

**Art, performance and social poetics:
contemporary Japanese perspectives**



**2 May 2016.
2:00pm Symposium | 6:30pm Artist Talk**

A Symposium sponsored by the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture at Columbia University, with additional sponsorship from the Martin E. Segal Theater Center of the City University of New York

**Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture
A 2016 Sen Lecture Symposium
403 Kent Hall, Columbia University**

Art, Performance, and Social Poetics: Contemporary Japanese Perspectives

- 2:00-2:15 Introductory remarks: Marilyn Ivy and Peter Eckersall
- 2:15-2:45: The *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial*: Revitalizing the Dying Countryside with Contemporary Art
Midori Yamamura, Fordham University
- 2:45-3:15 (Politico-Artistic) Landscapes of Image Play
Thomas Looser, New York University
- 3:15-3:45 Peregrinations and Heterotopias: Thinking Art/Performance after 3.11
Marilyn Ivy, Columbia University
- 4:00-4:30 The Emptiness in Pierre Huyghe's "Untitled (Human Mask)" (2014) and Takayama Akira's "Demarcation: Happy Island: The Messianic Banquet of the Righteous" (2015)
Peter Eckersall, Graduate School, City University of New York.
- 4:30-5:00 *Don't Follow the Wind*: Chim↑Pom and the Creation of a Collective Imaginary
Miwako Tezuka, Consulting Curator, ARAKAWA+GINS, Reversible Destiny Foundation
- 5:00-5:15 Discussion

Akira Takayama: Artist Talk, Sonic/Visual Presentation, and Conversation with Keijirō Suga

Moderated by Peter Eckersall, CUNY and Marilyn Ivy, Columbia

May 2, 2016

6:30-8:00

Kent Hall 403

Columbia University

Akira Takayama is a leading performance maker and installation artist who founded the company and artist collective Port B in 2002. His works have been seen at major arts festivals in Japan and in Europe. He looks at contemporary issues, such as the rising numbers of working poor in Japan, and also makes extensive use of social and digital media. Takayama develops projects which go beyond the framework of existing theater, as he tries to expand the “architecture of theater” and establish it as a new platform in society, which he calls “theater 2.0”. He does so, based on theoretical considerations about the experience of the audience and by referring to the original meaning of “theatron” as an auditorium. In 2011 he founded the Think Tank “Port Tourism Research Center” and develops projects in the fields of architecture, tourism, and urban planning. Takayama researches new areas in society, to expand their possibilities and to enrich new constellations with the help of his theatrical thinking.

Keijirō Suga is a Japanese poet, critic, translator, and writer, the presenter of the 2016 Sen Lecture hosted by the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture at Columbia University. A prolific translator, his translations from French, Spanish, and English include works by Edouard Glissant, Maryse Condé, Francisco Varela, Isabelle Allende, Jamaica Kincaid, and Aimee Bender. He has published several collections of poems, including *Agend'Ars* (2010) and *The Water of the Islands, the Fire of the Islands* (2011). In 2011, he was awarded the Yomiuri Prize for Literature for his travel essay *Transversal Journeys*. He is currently chair and professor in the program in digital content studies, Meiji University, Tokyo.

Sponsored by the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture at Columbia University, with additional sponsorship from the Martin E. Segal Theater Center of the City University of New York

Symposium abstracts and presenter biographies

Midori Yamamura, *The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial: Revitalizing the Dying Countryside with Contemporary Art*

Led by a 1960s student activist, Fram Kitagawa (b. 1946), the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial (2000-), challenges the government's efficient management policy of prioritizing the urban over the countryside with contemporary art by visualizing the lure of the rustic life that has been restoring pride in the local farmers and stimulating the interests of the urban visitors. The uniqueness of the triennial lies in the many year-round activities that connect urban volunteers and rural residents. This paper will discuss how Echigo-Tsumari Triennial has been meaningfully connecting artistic practices with communities and evoking alternative ways of thinking about today's city-centered neoliberal society.

Midori Yamamura (Lecturer at Fordham University), specializes in post-WWII Asian art in transnational contexts, feminism, and critical theory. She is the author of *Yayoi Kusama: Inventing the Singular* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015) and *Japanese Art after 1989: Emergence of the Local in the Age of Globalization* (London: Reaktion Books; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019).

