

PRESS RELEASE

4TH DOJIMA RIVER BIENNALE
25 July – 30 August 2015, Osaka

4 July 2015

Take Me To The River - currents of the contemporary

Dojima River Forum
1-1-17 Fukushima, Fukushima-ku, Osaka 553-0003, Japan

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Opening times: 11am - 7pm, daily

Artists: **Aki Sasamoto, Angus Fairhurst, Hito Steyerl, Melanie Gilligan, Melanie Jackson, Michael Stevenson, Peter Fend, Ryoji Ikeda, Shimabuku, Shitamichi Motoyuki, Simon Fujiwara, Superflex, The Play, Vermeir & Heiremans, Yuken Teruya**

Artistic Director: **Tom Trevor**

The opening sentence of *Hōjōki*, written in 1212 by Kamo no Chōmei, is celebrated in Japanese literature as an expression of *mujō* (the transience of things): “The current of the flowing river does not cease, and yet the water is not the same water as before.” In the Western tradition, a surprisingly similar saying is ascribed to Heraclitus, circa 500 BC: “You cannot step into the same river twice”, along with the famous declaration: “Everything flows, nothing stands still.” Both employ the image of a river as a metaphor for the flow of time, and thus impermanence, evoking a sense of the ephemeral nature of existence and the continual process of transformation that renders all certainties, and their associated social hierarchies, transitory, and ultimately inconsequential. In more recent times, in his book, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), Manuel Castells defined a new “space of flows”, arising from the rapid technological developments of the Information Age. Essentially this emerging global condition of flux shifts the emphasis of social relations to people’s place in time rather than in space, defined by dynamic movement rather than by static location. In this fluid state, meanings and values no longer derive from individuals or places, or from fixed intrinsic qualities, but rather they are contingent and relational, generated by interactions in the space of flows. As a result, Castells says: “Our societies are increasingly structured around the bipolar opposition of the Net and the Self.”

Take Me To The River is a project about change and exchange in the contemporary ‘space of flows’. Exploring the notion of ‘the current’ within contemporary art, and the confluence of multiple temporalities within globalized culture today, it employs the metaphor of the river to examine the experience of being immersed in a world marked by an unprecedented diversity and depth of difference, by the coexistence of incommensurable viewpoints, and by the absence of an all-encompassing narrative (including those of modernity or post-modernity) that will enlist the participation of all. Within this convergence of different worlds that makes up the historical present, many different ‘currents’ compete for ascendancy, but with no clear vision of the future. At the same time, traditional notions of the self, as grounded in a communal sense of place, are being washed away, replaced by a ‘network culture’ of emergent meanings and practices. The question arises, how will the singularity of the artist function and change in relation to these new conditions? What happens when the subjective self is set adrift in the space of flows - when you ‘take me to the river’?

The title of the project, *Take Me To The River*, references the classic R’n’B song, written by soul singer Al Green and guitarist Mabon ‘Teenie’ Hodges in 1973. At once a steamy love song, full of romantic yearning, and at the same time a plea for absolution, Green’s lyrics maintain an unresolved contradiction throughout. Whilst the singer had achieved mass popular appeal in the early 1970s, crossing over to the mainstream pop charts with a string of soul hits, his roots were in gospel, and this tension is perhaps best embodied in the ambivalent lyrics of *Take Me To The River*.

The 4th Dojima River Biennale, *Take Me To The River*, curated by Tom Trevor, follows on from three previous editions, *Reflection: The World Through Art* curated by Fumio Nanjo in 2009, *Ecosophia (ecology + philosophy): Art and Architecture* curated by Takayo Iida in 2011, and *Little Water* curated by Rudy Tseng in 2013. Tom Trevor is a curator and writer based in England. He is currently Guest Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, and developing a new biennial for Aarhus 2017, European Capital of Culture, with ARoS Kunstmuseum. He was previously Director of Arnolfini (2005–13) and Spacex (1999–2005), in the UK.

