



AIR Exchange Program 2018 Youkobo × Finland Artists' Studio Foundation

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Collaboration and future perspectives

Riikka Suomi-Chande
Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation

In 2016, the Finnish Artists' Studio Foundation (FASF) was happy to sign an artist exchange agreement with Youkobo Art Space.

Among Finnish artists, there had been a growing interest in Asia, and the partnership with Youkobo Art Space enriched our residency programme and made it geographically more diverse. We had sought for cooperation with Youkobo Art Space, because we were familiar with its active role in developing the residency field through the international network Res Artis, as well as the warm welcome and good facilities it offers to artists.

Within the exchange programme, last year the FASF hosted visual artist Tetsuro Kano in the Project Studio Artsu in Helsinki in May-June. At the end of his residency, Kano held an Open Studio event and Exhibition in the Studio. Retrospectively, visual artist Antti Nyysönen was selected for the Youkobo Art Space and got an opportunity to have an intense residency working period there.

We consider it very important that artist exchange programmes give access to residencies abroad and enable creation and research periods for artists in a supportive environment. We hope that our cooperation with Youkobo Art Space will continue to benefit artists in both countries in the future.

About FASF

The Studio Foundation (FASF), headquartered in Helsinki, is a non-profit studio provider organization established by the Finnish Artists' Association in 1990. It is dedicated to the management of affordable artist studios and it offers working facilities, studio apartments and residencies for visual artists. In 2018, FASF had altogether 300 visual artists as tenants and managed studios across 15 buildings in Finland. Furthermore, FASF manages two studio buildings abroad; one in Grassano in Tuscany Italy, and another in Marbella in Spain. Every year approximately 50 Finnish artists stay and work in these studio buildings for 1-3 months at a time.

The international Artist-in-Residence program run by FASF was initiated in 1997 and the aim of the programme was to offer artists more working opportunities abroad. FASF facilitates artist exchange programs with similar institutions in other countries like Canada (Quebec) and Japan. The resident artists are selected through these programs or occasionally also through open calls.

In Finland, FASF has also a role to collect and spread information and knowledge on residency opportunities both for artists and communities. One channel for this is the website artinres.fi

In 2018, the Tapiola Guest Studio, normally reserved for our residency programme, was under renovation. The Foundation decided to provide another studio from Helsinki for the resident artist. This facility, the Project Studio ARTSU, was located in an old industrial building in Arabianranta, a residential district known for its public art works, also several educational art institutes were located in the area. Even though the district was close to the city centre and its cultural attractions, the neighbouring bay was a beautiful bird wetland surrounded by forest. The Studio, located on the 7th floor of the building and including an own kitchenette and a bathroom, had a total area of 47 m² and was for private use of the resident artist. Having the residency in ARTSU could also catalyse engagement with local artists, since on the same floor, there were eight other artist studios rented for local long-term artist tenants.

The residency programme was made possible in Finland with the support of the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and the City of Espoo.

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



Exchange with the Finnish Artist Studio Foundation (FASF)

Hiroko Murata
Youkobo Art Space

Youkobo continues to host artists as a space where they can stay, create and present in Japan, while simultaneously creating opportunities for artists active in Japan to carry out such activities overseas as a collaborative activity among other AIR programs. One of these activities is the reciprocal exchange program we are organizing with the Finnish Artists Studio Foundation (FASF), an organization that provides studios to Finnish artists. Beginning in 2017, the program took place for the second time in 2018. Following the participation of Kazuo Yoshida in the first year, Tetsuro Kano was the Japanese artist given the opportunity in 2018 following the selection process. The accommodation and studio space allocated for the 2018 exchange was at Tapiola Guest Studios (Espoo City), a facility managed by FASF that is situated in a green environment with excellent transportation. Due to the studio being under construction, however, Kano's residency took place at Project Studio Artsu in Helsinki. He conducted research into recent preoccupations with animal species from a global perspective, holding an exhibition to conclude his two-month stay in May and June. Finland at this time of year enjoys the season of "white nights" after being released from the long dark winter, and people are in high spirits as they prepare for summer vacation.