Thomas Looser, (Politico-Artistic) Landscapes of Image Play

This paper looks at recent examples of the play of imagery (graffiti, museum art, digital and place-based performance, etc.), in ways that might be thought of as a reorganized image landscape. This includes the performance, movement, and circulation of images, in a way that interrogates what an image is, how it performs within the space of a city, and how (or if) there are political effects. The implications extend beyond the focal question of the confines of art—what “art” is, where and how it takes place, and its status as a political act—to broader questions on the claim for a restructured nature; the ground and urban place of capital production; the form of the contemporary city, and the relation between the 1970's and Japan today.

Tom Looser is Associate Professor of East Asian Studies at New York University. His areas of research include cultural anthropology and Japanese studies; art, architecture and urban form; new media studies and animation; and critical theory. A senior editor for the journal *Mechademia*, he is the author of *Visioning Eternity: Aesthetics, Politics,*

and History in the Early Modern Noh Theater, and has published articles in a variety of venues including *Japan Forum*, *Mechademia*, *Shingenjitsu*, *Journal of Pacific Asia*, and *Cultural Anthropology*.

Marilyn Ivy, Peregrinations and Heterotopias: Thinking Art/Performance after 3.11

The triple disaster after 3.11 brought into catastrophic relief new zonings and mappings of place and displacement within the Japanese archipelago. Along with these reconfigurations of Japanese symbolic topologies have come newly intensified forms of peripatetic, mobile, and traveling practices of performance-making and art-making. This paper looks at works--such as those by Akira Takayama, Lieko Shiga, and Eiko Otake--that have variously enacted contradictory imperatives to peregrinate and to stay in (a) place post-3.11. In doing so, they have produced art/performances that open up the Foucaultian notion of "heterotopia" for supplementary reconsideration.

Marilyn Ivy is a professor of anthropology at Columbia University. She has written widely on Japanese modernity, mass culture, media, and politics, along with essays on Japanese photographers and artists, ranging from Naitō Masatoshi to Nara Yoshitomo. Most recently she has been speaking and writing about aesthetics and catastrophe, focusing on photography in Tōhoku after 3.11, including an essay entitled "The End of the Line: Tōhoku in the Japanese Photographic Imagination" for the exhibition catalogue *In the Wake: Japanese Photographers Respond to 3.11* published by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Peter Eckersall, The emptiness in Pierre Huyghe's "Untitled (Human Mask)" (2014) and Takayama Akira's "Demarcation: Happy Island: The Messianic Banquet of the Righteous" (2015).

In recent video installations by Takayama Akira and Pierre Huyghe the emptiness of rural landscapes and homely spaces is in marked contrast to the uncanny presence of animals. This paper will discuss how these works materialize the conditions of existence in the Fukushima radiation exclusion zone. I argue that emptiness is used in a way that is concretising the idea of dark matter (after Timothy Morton).

Peter Eckersall is Professor of Theatre and Performance at the Graduate Centre, City University of New York. Peter works on contemporary performance practices in Australasia and Europe, with particular interests in Japanese performance and on dramaturgy. Recent book publications include *We're People Who Do Shows, Back to Back Theatre: Performance, Politics, Visibility* (co-edited with Helena Grehan, Performance Research Books, 2013), *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* (co-authored with Denise Varney, Barbara Hatley and Chris Hudson, Palgrave 2013) and *Performativity and Event in 1960s Japan: City, Body, Memory* (Palgrave 2013).

Miwako Tezuka, *Don't Follow the Wind: Chim↑Pom and the Creation of a Collective Imaginary*

Don't Follow the Wind is an inaccessible exhibition launched inside the Exclusion Zone in Fukushima in March 2015. Initiated by the artist group Chim↑Pom, it was organized by a team of international curators and artists in collaboration with individuals from the local community that has been displaced due to the nuclear disaster following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011. In this presentation, I will report from my personal experience of entering the zone with Chim↑Pom and the curators with a special permit, seeing what shall not be seen (the exhibition), and will contemplate on the critical potential of artistic intervention on the community that has become invisible.

Miwako Tezuka is Co-director of PoNJA/GenKon, an international network of art professionals, scholars, and artists in the field of post-1945 Japanese art. She is also Consulting Curator of Reversible Destiny Foundation established by artist Shusaku Arakawa and artist-poet Madeline Gins. In the past Dr. Tezuka has held the positions of Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at New York's Asia Society Museum and Gallery Director of Japan Society.