Organizer: Dojima River Forum
Director: Hikari Furukubo

OPENING SCHEDULE at the Dojima River Forum

■ PREVIEW

Date: 15:30-18:00, Friday, 24 July 2015

■ PRESS CONFERENCE

Date: 16:30-17:00, Friday, 24 July 2015

■ RECEPTION

Date: 18:00-20:00, Friday, 24 July 2015

■ GALLERY TOUR, led by the Artistic Director, in conversation with participating artists

Date: 11:30-13:00, Saturday, 25 July 2015

ARTISTS INFORMATION

The Play (artists collective founded in 1967 in the Kansai region, still active today)

Staging most of their actions, “without particular reason,” in “natural outdoor spaces,” and admitting they “only like the infinite time and space of open air,” The Play is a fluctuating art collective, that has constantly devised its own methods for collective actions and the ways of transmitting them, its members coming together to create the possibility of an event without any concern for its result. Refusing to distinguish art from life, The Play underlines an attitude and an outlook focused on playing, sincerity and humor, notions that remain crucial today. For the Dojima River Biennale, the Play has re-activated a project, ‘IE: The Play Have a House’, first realized in 1972.

Peter Fend (born 1950, US, lives in New York)

Peter Fend established *Ocean Earth Development Corporation* in 1980, specifically conceived as an instrument for implementing the goals of the environmental art movement, building upon the ideas of ‘land artists’ such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heiser, Dennis Oppenheim and Gordon Matta-Clark (with whom Fend worked closely until his death in 1978). One of Fend’s principle strategies is to view global ecologies as centred around ocean basins, rather than land (and terrestrial being), which is peripheral to these hydrometric geographies. For *Take Me To The River*, he is focusing on the water basins and ocean currents bordered by the territories of Japan.

Shitamichi Motoyuki (born 1978, Okayama, lives in Nagoya)

Shitamichi Motoyuki is a traveling artist, best known for his photographic documents of what he happens upon in transit. In the *Bridge* project, he took photographs at different places he happened to come upon, where people had employed minimal structures, like a piece of board or concrete slab, to cross boundaries, which he defined as bridges. For the Dojima River Biennale, he has created a new project around the idea of borders, but specifically at sea, or as defined by rivers, using water samples as a medium for investigating this immaterial idea.

Melanie Jackson (born 1968, Hollywood, UK, lives in London)

Melanie Jackson has developed an aesthetic that allows her to reflect on the manner in which she is implicated in the condition of her chosen subjects. Previously she has focused on global consumerism and popular attitudes towards the new mobility of goods and people, circulating around the world. For *Take Me To The River*, she presents two projects, including a new site-specific work, exploring attitudes to milk and its commercialization, reflecting upon how this basic commodity becomes a cipher of protracted infancy and postponed desire, redemption, and of annihilation.

Simon Fujiwara (born 1982, London, lives in Berlin)

Simon Fujiwara is a British/Japanese artist who grew up with his English mother in the remote rural county of Cornwall, in the UK. Using his family history, he fuses the private sphere with the social realm, blurring reality and storytelling to create a drama in which he plays the roles of multiple characters: anthropologist, novelist and eroticist, amongst others. For the Dojima River Biennale, he presents a new version of *Rehearsal for a Reunion (with the Father of Pottery), after Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada* (2011) narrating a process of reparation and re-engagement with his estranged Japanese father, via the medium of pottery.

Aki Sasamoto (born 1980, Yokohama, lives in New York)

Aki Sasamoto is a New York-based, Japanese artist, who works in performance, sculpture, dance, and “whatever more medium that it takes” to get her ideas across. Sasamoto's installations are careful arrangements of sculpturally altered found objects, and the decisive gestures in her improvisations create feedback, responding to sound, objects, and moving bodies. The constructed stories seem personal at first, yet oddly open to variant degrees of access, relation, and reflection. For *Take Me To The River*, she creates a new sound installation in the basement of the Forum, using ice, found objects and personal memorabilia.

Shimabuku (born 1969, Kobe, lives in Berlin)

Shimabuku travels the world, interacts with strangers, and converses with nature, instigating moments of poetry, humor, and wonderment. Each of his works tells the story of an improbable encounter across borders, species, and states of being. In “Something that Floats/Something that Sinks,” featuring fruits and vegetables circling each other (one above, one below), Shimabuku demonstrates an odd natural phenomena—certain fruits of the exact same species and even of the same plant, float, while others sink. For the Dojima River Biennale, along with a number of works relating to the idea of the river, he presents a new work, developed in Bordeaux, France, in relation to the river eel, or lamprey.

Yuken Teruya (born 1973, Okinawa, lives in New York)

Yuken Teruya manipulates everyday objects, transforming their meanings to reflect on contemporary society and culture. Central features of his works include the idea of metamorphosis, and the subversion of expectations or traditional meanings. Using a variety of materials and media — from kimonos, to pizza boxes, newspaper articles, shopping bags and paper-cuttings — Teruya frequently creates meticulous and intricate art works, small and enchanting worlds, which relate to broader concerns. For *Take Me To The River*, he has revisited an existing series of works, producing portraits of specific trees cut from the bags of everyday fast food stores, as a site-specific installation.

