

Art of Nora

Being Kind to Earth
Social Art/Unit Ulus

Art of Nora

2020 — 2021

*Nora is working good for nature in the field
it is an ancient human activity itself.*

A message from Unit Ulus, coming together of people from variety of backgrounds

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Art of Nora

Being Kind to Earth



Social Art and Community

Fukuichi Yoshida
Social Art/Unit Ulus

In prehistoric times, when people lived in forests and grasslands, they lived close together in caves dug into hillsides and behind rocks. During the day they collected seaweed, shellfish and caught fish by the water, gathered acorns, leaf buds and mushrooms in the fields and mountains, and hunted small animals that looked tasty, sometimes shooting and eating wild boars and deer.

At night, to avoid attacks from the animals, they would return to their roosts before nightfall where they could get a good night's sleep and huddle around a campfire. They also knew that the seas, rivers and mountains could become rough, so although they fished by the rivers or near the beaches, they preferred to live on higher ground. They were in awe of the various natural phenomena and worked hard to find a way to survive and to sustain life.

The meaning of primordial art as found in Satoyama*

Eventually, they cleared forests and meadows and began to live in huts built over hollows dug in the ground and covered with wood. The earth left over from the pits was used to build the walls of the hermitage, ensuring that the space inside was large. Nut trees, brought from the deep mountain, would be planted around the dwelling. Some of these trees were cut down, leaving the roots in the ground, so the wood could be used as aggregates for buildings and to be burnt to produce charcoal. New shoots sprouted from the sides of the tree stumps and the seeds germinated, bringing joy to the people. These gradually led to the growth of satoyama. Roots of bracken and burdock were transplanted, marking the beginnings of farming. Inside the hermitage, charcoal would be kindled in the hearth to keep warm, grill their catch and cook using earthenware. At the same time, they fired vessels, bowls, jars and braziers made from clay. During prolonged period of rain, men twisted ropes and worked hard to make tools for hunting and fishing. Women beat the hemp bark to loosen it and dried it and made it into bills or cords,

which were then used to make baskets and sandals. They twisted the long, thin fibres into braided cloth, which they wore. Everything the people did was closely linked to their lives, and created ways of living which brought them joy. In other words, ways of making a good living and making the best use of what the nature provided, was art in itself.

「The word ‘ 芸術 ’ (geijutsu) was adopted as a translation for the English word 'art', which was imported after the Meiji era (1868-1912), when Japan was promoting modernisation.

The word ‘ 芸 ’ (gei) is written in the old script as ‘ 藝 ’ where part of the character depicts a person holding a sapling and another part depicts growing of grains in the soil. In other words, ‘ 藝 ’ (old script for gei) refers to how farming is carried out, while ‘ 芸術 ’ (geijutsu) refers to the skill and act of planting and growing crops on the land. It is something people learnt naturally as a way to maintain life and as a useful methods for daily life.

How we descended on Saitama City / Minuma-Sagiyama

Our first charcoal burning was done in Onoji, Machida and this was the start of our involvement with agriculture. Burning of wood into charcoal is a highly mysterious process. We tried it several times based on limited information we gathered but we could not get it right. As a result, we sought out Mr Kunio Matsumoto, who has experience in the field, and we have been studying with him since 2010 (see note 2).

Onoji, where the charcoal kiln was located, is in the middle of the Tama Hills, on the south side of the watershed. It is an area that was to be part of Tama New Town development, but was eventually left untouched as the scale of the development was reduced. After discussions between Machida City and landowning farmers it was agreed that the area was to be designated as a satoyama* area. Fields are scattered between wooded areas and bamboo groves, retaining the feel of satoyama.

In the beginning, we used Mr Matsumoto's charcoal kiln to be taught how to make charcoal in a metal barrel. We left Onoji in 2015, shortly after building our own original charcoal



Part of the charcoal kiln built by Social Art which was dismantled in 2015

* Satoyama is a forest worked on by humans in order to make use of it to sustain the lives of villagers.

* Yato, also known as yatsu, is a gently sloping small scale valley where people can live and farm.

kiln from the local pit sand. During our time in Onoji, we burnt mainly bamboo charcoal and experimented to understand the mysteries behind pyrolysis.

One day I heard about Jomon pottery scattered in a field next to the kiln site, and after collecting the pottery fragments I started to ponder over the people who lived there during Jomon period (approximately 16,000 years ago). The field was in a sunny spot with wood in the background and I sensed as if the Jomon people were still living there. After this, we started to use the kiln not just for making charcoal, but also for firing unglazed earthenware. We made braziers and earthenware ducts.

We also saw rice straw strung on rice racks in the nearby yato* and we were surprised by a strange phenomenon of being able to produce rice husk charcoal without the using a kiln. We tried making rice husk charcoal many times. We were also shown a large quantity of freshly burnt rice husk charcoal by another farmer working nearby and were given practical advice.

During this time, we explored the possibility of producing rice husk charcoal in a number of places. And although our proposal to the Saitama Muse Forum conference was not successful, we had several opportunities to practise the art of rice husk charcoal production in Niigata and Kawagoe. We then started to consider the relationship between agriculture and art, and combine the production of rice husk charcoal, which is a type of biochar, with artistic activities .In 2016, we finally arrived in Saitama City (Minuma-Sagiyama area). The reason why we descended here was because we developed SMF-TANBO project - Rural Dream in Kataya Tanbo in Minuma, and the following year, in 2017, we held the Farm in Sagiyama 20th Anniversary - Art of Nora in Sagiyama. During this time, we set up a new charcoal kiln in the forest on a slope in Sagiyama and formed the ‘Charcoal Burning Association’ with local people and we were able to resume charcoal burning (Note 5). With the help of the local people, this activity continues to this day. We were finally able to set up an environment that was favourable for us.

About Social Art/Unit Ulus

The name 'Ulus' was first proposed by the artist, Hiromasa Tayga Abe when he was exhibiting in 2011 in the Mobile Museum, a touring exhibition project organised by the Museum of Modern Art Saitama, as a member of Social Art whose work was presented in a yurt. Abe felt then that what Social Art was aiming to achieve was the same as the concept of 'ulus', which in modern Mongolian means 'nation' but in the ancient language meant 'vortex of people', and defines a concept that refers to a self-sustaining assembly of people without borders. Considering the history of Mongoloid migration, it seems likely that this spirit was passed on to the Jomon people who settled in Japan and probably resides somewhere deep in our collective memory. It is a historical tendency towards self-reliance, independence, unity and maintaining of a certain level of trust. The Unit Ulus (vortex) aims to reflect, to share and to experience together the source of creativity, and to transmit wisdom, placing great importance on communication between people as they come into contact with nature through the earth.

Art as a way of actively touching the world. It approaches gently and encourages you, providing you with strength to overcome obstacles. People connect with each other and amplify their energy like a vortex. It engages with society, sharing the power of art.

Unit Ulus's current activities are rooted in the community and combine the creativity of agriculture with the creativity of art.

How 'Art of Nora' came about

Social Art was established in 2002 at Fukuichi Yoshida's exhibition, '**Social Art Exhibition: THE Ichiba**' (ichiba means market in Japanese). At the time of its conception, the collective was simply named Social Art, using the term as a proper noun for the purpose of constructing the concept of

social art. Between 2008 and 2010, Social Art defined social nature of art as social capital and exhibited works such as The Menko-ya Rokumondo, Pizza Mobile and Shichirindo (kitchen car) using seven rickshaws, collectively named **Jiriki Koseisha (autonomous welfare cart)**.

In 2011, Social Art created a unit within the collective, called Ulus, which practiced charcoal burning and focused on agriculture as a basis for life. After Unit Ulus created their first charcoal kiln work in 2011, they went on to produce charcoal clay works with water purification function, objects made from bamboo charcoal which also contributed to the maintenance of overgrown bamboo forests, and charcoal works made from various waste materials such as food residue. 'Hut conferences' were held in one of the three yurts constructed out of bamboo and the during the TANBO project in 2016, 20m long straw paper was made in rice paddies, led by Tsuguo Yanai. The participants became acutely aware that the key to solving the problems of modern society lies hidden in the way farming is carried out. At the same time, they conducted rice husk burning which is beneficial for the soil, in Niigata and Saitama, and made earthenware brazier. Unit Ulus has been organising various projects, such as on-site exhibitions and associated workshops, over the years.

Since 2017, a charcoal kiln has been installed at an organic farm, Farm in Sagiyama in Saitama City, gradually expanding their activities. Around the same time, Unit Ulus also began working with Yuuki no Sato Towa in Fukushima prefecture, a village known as 'home of organic farming', and were able to experience the vitality of satoyama*(p3). The idea for the term 'Art of Nora' was suggested by head of the farm.

The Jomon culture, which lasted for over 10,000 years, has passed on to future generations the concept of 'nora', which is made up of Japanese characters which means 'good' for the 'field'.

'Nora' is an art of living where we regard ourselves as a part of nature and recognise what is provided to us as nature's blessings, not to be wasted and recycled and regenerated. It also involves providing hospitality and mutual support as well as to collaborate unconditionally.

Unit Ulus believe that we can trace the Jomon philosophy, which once existed throughout Japan but has now largely been lost, back to the ideas behind satoyama.

The concept of labour in Asia differs from that of the West. 'Nora' conveys a concept of labour. Where there is art of nora, everything people do is closely connected to nature. It is the art of living as part of nature, the imagination and creativity to lead a good life, the art of carefully selecting and making use of of what is provided by nature. Such a way is art and is considered to be nora.

Jiriki Koseisha (autonomous welfare carts) are also shaped to be able to sleep in, with homelessness prevention in mind. We were loaded with small jobs in these wheelbarrows and travelled around Japan.



Flyer: Social Art, 'Jiriki Koseisha (autonomous welfare carts). + α Plan 2010 in Utsunomiya', 2010

Experience in satoyama*

For a recycling-oriented society, charcoal-making is indispensable for the maintenance of satoyama. In 2010, we started a charcoal-making art project in Tokyo's remaining satoyama by cutting down the overgrowth of bamboo groves. Bamboo was once used not only for food, but also for various daily necessities and building materials, but many bamboo groves are now neglected and charcoal making has declined. The abundant resources of the satoyama are now being lost without any regard for their function.

The main uses of carbonised materials for environmental restoration are diverse, including agricultural use, greening, forestry, livestock production, compost production, water treatment, exhaust gas treatment and humidity control materials for construction, in addition to fuel.

Since becoming involved in art activities in Saitama City, the group has experienced the rice husk charcoal-making art project and the fertile soil cultivated in the satoyama as a way to utilise biochar, which has attracted attention in recent years as a carbon storage material, in agriculture. Fertile soil is soil that people have cultivated to make it easier to grow crops. Farmers cultivated humus from compost heaps with the help of fungi living in the soil. By ploughing this into the tilled soil, over thousands of years they developed a method of transforming poor soil into fertile soil. Carbon is cycled through fungi and photosynthesis at the same time as the charcoal is burnt. We are thinking the measures of the 'Satoyama Farming Method', which draws out nature's own natural forces, will be necessary in the coming years.

editor Chikako Hasegawa



New water 2011.
Purifying water with charcoal-impregnated roto and bamboo charcoal



charcoal kiln, Social Art 2017

Homage to Art of Nora

Akira Tatehata
Director, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama
President, Tama Art University

Paul Valéry critiques exhibiting works of art in museums (including art galleries), where paintings are taken out of their rightful place and placed amongst works which are unrelated to each other. He argued that while a museum may help you to attain knowledge, such a way of presenting works is a loss for art. The Venus, which should be beautiful, is reduced to a mere data. Museums isolate art from the real world, and we are inevitably defined as just viewers as soon as we walk through the museum door.

Of course, this has made art more accessible to the wider public, but it must also be said that a great deal has been lost. In the exhibition, *Chambre d'Amis*, organised by Jan Hoet (former director of S.M.A.K., the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium) in 1986, around 50 or so radical artists' works were exhibited in homes of people who volunteered to show them, spread around the city. The intention of this exhibition was indeed a critical attempt to bring art which had been isolated back into living space. The fact that many triennials and biennials that have recently taken place in various parts of Japan have intentionally been held in town centres, rural areas and satoyama is not so much about escaping from art museums but perhaps with an aim of returning to a healthier form of art.

The ongoing 'Art of Nora', centred around Sagiyama and Minuma Tambo in Saitama Prefecture, is a project which is both idyllic and radical in its attempt to integrate daily work, life and art more directly. The activities involving artists, architects, curators and others, in collaboration with local farmers, are notable in that they synchronise with efforts to address environmental issues.

For someone like me, it was surprising to find that there is still a rich and an abundant satoyama in the vicinity of a large city. They engage in variety of activities such as burn charcoal, make earthenware using 'noyaki' (open-firing) method, create outdoor installations using natural materials,

hold symposiums and even exhibit the results in the SMF* Treasure Ship Exhibition. How they have sustained such a practice in an independent manner has to be admired. 'Social art' that they uphold probably corresponds to the totality of such a movement. Their steady effort to redefine the meaning of art from the perspective of people's daily lives will no doubt greatly inspire museums, which can easily end up being self-righteous ivory towers, to consider the importance of activities that are rooted in the local community and accessible to the public. The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, where I work, also has the motto 'art museum which is open to all' and I would like to expand the circle of mutual exchange so that this does not become empty words.

*Saitama Muse Forum. An organisation which is a cross-genre curatorial platform which sets up a variety of art programmes that are free from traditional boundaries between genres, meaning to bring people close to each other.

*Satoyama literally means village mountain and is a forest near a settlement which is provides livelihood for the people



Chapter I:

Art of Nora 2021: Sagiyaama - The Scene II: 'Requiem and Reawakening'

Dates: 12 (Fri), 13 (Sat) and 14 (Sun) November 2021

Venue: Farm In Sagiyaama, Sagiyaama Memorial Park (Midori Ward, Saitama City)

Organiser: Social Art/Unit Ullus

Planning: Social Art/Unit Ullus. Project leader: Ken Nemoto

The project expresses the 'repose' of the dead from the infectious disease pandemic, and questions the state of the cities, by listening carefully to the voices of the life that lives in the precious satoyama near the capital and from its locality. By reflecting on the past, we share what is important to us and use it as an opportunity to 'revive' the city.

2021

A Major Turning Point

Social Art/Unit Ulus
‘Art of Nora - Requiem and Reawakening’
Project leader: Ken Nemoto

The world in which many lives have been lost and the norm has been turned upside down
We are at a major turning point
Activities in cities have come to a temporary halt
But, farming which sustains cities continued as before
Still, as we face forward, may be we need to look back to a more fundamental way for society to function
Now, we are unable to have heart to heart conversation
Artists coming together and sharing creativity provides a ray of light
Those white herons which disappeared
What were they feeling at that time?
Listening to the voices of life in satoyama

Around January 2020, novel coronavirus raged in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread to become a global pandemic. Anxiety about the unknown virus turned to anger, and many voices of distress were heard during this disturbing period, as if the entire world was suffering from a mental illness. As of September 2021, more than a year and a half later, we are experiencing the fifth wave of covid infections due to the emergence of mutant strains.

The story behind how Sagiyama (‘sagi’ is Japanese for heron and ‘yama’ means mountain), the venue for this project where we were preparing for an art event, came to be known as that is described elsewhere (Social Art vol. 4, no. 49), so I will not go into detail here. However, I would like to focus on the fact that the number of herons, whose nests numbered approximately 6,000, with 30,000 adult and baby birds, at its peak in around 1957. Their numbers soon declined and they stopped nesting in the area. Three main factors for their disappearance are said to be: (1) transformation of surrounding rice paddies to fields, which resulted in reduction of feeding grounds for the herons; (2) destruction of the ecosystem due to the use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers; and (3) the rapid development of residential areas and increased volume of traffic. We were also told that deformed chicks were born from herons that ate food contaminated by pesticides. I cannot but help to see the similarity between the state of emergency experienced by the herons, whose natural life was destroyed, and the situation we are facing at present.

The year after my first encounter with Social Art/Unit Ulus, I had a wonderful experience at 'The Art of Nora: Sagiyama - The Site - 2017'. The exhibition took place in a precious green space which did not seem to be in the suburbs of

Tokyo. Art works were situated at various locations in the space and you wondered through the area to view them. I remember it being a site-specific project with each work, based on a theme of a specific material, responding to each other. It was made possible thanks to the full cooperation of ‘Farm in Sagiyama’, which runs a farm on this historic land to preserve the agricultural landscape for the next generation. Half a century later, the heron’s nesting place has become a colony for artists, as if herons have returned to the region.

