations consisting of text, video, and drawings.

Nobuko Tsuchiya will present new works, continuing a sculptural practice that embodies a futuristic anthropomorphism through its materiality. For *Invisible Energy* Tsuchiya has reconfigured work with new materials found locally. Combining steel offcuts, piping, silicone and altered objects with organic materials like wool she creates sculptural objects resonant of another logic. The forms, which are almost alien in appearance, seem incomprehensible in their referent points to things that already exist in the world. Her surreal titles offer no further sense of narrative or purpose. Un-human materials make up forms which seem visceral and living, creating objects with an anthropomorphic sensuality. Although the final work is minimal and restrained in appearance the process to create these pieces involves the assembly of different onomatopoeic words as well as different images before arriving at the resolved objects and configurations.

In his work *Stylish Flies for House Wives (2012-2013)*, Masahiro Wada refers to relationships among family members, through an unlikely combination of key words: 'house wives' and 'flies'. Elements such as maggots, flies, and a staged room, together with scenes of the artist's daily life with his wife and son indicate the frustration and confusion of parenting, artistic careers, and family economics.

Yoshinari Nishio questions the way we communicate through fashion. Nishio will be in Auckland from 19 February until 6 March to

make a new version of his ongoing series *Self Select* (2007-) on the streets of central Auckland. This project has seen him exchange clothes with unknown passersby in various cities across the world. For Nishio, "A costume that is unique to a certain group is more important than language as a criterion to distinguish 'us' from 'them.'" In an act of intimacy that requires instant yet strong trust and mutual understanding, two complete strangers take off their clothes and trade them on the street. By initiating this ritualistic performance on random streets, Nishio sidesteps more ordinary human-relation building processes to suggest a new way of connecting to people and places. This guerrilla-like costume play, which temporarily makes each participant 'become the other', questions social and gender rules that ordinarily bind us. *Self Select* acts to dissolve biases, prejudices, and misunderstandings that we tend to literally cover up with our clothes.

Invisible Energy is not a definitive thesis on these artists' practices, but rather links the resonant energy in their work to the energy that one experiences in contemporary society. The aftermath of the 3/11 incidents, and looming sense of nuclear danger, is yet to materialise physically. It remains invisible to the naked eye yet will continue to have resounding effects on all of us.

Artist information

Hiroharu Mori (Born 1969 in Kanagawa / Lives and works in Kanagawa)

Completed a Masters of Fine Art at Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan, USA (2000), and Master of Science (Visual Studies) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA (2004). He has exhibited widely both internationally and in Japan, received a number of awards and undertaken residencies in Australia, USA, Germany, Korea, and Poland. Mori is a co-founder of the organization Artists' Guild launched in Japan in 2009. Artists' Guild creates a support system to provide and share video and film equipment for the emerging artists to help their independence: <http://artists-guild.net/>

Masahiro Wada (Born 1977 in Tokyo / Lives and works in Tokyo)

Completed BA Fine Art, Goldsmiths College University of London (2004) and has served as a director of the artist run space Homebase since 2001. Wada examines cultural codifications that are taken for granted, hidden or secluded to create interventions that often encompass performance, sculpture, installation and video. Since the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, Wada has been working on an investigation of uncertainty as a reflection of his political and economic suspicions. In his recent video work, *Recorrido Arqueologico #1* (2013), Wada searched for the location of an ancient ruin that appeared in a dream he had whilst suffering from an unknown illness in Mexico. As part of the work, he visited fortunetellers and scholars in both Mexico City and Japan to discover if the symbolic place he had seen could actually exist.

Erika Kobayashi (Born 1978 in Tokyo / Lives and works in Tokyo)

Is a writer and comic artist. She graduated from the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies Graduate School of the University of Tokyo. Kobayashi stayed in New York from 2008 - 2009, having received an invitation from Asian Cultural Council (The Rockefeller Foundation). She has authored a novel called *Madame Curie to Choshokuwo (Breakfast with Madame Curie)* nominated for the 27th Yukio Mishima Award and the 151st Ryunosuke Akutagawa Award in 2014. She published several books including *Your Dear Kitty*, which is based on the diaries of Anne Frank and Kobayashi's father, *I can't forget-* (collected works including texts, drawing, and comics), and comic works about the history of radioactivity '*Hikari no Kodomo1 (LUMINOUS)*'.

Meiro Koizumi (Born in 1976 in Gunma/ Lives and works in Yokohama)

Koizumi studied at the International Christian University, Tokyo (1996-1999), Chelsea College of Art and Design, London (1999-2002), and Rijksakademie van beeldend kunsten, Amsterdam (2005-2006). Koizumi's work *Death Poem for a City* (2013) playfully presents confessions both real and fictional which reveal an underlying tension between imagined personas and how they are an affect of our lived situations. Using clichéd Japanese narratives as well as fictitious characters his work often reveals an insight into an underlying sociological phenomenon in his native surroundings of an ebbing, bustling but introverted metropolis.

Yoshinari Nishio (Born in 1982 in Nara / Lives and works in Nara)

Obtained his Ph. D. in Fine Arts from Tokyo University of the Arts. His works have consistently referred to relationships between fashion and communication, developing art projects with the cooperation of citizens and students around the world. His major art projects include *Self Select* (2009 – ongoing), *Familial Uniform* (2006-) in which he reproduces family photos with the same family members in the same clothes at the same place, *Overall* (2010) in which he reconstructs giant lost objects around the world with patchworks created from unwanted clothes. He established Nishio Workshop Nairobi Office in 2009, and started on alternative art projects in Africa. Based on the unique long-term study on clothing through the lens of a contemporary artist, he set up his own fashion label FORM ON WORDS in 2011.

Nobuko Tsuchiya (Born in 1972 in Yokohama / Lives and works in Yokohama)

Tsuchiya trained in London at Goldsmiths College, University of London. She has exhibited extensively including at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003), *Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century*, New Museum, New York (2007) and *Quiet Attentions - Departure from Women*, Art Tower Mito, Ibaraki, Japan (2011). Tsuchiya's sculptures consistently have an appearance suggestive of lab experiments with a combination of repurposed objects such as drum kit steps, birdcages or tennis bats with materials such as wax, leather or plants.

Works list

1. Nobuko Tsuchiya

Meteor Ruler (2015)

Mixed media

2. Nobuko Tsuchiya

A Brief History of Time (2015)

Mixed media

3. Hiroharu Mori

Re: (2009)

Full HD single channel video installation / stereo sound

Duration: 37 minutes

4. Meiro Koizumi

Death Poem for a City (2013)

Two channel video installation

Duration: 21 minutes 45 seconds.

Courtesy of the artist and Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

Please be advised that this work contains explicit language that may offend some viewers. Not suitable for children.

5. Yoshinari Nishio

Self-select (2015)

Installation, workshop

Dimensions Variable (Work in Situ)

6. Erika Kobayashi

HALF-LIFE CALENDAR (2014)

594x841mm (poster) / 794 x1041mm (Acrylic Sheet), 1601 numbered calendars, silkscreen print on acrylic sheet, wooden plinth, adhesive vinyl

*Designed in collaboration with Mina Tabei

The calendars were previously distributed at the exhibition:

The MOTHER of DESIGN meets Cosmos [COSMIC GIRLS], Marunouchi House

Tokyo, Japan

27 October -16 November, 2014

Visitors are welcome to take a poster

7. Masahiro Wada

Stylish Flies for Housewives (2012 -13)

Single-channel film installation/monitor, photograph, timber, sofas, flies

Duration: 39 minutes

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