Superflex (founded in 1993, live in Copenhagen)

Superflex is a Danish artists' group founded in 1993 by Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen. Superflex describe their projects as Tools, as proposals that invite people to participate in and communicate the development of experimental models that alter the economic production conditions. Often their projects are related to economic forces, democratic production conditions and self-organisation. For the Dojima River Biennale, they present a site-specific installation of their infamous video-work, *Flooded McDonalds* (2009).

Michael Stevenson (born 1964, New Zealand, lives in Berlin)

Michael Stevenson's practice embraces both conceptual art and objects. Allowing the conceptual basis for a project to dictate the form of each artwork, he is particularly interested in historical moments that

demonstrate the nexus between art and economics. The point of departure for his practice is often a singular historical story concerning intersecting figures and events, both public and private. For the Dojima River Biennale, he presents a new installation about the MONIAC, a hydraulic device designed by economist Bill Phillips in 1949, to illustrate national economic processes. Reputedly the MONIAC could illustrate export and import only by having water drained from or fed into the hydraulic system. Legend has it that in 1953 the Central Bank of Guatemala acquired a model.

Ryoji Ikeda (born 1966, Gifu, Japan, lives in Paris)

Ryoji Ikeda is a sound artist, working with electronic media and raw digital data to create large-scale immersive installations. Ikeda is concerned primarily with sound in a variety of "raw" states, such as sine tones and noise, often using frequencies at the edges of the range of human hearing. For *Take Me To The River*, he will present a spectacular, site-specific immersive sound installation that explores the potential to perceive the invisible multi-substance of data that permeates our world, and to materialize raw data in sound and visuals. Realized in relation to the architecture of the main hall of the Forum, the digital data will flow through the space like a river.

Angus Fairhurst (born 1966, in Kent, England, died in 2008)

Angus Fairhurst's work encompasses sculpture, painting, performance, photography, video, music, printmaking, drawing and collage. It touches on themes such as selfhood, desire, advertising and mass reproduction. The artist found a source for his complex collages in advertising, with its constantly repeated paradigms of female beauty and diverse design concepts. By freeing these from their representative function, for example by removing all evidence of body and text, Fairhurst revealed his fascination with the aesthetics of surfaces. Much of Fairhurst's activity centres in this way on repetition (often compared to Samuel Beckett or Bruce Nauman), as he explored the way in which loops and superimposition serve as metaphors for the absurdity of everyday life.

Hito Steyerl (born 1966, Munich, lives in Berlin)

Hito Steyerl is a German filmmaker, visual artist, and author in the field of essayist documentary video. Her practice uniquely articulates the contemporary status of images, and of image politics, in the digital age. Central to her work is the notion that global communication technologies – and the attendant mediation of the world through circulating images – have had a dramatic impact on conceptions of governmentality, culture, economics and subjectivity itself. For the Dojima River Biennale, she presents a site-specific installation of recent her work, *Liquidity Inc.* (2014), in the basement of the Forum, incorporating a giant wave-like ramp, Judo mats and a video projection.

Vermeir & Heiremans (born 1973 and 1962, Belgium, live in Brussels)

In their collaborative practice, Katleen Vermeir & Ronny Heiremans focus on the dynamics between art, architecture and economy. ART HOUSE INDEX (AHI-) is a new "extension" of their own loft apartment in Brussels that proposes the transformation of "the home as an artwork" into a financial instrument. Art, like finance, is a system of belief and their markets are where this belief is put to work. For Dojima River Biennale they also present their new video installation, MASQUERADE, and In-Residence Magazine # 02, an artist publication in the form of a lifestyle magazine, which offers background information on the concept of "value" in the worlds of finance and contemporary art.

Melanie Gilligan (born in 1979, in Toronto, lives in New York and London)

Melanie Gilligan's video-works examine how technology and the economy instrumentalize everyday interactions and human relations. In her latest work, *The Common Sense* (2014), an experimental narrative drama, she tells the story of a speculative future technology, "The Patch," a sort of prosthesis which makes it possible to directly experience the physical sensations and feelings of another person. Gilligan raises questions about our present relationship to technology, which increasingly shape our minds, our bodies, and the way we live and interact within a capitalist system.

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