In 2020, during the planning of 'Borders', Hiromasa Tayga Abe stated that the important thing about developing art activities in Minuma is to extract the essence of the area. The exhibition, 'Art of Nora - Requiem and Reawakening', is an archive of expression which could only be achieved there, covering a period of change in history.

This project was assembled as a one-off project in which the context of the land that has been explored in depth overlaps with the situation at the time. Although there was a difference in the sequence of events, we wanted it to be a living expression in which the extracted essence resonated together like an ecosystem.

We are at a time to reconsider the decline of herons in Sagiyama as an amber light signal in terms of climate change. In a sense they were acting like the canary in the coal mine. With such a historical context, the area is suitable for the expression of repose for souls of those who suffered as a result of the infectious disease pandemic and various disasters of recent years, superimposing it onto the plight of the herons. Sagiyama can also provide a starting point for 'reawakening' how cities can be in the post covid world and towards constructing a sustainable society through reflecting back on the past.

The venue Farm in Sagiyama





Fibonacci Structure Hiromasa Tayga Abe Thinned wood (zelkova, metasequoia, etc.) H400×W400×D100cmD 2021



On the right Takeshi Hagiwara (lumberjack) and on the left Hiromasa Tayga Abe (sculptor)

At the 'Requiem and Reawakening' in 2021, Hagiwara and Abe decided to burn the artworks at the end of the exhibition. Charcoal burning workshops and burning objects thereby became the two pillars of the project. After burning, the materials are returned to the earth to become ashes for growing crops, and they want to show this in the form of artworks. The idea is to find a way of life that we can emulate here in the satoyama, a way of life with agriculture.





Takeshi Hagiwara , *Fibonacci Structure* after burning

Hagiwara, a lumberjack, excavated the earth and piled up logs as high as 280 cm, imagining that the charcoal from the burning would collapse into the holes, to create his work, 'Fibonacci Structure'. Sculptor Abe, on the other hand, used metasequoia planks, known as fossil trees, to create the 'Fibonacci Circle' as a fuse to the 'Fibonacci Structure'.



Fibonacci Structure Takeshi Hagiwara H.400cm (280cm above ground • 120cm below ground) ×W250cm×D250cm 2021



The Lost Body - Kimono of the Deceased

Artist, Japanese paper modeling Tsuguo Yanai

Last year, during the Bon Festival, I visited Nishimonai in Akita Prefecture. Nishimonai Bon Odori is one of the three major Bon Odori in Japan, but unfortunately it was cancelled due to the Corona. This Bon Odori is also known as 'Ghost Dance', and of particular interest is the mysterious scene where the dancers wear black hoods that look like blacks and dance. This black hood (hikosa-toukin) was a clue that led to the creation of the 'Kimono of the Ghost'. Since then, she has been making kimonos for over a year. I made, dyed, wrinkled and sewed Japanese paper in the hope that various memories and feelings would become visible at the boundary between the inside and outside (the surface) as something that exists at the point of contact between the lost body and the environment (society)

Lost Body - Kimono of the Dead

Tsuguo Yanai

Japanese paper W160 × H335 cm 2021



Egret Dance 2021 Stage Set for International Hut Conference Shogo Okuda Bamboo, paper 2021



Circle - Life Moving and Circulating Kuniyoshi Ishii Material: bamboo H1200cm×W600×D600cm 2021



Agricultural Workshop, 14 November 2021, run by Farm in Sagiya
(Satomi Hagiwara, Tetsuya Hagiwara and Yumiko Yoshitake)

Agricultural workshop

Art of the Fields

'Farm In Sagiya' has been practising organic farming since the Edo period, can be reached by train and bus from Tokyo in a little over an hour. Located in Saitama City's remaining vast green belt, the farm has continued to provide urban people with opportunities to experience agriculture through green tourism. As a commemorative project for its 20th anniversary, 'Nora no Geijutsu' at Minuma was initiated when the artist was asked to come up with a project to follow on from the TANBO Project, a project at Social Art in 2016.

The charcoal kiln created as part of the project at that time has been the focus of charcoal making and workshops with local people, which have continued as a regular activity to the present day.



Charcoal-making workshop



wood-chopping

Dates: wood-chopping Friday 12 November
13 Nov (Sat)
Fuse firing 13 Nov (Sat)
Kiln opening 21 November (Sun)
17 Dec (Fri)
Venue: Farm in Sagiya
(Sagiya charcoal kiln)

Contact: Charcoal Burning Association (Tetsuya Hagiwara, Fukuichi Yoshida)

The basis of our activities lies in the natural principles of cyclical regeneration, focusing especially on how to create fertile land in order to return art to its agricultural beginnings and to regain a form of daily life full of creativity. This is because we believe that we need to change course to regain the aims we have lost sight of.



Compost pile at Farm in Sagiyama.

Farm in Sagiyama as a farmhouse with both slope forest and farmland, it continues to demonstrate its attractiveness as a 'Art of fields' site by holding workshops on a daily basis to experience farming.

Therefore, in the planning of the 'Art of Nora, the project was assembled with an emphasis on getting people to visit the farming site first. Satomi Hagiwara, a farmer, says that 'agriculture has the power to solve various problems facing modern society' , and as part of 'Life with Agriculture', she organised workshops based on the concept of food education using a Kamado. The workshop was led by Tetsuya Hagiwara, using 'fuseyaki' (the oldest method of charcoal making), which is based on the assumption of charcoal making in the Jomon period. Lumberjack Takeshi Hagiwara and stone sculptor Taiga Abe created burning objects based on the concept of returning charcoal and ash to the earth and enriching farmland. In other words, it has the following characteristics: 1) on-site, 2) workshop, 3) objects useful for agriculture, 4) interdisciplinary exploration, 5) local communication, and is not an art activity limited to artists.

The art of Nora (Art of the Fiels) is an art of practice in which local people, artists, farmers, lumberjacks, landscape architects, etc. work together as a whole.



Lectures and social events and performances

The blessings of the forest and life in Minuma



Hideki Ishii (Associate Professor, Faculty of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Fukushima University)
13 Nov (Sat)

I think the essence of agriculture is how to create the environment for crops, but there is also a message of an agricultural way of life, and there is an old tale about a dead tree that was covered with ashes to make it bloom. In fact, life is a series of interconnected things, changing form and going round in circles. (From the lecture)



Performance, Hiroto Sou



'fuseyaki' is the oldest method of charcoal making

Two method of charcoal burning



Charcoal kilns are generally set up for charcoal making. Fuichi Yoshida explains the process in front of a charcoal kiln.

Memory of Mr.TV

Modern agriculture relies on factory-made chemical fertilisers and pesticides to produce consistent yields. This has become the international standard and is the so called 'green revolution'. Trouble is that in soil contaminated with pesticides which has become uninhabitable for small animals and micro-organisms (fungi), plant residues are not composted and become humified, so the spent minerals are not supplied to the soil. Unfortunately, once the soil loses its fertility, it can no longer be harvested and eventually becomes dependent on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, making farmers continue to be ruled by the capitalist economic system. In order to restore exhausted soil to fertile soil, we have to wait for the cycle of nature, which takes years of repeated composting and ploughing.

Memory of Mr.TV

Yu Ohara and Fukuichi Yoshida



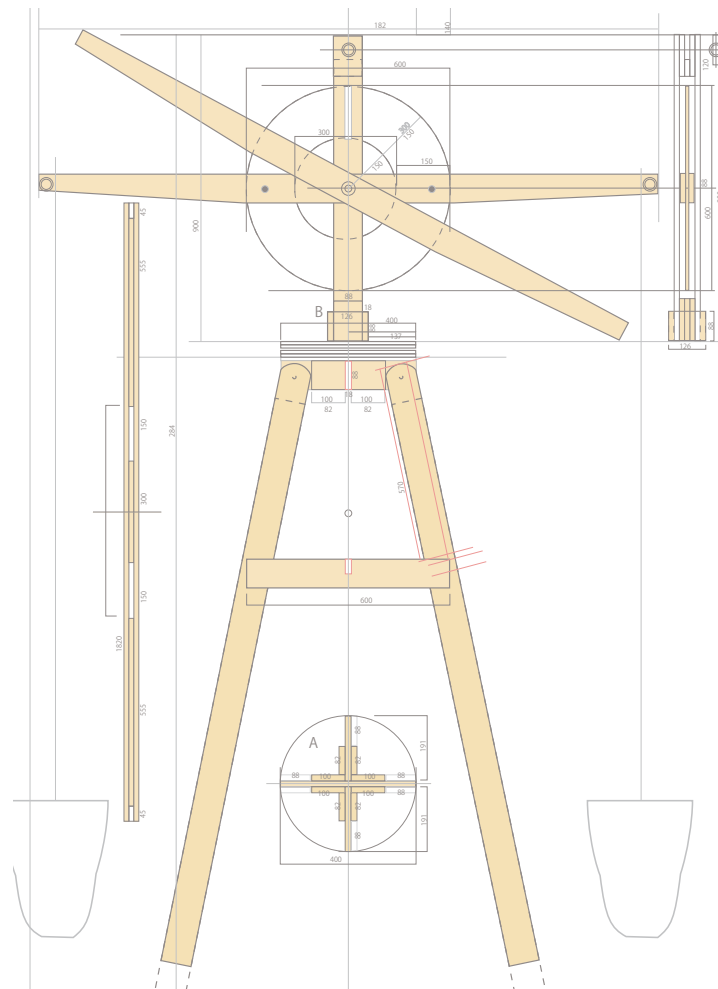
wood,plastic,projector D70×W70×H180cm 2021

Burnt charcoal or rice husk ash expels vaporised substances from carbon material (rice husk) as smoke, leaving the form of cell walls and cell membranes of the cellular tissue intact, so that the original shape is retained. In other words, charcoal or rice husk ash has cavities, and is porous with a large surface area. Therefore, if rice husk ash is ploughed into the soil, the microscopic holes in the charcoal will contain air and water, making it an excellent soil conditioner and environmental material for transforming hardened field into one with light top soil. Soil bacteria will reside in holes in the charcoal corresponding to their size, decomposing plant residues and help composting and continue to work so that humification occurs. In addition, minerals in charcoal and humification promote crop growth and soil fertility. Today, the use of charcoal is being reappraised as biochar rather than as a source of fuel.

Crane & Garden Fukuichi Yoshida

A large, light-colored wooden trebuchet-like structure is set up in a forest. It has a long arm and a counterweight, and is positioned on a wooden platform. The structure is made of light-colored wood and is set up in a forest with many trees and green foliage. A long, thin object, possibly a projectile, is attached to the end of the arm. The structure is positioned on a wooden platform. The forest floor is covered with dry leaves and twigs. In the background, there are many trees and green foliage. A small white tag with the number '3' is visible on a tree trunk to the left. A hanging basket with plants is visible in the background to the right.

In charcoal burning, kiln is filled with carbon material, and fired, leaving a small hole at the fire door. What is interesting is that once ignited, charcoal heats up and the process of carbonisation spreads to neighbouring carbon material so that it never goes out. Although there is no oxygen in the closed kiln, carbon material heats up without oxidising and continues to thermally decompose. The decomposed material with a small mass (molecular weight) becomes a gas and is expelled from the chimney. When this gas is cooled and liquefied it becomes liquid wood vinegar. Conversely, the higher mass substances (carbon and ash) remain in the kiln as black husks, i.e. charcoal, without the original shape of the tree being altered. When charcoal is used in a brazier, hearth or kotatsu (a table over a heater, originally a charcoal brazier in a floor well, with a hanging quilt that retains heat), combustion of the charcoal emits carbon dioxide and leaves ash in its wake, turning into a completely different substance. Charcoal making is a farmers' science.



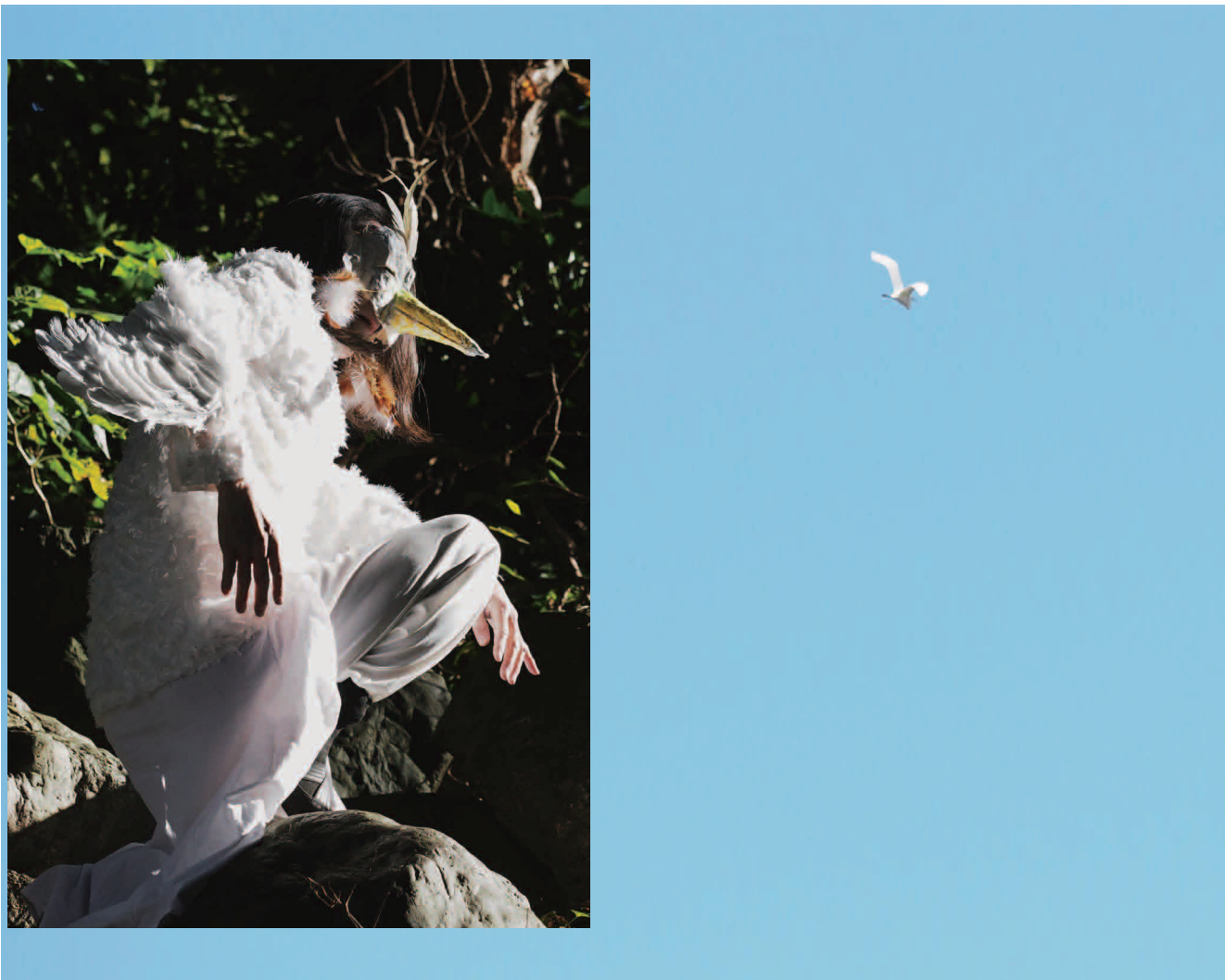
wood ,earthenware W110×D182×H284cm 2021



wood ,earthenware,ash,charcoal 2021

The earthenware brazier is a functional work of art. Hibachi (brazier) is filled with ash and charcoal fired in a charcoal kiln is placed on top. It is a heat source that can be used indoors or outdoors. Several of these were arranged in the open space of satoyama on a circular table. People gathered around the table to keep warm and to talk with each other. The topics of conversation were all about ash, compost and agriculture: 'Though some are used as feed and compost, rice husks are mostly incinerated as industrial waste. What a waste! 15% of rice husk is silicon (Si). When burned, 60% of the rice husk remains as rice husk charcoal, and when burned completely what is left is pure ash (17%). In other words, rice husk charcoal contains minerals and ash of burnt rice husk is also a useful inorganic fertiliser'. Charcoal kiln is a chemical factory for farmers.





