



AIR Exchange Program 2017

Youkobo x Finland Artists' Studio Foundation

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Introduction of AIRs

New collaboration and future perspectives

Riikka Suomi-Chande / Coordinator of Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation

Among the Finnish artists, there has been a growing interest in Asia during the previous years. This is why the Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation was very happy to sign an artist exchange agreement with Youkobo Art Space in 2016.

Within the new exchange programme, the Foundation hosted visual artist Kazuo Yoshida in Tapiola Guest Studio in May-June 2017. During his residency, Yoshida held also an exhibition in the Kalasatama Studio Building in Helsinki. Yoshida's residency was also a start for a new project and he has made plans to return to Finland in order to continue with it. Retrospectively visual artist Maija Luutonen was selected for the Youkobo Art Space and was able to stay and work there in a perfect setting adapted to the research and creation process. We hope that both residencies have enriched the professional experience of these two artists and reinforced the development of their international careers.

We are proud of this successful partnership with Youkobo Art Space. We know that Youkobo Art Space upholds high professional values and standard and we appreciate the support and facilities offered for the resident artists there. We would like to thank all the staff of Youkobo Art Space for the excellent cooperation and for the warm welcome for the artist. We sincerely hope that our good collaboration continues and benefits artists also in the future.

About the Foundation and Tapiola Guest Studio

The Studio Foundation, established by the Finnish Artists' Association, offers working facilities and studio apartments for visual artists and takes part in enhancing their overall working conditions. In Finland, the Foundation has approximately 300 visual artists as permanent tenants.

In order to develop the internationalization of the artists and to offer them working opportunities abroad, the Foundation runs a residency programme in Tapiola Guest Studio in Espoo Finland. The Tapiola Studio Building is located eight kilometres away from the Finland's capital city Helsinki. The building consists of 10 work and live studios for visual artists and it has been designed and constructed in 1955 especially for the use of visual artists. Since 1997, one of the residential studios was reserved for the use of the international residency programme run by the Foundation.

The artists are selected to the Tapiola Guest Studio either through the artist exchange programmes or through open calls. The Foundation offers practical assistance and networks for resident artists and tries to help artists to achieve the most out of their stay.

The residency programme is supported by the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and the City of Espoo.

<http://ateljeesaatio.fi/english/index.html>



The beginnings of our exchange program with Finnish artist studio and resource management organization, FASF

Tatsuhiko Murata /Co-director, Youkobo Art Space

In May 2015, we received an offer from the Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation (FASF) to consider forming some sort of cultural exchange, and began discussing possibilities for artist exchanges between the two organizations. FASF is a non-profit organization established in 1990, headquartered in Helsinki, that is dedicated to the management of artist studios in Finland. In addition to managing 7 working spaces, including 4 studio buildings, they facilitate artist exchange programs with similar institutions in other countries such as Italy and Spain.

In the full swing of autumn in early September, we visited their offices in Helsinki, and met with the director Tuula Paalimäki, manager Riikka Suomi-Chande, and had the opportunity to be shown around the Tapiola Guest Studios in Espoo, a suburban city outside of Helsinki. The facility that would be provided for the exchange program was a row-house type studio in a forest near the coast facing the Baltic Sea, located among an enormous housing compound built in 1955. While fairly close to Helsinki, the capital, it was a wonderful environment that would allow for focused production, as well as catalyze engagement with the local artists, since part of the building was used as a residence/work space for long-term artist tenants.

We quickly made a memorandum of understanding and agreed to each send an artist to one another beginning in 2017. In regards to the conditions of the exchange, we agreed that the respective countries would be responsible for obtaining sufficient funding for the artist they would be commissioning. In hopes for a fruitful exchange, we will continue to come up with a means and structure for sustainability.

This Helsinki visit was blessed in many ways. The day we visited FASF studios was coincidentally the last day of residence for a Japanese artist that had been there, and we were able to hear directly about the production process and gain insight on the residency situation. Additionally, we were able to visit the city of Ii to the north, and attend the 10-year anniversary celebration of the AIR program at the micro-residence, Kulttuurikauppila.

2017 Exchange Program Overview



-From Japan to Finland:

Kazuo Yoshida, photographer

May 1, 2017 ~ June 30

June 18~20: "Kazuo Yoshida Show" an exhibition showcasing his achievements during the residency held in the ground floor of the Kalasatama Studio Building in Helsinki.

From Finland to Japan:

Maija Luutonen, artist

October 1, 2017~ November 30

November 22~26: "untitled"

An open studio exhibition showcasing achievements from residency held at Youkobo Art Space.

