

Free exhibition tour
 16 Apr 2016, 3pm (Thu)
 conducted by Hisami Omori - co-curator, NPO Hexaproject

Supported by POLA Orbis Holdings Inc.
 For more information, <http://www.hexaproject.com/>

About NPO Hexaproject
 Hexaproject, a non-profit organisation, was established in 2006. Since then, it has been organising independent arts educational programmes in Japan and around the world through a variety of art and cultural activities, school workshops and art presentations.

象 徵 景
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HYPER JAPANESE

14 Apr - 3 Jul 2016

HYPER JAPANESE

Japan is a role model for its innovation, progressiveness, and rapid ascent in the global economy and technology ladder. While other countries were still making sense of their development status, Japan was well ahead of its peers in many ways. As a trend leader, it is at the same time able to preserve its rich cultural heritage with a dignified sense of purpose, and keeping its traditional practices and crafts pure and uncorrupted. Although it has remained resilient, societal behaviour and attitudes have been shifting over the past decades, some as a reaction to several landmark events in their nation's history.

In this exhibition, we share the works of a pool of artists who belong to a generation impacted by some of the recent crises - such as the Japanese asset price bubble that burst in the 1990s, and the more recent tsunami, which caused the nuclear accidents in Fukushima. Inevitably, what transpired from these events was an apparent shift in societal behaviour, in terms of ideologies, lifestyle readjustments, and subliminal discourse.

In *Hyper Japanese*, we foreground this particular generation of artists born in the 1970s and after. Here, we look at how the formalistic practices that are deeply rooted in their Japanese identity are being reinterpreted, broken down and reconstructed in many thought-provoking ways. These artists have studied, lived or worked overseas before at some point in their lives, enriched by both external and internal points of view in their discourse. Their artworks are evident of a new approach that is taking root in their practices, against the backdrop of a growing cosmopolitan society. It is interesting to discover that many of these artists, while trying to dismantle formal traditional art forms, often end up reinforcing them. Although embedded with various strong messages, these bold and ingenious works are, first and foremost, of uncompromised pleasing visual forms. The artists are able to introduce different layers of reading to their works, suggesting sensitivity and displaying maturity. More telling is how traditions can be preserved in a society with increasingly mixed, cross-cultural influences from other countries. In conceptualising this exhibition, the superlatives "hyper-adaptive", "hyper-evolution", and "hyper-Japanese", are coined as an urgent and poignant reaction to the tension of the fast and changing modern environments that calls for an immediate need for preservation.

More importantly, it is the Japanese spirit that remains unsurpassed in its unique strength. Curatorially, each work in this exhibition is represented by a traditional Japanese character that is used to express the characteristics of the Japanese spirit that lies within; concepts of texture, symbol, happiness, vanity, diorama, echo, drop, decoration, and miniature are explored and rediscovered in new interpretations suited to a hyper-evolving society of art audiences as well as practitioners.

— Visual Arts team, Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay
March 2016

We would like to thank all participating artists as well as Ms Hisami Omori from NPO Hexaproject and Ms Mikiko Matsumoto from POLA Orbis Holdings Inc. for co-curating this exhibition with us.

象

katadori : miniature

by Saya Irie (b.1983)
lives and works in Hiroshima, Japan



Dust series, 2007-2014
Eraser, banknote

As Andy Warhol once said, "Everything is beautiful. Pop is everything.". In the market economy, the more popular something is, the more demand there is for it, and the more expensive it becomes. Historical figures have long been portrayed on paper currencies to enhance its value and ensure our trust in it. Their portraits become part of the visual beauty of paper currencies.

Saya Irie reverses this process by restoring the subjects of these portraits to their original three-dimensional forms. Her elaborately-realised artworks deftly amplify the value of the original bank notes. By taking icons that have attained "values" through their ubiquity, erasing them and then recreating them as three-dimensional sculptures, Irie's work poses humorously modern questions about the way we interact with these images in our lives.