Dance Egrets revised Hiroto Sou 2021

I feel that the social art activities lament and resist the changes of the times and make new proposals using ancient wisdom to establish new innovations about agriculture and art.

At the root of this is daily practice and an attitude of learning wisdom from agriculture.

There is a village of social art, and I exist as a dancer living there. The dancer has the role of connecting the events and works that occur there with the thoughts of the villagers, and the art of living is to sublimate the whole gathered form at the end.

Dancer Hiroto Sou





left: Takeshi Hagiwara



After the exhibition

Ken Nemoto, Project Leader, Social Art/Unit Ulus

After the event at the venue, I recall the time spent working hard on the planning and management of the project. Work made in collaboration by Takeshi Hagiwara and Hiromasa Tayga Abe which rose high towards the sky until the previous day had slowly but surely turned to ash overnight. Faintly warm ash will eventually return back to earth. Next morning, Takeshi, who worked on the piece was working as usual, operating heavy machinery.

Following on from 'Sky and Earth' (organised by Hiromasa Tayga Abe) held in January of the same year in Kataya Tambo, across the river, this exhibition featured burning of objects once again. A scene which symbolises Art of Nora's theme of material circulation must have made a lasting impression on all those who witnessed the events.

I would like to express my admiration to the craftsman like work by the two artists who produced in public a large scale sculptural piece which incorporated a mathematical formula, within a limited time of the exhibition period.

Speaking of craftsmanship, I would also like to mention Kuniyoshi Ishii's approach to producing his work.

As with the previous exhibition, 'Sky and Earth', I was

concerned that, despite the opening of the exhibition was approaching, production of his work was not progressing as smoothly as I hoped for since he had a day job. Complete picture for the work was not apparent until the night before the exhibition opened but Mr Ishii has an ability to pull off such a feat. By the next morning, his sky-high work had been completed brilliantly. The production process of his work was not known to any of the other participating artists, partly because his space was at the back of the venue, but it is clear from looking at the finished piece that work at height continued well into the night. His work truly embodied the phrase 'the work speaks for itself'. During the day, he works as a gardener and after his working day, he would then spend time on producing the artwork. You have to say that he is a superman. Both his apprentice and Mr Takeshi say that they are no match for Mr Ishii.

On the other hand, Shogo Okuda planned a softer setting for the 'square' where people interacted the most in this project. In a space enclosed by catenary-curved ropes connecting the trees, Tsuguo Yanai's washi paper sculpture gave off a sense of presence, while Nobuo Yoshikawa's moving image work added colour to the space. At times, the space became a venue for talk sessions, and on the



From left: Sou, Ishii, Abe, Nemoto



From left: Nemoto, Yagasaki

following day it was busy as an agricultural workshop was held. Here, the artists discussed and coordinated with each other, and decisions were made carefully by the artists who were among the first to start working at the venue.

It is usual for unexpected things to happen at outdoor exhibitions. This time, however, I would like to mention a successful episode that resulted from the relationship between the position of the sunset and the placement of the works. The space had a unique atmosphere even during the daytime, but a dramatic phenomenon occurred as the sun set. As you looked to the West, the afternoon sun may dazzle your eyes and you would see Yanai's work become backlit with its silhouette emerging clearly. At the same time, the light shone on Okuda's work, which was placed directly opposite it. In contrast to 'Kimono of the Dead', which has a strong association with repose of souls, a 'requiem', the work, or the 'stage set', by Shogo Okuda gave the impression of a breath to 'reawaken' life. The site-specific phenomenon of works responding to each other like an ecosystem emerged as a scenery that symbolised the theme of this project.

For this project, we paid particular attention to the placement of the artworks from the planning stage. This was because we hoped that for the many urban residents who were restricted from leaving their homes due to the coronavirus pandemic, the experience of strolling around

and encountering artworks would help them regain emotional wellbeing. Just as I thoroughly enjoyed my first visit here, walking around to view the exhibited works during 'Art of Nora - Sagiyama no Genba 2017'. I asked Fukuichi Yoshida to exhibit his crane work at the entrance, in the hope that it would serve to provide direction to the main venue. This naturally led to Yoshida's works being scattered along the tree-lined path, and the overall layout of the works gradually took shape. The completion of a group of works which represented Social Art's concept and answers provided through 'Jomon thinking', including charcoal-making activities, was something everyone had been waiting eagerly for. In particular, 'Hibachi Circle' is a work that can only stand on its own with a finely balanced structure that supports each other, and it was read as an argument that we should return to small economy, where wealth is shared rather than possessed.

Collaborations between artists of different generations from the same art school, such as Yu Ohara's moving image work being projected onto Fukuichi Yoshida's work, were also worth mentioning.

I would like to once again thank the people from the site of the event and the locals, participating artists, lecturers, performers, those who helped in documenting the event to name but a few, for their cooperation in sharing their wisdom and the know-how, which made this project a success.

Sky and Earth: Coming and Going

'Carbon (C) Circulation and Regeneration'

Dates: 8 (Fri),-11 (Mon) January 2021
Venue: Kataya Tambo (Minuma Ward, Saitama City/NPO Minuma Farm 21)
Sagiyama charcoal kiln (Midori Ward, Saitama City/Farm in Sagiyama)
Organiser: Social Art/Unit Ulus.
Planning: Social Art/Unit Ulus Project leader: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Making charcoal from rice husks with a series of chimney-like objects



Biochar:
the key to prevention
of global warming

It's often mistakenly assumed that burning of charcoal contributes to the release of carbon dioxide. In reality the situation is the exact opposite in that what actually occurs when charcoal is burned is spontaneous carbonisation. The thermal decomposition that occurs naturally when temperature is raised to a certain degree results in the retention of carbon and minerals and may thus be thought of as a mode of carbon capture as proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). A provisional calculation has been made to the effect that global warming could be prevented by returning 0.04 per cent of carbon to the earth. Accordingly, mixing biochar and fertiliser into arable land in the course of agricultural work is likely to kill two birds with one stone, not only capturing carbon but also raising the productivity of the soil to ensure better crop yields. This is in essence the traditional cyclical method of farming as practised since ancient times. However, such methods have been frowned upon in Japan ever since burning of fields was prohibited by the Act Concerning Disposal and Cleansing of Waste Products and the ordinance governing the act's implementation. Field-burning as part of agricultural work is authorised under specific circumstances, but the restrictions in this regard often serve as obstacles when making charcoal from chaff and using earth in the context of art work. It was encouraging therefore to see a report on improvements to the guidelines for calculating emissions and absorption of greenhouse gases being adopted and approved at the 49th session of the IPCC held in Kyoto in 2019. An international framework for the use of biochar has thus at last got off the ground.

Involvement with charcoal-burning in connection with art draws one's attention to the science of charcoal, the power of charcoal, and the history brought about through the production of charcoal. It has become evident that carbonisation technology is an indispensable factor in resolving the energy and environmental issues faced by modern society. Charcoal-burning is closely linked to energy issues, and changes in energy are issues that bear on life itself.

editor Chikako Hasegawa



Photo 2 : Ducts were set up at the core of each mound of rice husk at Kataya Tambo.

Charcoal making of rice husks
The rice husks, which are considered agricultural residue, are burned into smoked charcoal and plowed into the cultivated soil together with compost (humus), which contributes to the creation of fertile soil and at the same time sequesters carbon. This method should ultimately lead to the achievement of carbon minus.

Art of Nora 2021 - Sky and Earth

Fukuichi Yoshida

I. Introduction

The southern part of Saitama Prefecture is adjacent to Tokyo, where a wave of urbanisation swept across the Arakawa river in the wake of rapid post-war economic growth. Fields, rice paddies and wooded areas were developed and transformed into residential areas. Such a development was closing in on the Minuma/Sagiyama neighbourhood.

Local residents felt threatened and lobbied the administration, and in 1969 Saitama Prefecture enacted the 'Minuma Rice Fields Agricultural Land Conversion Policy' (Minuma Three Principles) and in the same year the 'Handling of Minuma Rice Paddies' (Supplementary to the Minuma Three Principles).

Over time, all the neighbouring parts of Tokyo became increasingly urbanised. Against this backdrop, the ‘Basic Policy for the Conservation, Use and Creation of Minuma Tambo’ (1995) was drawn up and the Minuma Three Principles was abolished. Although this prohibited conversion of agricultural land to residential use, rules were not followed as agricultural land was turned into a vast green belt which remains in Minuma to this day. Later, this area and others were merged to form Saitama City (after merging with Urawa, Omiya and Yono in 2001, Iwatsuki was incorporated in 2005) and grew into an ordinance-designated city with a population of 1.3 million people. As a result of this process, Minuma found itself lying almost in the centre of the Saitama City area.

Minuma

Omiya Plateau is a tongue-shaped outcrop of an inland plain, which is part of the Kanto Plain, jutting out towards Tokyo Bay, with an elevation of around 20 metres. It is broadly divided into seven sub-plateaus (Note 1). Each of the seven sub-plateaus is carved by small and medium-sized rivers, which begin as springs at the edge of the plateau, and are then interrupted by even smaller valleys, forming a complex folded topography (Figure 1). The central part of the Omiya Plateau contains a large Y-shaped, bifurcated valley, forming a low marshy area around 5 metres above sea level through which the Shiba River and Kataya River flow. This is where Minuma is situated.

Minuma - Katayashinden.

The main site of Art of Nora 2021 was Katayashinden. Katayashinden is an area north of Shimekiri Bashi, situated a little further upstream from the confluence of the Shiba River, which flows through Minuma, and its tributary, the

Kataya River. It was reclaimed as paddy fields along with Minuma Shinden during the Edo period as a result of the construction of Minuma Daiyosui. The area was originally owned by the Bando family, but is now under the jurisdiction of Saitama Prefecture (Land and Water Promotion Division). NPO Minuma Farm 21, which has been entrusted with the management of part of the area, continues rice farming on the land. The whole of Minuma Tambo, including this area, has had a reputation as a good rice field since the opening of the rice paddies, but today only 4% of the paddy fields in both valleys remain, as they have been converted into fields not for growing rice or abandoned.

We developed the *TAMBO Project: Dream of the Countryside - ‘Farming is Art’* here in Kataya Tambo under the guidance of SMF (Saitama Muse Forum) during the Saitama Triennale in 2016. It is a memorable place that marked the beginning of our activities in the Minuma area.

Sagiyama (Angyo Plateau)

Ayase River flows through the middle of the Omiya Plateau, cutting it in half from north-west to south-east, and the Hatogaya Branch Plateau (Angyo Plateau) begins on the ridge between the Ayase River and the Minuma-Kataya River and extends south-eastwards. Uenoda traffic lights are located at the intersection of Prefectural Road 105, which traverses the Hatogaya Branch Plateau, and Prefectural Road 214, which crosses the Kataya River and runs above Shimekiri Bashi (Figure 2). Minuma Nature Park and Sagiyama Memorial Park are adjacent to the area, crossing the Minuma Daiyosui. The sloping forest immediately above the area is Sagiyama, which was once famous as a nesting place for herons, nationally designated natural monument. However, after the early 1970s, herons stopped coming to the area and the prestigious title was withdrawn. It is now commonly known as 'Sagiyama' in remembrance of this.

The Hagiwara family, the landowners of Sagiyama, has set up ‘Farm in Sagiyama’ to develop activities aimed at conserving agriculture, food and the environment. The area has become the main base of activity for us, Social Art, ever since 2017 we collaborated on an event, 'Farm in Sagiyama 20th Anniversary': Art of Nora 2017. We set up a charcoal kiln in a corner of the sloping forest there and established the 'Charcoal Burning Association' the following year in 2018. In addition to charcoal burning, we also practice rice husk burning. We have once again made use of this venue as part

Note 1: The seven sub-plateaus are: Ibusuki, Yono, Urawa-Omiya, Katayanagi, Hatogaya (Angyo), Iwatsuki and Jionji. Alternatively, the Shiraoka and Kasahara are added to make the total nine instead of seven.

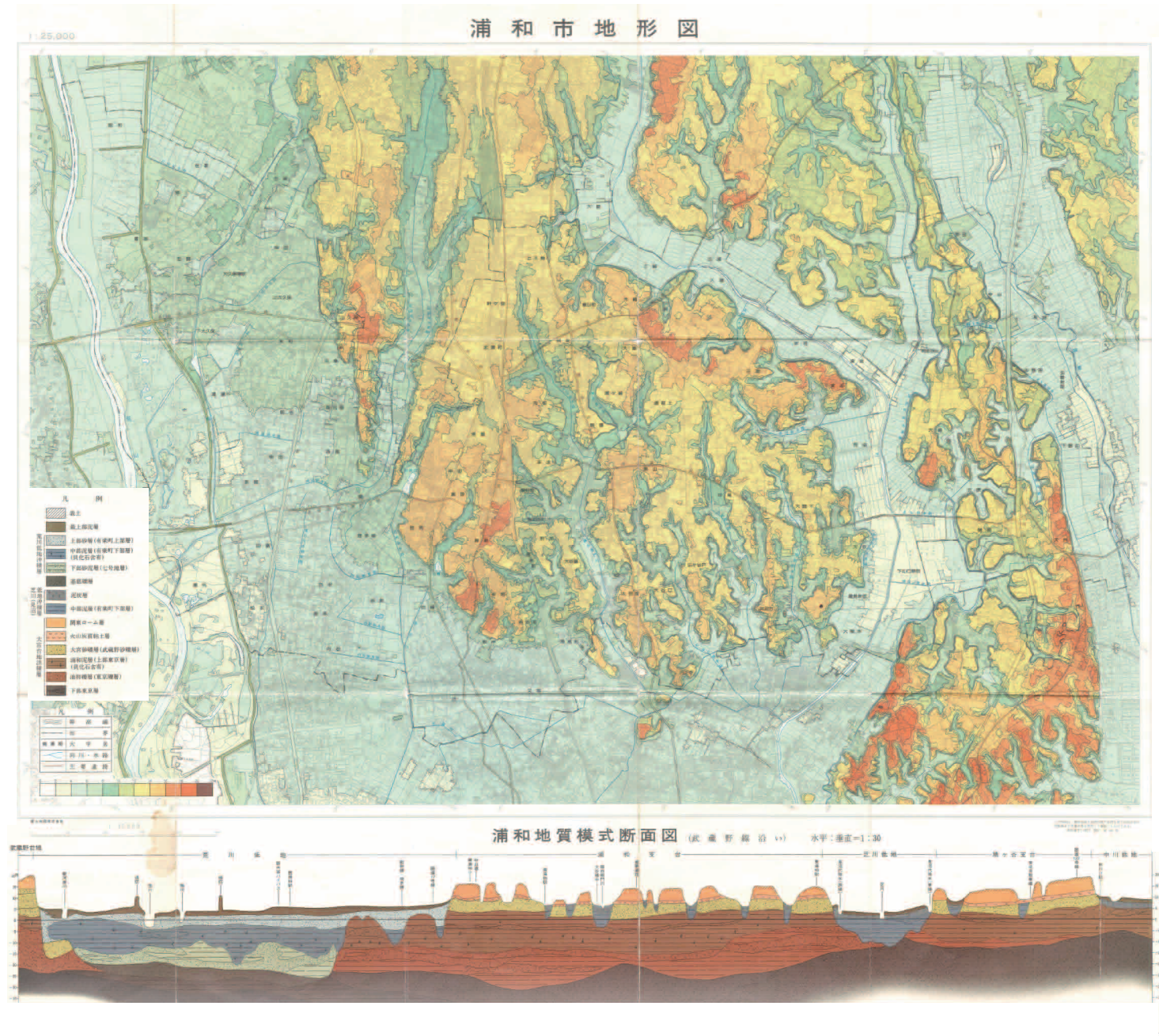
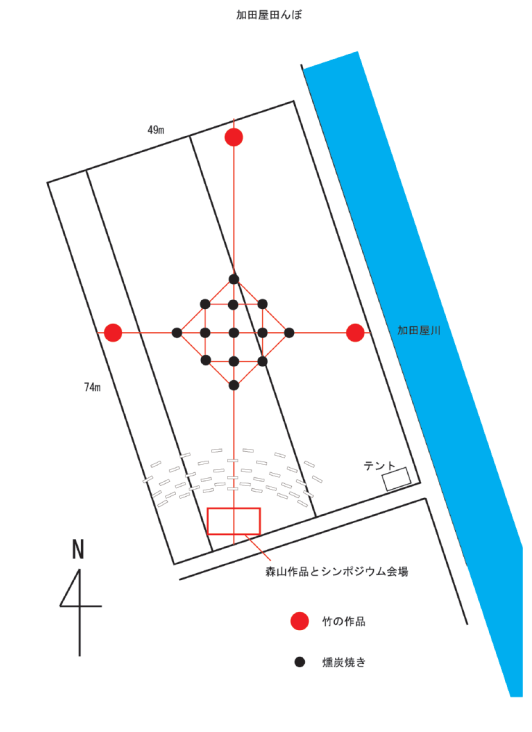


Figure 1: Digital elevation topographic map (Geographical Survey Institute)



Figure 2.