On the other hand, Annti Nyysola travelled to Japan from Finland after being accepted to undertake a two-month residency at Youkobo from December 2018 to January 2019. Annti had many opportunities to exchange with other artists staying at Youkobo who hailed from Slovakia and Australia, while he also made connections with the Japanese art community through artist talks and his exhibition opening. Youkobo also arranged a talk event for both artists, allowing them to learn about each other's activities and experiences. Next year, we anticipate the resumption of Tapiola Guesthouse as the venue for the exchange in Finland. We are looking forward to seeing the space following its renovation.

About 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, 300 overseas artists from 50 countries have been welcomed to Youkobo, and exhibitions of over 250 Japan-based artists have been held in what has become a place for rich cultural exchange. (As of March, 2019)

<http://www.youkobo.co.jp>



2018 Exchange Program Overview



Youkobo



Artsu

From Japan to Finland

Tetsuro Kano, artist

Residence Period : May 1 ~ June 30, 2018

Exhibition : June 13: "Lure, Decoy, Camouflage" at Kalasatama Studio Building in Helsinki.

From Finland to Japan

Antti Nyyssölä, artist

Residence Period : December 1, 2018 ~ January 31, 2019 (with his partner Akuliina Niemi)

Exhibition : January 23 ~27, 2019 "Antti Nyyssölä" at Youkobo Art Space.

Activity Report Meeting

This meeting was held on January 25th, 2019 during an exhibition at Youkobo, and was well attended by artists from both countries and a large number of art professionals.

In the meeting, presentations were also given by the artists—from Slovakia and Japan respectively—who joined the Slovakia AIR exchange program.



Lure, Decoy, Camouflage

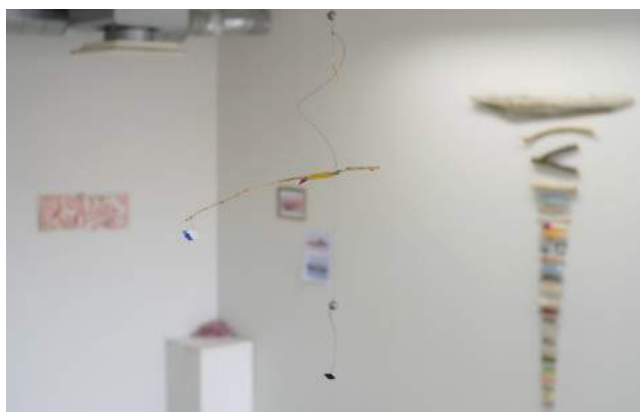
Tetsuro Kano/Artist

I was given the opportunity to stay in Helsinki in the early summer months of May and June, through an AIR exchange program between Youkobo Art Space and Finland Artists' Studio Foundation. It was my first time to travel to Scandinavia, but since the theme of my work in recent years relates to the relationship between nature and humans, it was a place that I had vague inclinations to visit at some point in the future. Around the autumn of 2017 when the open call for this program was taking place, I had just finished a residency on the west coast of the US in the intense heat of summer, and was about to begin a residency in Singapore in preparation for an exhibition, at a time when the climate was changing from wet to dry season.

As if in reaction to the long summer, while in a southern country I applied to various programs in the northern hemisphere, and was fortunate to join residencies in Finland in summer, and in Norway in winter. I started my residencies by first finding out about things I had wanted to see firsthand. For artists like me who make installations or sculptural works, there are at least two different patterns one finds with two-month residencies. The first involves an exhibition with a fixed framework or scale, and a proposal for a new work made in advance, which is then realized during the residency. The second pattern is research-based and involves sourcing materials and producing the work locally. For this exchange, I held an open studio during the residency, but it was mainly research-based.

The installations I have created in recent years, which employ natural and artificial objects in order to imagine a worldwide awareness of living creatures, are inspired by theories, knowledge and experiences of various fields and disciplines. Of particular relevance in this Finland residency, however, were the routes of migratory birds, and hunting culture, and these became the starting points of my research. One of my motivations for wanting to go to this part of the world was my interest in the routes of migratory birds, which had been aroused after learning that birds I had seen in Tottori Prefecture traveled along the Sea of Japan from Hokkaido to Russia and then on to the Arctic region. I had longed to visit Scandinavia since then.