Dust series, 2007-2014
Eraser, banknote

徵

shirushi : symbol

by Akiko Ozasa (b.1981)
lives and works in Tokyo, Japan



Präparat series, 2012
Acrylic on paper



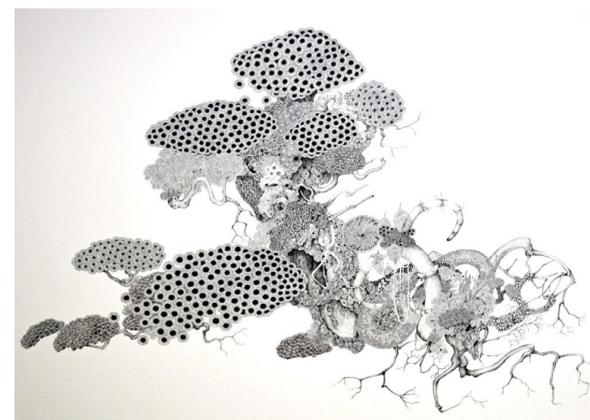
Akiko Ozasa creates drawings and embroidery works using the sewing machine. Through the works, she attempts to portray the different emotions that surges through us in times of difficulties. A mix of techniques are employed in her works, which demonstrate the traditional nihon-ga style of painting which she had mastered in Japan, as well as contemporary art forms that she learned while studying in Germany. The lines in Ozasa's works have a distinctive nihon-ga style of being "trans-dimensional". The stitches leave unconventional trails on the cloth, expressing emotional depths with a light, unrealistic touch. Between these lines and stitches, she spots a glimpse of light with great potential and that is when she senses beauty.

In her *Präparat* series featuring butterfly specimens, each appears beautiful and pleasing to the eye, yet there are stories of deep emotions hidden within the threads. As viewers spend more time in front of the works, the stories behind them start to unravel.

景

nagame : diorama

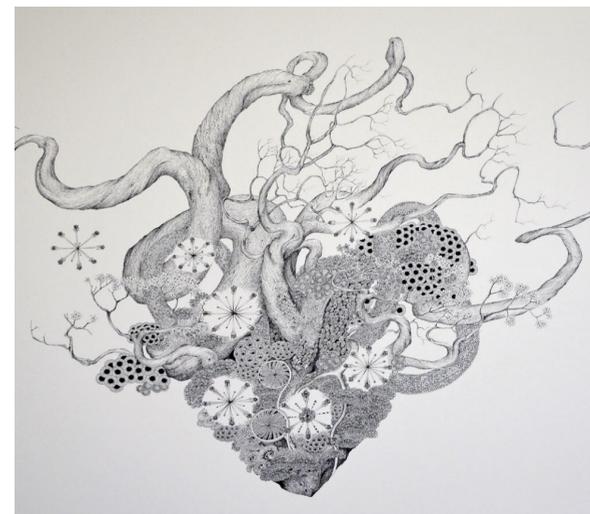
by Hiroko Masuko (b.1982)
lives and works in Iwate, Japan



Tyuhin Bonsai Yusi, 2014
Pen, ink, paper, wooden panel

Hiroko Masuko lived in various places in Tohoku such as Miyagi, Fukushima, Tochigi, Yamagata, and Iwate. She now lives in Miyako city in the Iwate prefecture which had been massively damaged by the East Japan earthquake disaster that occurred on 11 March 2011. She stayed on in the city despite the disaster and draws inspiration from the scenery, the people, the customaries, and other elements in her daily environment.

Masuko has been working on her depiction of a unique interpretation of the world through the symbolic motif of bonsai, which literally translates to "pot" (*bon*) and "plant" (*sai*). The growth of a bonsai is restricted by the size of its pot and by metal wires that twist the branches in the desired direction. Thus, a bonsai is created from the collaborative efforts of artistic depiction by human hands and the plant's survival nature. Masuko relates this to how we constantly attempt to shape society, and how we have a hand in the evolution of the world. Drawing out these "seeds" little by little using her ink pen, she documents her daily life experiences and influences in these intricate works that are created over a long time, similar to the cultivation of bonsai and life.



Tyuhin Bonsai Kaen, 2014
Pen, ink, paper

飾

irou : decoration
by Keiko Masumoto (b.1982)
lives and works in Shiga, Japan



Octopus/ Pot, 2013
Porcelain



Octopus/ Arabesque, 2013
Porcelain

Keiko Masumoto's style is humorous and displays a wonderful sense of energy from a young artist. The motifs in her ceramic pieces often protrude out of the vessels in witty three-dimensional forms, not confined to mere decorative images on the surfaces of the pots. Intricately sculpted forms of automobiles, birds, carps, horses, octopuses and Japanese pagodas stick out of plates and vases with such life, creating interesting vessels that blur the boundary of how we traditionally define ceramic, whether as a form of craft or fine art.

In her *Octopus* series, the pots are painted in Japanese arabesque style, which originated from the representation of a mythical flower in Buddhist folklore. Here, Masumoto challenges the definition of art and craft through her combination of traditional techniques and modern, kitschy ceramic forms. What resulted is a new way of looking at ceramic; the functionality versus the aesthetics of an object, and perhaps, the possibility to be both.

雫

shizuku : drop
by Kouichi Okamoto (b.1970)
lives and works in Shizuoka, Japan



Re-rain, 2016
Umbrella, iron, speakers, speaker cables, CD players

Kouichi Okamoto is the product designer behind the established Kyouei Design, which he founded in 2006. He has been releasing music albums with Dutch techno label, X-trax since 1997, and has exhibited extensively as a sound artist known for his installations of daily objects with mechanical parts that help reproduce familiar elements that cannot be captured by the naked eye (such as sound and gravity forces).