Figure 3



Note2:

Soil layer from Minuma lowland was excavated from a cultivated land with the help of Asako Farm, which was also the venue for the Saitama International Art Festival 2020 - Unit Ulus 'Borders', during the preparation period for the event on 23 February 2020. The other soil layer from the Omiya Plateau was excavated on the following day, 24 February, at an archaeological excavation site near Besshonuma.

Photo 1: Flying a string of 100 kites.



Photo 4 : Excavating beneath the mires underground at Minuma



II. About 'Heaven and Earth: Coming and Going' an event organised by Hiromasa Tayga Abe

As part of the 'Saitama International Arts Festival 2020 Citizens' Collaborative Programme, 'Borders' project by Social Art/Unit Ulus Borders was organised with Hiromasa Tayga Abe as the project leader. The festival which was aimed at sensing and experiencing the topography, history and mythology of Minuma, was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Abe reluctantly organised and informal event, 'Borders Documentation Session'. Later, at the beginning of 2021, while the country remained in a state of emergency, he took on the challenge of organising the 'Heaven and Earth: Coming and Going' here in Kataya Tambo.

1. Earthwork in Katayashinden

1) Layout of the works

As you look at the venue in Katayashinden from above, you will see rice fields divided into rectangular sections along Kataya River, with their edges roughly corresponding to the compass directions. We were able to use about 1,000 square metres of rice field (Kataya Tambo) which is part of the land cultivated by Minuma Farm 21. Figure 3 depicts the layout of the installed art works. A work made of dug out earth showing geological stratum, by Tetsukazu Moriyama, was positioned near the farm road at the southern edge and at the northern end from this was an agricultural crane object by Fukuichi Yoshida. A madake bamboo (long-jointed bamboo) object *Bamboo • Transmigration • Tree* by Hiromasa Tayga Abe was situated to the west, and in the east, a bundled moso bamboo (thick-stemmed bamboo) work, *Earth Starts*,

by Kuniyoshi Ishii soared vertically. A group of unglazed ducts (by Wakako Emori, Chikako Hasegawa, Hiromasa Tayga Abe, Fukuichi Yoshida and the members of Charcoal Burning Association), which functioned as ventilation ducts as well as being works in themselves, were positioned in the centres of mounds of rice husk which were burnt and were interspersed in the shape of a cross reflecting the positions of the above mentioned works.(photo2) The cross shape also indicated the orientation. In addition, benches made from planks, *Metasequoia Horizontal* by Ken Nemoto, were spread out in a semi-circle to correspond with the fan shaped open-air stage which had the geological stratum work in the background.

2) Tetsukazu Moriyama's 'Reproducing Past Positions'

The first earthwork you encountered as you entered the site at Katayashinden was the work by Tetsukazu Moriyama, which appeared as if a part of the earth had risen from the ground (Photo 3). Let's begin with this work.

The work consisted of soil layers excavated from two different sites, one from Omiya Plateau and another from Minuma lowland. Each stratum was then joined together as one piece.

The stratum from the Omiya Plateau (left half) was sampled from a Jomon (approximate period 12,000 to 3,000 years ago) excavation site and consists of a loam layer with blackened sedimentary soil above it. The two layers together geologically correspond to the beginning of Quaternary period, but the brown soil layer (loam layer) is from the late Pleistocene epoch, which was a cold period. And the dark brown upper layer, roughly 1m in depth, consisting of (blackened) sedimentary soil is said to be rich in traces of vegetation and is from the Holocene epoch onwards, a warm period. The dark brown upper layer (hereafter referred to as black soil layer) is found to contain small pottery fragments in

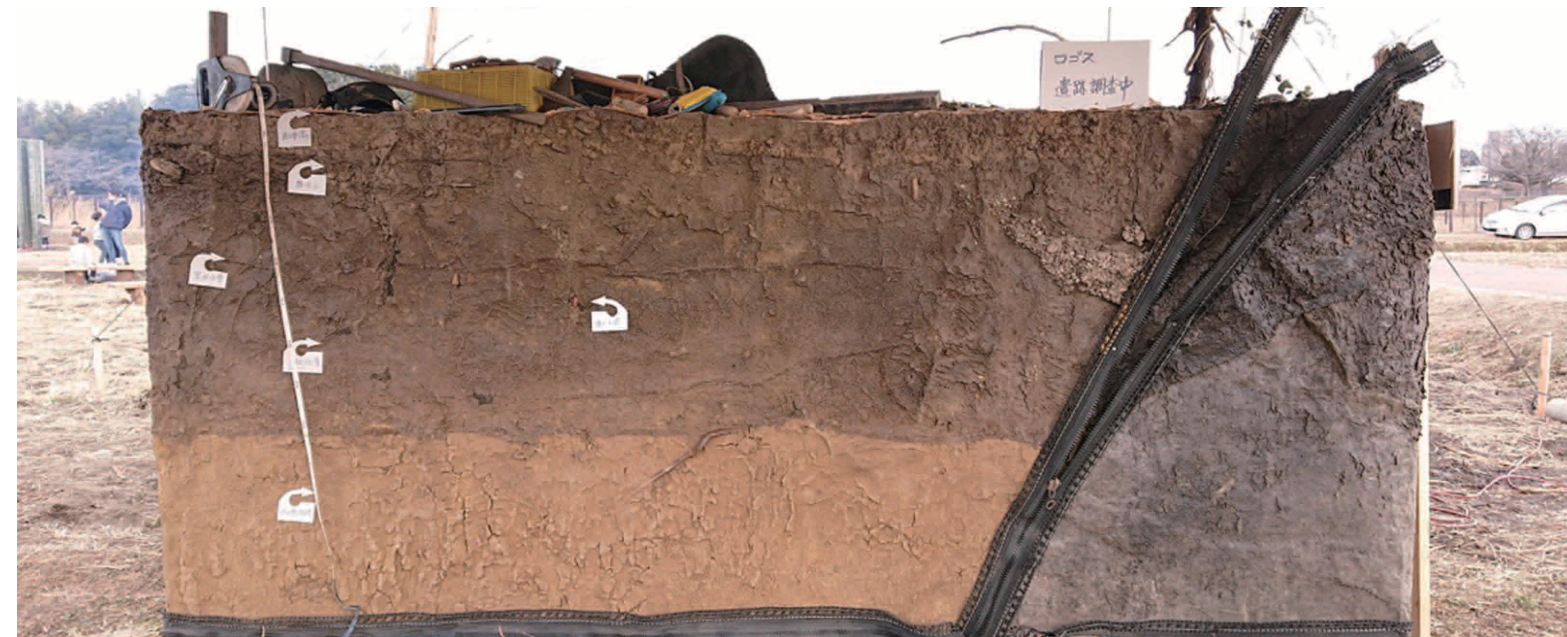


Photo 3: Tetsukazu Moriyama *Reproducing Past Positions* soil, medium support: Asako farm

places. The pottery fragments is likely to be from the Middle Jomon period. This blackened soil layer alone represents time period of 12,000 years (Sample 1).

Right hand side soil layer from Minuma lowland was excavated from an area a little downstream from the confluence of Shiba River and Kataya River near where the river intersects with Minuma Bridge. When the 30cm or so layer of cultivated soil, which forms the surface layer, is stripped away, approximately 1.4 m thick layer of dark grey peat caused by Manchurian wild rice (a hydrophytic plant of the grass family) is revealed underneath. This is thought to be a sedimentary soil layer from the Holocene period onwards, when vegetation has become richer. On close inspection, some subtle horizontal movements in the soil layer is evident, and although evidence of climatic (environmental) change can be detected, no sign of life can be seen here (Sample 2).

The work includes soil layers from both the plateau and the lowland. Sample 1, from the excavation site, is from the Ice Age and the following period, Holocene. Sample 2, from Minuma, is from the Holocene period onwards. Although there is a time lag, the relationship between environmental change and the life of the people who lived there can be deciphered, and the soil layer samples are full of clues for how to think about the whole region.

However, on this occasion, there was a limit to how deep it was possible to excavate due to the conditions at the sites. Therefore, it should be noted that soil layers continued further down below at each of the sites. At Minuma, the layer below the peat was a soft and flabby soil layer encased in a gel-like substance but the excavation was limited to roughly 1.8m deep, which was the extent of how deep the power shovel could excavate. For this reason, the excavation was confined to the top soil and the peat layer. (Note 2)(Photo4)

Fields in which we usually make and exhibit art works in are more or less the same as the surface soil that farmers cultivate on a daily basis, which is the top soil. Therefore, we do not move away from thinking laterally. Moriyama's work, however, exposes the earth beneath, and the work's significance in encouraging 'vertically thinking' is valuable. One of the areas opened up by Tetsukazu Moriyama is the method of conserving form by taking a mold.



3) Field burning and its significance - a group of unglazed ducts for rice-husk burning

In the early afternoon of 10 January, mounds of rice husk with earthenware duct at its core were ignited. Soon they began to smoke furiously. Wind blew through the rice paddies and the swirling air currents resulted in smoke moving chaotically, causing it to change direction erratically and to dance wildly. (Photo 5)

Burnt rice husk ash retains the shape of its shell and cellular structure, with cell membranes leaving voids in the burnt remains. It is therefore porous and has a large surface area. When spread on the soil and ploughed, microscopic holes in the charcoal allow air and water to be retained, making it an excellent soil conditioner that transforms hardened fields into lighter soil. In addition, bacteria in the soil can live in holes corresponding to their sizes, and the ability for bacteria to decompose materials helps to humify plant residues, making the cultivated soil more fertile. Furthermore, the gaps in the amorphous carbon contain a variety of minerals and are a treasure trove of nutrients. In short, rice husk ash is useful as a soil conditioner or soil productivity restoration material.

Today, most rice husks, except for some which are used for animal feed and compost, are wasted as they are incinerated as industrial waste. 15% of rice husk is silicon (Si). When burned, 60% of the rice husk remains as rice husk charcoal, made up of carbon and silicon and when burned completely, there will be trace element of ash. In other words, ash contains minerals and rice husk charcoal and ash are useful inorganic fertiliser. We should make good use of these.

Unfortunately, modern agriculture relies on factory-made chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Soil contaminated with pesticides kills many organisms and soil bacteria that live there, and the ability for the soil to decompose materials is severely reduced. Plant residues are not composted and humified, and minerals are not supplied to the soil. For the soil to recover fertility by itself, it takes many years for life to be regenerated and 'reincarnated'. Once the soil loses its productivity, it becomes necessary to depend on chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This seems to be in keeping with the capitalist system from which we cannot escape.



Photo 10: Dancer: Hiroto Sou

4) A feast of images and light

Having waited for the evening, the moving image work *Expressionists During the Pandemic* (organised by Chikako Hasegawa, edited by Megumi Ishibashi) was projected onto the smokescreen created from rice husk burning. Here, rather than being able to make out the moving image, flashes of light was directed at the smoke rising from the burning of rice husk, and trails of light shone through the smoke. The irradiated and luminescent visuals expanded into a sculptural space of light (Note 3).

Cracks in the Soil by Nobuo Yoshikawa was the other moving image work. A white tent was erected at the south-west end of the site and the work was projected onto one of its walls. Every time he takes part in this project, he produces work based on a theme he has set for himself. The work is modest but also luminous. Rice paddies after dusk filled by a feast of colourful light.

Sound and dance session

A stage was set up against the backdrop of the geological stratum work placed at the south-western end of the venue. The group who played on the stage, day and night, was Mori no Tami with Hisato Yamamoto. The musicians played simple instruments such as nose flute, mukkuri (mouth harp) (Photos 8,9) and handpan. Their music resonated not only with the space but also with the cells in the body of the people in the audience. Cheerful yet modest sound may have its origins in the embryonic movement. It gently caressed the visitors gathered at the venue.

Note 3: In fact, Nobuo Yoshikawa and Fukuichi Yoshida also had the idea of projecting moving image onto smoke five years ago, but it was not realised. Megumi Ishibashi, who took part in the project on this occasion as a guest made it come true.



Photo 6. Megumi Ishibashi: *Expressionists During the Pandemic* light installation



Photo 7. Nobuo Yoshikawa *Cracks in the Soil*, moving image



Musical performer : Mori no Tami with Hisato Yamamoto

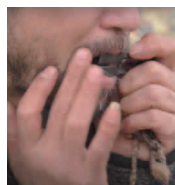


Photo 9



Nunosawa, in Fukushima 2020

Column

In December 2020, the Social Art Team was invited to a workshop at Nunosawa, in Fukushima Prefecture. There, We conducted a clay workshop on duct-making and at the same time experimented with projecting images onto the smoke of a rice husk charcoal making for the 'Sky and Earth' project. The experiment was a success and the text of the images emerged clearly in the smoke. The duct-making workshop in Fukushima has been held every year since 2017, and the finished ducts have been returned to Fukushima after the main firing and installed outdoors as 'Nunosawa's Field Art'.



A man suddenly appeared from among the visitors and started dancing in front of the musicians. The dancer, Hiroto Sou, danced slowly, entwining himself with the performance, and eventually left the scene and began circling in the rice paddies. He approached mounds of rice husk ash spewing smoke and also danced with the kite trains soaring in the sky. Performer has a license to move freely in all directions. The dance, which entwined with everything that could be touched, was like a reenactment of smoke trailing in the wind (Photos 10,11).



5) Dragon god kite train and a workshop

Three linked kite trains, each consisting of 100 kites, were flown long and high into the sky over the Minuma rice paddies. They were like staircases connecting the sky and the earth. Long kite trains were flown by Hirofumi Shibuta and the members of the Japan Kite Association. One of the kites had a dragon head made by Abe, charming everyone with its tail in the sky while facing the earth (Photo 11) .

Most of you may have experienced from your childhood the response of a kite when it is filled with air. When 100 of them are strung together, the pull of the kites must be quite something.Sound, dance, smoke and kites cannot exist without atmosphere (air as a substance).

Photo 11: Dragon god kite train



6) The height of the board corresponds to a high water mark

Ken Nemoto observed how Minuma flooded as a result of Typhoon No.19 in October 2019. Surface of the water reached the height of the banks and even overflowed to flood the whole area, but the rice paddies, divided by the banks, acted as containers and floating objects moved about within them but did not escape outside. Minuma is not a mountainous area where torrents such as flash flood occur and instead, the water level rises as the region takes on rainwater from surrounding areas. It returns to being a marshland like in the old days, albeit temporarily. In other words, this demonstrates the role of Minuma today as a retarding basin. Apparently, the height of the banks



Photo 12: Kite making workshop

Photo 14: Earthenware brazier being replenished with charcoal
Yoshida Fukuichi ,Chikako Hasegawa Earthenware Braziers



determined the height of the benches which were 40cm high. Benches fulfil their role when people sit on them. Ergonomically, there is a preference for 40cm as a comfortable height for sitting. During rice planting, fields are filled with approximately 15cm of water, so the banks are also a height where people can sit down and rest when taking a break (photo 13).

7) Earthenware brazier

The event took place during the second week of January, which is an extremely cold period. All activities took place outdoors. As expected, Japan was hit by the third wave of covid-19 infections around the same time and a state of emergency was declared by the government. Masks and alcohol disinfection were basic measures that had to be taken and we also had to do something about the cold weather.Disposable body warmers may be a way to stay warm, but some form of heating would be welcome. So, we brought in earthenware braziers which are clearly functional works of art. Charcoal fired in a charcoal kiln by the Charcoal Burning Association would be appropriate as fuel (photo 14) .

The braziers were first filled with ash and then topped up with charcoal.Charcoal is easily ignited by lighting cedar leaves or dead metasequoia leaves placed on top. They are not really sufficient to raise the temperature in Minuma but the far-infrared radiation is potent enough to warm the whole body just by warming your hands. Chikako Hasegawa and Fukuchi Yoshida provided the same number of braziers as the benches.