Residence was accompanied by partner and artist, Olli Keranen and daughter Aina.

An achievement presentation meeting was held for the above 2017 activities, titled "FIN/JPN LAB #4 - A gathering of Practitioners pondering the relationship of art, residency programs, and cross-cultural collaboration.*1" The participating artists, as well as other arts-related people attended the event which specially held under the arrangement of the Finnish Institute in Japan, Tokyo on 25 October 2018 at their Tokyo office.

A presentation about the achievements of the art festival exchange program conducted by the city of Toumi in the Nagano prefecture and an organization in Lapland, which took place from August to October, was also held at this time. Finland liaison for the exchange program include ArtBreak, and city of Ii, Finland. The Tokyo liaison was Youkobo.

*1 A gathering of Practitioners pondering the relationship of art, residency programs, and cross-cultural collaboration.'

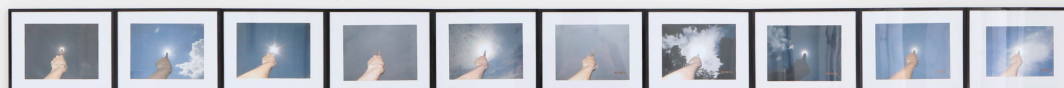
For the months of May to June in 2017, I participated in the artist-in-residence program co-hosted by the Finnish Artists Studio Foundation and Youkobo Art Space. During this program, the organizer offered the Tapiola Guest Studio in Espoo, close to Helsinki as a place to stay. Generally, organizers of the artist-in-residence program request that participating artists produce works that make use of the residence characteristics or produce work from investigations and interactions with the place. In other words, except for special cases, an artist should act as an intermediary with their previous experience and activity with the current history, climate and culture (including a critical position) through an investigation of where they will stay.

For this residency, I described in a proposal submitted beforehand that I would focus on the characteristic of skies (light) in Finland known as 'White Night', and recreate my previous work *Air Blue* on which this was based. The following is a definition of 'White Night'.

- 'White Night' is written both as *byakuya* and *hakuya*. It refers to the phenomenon of the sun that never sets, when nights are short and twilight lasts a long time. Twilight refers to the time when the sun moves almost parallel with the horizon during sunrise and sunset (Source: *MyPedia Encyclopedia*, Hitachi Solutions, Inc. Create)
- *Byakuya* (*hakuya*) exists in the upper latitude region. The phenomenon is caused by the sun setting near the horizon, and results in summer twilight lasting for a much longer time. (Source: *Digital Powers*, Shogakukan)

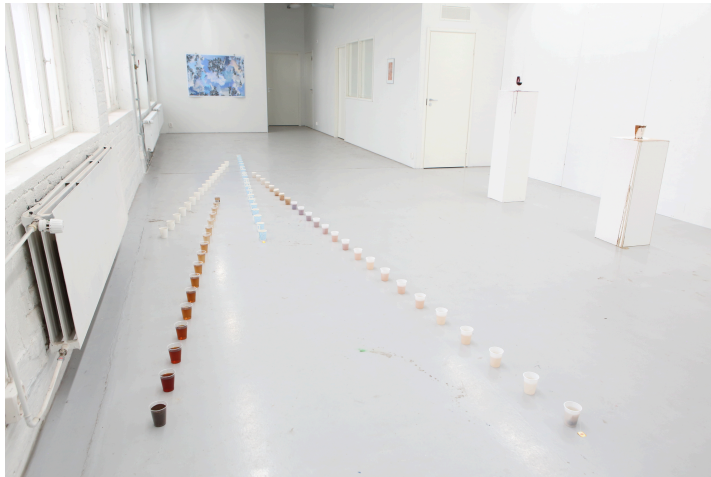
When planning what to shoot, I struggled to fully understand the ambiguous definitions of these 'white nights'—in the first place, they are not visible in Japan. One of the problems of translating 'white night' into another language is that the corresponding translation changes depending on whether the sun is visible or not throughout the day. To briefly recap, 'white night' describes a twilight state at night, regardless of the sun's visibility. With that being the case, at what time does 'night' begin and end, and just how bright is 'twilight'? I realized that I could not understand the words or find a clear definition (in the first place, a precise definition does not exist) that fully matched the term 'white night' until I finished the text. What follows is an examination of the relationship between the defined situation of 'white night' and words that correspond to it in each country. I tried to organize these in my own way. Although presenting such sentences in a state not factually perfect is regrettable, I am delaying the submission of this report for the second time so that I can give priority to what 'white night' actually is and not what I think it might be, allowing me to finalize these sentences with the appropriate context.