In *Re-rain*, Okamoto tries to reiterate the interconnectivity that we have with the elements around us and the forces of nature. Using the sounds of raindrops hitting onto an umbrella, small dish-like speakers send vibrations through umbrellas that are placed on top of them, thus generating different sounds. This can only be achieved when the magnetic force of the speaker, weight of the umbrella and the sound pitch of the recording are in perfect balance, further iterating the need for harmony in our environment.



Re-rain, 2016
Umbrella, iron, speakers, speaker cables, CD players

空

ku : vanity
by Naoko Yoshimoto (b.1972)
lives and works in Mie, Japan



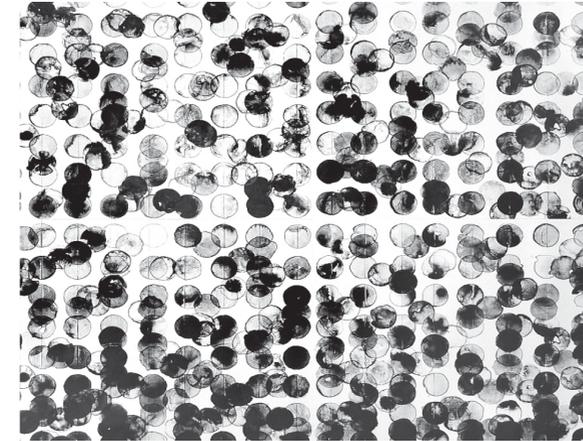
Wing - Dedicated to E -, 2015
E's clothes, books, wood, glass

Naoko Yoshimoto is a graduate from Kyoto University who majored in educational psychology. She has also spent time as a research student in Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs' programme for Upcoming Artists in the UK, as well as with the Pola Art Foundation. Yoshimoto's works draw inspiration from the memories that remain with someone's personal belongings like old clothes and books.

Wing - Dedicated to E - was created from 12 garments and a catalogue that belonged to a dear friend, the late Emi Fukuzawa. The work was created using the threads that were shredded from the fabric of Emi's translucent Indian cotton shirts, that still lingered in them her presence. The stains and dirt found on the threads are tangible evidence of Emi's existence.

触

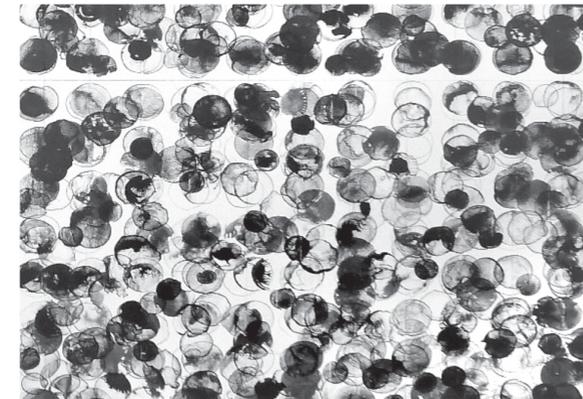
sawari : texture
by Yuki Hasegawa (b.1975)
lives and works in Tokyo, Japan



steaming 01, 2014
Lithograph

Having studied dressmaking in art school, Yuki Hasegawa's immediate influences in textile studies are apparent in her delicate lithographs. She describes the process of making prints similar to recalling distant memories. She connects fragmented layers together to represent the scenes that she has experienced in the past.

Hasegawa's work is made up of many intricate layers of lithographs that convey a strong sense of depth while signifying multiple forms even though they are two-dimensional. The density and warmth of the black ink represents the imprints made by people in history that forever occupy our memories.



steaming 02, 2014
Lithograph

訝

kodama : echo
by Yuri Suzuki (b.1980)
lives and works in London, UK



Garden of Russolo, 2013
Horns, wood

Yuri Suzuki is a sound artist, designer, and electronic musician who explores aural landscapes through exquisitely designed pieces. His works raise questions of the relationship between sound and people, and the effects that music and sound have on one's mind.

Garden of Russolo refers to Luigi Russolo, an artist of the Futurist movement in the early 20th century. The format of this work borrows from his noise generating machine, *Intonarumori*. In his manifesto *The Art of Noises* (1913), Russolo's proclamation on enlarging and enriching the field of sound by approaching the "noise-sound" was an expression of a changing sensibility in the new age of mechanisation and urbanisation.

Different large boxes are fitted with horns to act like speakers. When one speaks into or makes sounds into these horns, these sounds are processed before they are reverberated from the speakers and are played backwards or distorted into noise; while plain voices are turned into melodious music. Through these devices, individual voices and environmental noises are turned into different sounds, seemingly communicating back as they respond to an individual's interaction in various ways. These devices transform and recreate the sonic environment in which they are installed, thereby becoming an environmental art installation.