Photo 13: Earthenware braziers placed beside benches made from metasequoia planks

Ken Nemoto Metasequoia Horizontal





Dondo Yaki* Bamboo • Transmigration • Tree

Two works, Hiromasa Tayga Abe's *Bamboo • Transmigration • Tree* and Kuniyoshi Ishii's *Earth Start*, were installed on the eastern and western area of the venue respectively and were scheduled to be burnt on the last day of the festival. However, we followed Mr Tokuno's (Kataya Tambo's group leader) advice and postponed the burning of Ishii's work until a later date. Mr Tokuno was concerned that going ahead with it may be too much for us to contend with given that we already had a very busy schedule.

On the evening of 11 January, the last day of the festival, Dondo Yaki of Hiromasa Tayga Abe's work finally began. Instead of the shinto priest's prayer, Abe himself gave a brief account of his intentions for the work and explained the title, Bamboo • Transmigration • Tree. A bamboo yearned to be a tree and was transmigrated into one, which was then burnt and turned into charcoal. This charcoal was returned to soil and from which, the bamboo was reborn as a different crop. The work represents a part of the cycle of nature" (Photos . 15,16).

In terms of the method used to assemble bamboo as well as in form and size, the work that was constructed differed little from traditional Dondo Yaki, but the practice seems to have died out in the Saitama region and completely captivated the assembled crowd. Perhaps people were drawn to the massiveness of the flames that rose up. It would have been enough to dispel the haze in the minds of those whose activities had been restricted for a year because of the upheaval caused by coronavirus. These were the programme of events presented over the four days in Kataya Tambo, and we are sure that everyone thoroughly enjoyed the occasion.

Abe gave an explanatory speech at the start, which could be comparable to a shinto prayer given before such an event, and he emphasised the power of glowing ember and ashes and concluded that 'everything is reborn and circulates between heaven and earth'. This sentence perfectly described the intention of this Art of Nora project.

This intention was further stressed in 'the other Dondo Yaki' by Kuniyoshi Ishii, which will be discussed in section III. As he faced problems, Sai no Kami (ancient deity who protects everything under the sun including humans) descended.

Both the rice husk ash and charcoal made using chimney objects and the burning objects made from natural materials return to earth to help towards growing new crops.





Photo 17: International Hut Conference

2. International Hut Conference*

1) Symposium

On 9 January, a symposium, 'Soils of Minuma Tambo and the Soil Layers Lying Beneath', took place. Metasequoia planks (benches) and braziers for warming hands were provided and the International Hut Conference was held under a blue sky without roof nor walls (Photo 17).

Shoji Abiko (archaeologist), Kohei Inose (professor at Meiji Gakuin University) and Tetsukazu Moriyama (Institute of Archaeological Figurative Arts) were invited as speakers (photos 18,19,20,21).

Since the government announced the policy of reducing acreage under cultivation in 1970, income inequalities between industries widened and abandoned fields have become more noticeable, possibly due to lack of farming successors. In 2018, due to another government policy, subsidies for acreage reduction was removed, which further exacerbated the situation. These policies have not led to

solving Japan's agricultural problems.

In this area, the 'Basic Policy for the Conservation, Use and Creation of Minuma Tambo' was enacted by Saitama Prefecture in April 1995, doing away with the Three Principles of Minuma that had been in place since 1953. This meant that change of use from farming land was permitted as long as green space was preserved and that the land was not used for housing. Since then, a number of parks and schools have been created on former farming land, initiated by the local authorities. Following this trend, the conversion of rice paddies into agricultural fields by companies with large capital became inevitable. Fields that are not submerged in water are preferred, and even if the layer of soil brought from elsewhere to improve the soil is clearly over the stated guideline of 30 cm or even over 50 cm, there is no rebuke and the regulation exists in name only. The tendency in Minuma for rice paddies to disappear and to be converted into regular fields leads to the deterioration of the water-recreational function in the area and to a significant reduction in the water-holding capacity.



Photo 18: Tetsukazu Moriyama



Photo 19: Kohei Inose



Photo 20: Shoji Abiko



Photo 21: Hiromasa Tayga Abe (moderator)

Note 4: Metropolitan Outer Discharge Channel: stormwater regulating reservoir. The area where the Nakagawa and Ayase River converge was on the seabed during the Jomon period. This was an area where new rice paddies were developed on low-lying land which was reclaimed as a result of the Tone River having been diverted eastwards in the Edo period. When there is heavy rain, the original topography comes back into play and the area becomes extensively flooded.

There is currently a rush to build large-scale underground reservoirs in various locations around Tokyo (note 4). This is a countermeasure against flooding in the downstream areas, but if the water retention capacity in the upper and middle basins is being reduced as a result of urbanisation in such areas, it is like a game of cat and mouse between flood damage and countermeasures.

Before urbanisation swept into the Saitama area, there was a long line of sloping forests between Minuma lowland and the Omiya Plateau, separating the area where people lived and the area left for nature where dragons (beasts) dwelled. Today, however, the sloping forests have dwindled to scattered patches. Nevertheless, through the diligence of the residents and the administration, a rural landscape is preserved in the lowlands of Minuma, but if you look up, you will see the strange sight of skyscrapers of Saitama's new city centre standing close to each other above Minuma.

Soil for cultivation which is rich with soil bacteria is called 'fertile soil' and the ability to decompose materials by bacteria and the resulting abundance of nutrients is called 'soil productivity'. Farmers have maintained and managed their fields and satoyama in symbiosis with fungi since the Jomon period. However, with the introduction of the Green Revolution after World War II, modern agricultural practice of using chemical fertilisers and pesticides was established.

And agriculture was classified as an industry and was incorporated into the economic system. Furthermore, the government has been consolidating farming and buying up small farms to create large scale farms as a response to the global economy. If farm conversion which involves the use of soil brought from elsewhere is simply a means of economic activity, then farmers will be left to the mercy of global corporations.



Since I started the Art of Nora project, I have become aware that soil micro-organisms, the decomposers, play a major role in generating food for people and supporting life on Earth. Kohei Inose, who was asked to be a panellist at the symposium, has written a book from cultural anthropology perspective entitled “Decomposers” Living on the banks of Minuma’ (published by Seikatsu Shoin). A large number of people who are considered to be socially insignificant are decomposers who contribute to the circulation within the society and play important roles.

Along with Mr Inose's view, the content of Tetsukazu Moriyama's work *Reproducing Past Positions*, which was installed at the venue, was much discussed. (Reference p120) One side of the work consisted of the earth from under Minuma Tambo, excavated with the help of Asako Farm, while the other half was excavated from a Jomon site on the Omiya Plateau. Mr Abiko, an archaeologist, talked about the existence of Jomon sites in the Kanto region and gave an explanation of the soil layers where traces of pottery and other artefacts were found in archeological term. Mr Moriyama also spoke passionately about the important role of art in the age of spirit of physis, basing his argument on not just 'logos' (logic) but also on Jomon way of thinking.

May be the first step that can be taken is to learn about the power of ‘cultivating the local area’, ‘what can be achieved by small elements joining forces’ and about the philosophy of the satoyama, which has been practised since the Jomon period.

Lectures on the sloping forests of Sagiyaama

As a way of listening to what the forest has to say, a lecture, 'Environmental Conservation Entrusted to Forests' by Mr Tadao Otsuki was held.

Mr Otsuki talked about the source of life saying that 'a healthy forest with springs enhances the ability for rivers to purify its water and preserve the environment of the ocean to which it flows into. Forests, rivers and sea all play their respective roles'. He went on to explain the cycle of water and said that 'the water vapour rising from the sea creates clouds and bring rain to the forests, and then flows into the rivers and return to the sea'. He also explained that 'there are small fish that eat the abundant plankton in brackish water, and large fish that eat small fish in the oceans, which we humans feed on, thus forming a food chain. '

It is an elucidation of the mechanisms by which pesticides and chemicals are destroying the environment and, in turn, endangering our health. The content of this lecture was in line with Farm in Sagiyaama's stance and also can be shared with the activities of the Charcoal Burning Association which is based on the principle of ‘Carbon (C) Circulation • Regeneration”.

Lecture by Tadao Otsuki





photo Tent blown away by gusts of wind

Precursor

Hardship is compost for getting things done

On the evening of 7 January, a sudden gust blew wildly with the passage of a front, blowing away the works and tents that had been set up. It was not until I returned after having finished masking off a space for painting at another venue that I saw the distressing state. I still vividly remember seeing Ken Nemoto holding onto the collapsing tent with all his might, his body contorted and in pain.

Other damages included overturned skeleton-like works by Abe and Yoshida. And even Ishii's work, which had been embedded 50cm deep into the ground, had tilted, indicating how strong the wind was. Nevertheless, Moriama's work was unharmed. A single sheet awning that provided cover for his work was just fluttering in the wind. His fieldwork experiences in the deserts of the Middle East and other regions of the world had enabled him to take all possible countermeasures against strong winds by allowing air to escape from the structure. Although the gusty wind was unexpected, in hindsight, we should have dismantled the tent before the arrival of the abnormal weather.

Most tragically, two tents that had just been pitched were completely destroyed and were in a pitiful state. So for the time being, we placed the disassembled tents, part by part on the ground and put them up again the next day (photos 28 and 29). Having lost the tent we camped in the previous day, we literally became 'home less' and had to be rescued.

We accepted that the gust of wind was a natural

disaster, but we were seized by a premonition that as the project progressed, we may face all manner of problems and difficulties of various kinds. The hardship changed form and descended on Ishii next.

Guided by confusion

While Abe's Dondo Yaki (11 November, final day of the exhibition) was underway, Kuniyoshi Ishii decided to cancel scheduled burning of his work, Earth Start , and was racking his brain to work out how to deal with the decision. Mr. Tokuno, the group leader of Minuma Farm 21, advised us that 'when there are two large flames in the dark, they could distract people and affect their attention and there is a danger that this might increase the likelihood of an accident. We should avoid risks since there are people who were invited to the event.' After discussions, we decided to postpone the cleanup operation, which the burning of works was a part of, until the following month, before the fields were prepared for planting rice. We decided that Ishii's Dondo Yaki was to take place on Saturday 6 February.

Ishii was at a loss, and for a while he could not make sense of the situation, but eventually he began to feel a growing sense that things were about to take shape.







Risa Ito dancing in response to Hiroto Sou's dance

Photo:1 Kekkai (boundaries for religious practices) was installed until 6 February.
Kuniyoshi Ishii *Earth Start* and Kekkai bamboo wood H3.6m W1.8m D1.8m
stage W3.6m D2.7m 2021



Photo 2: Lion dance by Gen Nakamura and children

Note 1: We asked Gen Nakamura to take photographs on the day, but since he is also the president of the Lion Dance Preservation Society in Soka City, Ishii apparently pleaded with him to perform the lion dance. Hiroto Sou has a history of participating in social art activities on numerous occasions and took part as he is Ishii's friend. Risa Ito, who took the initiative to take part, was a post-graduate student at Tsukuba University, who studied environmental design and works as a gardener.

The Other Festival: Artwork by Kuniyoshi Ishii

Fukuichi Yoshida

Kuniyoshi Ishii postponed the event where the burning of his work, *Earth Start*, would take place to the following month. We were given a reprieve until before the ploughing of the field and it was to go ahead on Saturday 6 February(Phot1)

The event began on 8 January and finished on the 11th. However, Ishii was given a reprieve for staging the burning of his work and he was to organise another event soon after the main one. The concept and the procedure was 'to create a 15cm high stage, with the height of the water during rice planting in mind, and chant "a shinto prayer" together with those attending and put on a performance of dengaku*, dedicating everything to Sai no Kami. At the end of the performance, I want the work to be burnt as an offering.' He spoke quietly but with determination and enthusiasm.

One problem was that there was little time for preparation. What is more, the budget was already used up and it was not possible to publicise the event formally such as printing flyers. More importantly, extending or making changes to the event after the exhibition was over, would be a breach of land lease and grant application agreement. We had to bare these issues in mind and think how we can stage another 'final event'.

Mr Tokuno, Kataya Tambo's manager, has agreed to hold the event and while discussions were underway between those involved, Ishii continued with the preparations and built an impressive looking stage which was painted black.

What was decided was as follows: (1) The event should just be part of the 'clean-up process'; (2) We would notify the fire service and the neighbours since we will be using fire; (3) Hire a water truck for firefighting; (4) The operation will be carried out only by those involved and it will not be a public event. In other words, we thought that it would be difficult to even get the members of the group back together at the event again. This turned out to be a sensible measure.

On the day of the event, Gen Nakamura read out a prayer and performed lion dance on the stage. The lion danced, biting and eating pieces of paper handed by children with the words 'exterminate corona' written on them. This was followed by Hiroto Sou's dance, to which Risa Ito also danced in response. Musical accompaniment (performance) by Mori no Tami enveloped the dance. A wonderful session began, making it hard to believe that this was the first time they all performed together (Note 1) (Photos 2,3).

Everything was nothing but the spirit of *tojin. Sai no Kami may have woken up.

Even once the performers have left the stage, no one wanted to leave the scene. Looking around, the crowd was as large as it was for the official event which had finished a

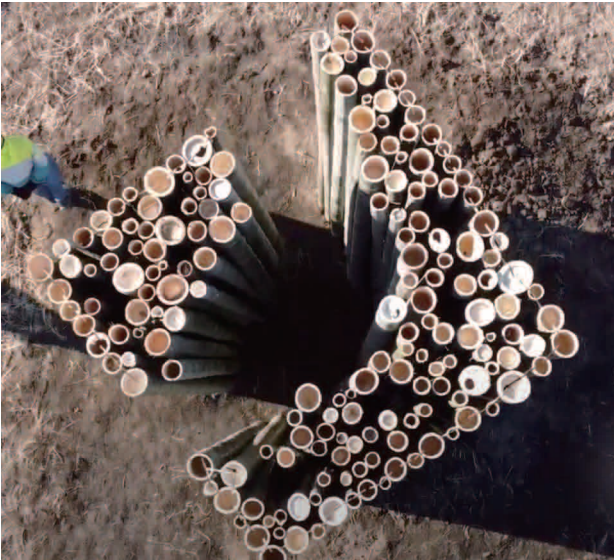


month earlier.

We waited for the sunset and the fire was finally 'thrown in' by Ishii. We did not plan what was to happen from this point onwards so we just allowed things to unfold. The fire burned for about three hours and spread from the inside of the bamboo columns and the work gradually unravelled. Throughout this process, shimenawa (sacred Shinto straw festoon) continued to hold the work in place, and the outer layers firmly stood upright without losing its shape. The column of flames and the fine sparks soared into the night sky, uniting earth and heaven as one. We felt the sense of becoming one with Sai no Kami around the blazing column.

Temperature dropped as night fell but there were probably still around half of the people who was present from the beginning. Some were about to start shaking their bodies as they could no longer bear the cold. Someone started dancing, violently shaking maracas made from bamboo and someone else started drumming. There was also loud singing. Then Ishii himself started to dance with his arms raised in the air. In an instant, everyone found themselves in a state of ecstasy screaming. Sai no Kami has appeared.

We are not sure what time it was when the bamboo structure was burnt out and turned into ember. The flames



subsided and transformed the ground into a red carpet. Someone asked, ‘Where are the rice cakes? I want some 'omayu dama*’. Although omayu dama is an offering made to gods, including Sai no Kami, everyone was reminded of their hunger. Reflecting on not being prepared, we swallowed saliva instead and went back home with the feeling of empty stomach.

Water truck was brought out to extinguish the remaining fire. With a sizzling sound, steam rose up. After a considerable amount of water was used, the fire was deemed to have been extinguished, and Abe, Ishii, Yoshida and Tokuno returned the next morning to clean up, marking the end of the event.

When we arrived back in the morning to work, we were surprised to see that the large pile of burnt remain we saw the night before had been reduced to a tiny pile. At the same time, we also immediately understood what had happened. Few live coal left at the bottom of the pile had gradually dried and ignited wet coals above and the burning spread while we were sleeping. Even if a considerable amount of water has been poured onto the burnt remains, the surface coal may absorb water preventing it from penetrating further below, leaving some materials which can be kindled. We think that the main source of fire was probably the bamboo roots, buried up to 50cm below ground.

If the rationale of the modern age is the everyday life that just happens on the surface, then surely the role of art is to identify and extract the truth hidden behind the extraordinary. We all underestimated the power hidden in the ember.