The Finnish term for 'white night' is *keskiyön aurinko* or *yötön yö*, where *keskiyön aurinko* refers to 'midnight sun' and *yötön yö* refers to 'nightless night' in English. When examining definitions in the Japanese-English dictionary, this corresponds with 'midnight sun' and 'white night'. 'Midnight sun' is said to occur in an area 66.6 degrees north latitude or 66.6 degrees or more of south latitude—indicating that the sun will not set at certain times of the night. However, 'midnight sun' literally refers to the sun itself, not the term 'white night'. A direct translation in English, 'white night' is considered a term closer to the phenomenon and the meaning of 'night without sleep' is generally stronger in English-speaking countries. In the Finnish dictionary, the same expression is said to be *yötön yö* (nightless night). 'White night' is also a familiar sight at the White Festival in Russia's St. Petersburg, close to the residency in Espoo, and is known as 'Белые ночи'—occurring in areas of 60 degrees 34 minutes or more—an endless state of twilight. Although a slight deviation, in terms of the nature of light itself, 'midnight sun' is direct light while 'white night / nightless night' can be classified as indirect. The point above reorganized was explored from before the residency up until now. The main essential point I have kept in mind so far is not the 'midnight sun' visible from my residence in Espoo, but 'white night' and 'nightless night' instead.



The above classification of 'white night' was not even finished before my residency began. The purpose of staying for a length of time was to shoot in Lapland in Northern Finland. When first running into people in the local area, it was troublesome talking about such ambiguous white nights by myself. However, without a clear purpose, it would have been a waste of time and expense traveling and staying elsewhere when so much of Lapland is uninhabited and 'expansive'. For each person I met I tried to ask simple questions regarding places where the 'midnight sun' could be seen but naturally only got answers that were just as simple. I would look at a map of Northern Europe stuck on the studio wall every day, and would repeat the same question over and over again—where am I now, and what is the characteristic of the place, but the answer never came. At the end, my stay was also over a month, and impatient to start on the exhibition ahead, I shifted the inquiry from the characteristics of what this place might be to the characteristics of what my presence (and my media) in this place is and somehow survived the final exhibition.

Leaving Espoo on the final day and returning home, I was satisfied with the work I had done and felt very emotional. And as a result, the dawn sky I saw as I headed toward the airport from the car felt more beautiful than usual, changing my thoughts and feelings of the place. Unlike a polar night where the aurora borealis is visible, my disappointment with the 'nightless night' meant I could not find a clear enough distinction in the sky (light) with other places during my time in Finland. However, light is visually perceived as the sky colour; not the nature of light but a continuous amount of subtle night light lasting several hours, the amount of which perhaps remains a mystery. And maybe nighttime light measurements can visibly point toward numerical differences. This discovery was a wake-up call for me. Romantically speaking, that accumulation of sunbathing in twilight for two months gently stimulated my senses, finally connecting with my brain's synapses. As mentioned at the beginning, artists participating in artist-in-residencies are asked not to deal with photometric data but rather connect with the characteristics of the place. I therefore present this rather vague and extremely nonessential exchange with the surroundings in the form of a report as the outcome of being an "Artist in Residence". Last of all, I would like to thank the Finnish Artist Studio Foundation and Youkobo Art Space who provided me with the opportunity to concentrate on such thinking and practice, and everyone at the Finnish Embassy for providing a space and place to work and interact, enabling me to conclude this work.



Kazuo Yoshida

Born in 1982, Hyogo, Japan, Yoshida graduated from the University of Shiga Prefecture in 2004. He attempts to establish a new index in the present age through a process of collection and reconstruction using various media such as the elements of uncertain time, space and color. In 2012, he received the Grand Prize at the 11th Gunma Biennale For Young Artists. Major exhibitions include: 'Ruler,' G/P gallery, Tokyo (2014); 'Japan Media Arts Festival,' Hokkaido, Kushiro Art Museum (2014); 'Boundaries of Photograph,' Yokohama Civic Art Gallery, Azamino (2014); 'Picturing Plants,' The Museum of Modern Art Gunma, Gunma (2013); 'Expanded Retina,' G/P gallery, Tokyo (2012). Immediately after the Tohoku earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster in 2011, he published Air Blue, a series of photographs with focus on the forest area in Fukushima, and received the Jury Prize at the Selection at 16th Japan Media Arts Festival in 2013.

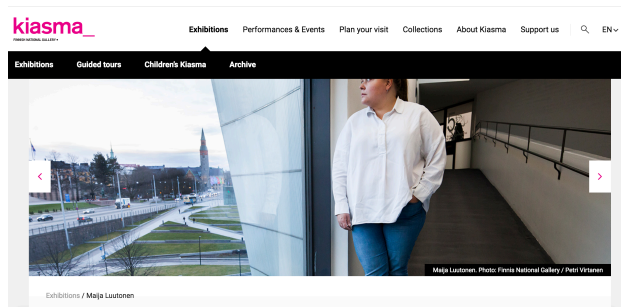
Two months residency at Youkobo Art Space

Maija Luutonen

I spent October and November in 2017 in residency at Youkobo as part of the exchange program between Youkobo and the Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation and Youkobo Art Space. My initial plan for the residency was to do research for future projects, research new materials and begin work on my next artist book. A few months before the start of my residency I was invited to produce a new commission work and to have a solo exhibition at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki beginning in February 2018. Because of this tight schedule I shifted my plans a little and started working on the commission while in residency. My plan was to create an installation of panels, some sculptures and printed silk fabrics for the space.

While in residency I first started to look at the wide range of image culture in Japan. I immersed myself in patterns, prints, books, magazines, graphic design, signs etc. I decided to think about how to live without written or spoken language and subsist only with the help of images and signs. To try and find out what is the least amount of information you need to have to be able to patch up the rest of an image, how your brain can use previous experience and things learnt and build up from almost nothing. I was also very inspired by the scarcity and amazing use of empty white spaces in some early comics/wood block prints meant to be reprinted again and again and to be spread widely. In them there is no need really to mark the spaces. All the things happen in a blank space that you can fill out yourself or imagine it as somewhere other than this reality.

During the residency I gathered material, visited a lot of museums, book shops, materials shops, National Treasure sites, gardens, buildings, etc. In the studio I began making sketches for the future works. I painted sketches for the panels, gathered image material for the printed fabrics and used a 3D scanner to create shapes for the sculptures that were then fabricated back in Helsinki. While I made most of the actual work that is now shown in Kiasma after I returned to Helsinki, the work was very much informed by my time spent in residency.



The exhibition "Patch" is open from the ninth of February to the 29th of July 2018 at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art. The work is a new commission supported by the Alfred Kordelin Foundation.

<http://kiasma.fi/en/exhibitions/maija-luutonen/>

Maija Luutonen

Born 1978 in Helsinki. She is a visual artist working mainly with painting on paper. Her practice is versatile as well as polymorphic: her works can be two-dimensional or spatial. Her works often deal with the questions of the relationship and space that is formed between the work and the viewer. Luutonen studies representation and its limits while attempting to expand and stretch the terms of painting. Her works escape definition: they often address questions of representation and tangibility.

Finland and Japan AIR Exchange program 2017

Finnish Artists Studio Foundation (FASF) AIR

The guest studio is part of the Tapiola Studio Building which houses also nine other residential studios for local artists. It is located in Espoo, 8 km from Helsinki Finland.

The Tapiola Guest Studio is maintained by the Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation. The purpose of the Foundation, established in 1990, is to improve the working conditions of visual artists by maintaining and acquiring work facilities and residential studios. The foundation has approximately 300 artist tenants in Finland. The Foundation has invited artists to Tapiola Guest Studio since year 1997, mainly through artists exchange programmes, but occasionally also through open calls.

About host organization :

Finnish Artist Studio Foundation, FASF, www.ateljeesaatio.fi

2017 Espoo/Helsinki

Date of residency: beginning May to end June

2017 Number of participants: 1 / Kazuo Yoshida/ Photographer

Youkobo Art Space

Youkobo Art Space manages an Artist-In-Residence Program (AIR) providing accommodation and studio space to artists for a set period of time, and a non-profit studio and gallery for creating and the presentation of new work by Tokyo-based artists, while also promoting community engagement through art and culture. As a 'studio ('kobo') for 'you' ('you' in Youkobo meaning 'play' in Japanese), Youkobo aims to create a space which gives many people the opportunity to experience art and culture on a more familiar level by supporting the autonomous activities of artists. To date, 280 overseas artists from 40 countries have been welcomed to Youkobo, and exhibitions of over 150 Japan-based artists have been held in what has become a place for rich cultural exchange. (As of March, 2017)

Host organization

Youkobo Art Space , www.youkobo.co.jp

A resident in 2017

Date of residency : begining October to end November

2017 Number of participants : 1 /Maija Luutonen/Painter