Even under the state of emergency, over a period of four days, an average of 70 visitors attended the public events

each day. In addition to this, a similar number of visitors attended this clean-up event which was only for those closely involved. In total, there were approximately 350 visitors over the five days. Moreover, although there were a small number of visitors from far away, the majority were local residents, many of whom attended more than one day. As the days passed we got to know each other. Together with those who were present at the event, we must have truly awakened Sai no Kami.

At the end of Ishii's thank you letter which was sent to all who was present at the event, he wrote: "Looking at the flames away from everyone else, I wondered if this was the other world! Thank you to everyone for a once in a life time experience". I think this letter sums up what this project achieved.

*Dondo Yaki is a ritualistic burning of objects such as old lucky charms at lunar New Year.

*Dengaku is traditionally performed outdoors in paddle fields at the time of planting and cultivating rice. On this occasion it was performed to wish for good crop.

*Tojin means to do away with your desire and be selfless, acting for the others and sharing, even if that means self sacrifice.

*Omayu dama is a ball made of rice flour. In this region there was a tradition of eating rice cakes cooked in dying embers of Dondo Yaki.



On the Finale

Sculptor Chikako Hasegawa

Structure of Four-Dimensional Sculpture

This is what it means to burn from the inside out.

There were about 120 bamboos driven into the ground, forming a rectangular pillar more than 5 meters high. There was no bamboo in the center, and the flames released into it were pulled vertically up to the sky, as if running through a chimney. One side of the hollow bamboo burns, but the fire does not spread to the other side. The burnt bamboo collapses toward the space in the center of the work, and the burning object continues to burn, maintaining its intended rectangular column form until the very end. It is a brilliant design. As you can see from the photos, there are two places where visitors can enter the pillar. During the Triennial, both children and adults were invited to enter and exit the columns. The pillar was more than enough to entertain us in this way. After the pillar was set ablaze, the outside air was drawn in moderately from the place where people walked in. The air in the bamboo would cause the bamboo to flame vertically without much smoke. Usually, bonfires dance wildly in the air to the right and left, but the fire in this work does not dance whimsically but continues to shoot out from the earth to the sky. This is because of the structure of the flue. Moreover, the bamboos themselves, which are arranged on square pillars as materials for the work, become incarnations of nature one after another, scorching themselves beautifully and collapsing inward. Not even a single bamboo strand breaks apart toward the outside of the work, nor does it catch fire, but continues to burn as a flame rising from the inside. Therefore, both the shimenawa rope wrapped around the outside of the object and the washi paper are beside the flames that are rising, and yet they remain until the end.

This is a work of controlled transformation designed by Kuniyoshi Ishii. The entire scene of the burning figure was beautiful, and everyone was overwhelmed by the appearance of the sculpture, whose master was the flame, which they had never seen before, and they wanted to continue standing there, oblivious to time. I see this as the emergence of a dynamic four-dimensional sculpture that broke away from the concept of a three-dimensional sculpture. " We transported the bamboos and erected them perpendicularly to the earth, one by one, while we worked out the plan on site. The design was in line with nature." Ishii explains the origins of his work. I consider this to be the traditional approach to work, in which objects are created while listening to the voice of nature. It is a form of design that has been practised since ancient times, but which is now almost forgotten, in which the position of human society as a part of nature is measured and understood. They had made biochar and ash as nature intended, and left them to circulate as a finale.





Earth Starts Kuniyoshi Ishii bamboo H3.6m W1.8m D1.8m 2021



Living a farming life.

The art of farming and the COVID-19 pandemic / Living a farming life.

By Satomi Hagiwara

I would like to introduce Satomi Hagiwara. She lives on the farm.

This is not so much a lecture but more an introduction to this way of life.

(The English section starts midway through this program)

The amount of space we have out here can be quite a surprise to some people. Its for exactly this reason that this area has been a nesting spot for the sagiyama herons since the Edo period.

Where this building stands was once a bamboo grove. Every year, between 30,000 and 50,000 white herons fly north from southeast Asia to the island of Honshu. This is an ideal nesting place for them, they have been coming here for over 250 years.

The shoguns of ancient Japan were forbidden to fell trees,

so they were able to live in harmony with the herons. I came back here to get married but for much of my childhood, I lived on a farm. When I was young, I would watch everything my parents did on the farm, but after I got married, I started to get more involved in agriculture and farming.

The first summer I spent here after my engagement, I wondered what the loud bird call was. It was so loud, I couldn't even hear my phone ringing. But in 1972, it stopped. I couldn't even hear one call. They suddenly stopped coming, as if they had been chased out. This had to be an environmental issue. A strong pesticide had been used which created a deformity in the herons.

I know our ancestors lived in harmony with the white herons, so this event tells me we need to address the environmental issues we have today.

I will talk you through a few points, but know that the white herons were already warning us of these environmental issues some 40 years ago. Finally, we humans are paying attention.

They warned us that this was their resting place and that

environmental issues were leading to its destruction. These are the issues we need to discuss.

What you can see here is the rice plants being dried. The tree here is actually a persimmon tree, which has its own role to play in the discussion of environmental issues. We deal with persimmons but for a long time, the making of kakishibu (persimmon tannin dye) has been a supplementary business for many farmers. Recently, it has been reducing however I saw on television that it has increased again during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been produced since the Edo period, especially during the Obon holiday period in Japan. From here, it was carried by boat to the capital Edo. Kakishibu is often used as a base for lacquerwork. It has antiseptic and anti-insect properties, and it is often painted onto buildings.

During this pandemic, people have become more aware of natural things. There are a number of buildings around this area, the family name SHIBUYA is common, the name indicates that they once owned Shibugaki farms. I have a relative with that surname.

But they don't make it now, in our case, we donated a large barrel of it to Saitama prefecture. But we can reflect on the persimmon trees as part of a bigger environmental issues.

You can see a lot of different people kinds of here. Everyone from nursery school and kindergarten age to the elderly. Now it is autumn and the leaves have begun to fall. My mother-in-law passed away at the age of 97 years and 8 months. When she was alive, she would laugh with me while we collected the leaves. Both she and the fallen leaves have taught me many lessons. All the fallen leaves are collected and become compost. Grandma was really lively. She passed away at home without issues with welfare and long-term care facilities. It sounds like a lie, but the last words I spoke to my mother were “ its almost time”, and five minutes after I went, she passed away.

That's why people created this way of life. And I think that there is potential for both art and tourism within it.

Now, I want to live a life where I explore the potential held in a life of farming. I will do that until I myself return to the soil.

Q - During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of introducing farming into your life has become more of a focus

for many people.

Yes, take a look here. This is what farming life looks like in a pandemic.

This is a job that everyone at Shinjuku Cooking School helped with during the COVID-19 pandemic. This area was very rough before we came. We cleared it up and opened up the outdoor area here, we arranged the chairs around the fireplace.

Q - Yes, let's go

Oh, that's amazing. (Looking at the sculpture that was just installed) What is this? Oh wow!

Q - These sculptures are smoked charcoal chimneys.

Oh, it's amazing, isn't it? Is that a person? It looks alien!

It would be nice if we could make a fireplace here and light a fire for cooking. We could hang a pot and enjoy this area in winter.

Look at this. Someone who has since passed away revived the method of making a kamado oven after 50 years and passed that knowledge onto their son. The son then taught it to me and I have been continuing to make it since. I am using a kind of soil called Arakida here. It is the soil below the clay soil in the Arakawa river. I bought it and made a kamado oven. It's made with only with soil and straw. First, you knead the soil and add straw to increase it to the size of a brick. You just keep tapping and kneading it, that's how you make it. It becomes a really useful thing. I use it to cook rice, to make soups, and to make side dishes. We also make stir fries. So, what's great is that if the kamado oven breaks, it will just return to the soil again. It's just soil and straw, after all. When it returns to the earth, it is recycled.

Q - This isn't an environmental problem, is it? There's no issue with pollution?

That's right. So much so that the teachers just made it again.

Q - It came about during the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's right. I wanted to make more bread and this was the



Q - The cooking school has completely moved, right?

That's correct. Since everyone is growing their own vegetables, as well as preparing their own rice, we like to think about what we can cook with the vegetables that we grow.

Q - It's a really hands-on lesson, isn't it?

The principal says that in an emergency (e.g. an earthquake or blackout), you need an alternative method of cooking food. It is possible that during these times, there will be no gas or electricity to cook the conventional way. When visitors come, we collect branches and sticks to make the fire. Human beings have evolved to depend on fire. It is difficult for th students to work on maintain fires, especially on rainy days. It can be tough, but I have been making fires my whole life, I teach people how to do it using a little bit of newspaper.

Q - As a human being, if you don't know these simple things...
This kind of knowledge isn't just for the purpose of studying. It's a useful skill for all human beings alike.

Q- Yes, as you continue working with the crops, the soil, and the fire, you'll feel the energy filling up your body! Truly!

People can and do change. I do what I can but even children who have difficulties at school will come here and you will see a change. When they come, they greet us in a voice that we can barely be sure is even there. But by the end, after we make all our meals together, they return home a different person. They always say "thank you for everything, I will come here again!" with a completely different look on their faces.

Q - Do people speak naturally about their experience here?
Yes, that's right. I've been working with a junior high school in Tokyo for 20 years now. It had a reputation for being a slightly difficult school, but I have been doing the farming experience with them for that long. When the community sees the changes that it brings about, they are very supportive and grateful.

Q - Even children are changed by their experience here.
That's right. Children who say they hate green peppers and carrots come here and they pick those vegetables and put them all in curry. When they eat it, they say it's so delicious. I hear from so many people that their children who previously wouldn't eat vegetables at home now eat the vegetables they tried here. They say the peppers are fresh and sweet, eating them here really changes their opinions.
Our vegetables create their own stock, so they're delicious cooked on their own. That fact changes everyone's preconceptions.

Q - The beginning of these changes starts when they taste the produce?

The answer to many of Japanese society's problems lies in farming and agriculture. Social problems, food safety, safety, our stress, education problems, welfare problems, and environmental problems can all be helped by this life. People like my grandmother live this life and work in this industry every day until the end. This is what I've realized after 23 years of living like this.

You can see the changes in so many different areas. In June, nursery school students were digging up the potatoes they'd planted. This year, we dug up 1 ton or 1400kg of them. And they are only 5 and 6 years olds! We want to increase that next year which we are really looking forward to. These children also farm rice, it's amazing. You need about 10 cm of muddy water for planting rice. I'm going to make a little play area in the rice field, so the children enjoy swimming and playing in the mud.

Because of the covid-19 situation this year, no one was able to enjoy it. But I came here and ran around and was happy to

be able to do it.

Q - This place really came into its own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This place is different from the city life that it doesn't have the same risk factors for the spread of disease. We can easily maintain social distance on a farm,so there is no need to worry about masks a d other precautions like that.

Q - A farmer has to be able to do 100 things, right?

That's right. When I was little, my father raised me to believe that you couldn't grow up to be a farmer if you didn't know those 100 things. It's not that way now though.
In the past, the word peasant or farmer carried a negative nuance and was generally disliked, but that is not the case now.

Q - In the end, everyone can do this, there are many different methods to get there. I am creating an art. I want to help people realize the importance of these things.

That's right. After all, we sow the seeds and watch them grow. That's why you yourself have the power to grow from nothing, and that is the source of your power to live. This is something I can do until I die.

Even people who suffer from mental health issues are said to be refreshed when they come here. The air is different out here, and everybody can benefit from a visit to this place. I believe that's why herons and other birds have always come out here to nest. Out here, only an hour from the city centre.

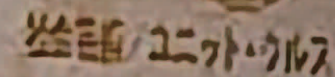
The art of farming
Interview Chikako Hasegawa



Yumiko Yoshitake *Suspended on a Tree/Preserving Straw*



王德之印 王德之印



見招の境界線を巡る旅

Chapter III:

4/29(水)

‘Borders’ A Journey to the Borders of Minuma

5/6 (永)



2020



Cancelled due to covid-19

Art and City Tour Project 2020 /

Art Saitama 2020 Social Art/Unit Ulus

'Borders' A Journey to the Borders of Minuma
Projects planned for 29 April to 6 May 2020

Art and City Tour Project 2020/Art Saitama 2020

Social Art/Unit Ulus

'Borders' A journey to the borders of Minuma

Projects planned for 29 April to 6 May 2020

Minuma Street Funabori Park

'Border – Past and Future'

Examining the border called the present through the hands of a giant dragon.

/Artists: Hiromasa Tayga Abe, Kuniyoshi Ishii

Tsukushima Nyotai Hikawa Shrine

'Border - Gods and People'

Exhibition dedicated to dragon scales ripped off from the hands of a dragon in Funabori Park, Minuma Street

Omaki Hikawa Nyotai Shrine

'Border - Ancient Shore'

Exhibition of boats, made out of hand made paper, associated with the Mifune Festival, a festival going back to when Minuma was a marsh./Artist: Tsuguo Yanai

INAKA PROJECT Asako Farm

'Border - Agriculture and Civilisation'

The project is based on 'fertile soil plants' using discarded pallets to learn about the land in Minuma and look for new possibilities.

① 'Fertile Soil Plan Using Fertile Soil Plants'

Exhibition of the results of composting using 'fertile soil plants' on location, which began in spring 2019 /Artists: Fukuichi Yoshida, Chikako Hasegawa and INAKA PROJECT Collaboration Project

② 'Strata Stripping! Earth Excavation Earthwork'

Exploration of the strata lying beneath Minuma through the excavation pit.

Exhibition of 'contemporary samples' that reveal the long relationship between people and the land. /Artist: Tetsukazu Moriyama

Minuma Hikawa Nyotai Shrine and Minuma Hikawa Park

'Border - Izumo Gods and Dragon God'

Legends are introduced at the head shrine, Hikawa Nyotai Shrine, which enshrines the Izumo god Kushi-inadahime and the Minuma dragon.

'Dragon Kite Making and Flying Workshop' in Hikawa Park next to the shrine by Shibuta Hirofumi and other members of the Japan Kite Association.

-International Hut Conference

-Food workshops/Enjoying Ashes and Charcoal from Earthenware Braziers

-Prayer for Fertility - Gods and People/Dance by Hiroto Sou

-Origami workshop using paper made from bamboo produced in Japan

-Minuma Smartphone Ryujin Stamp Rally

Chuetsu Pulp & Paper Co. Ltd.

Saitama Railway

Multiethnic Cuisine Izakaya Fantasista





Photo collection of recordings compiled by Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Phantom Art Exhibition: A Collection of Photographs 2020 Unit Ulus “Borders”

Dates: 4 May (Mon) - 6 May (Wed) 2020.

Venues: 1) INAKA PROJECT Asako Farm, 2) Tsukishima Hikawa Nyotai Shrine 3) Omaki Hikawa Nyotai Shrine

Organised by Social Art/Unit Ulus “Borders”

Planning: Social Art/Unit Ulus Project leader: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Contactperson: Hiromasa Tayga Abe / Secretariat: Takashi Nishina, Ken Nemoto, Chikako Hasegawa, Fukuichi Yoshida

Cooperation: INAKA PROJECT & Asako farm, Future Heritage Minuma Tambo Project Promotion Committee, Multiethnic Cuisine Izakaya Fantasista 13, Minuma 100 Year Plan Association

Participating artists: Hiromasa Tayga Abe (sculptor), Kuniyoshi Ishii (gardener), Tsuguo Yanai (Japanese paper modeling artist), Fukuichi Yoshida (artist).

Physical performance: Hiroto Sou, 'Prayers for a bountiful harvest, gods and people

World Hut Conference 2020.5.6 Participation: Masuko Iso (Germany), Gisela Aubeck (France), Brigitte Rachel (Germany), Chikako Hasegawa (Japan) / Chair: Hiromasa Tayga Abe



As we started to think about the value of existence of Minuma Tanbo, our spiritual home, western Japan experienced torrential rain in July 2017. Since then, there is flooding somewhere in Japan on an annual basis. It became clear that the conventional flood control method, akin to trial of strength, is unable to cope with today's climatic changes. This became the framework for this project, which we named 'Borders'. It was an art project which reappraised the wisdom of people who lived harmoniously with water through culture, custom, religious faith, history, topography, geology and the concept of farming known as 'Nora'. The subsequent covid pandemic forced the cancellation of the 'Borders' project, which was scheduled to be held from 29 April 2020, due to the decision by Saitama prefecture.

However, a three-day informal event, without an audience, took place from 4 May and was documented and published as a booklet entitled, The Phantom Open Air Art Exhibition.

Social Art/Unit Ulus

Borders

Project leader: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Even the Corona disaster did not discourage the photo shoot. Despite light rain in the evening, we were able to talk with friends from Germany, France and Japan in the tent, connecting to the web.

5 May 2020.





Agriculture supports the city

Composting 2019-2020

A 'plant' is another name for a factory, but the primary meaning of the word is of course a vegetable organism that has been planted as a means for creating agricultural produce. The more that people create and gather in cities, the greater the need for food products for the maintenance of life. No matter how much we develop technology and attempt to break down barriers by flying off into space, since the cosmos is itself a natural phenomenon, human beings are merely a single life form existing within nature and subject to the process of natural selection. Struggling with the land with our roots set in the earth by making compost, tilling the land and creating fertile soil is the basis for artistic creation and the starting point for artistic conceptualisation.

So we spent a year making compost for the Art Saitama 2020.

Composting with organic materials has since been passed on to local people and is still being done today.

INAKA PROJECT Asako Farm

'Border - Agriculture and Civilisation'

The project is based on 'fertile soil plants' using discarded pallets to learn about the land in Minuma and look for new possibilities.

① 'Fertile Soil Plan Using Fertile Soil Plants'

Exhibition of the results of composting using 'fertile soil plants' on location, which began in spring 2019 /Artists: Fukuichi Yoshida, Chikako Hasegawa and INAKA PROJECT Collaboration Project



Fertile soil plants Plan in INAKA PROJECT Asako Farm 2019-2020.

Composting of agricultural residues was the most advanced method of making compost at the fertile soil plant.

The supply of residues came one after another from the farm of Rhythm, a group of people with disabilities who work at Asako Farm, where we produced the Fertile soil plant sculptures, and who brought in vegetables and potato vines that could not be shipped. For our side, it was the acquisition

of materials; for them, it was the securing of a dumping ground.

It was surprising to see the growth of the broccoli samples that, with the addition of humus, the broccoli produced a large crop even in red or black soil, both of which are considered poor. The nearby farmers also recognised the results.

Experimental garden



Rice husks



Tree leaves → humus



Weeds



Agricultural residues

- (i) No contamination.
- (ii) Immature humus

[A. Black soil]

(i) No contamination.



(ii) Immature humus



(iii) Humus (mature compost)



[B. Red soil]

(i) No contamination.



(ii) Immature humus



(iii) Humus (mature compost)





Clutched compost approaching humus

1, Compost making and cultivation experiments

Since ancient times, it has been said that the key to farming is soil preparation.

In most cases, the soil that people have sought out for cultivation is not always fertile from the outset, and in most cases there are some problems with growing crops. Fertile soil is good cultivated soil that has been created by human hands.

Therefore, in 2020, a 'fertile soil plant' will be set up in a corner of Asako Farm, the venue for the Saitama International Art Festival 2020/Social Art 'Borders', and the challenge of actually making compost will be undertaken (Fig. 1). An 'experimental garden' was also set up in conjunction with the plant, where crops (broccoli) were grown in two types of soil: loam (red soil) and black bok soil.

2, Consideration of compost and humus

The digestion of plant remains by micro-organisms and the decomposition of organic matter by bacteria have revealed the state of compost and its transition to humus. The understanding of soils has also been improved by considering the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene, in conjunction with environmental changes.

Compost is the state of the residues and faeces of plant remains such as agricultural residues (organic matter = C-OH and macromolecular compounds of trace molecules) that have been digested by micro-organisms such as earthworms and lost their original form, but the tough lignin trunk and leaf veins are retained. Furthermore, even the original plant matter is lost through decomposition by soil bacteria into humus, which is transformed into a completely new substance (soil). Finally, it can play the role of supplying nutrients to the crop.

Humus is a mineral assemblage formed by the action of soil bacteria, in which the four plant elements (C, H, O, N) and other trace elements (Cl, K, Fe, S, P, Ca, Na, Mg, etc.) are intricately molecularly bound together and encased in a gel substance.

3, Soil considerations.

1) Formation of loam layers.

If the inland area hosts a volcanic ash plateau caused by pyroclastic flows, it is pulverised by river erosion and transformed into fine-grained sand. In the course of environmental changes that occur in 100,000-year cycles

of glacial and interglacial periods, fine particles such as volcanic plumes and yellow sand carried by jet streams were deposited by the cool dry period of the last Pleistocene glacial period (Ulm glacial period) over a period of time. The loam layer is thought to have been formed by wind and water deposition over time. It forms a high-density, high-specific-gravity soil layer and contains few organic nutrients.

(2) What is black earth?

Black earth can be observed as a black soil layer and an underlying loam layer on landslide sites, cut surfaces and construction site excavation surfaces.

During the Holocene (interglacial period), warming and rainfall cause dry grass pioneer plants, such as *Miscanthus sinensis*, which use silicon as their main nutrient, to begin to flourish on the loam land. When they died in winter and came into contact with the soil, decomposition by micro-organisms and soil fungi started the formation of black-box soils.

Secondary deposition of wind-fall has led to the raising of the black-box soil, which has continued for more than 10,000 years, and has reached around 1 m in the Holocene.

4, Recommendations for Satoyama farming: causes and solutions for andosols

Clay and humus are mutually bound to each other and form black-box soil. This inter-particle gap contains air and water, making the soil light, soft and physically excellent. Strangely, however, it has also been stigmatised as a poor soil (andosol) that is difficult to grow crops on.

Analysis has shown that the clay in the loam substrate has a specific function. Clays are composed of silica (Si) and metals (Al, N, K, Na, Mg, Ca, etc. Al in particular) in a two or three-layer structure. Between these layers, phosphoric acid is fixed by strong curate bonds and crops do not grow due to phosphate deficiency. This was found to be the cause of poor soil. Both loam soil and black box soil have long been treated as bad soil.

The solution includes the existing farming techniques of the Green Revolution, but the farming method* of compost and humus cloth fertilisation is more effective in terms of the SDGs. We would like to name this farming method the '*satoyama farming method'.

Social art: Fukuichi Yoshida



Fertile soil plant sculptures

Beetle larvae lurking in the humus-making pile



Fertile soil plant sculptures



Chapter IV :

Ulus - Coming Together of People

Public dreaming in the shadow time

Kim Anno
Artist / Filmmaker / Professor, California College of the Arts

In this moment of uncertainty, social practice takes on a new meaning. In my corner of the globe in the San Francisco Bay Area we are currently on lock down and can only leave the house for essentials and if you are over 65 you are not supposed to leave at all. However, we learned today that 40% of cases in the hospital are young people.

Social practice art as a long tradition and it was referred to as ritual, culture, festivals, quilting, music, etc. As visual artists some of us have solo practices and have longed for the collective or group art making as well. In my case my interest in collective projects began at the same time as my coming of age period in the 1970s. This has stayed with me over time. And as I was neatly placed into the art world, selling paintings, I began to cultivate collectivity in other ways.

Currently I am involved with a project in a California town: Pacifica. This town has had a history of sea level rise and erosion. This particular town, Pacifica, California has commissioned a team of artists, including myself, Kim Anno to create a sequence of art works that engage the town in a dialogue about the climate change issue and sea level rise. We had proposed a number of activities and now public gatherings are forbidden. So, we have to change up our platform. We are continuing to knit plastic bags that each person collects. And our idea was to make a huge town sea level rise breakfast with a hand knitted giant tablecloth, down a fishing pier, like a breakfast for 500 people. And at this breakfast the public will discuss three questions:

What does sea level rise mean to me in Pacifica, California ?
What do I want to do about it?
What do I want to leave successive generations?

This discussion was to be had with all generations of the

Sanchez Art Center and the County of San Mateo presents

Pacific A Future: a public art gathering!

We welcome you to participate with us.

Feb.9 10:10 Am Linda Mar Beach, King Tide Day, in Pacifica

Information: Cindy Abbott, Sanchez Art Center: info@sanchezartcenter.org

Kim Anno, Alicia Escott, Modesto Covarrubias, and Heidi Quante artists conduct two interactive simultaneous public art engagements:

The Bureau of Linguistic Reality

Knitting It All Together: Sea Level Rise Giant tablecloth Knit

https://www.meetup.com/Pacifica-Green-knitting-recyclers-Meetup-Group

The Bureau of Linguistical Reality Field Offices will open at 10:10 AM sharp to mark the King Tide event, Sunday February 9th at Linda Mar Beach featuring guest climate planning officer: Kim Anno.

The Bureau of Linguistical Reality is a participatory artwork by Alicia Escott & Heidi Quante working with the public to recognizing a collective loss for words to describe the emotions and experiences we are having as our world warms and climate change accelerates. Recognizing that just as new maps will need to be drawn, new words will need to be created to recognize our changing realities. The Bureau works with the public to name the unnamed feelings, experiences and phenomena of our time by creating a platform for people to identify feelings and experiences they do not have the language for. Come Visit us at our offices from 10:10 to 1:10 at the beach .

Knitting It All Together:
Come join us to begin the Pacifica collective Knitting project for the giant Sea Level Rise tablecloth & Pancake Breakfast exhibited in May. Modesto Covarrubias is leading a public effort to contribute to a recycled plastic giant tablecloth. This begins a series of workshops that instructs participants on basic knitting techniques and making yarn from recycled/repurposed plastic. Come create a giant table tablecloth for the final gathering. Bring your plastic, knitting needles or just yourself!

public, randomly participating. We now will knit the tablecloth for faith that we can have something of this scale in the future. We will gather and knit online.

The other part of the project is “The Bureau of Linguistic Reality” which is a project originated by Alicia Escott and Heidi Quante. They conduct workshops for people to create new words based on new contradictory feelings in the Anthropocene era. We talk with people who come by via an internet gathering invitation. The sit down with us at a table and we together create new works with their experiences and interests in mind.

We are now figuring out other modes of gathering the public online as we wait out the rise and fall of the COVID 19 virus. I think about Japan and the suffering of many families. I work on my own fear and continue to have an aesthetic and intellectual life. I think what a connection to joy and love that one has in artmaking. I feel pretty lucky to be able to continue this at a watershed moment in global history. Our human planet is both vast and small. We are intricately connected as we watch the virus travel through populations.

Pacific/A/Future is the project with collaborators: Alicia Escott, Modesto Covvarubias, and Heidi Quante and myself, Kim Anno.

I am thinking of the following questions: How can we conceive of an empathetic public online?
how can art make a difference now? What is essential for us in the Pacific Rim now?

California and Japan are connected by the Pacific ocean. We share the same global fishery.
This is our back yard together. Last year, I visited Japan and met social engaged artists including members of Yamanba Planning Team, from whom I learned that Yamanba, usually considered an elderly female human-shaped monster living in the mountain, used to be more reminiscent of a mother goddess, someone helping social reform. What can we do to highlight our interconnectedness as Yamanba in the Pacific Rim?

Sharing in creativity by returning to fundamentals

Engaging in the production of charcoal has made us aware of the deep links between woodland and everyday life. Woodland assists all of us in the conduct of our daily lives and provides an irreplaceable setting for fluid linkage between nature and the human soul.
Woodland in the vicinity of residential areas has decline greatly. In the past we used to gather our food products from the woodland and fields in the vicinity of where we live. However, these days most of us who live in the big cities have no idea of where our food materials were grown and cultivated, nor do we have any conception of the seas where the fish that appear on our dinner table once swam. Having lost any sense of continuity and linkage in the course of our hectic lives, we are living in a reduced, fragmentary space that might be thought of as a sliced-up manifestation of the present.
Long ago, a traveller or visitor from afar would invariably be greeted with a bowl of tea or soup. If there was nothing available, the least that a host could do would be to provide the ‘hospitality of fire’. People would burn charcoal around a hearth or brazier and roast mushrooms gathered from the hills along with yams dug up from the fields and dumplings in large pots. Once soup poured into bowls had passed the throat and entered the stomach, people would engage in animated conversation, resulting in a sense of communal bonding. This is the situation in which creative links can emerge. This is the way in which Japanese people used to live their everyday lives in an unbroken continuity between the Jōmon period and the late 1950s.
The spirit of self-effacing hospitality towards strangers was demonstrated at the time of the 2011 earthquake disaster. It’s not hard to imagine how our ancestors used to live through difficult times in a spirit of shared creativity around the brazier and hearth. We need to regard the concept of hospitality as something that stands at the very roots of our culture. The economic culture of hospitality of the Jōmon period was a mode of gratuitously squandered gifting with none of the credit and debt that are the features of the modern economy.

editor

The Jomon concept of ‘tojin’
Tetukazu Moriyama of the Archaeological Art Institute.

The origin of ‘omotenashi’ (which roughly translates as hospitality) comes from the Jomon concept of ‘tojin’ which was born from the Jomon culture. The word means giving without expecting anything in return. There is a necessity in the world today, on this planet of life called earth, to pass on the source of recognition of prosperous coexistence, in other words, the origin of ‘omotenashi’ to the next generation in action and embodiment.



Minuma Essential Oils

Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Social Art / Unit Ulse

Project Leader of "Borders": Traveling Across the Verges of Minuma

Since 2016, with a variety of phrases such as “agriculture and art,” “art in the fields,” and “agriculture is art!,” Social Art / Unit Ulse has staged a series of projects in the vast rice paddy fields of Minuma, claiming that creativity has always been nurtured and utilized in this fundamental human activity of field-working. Before us, there had already been more than 20 groups at work in the area, seeking for environmental conservation and cultural inheritance. Offering our artistic faculty in the hope of contributing to their efforts, we have developed collaborative relations with them, trying to figure out ways to make changes together for the future.

The term “sustainable society” has been in the air for some time, but what is it exactly? Surely, attempting to return to the past by protecting the environment, reviving the circulatory life system, and maintaining the local cultural customs originally invented to make our life better, would give us tremendous clues to build a sustainable future. However, doing all those things in the exact same manners as in the past would result in discarding our current way of life, which most people could not bear. In order to maintain the local fields and forest of your village, you would have to plow the ground, hunt animals, manage food by yourself, log trees, fell bamboo, chop firewood, weave fabrics, dig wells, and so forth. You would spend all your time to work on the basics to live. It would be so much affliction for modern-day people,



possibly creating mental and physical damage, with which you just couldn’t sustain your attempt. Therefore, it is not an option for us just to propose “a return to the past.” Indeed, in our Unit Ulse activities, we often follow past methods that have been lost. And certainly, each method is a tremendously painstaking task requiring time and effort, not something that you can handle on the side while managing everyday life.

So the crucial approach, then, is to extract the essence out of them. We track back the past to do so. “Essence,” according to online dictionaries, means “the indispensable quality,” “the intrinsic nature,” “an extract,” and “a concentrate,” like an essential oil for example. Sprinkling drops of essences of the past over the current lifestyle should help us develop a hybrid way of life.

Taking a close look at Minuma, you find it filled with a variety of highly fragrant essences. The forms they take include relics from when it was part of the sea, customs from when it was a pond, cultures developed after it became an area of paddy fields, and the history of preservation attempts from when the paddy fields began to disappear one after another to today. Each and every one of these has been constructed with a wisdom for life taking into consideration the area’s geography, environment, climate, history, and even people’s sentiments. Minuma has been traditionally looked after by creative minds of the times. It has been always mediated by their ingenuity toward living joyfully, beautifully, and comfortably, so that people would not just suffer from imposed labour and endurance. That is the significance of what I would call Minuma Essential Oils. As artists living in the present moment, we receive such essential oils from the precursors and try to hand them over hopefully with even more creative ideas to build a future of Minuma — together, I trust, with the many people who love this place.

‘Rikyū Knew the Jōmon Period’ by Moriyama Tetsukazu of the Archaeological Art Institute. The tea ceremony performed around the in situ recreation of a Jōmon Period hearth dating from 4,500 years ago (Tanbo Social Art Project). 2016.



In 2017, lumberjack Hagiwara performed a metasequoia felling performance. As the metasequoia trees planted in various locations were about to be cut down, attempts at art such as beehives, charcoal and paper-making were developed as ‘Art of Nora (Art of the fields)’ as a form of utilising the logs for practical purposes.

Tayga Abe (photo right) explains about the beehives he created.
Tomikazu Yoshida (photo left)



Towards an Era of Natural Cycles of Living Organisms Breathing with Nature -

I called a friend who runs a farm in Fukushima as I was worried for them after yesterday's earthquake (Note 1). I was relieved to hear that everyone was safe even though some furniture ended up scattered around the house. In Japan, where four continental plates collide, earthquakes occur regularly and the clean up operation at nuclear power plants in Fukushima, after their destruction, continues in earnest. (Note 1)

People who spoke Japanese, which is classified as an isolated language, and formed a unique culture, started living on these islands since the Last Glacial Period, when the archipelago, formed by the accretion of oceanic volcanoes and continental plates, was still connected to the Eurasian continent,

Even after the Japanese archipelago was separated from the continent, many people from other regions arrived and it is thought that they lived harmoniously, mixing with each other. The Japanese archipelago has been consumed by nature’s ‘breathing’ on numerous occasions as it was subjected to repeated natural disasters. Despite this, people who lived on the islands fostered culture based on what the nature provided.

'Major Jomon sites in and around Musashino' (page 122), a map which shows distribution of Jomon sites, records traces of Jomon people’s residences which were mainly situated on a plateau near sloping forests, where they built satoyama on sunny plateaus and slopes.

As we continued to discuss the soil and culture of Minuma, including the Jomon period, and current state of the Three Principles of Minuma, we organised 3 art projects. This booklet documents these activities.

Moriyama Tetsukazu who produced Reproducing Past Positions (page48) says:‘In Jomon sites, traces of people who lived in the same area for over 10,000 years, during the Early, Middle, Late and Late Jomon periods, can be found as data. Such a case is rare anywhere in the world’.

We like to think that the descendants of Jomon people continued to live in harmony with nature, building satoyama on the sites of former Jomon settlements throughout Japan and engaged in ‘nora’ activities.Satoyamas quickly disappeared during and after Japan’s period of rapid economic growth, but fortunately they still exist in some areas.

‘Farm In Sagiyaama’, the farm featured in the booklet, is one such place. It is where journeys undertaken by each member of Unit Ulus led to.

Takeshi Hagiwara, from the farm, has produced works which were eventually burnt at art exhibitions, not as an artist but as a lumberjack, and also cut down a large metasequoia tree as a performative piece. Despite busy life as a farmer,

he has accepted the position as a representative of the Social Art Charcoal Burning Society Terayama Branch.

The owner of Farm in Sagiyama, Satomi Hagiwara, despite the covid pandemic, led rice planting with children who ended up covered in mud, as well as teaching agriculture, food and kamado (Japanese cooking stove) making to students from a culinary school face to face at the farm (page 72). She also shares the concept behind Art of Nora and supports our artistic activities. It is surprising that by paying attention to traditional methods of farming, many of the mounting problems in contemporary society can be solved through our relationship with nature which we experience through such a method.

Satomi Hagiwara says that agriculture provides clues to solving many of the problems facing contemporary society which include food safety, education, environmental issues, social welfare, medical care and motivation for living. Farming methods handed down from generation to generation have scientific basis. Valuing organic kind of farming and rebuilding social structure will provide a signpost to a sustainable society.

We consider the very activity of building satoyama which our ancestors have established as an art form. Ulus, or whirlpool, of people has begun to move towards ways of being kind to the field. In Sagiyama, we have built a charcoal kiln as work of art in the forest on the slope, which is a satoyama. In this kiln, we have burned biochar for carbon storage and for use in the field. We have also burned art works in rice paddies and returned ashes to the soil. These farming and artistic acts are also based on the concept of carbon neutrality. There is a sense that our activity in Sagiyama has organically developed into a new festival in the region. In recent years, open burning has been condemned due to CO2 emissions associated with such an activity. However, such a perception is changing as we come to realise carbon-negative nature of open burning based on carbon neutral principles and carbon sequestration.

In compiling this publication, 'Art of Nora', we looked at Minuma from the perspective of soil science, geography, archaeology, cultural anthropology and other fields. We also received advice and suggestions from experts, hoping that the publication could play a part in thinking about the world through the example of Minuma (Saitama City).

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone at the farm, people of Minuma, to the experts and many others who contributed to the project.

Social Art/Unit Ulus. Editorial team
Ken Nemoto
Chikako Hasegawa
Fukuichi Yoshida

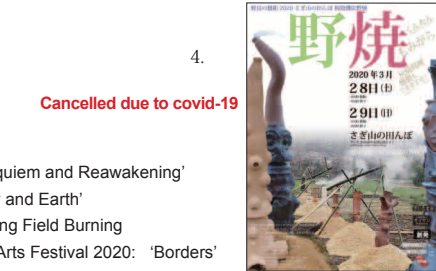
Flyers

'Social Art Exhibition: THE Ichiba'
(ichiba means market in Japanese).



p83 Note 1

7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Fukushima on 16 March 2022.



Cancelled due to covid-19

Flyers

1. Art of Nora 2021: 'Requiem and Reawakening'
2. Art of Nora 2021: 'Sky and Earth'
3. Art of Nora 2020: Spring Field Burning
4. Saitama International Arts Festival 2020: 'Borders'

Art of Nora 2020-2021

Social Art/Unit Ulus

Art of Nora 2021: Sagiyama - The Scene II: 'Requiem and Reawakening'

Dates: 12 (Fri), 13 (Sat) and 14 (Sun) November 2021

Venue: Farm In Sagiyama, Sagiyama Memorial Park (Midori Ward, Saitama City)

Organiser: Social Art/Unit Ulus

Cosponsor: Farm in Sagiyama

Funded by: Saitama Prefecture Cultural Development Fund, Saitama Cultural Grant

Supported by: Saitama Prefecture, Saitama City, SMF (Saitama Muse Forum), Art and City Tour Project Implementation Committee, Minuma 100 Year Plan Association, Future Heritage Minuma Tambo Project Promotion Committee, Learned-scape Sightama, Saisan Environmental Conservation Foundation

Cooperation: Social Art Charcoal Burning Association Terayama Branch, Life Art Research Committee of Institute of Environmental Arts and Design, Open Street inc., Script Co. Ltd., Saitama Railway Corporation, Mochizuki Printing co.Ltd, Tsuyoshi Hagiwara

Photography: Koji Ishizaki, Hidehiro Kato, Gen Nakamura, Akira Yoshiya

Video production: Megumi Ishibashi, Yu Ohara

Volunteers: Masahiko Nemoto, Kenji Yagasaki

Planning: Social Art/Unit Ulus. Project leader: Ken Nemoto

Team member: Chikako Hasegawa, Akiyo Marufuji, Shogo Okuda, Fukuichi Yoshida

Participating artists: Hiromasa Tayga Abe (sculptor), Takeshi Hagiwara (lumberjack), Kuniyoshi Ishii (gardener), Yu Ohara (film maker), Shogo Okuda (architect), Tsuguo Yanai (Japanese paper artist), Fukuichi Yoshida (artist), Nobuo Yoshikawa (filmmaker), Yumiko Yoshitake (physicist)

Dance: Hiroto Sou

Lecture: 'Soil, Forest Blessings and Life in Minuma', Hideki Ishii (associate professor, Fukushima University)

Chair: Shogo Okuda

Charcoal burning workshop: 'Fuseyaki' with Tetsuya Hagiwara, Chikako Hasegawa, Fukuichi Yoshida, Yumiko Yoshitake of the Social art /Charcoal Burning Association

Agricultural workshop & talk: Together with Farming' by Satomi Hagiwara

Art of Nora 2021: Sky and Earth 'Heaven and Earth: Coming and Going' 'Carbon (C) Circulation and Regeneration'

Dates: 8 (Fri)-11 (Mon) January 6(Sat.) February 2021

Venue: Kataya Tambo (Minuma Ward, Saitama City/NPO Minuma Farm 21)

Sagiyama charcoal kiln (Midori Ward, Saitama City/Farm in Sagiyama)

Organiser: Social Art/Unit Ulus.

Cosponsor: Minuma Farm 21, Social Art Charcoal Burning Association Terayama Branch

Funded by: Agency for Cultural Affairs, Saitama City.

Supported by: City of Saitama, Saisan Environmental Conservation Foundation, Future Heritage Minuma Tambo Project Promotion Committee, Saitama Art Exhibition <Emergence> Project

Cooperation: Farm in Sagiyama, Daichu Co. Ltd., SU Farm, Multiethnic Cuisine Izakaya Fantasista 13, Takeshi Hagiwara, Osamu Nishimura, local residents

Photography: Hidehiro Kato, Gen Nakamura Video: Yu Ohara, Video production: Megumi Ishibashi

Planning: Social Art/Unit Ulus Project leader: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Team member: Chikako Hasegawa, Ken Nemoto, Fukuichi Yoshida

Participating artists: Hiromasa Tayga Abe (sculptor), Wakako Emori (sculptor), Chikako Hasegawa (sculptor), Megumi Ishibashi (video), Kuniyoshi Ishii (gardener), Ken Nemoto, Tetsukazu Moriyama (head of the Institute of Archaeological Figurative Art), Fukuichi Yoshida (artist), Nobuo Yoshikawa (video artist)

Kite flying: Hirofumi Shibuta, The Japanese Kite Association

Musical performance: Mori no Tami with Hisato Yamamoto

Dengaku (dance): Risa Ito, Gen Nakamura, Hiroto Sou

Charcoal burning: Members of the Charcoal Burning Association

Lecture: 'Environmental Conservation Entrusted to Forests', Tadao Otsuki (Kikurikan),

International Hut Conference (symposium): 'Soils of Minuma Rice Paddies and the Soil Layers Lying Beneath'

Participants: Shoji Abiko (Archaeologist), Kohei Inose (Professor, Meiji Gakuin University), Tetsukazu Moriyama (Institute of Archaeological Figurative Arts)

Chair: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Phantom Art Exhibition: A Collection of Photographs 2020 Unit Ulus "Borders"

Dates: 4 May (Mon) - 6 May (Wed) 2020.

Venues: 1) INAKA PROJECT Asako Farm, 2) Tsukishima Hikawa Nyotai Shrine 3) Omaki Hikawa Nyotai Shrine

Organised by Social Art/Unit Ulus "Borders"

Planning: Social Art/Unit Ulus Project leader: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Contact person: Hiromasa Tayga Abe / Secretariat: Takashi Nishina, Ken Nemoto, Chikako Hasegawa, Fukuichi Yoshida

Cooperation: INAKA PROJECT & Asako farm, Future Heritage Minuma Tambo Project Promotion Committee, Multiethnic Cuisine Izakaya Fantasista 13, Minuma 100 Year Plan Association

Participating artists: Hiromasa Tayga Abe (sculptor), Kuniyoshi Ishii (gardener), Tsuguo Yanai (Japanese paper modeling artist), Fukuichi Yoshida (artist).

Physical performance: Hiroto Sou, 'Prayers for a bountiful harvest, gods and people

World Hut Conference 2020.5.6 Participation: Masuko Iso (Germany), Gisela Aubeck (France), Brigitte Rachel (Germany), Chikako Hasegawa (Japan) / Chair: Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Charcoal Burning Study Group

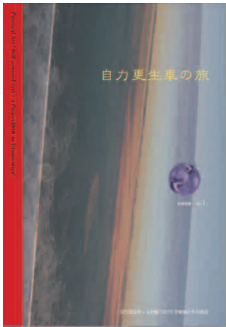
Lecture: 'Will Charcoal Burning Save the Earth? The Potential of Biochar and Trends in the World'

Date: Saturday 22 February 2020

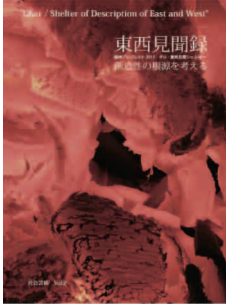
Venue: Katayanagi Community Center

Organised by: Social Art/Charcoal Burning Association Terayama Branch

Lecturer: Munehiko Iwaya (Permanent Secretary, Japan Biochar Association)



SOCIAL ART vol.1 2011



SOCIAL ART vol.2 2012



SOCIAL ART vol.3 2013



SOCIAL ART Photo album 2020



SOCIAL ART vol.4 2020



SOCIAL ART vol.5 2022

Pablications

Social Art/Unit Ulus

Participating Artists 2020-2022

Hiromasa Tayga **Abe**, sculptor, Chiba & Perugia
Wakako **Emori**, artist, Kanagawa
Takeshi **Hagiwara**, lumberjack, Saitama
Tetsuya **Hagiwara**, farmer, Saitama
Chikako **Hasegawa**, sculptor, Tokyo
Kuniyoshi **Ishii**, gardener, Saitama
INAKA PUROJECT, farming company
Mori no Tami with Hisato Yamamoto, musical performer, Tokyo
Tetsukazu **Moriyama**, Institute of Archaeological Figurative Arts, Tokyo
Hajime **Nakamura**, shishimai (lion dance), Saitama
Ken **Nemoto**, student, Architecture Department, Musashino Art University, Saitama
Yu **Ohara**, moving image artist, Saitama
Shogo **Okuda**, architect, Chiba
Hirofumi **Shibuta**, kite craftman Tokyo
Hiroto **Sou**, dancer, Tokyo
Tsuguo **Yanai**, washi artist, Saitama
Nobuo **Yoshikawa**, moving image artist, Kanagawa
Fukuichi **Yoshida**, artist, Tokyo

Cooperation
Farm in Sagiyama: Satomi **Hagiwara** (representative)
NPO Minuma Farm 21: Yumiko **Shimada** (representative)
SU Farm: Representative: Minehito **Okamoto**
Future Heritage Minuma Rice Field Project Promotion Committee: Norio **Kitahara**
Minuma 100 Year Plan Association: Akiko **Mizuno**
Art and City Tour Project Implementation Committee
SMF (Saitama Muse Forum)
Learned-scape Sightama
Life Art Research Committee, Institute of Environmental Arts and Design
Kiryokukan
Saitama Railway Corporation
Chuetsu Pulp & Paper Co. Ltd.
Mochizuki Printing Co. Ltd.
Open Street Co. Ltd.
Script Co. Ltd.
Risa **Ito**
Megumi **Ishibashi**
Koji **Ishizaki**
Kazukiro **Takabatake**
Yumiko **Yoshitake**

Project leaders

Hiromasa Tayga **Abe**
Ken **Nemoto**
Fukuichi **Yoshida**

History of Social Art

Jan	2002	Founded by Fukuichi Yoshida in Senkawa, Chofu City, Tokyo
Apr	2005	Office moved to Kokuryo, Chofu City, Tokyo
Jul	2010	Charcoal kiln set up at Kojima Farm, Onoji, Machida City, Tokyo. Closed in 2015.
Dec	2011	Formation of the activity unit 'Unit Ulus', which has been putting on various projects since.
July	2015	Office moved to Ochiai, Tama, Tokyo
Jan	2018	Social Art Terayama Branch established in Terayama, Midori-ku, Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture with Tetuya Hagiwara as the representative.
Feb	2018	Charcoal kiln set up at Uenoda, Midori-ku, Saitama City. 'Charcoal Burning Association' set up by Fukuichi Yoshida.



Note 1
7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Fukushima on 16 March 2022.

While many projects were swallowed up by the waves of the times, Social Art has been able to continue its activities for the past two years as usual or even better. We believe this is because our activities, which are related to 'Nora', take place outdoors and our good fortune to have undergone a generational change within the unit which gave us momentum.

The age of core members of Unit Ulus range from those in their 20s to 70s, and those taking part include not only artists and students but also farmers, a lumberjack, and a gardener. The power of art, which is inherent in all human beings, has always gently pushed us to overcome problems.



<https://artngo16.wixsite.com/socialart>





Thinking about how to open up the future
through scrutiny of the past

‘The artefacts of people from antiquity preserved in museums are highly inspired objects intimately linked to the everyday human concerns of clothing, food and habitation. People in modern times place so much importance on time-saving that we have forgotten much that should hold an attraction for us. It may well be that genuinely new creativity will only emerge once we have taken the time to trace the methods employed by people in ancient times and to uncover the attractions that they offer. Many outstanding inventions have surely emerged from the essence of the past extracted in this way. This is maybe what rural creativity is all about.

Hiromasa Tayga Abe

Publication Social Art/Unit Ulus

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editing Chikako Hasegawa
2023

Farming sustains cities



Art of Nora

Being Kind to Earth

Social Art/Unit Ulus

2020 — 2021

*Nora is working good for nature in the field
it is an ancient human activity itself.*

A message from Unit Ulus, coming together of people from variety of backgrounds

Art of Nora