This was also the starting point for walking along watersides and wetlands as research subjects. I thought there must be a value in comparing people living in the wilderness, mountains, and islands of Finland by learning how people living in port towns and the lakelands perceive such phenomena. My interest in hunting culture derives from the time I got a hunting license and started to research the knowledge and experience of hunters when I first began thinking about living creatures. When imagining the ecology of wild animals, there are few introductory books and little environmental know-how available in comparison to domestic animals. The best traps do not allow the animal to sense danger, or offer something that overrides that sense of danger. I think knowledge about the forms and structures of traps and nets that have been constantly improved by hunters is deeply related to the artificial things perceived by animals (that is, things of a sculptural nature made by hand).



In Finland, hunting and fishing are popular, and I imagined a different landscape from Japan, in which I could glimpse elk, reindeer, seals, brown bears and salmon lure fishing. I set my starting point at the research of fake birds (lure) and decoys traditionally used in waterfowl hunting. When lures and decoys were first used, the hunters and fishermen carved them out of wood while examining the form of real birds. It is interesting that these objects can be understood as original works in the sense that the artificial objects are finely tuned to be more easily perceived by animals. In addition, hunting methods often share more similarities between different regions the further one looks back to primitive versions, but due to differences in fauna, the traps naturally take on a unique form due to the optimization of methods for hunting targets. This is something that tends to be overlooked in a world where products by famous manufacturers are circulated worldwide, but I had expectations of being able to see vintage samples that would make my research easier. At the same time, I also consider the participation in residencies as important opportunities for accidental encounters through the course of research. I am always positive that I will react intuitively to things I encounter, which might lead to the acquisition of unknown subject matter.

Camouflage patterns is one of the subjects I found through this residency. Camouflage technology was originally studied with the aim of dazzling range finders of the enemy at a time when modern sonar and radar technology still hadn't been developed. Dazzle camouflage in-particular—studied in the UK about 100 years ago—involved an arrangement of geometric patterns, the theory being that it would create an illusion misleading the enemy's reading of distance. Links can also be made here with geometric abstraction in painting. While walking on the paths in parks and forests in Finland, I had the impression that buildings and artifacts really fit in with their natural surroundings, regardless of the age in which they were constructed. While investigating whether there is any difference in color sensation between people who design such buildings on a daily basis, I arrived at the M05 camouflage pattern currently being used by the Finnish military. M05 camouflage was developed through an archive of forest photographs owned by the Finnish Forest Research Institute and an analysis by the VTT Technology Institute, and I had the impression that it is like a contemporary abstract painting of Finnish forests when seen in their entirety. Learning about the breadth of color that people and animals are experiencing on a daily basis was one of the real discoveries during the residency.

Without obsessing about meeting my expectations for the residency before it begins, I try to maintain a flexible approach. It may be more effective to head directly to something for research purposes when there is only a limited period of time to investigate, but one can also discover things by taking the long route. When I observed an elderly person feeding bread to ducks in the park, in order to find out that it was not white bread, nor brioche, nor a baguette but rye bread that they were using, it was necessary to visit the supermarket with curiosity, and make a sandwich in the same manner as a local person would. Such an experience reminded me of differences in common terms from a more personal scale, and continued to feed my awareness over two months. And now I always remember Finland whenever I eat rye bread.



Tetsuro Kano

1980 Born in Miyagi, Japan. 2005 BA, Environmental Design/City Environmental, Tokyo Zokei University. 2007 MFA, Fine Arts, Tokyo Zokei University. In 2011, he obtained a license for hunting with nets and traps. His recent solo exhibitions include Naturplan (Bloomberg Pavilion Project Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2011), Clear signs, Vivid tones (HARA MUSEUM ARC, Gunma, 2012), Abstract maps, Concrete territories (Moerenuma Park, Sapporo, 2013) and Nature / Ideals, Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo (2015). His recent group exhibitions include Breathing Atolls: Japan-Maldives Contemporary Art Exhibition (National Art Gallery, Sultan Park, 2012), To Wander a Garden (Vangi Sculpture Garden Museum, Shizuoka, 2012), In Search of Critical Imagination (Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, 2014), and Between Botany and Art (Aichi Prefecture Museum, 2015).

YOUKOB0 RESIDENCY

Antti Nyysölä /Artist

I stayed at the Youkobo residency between December and January 2018-2019. I was given a large studio space with smaller living room, and the solution this way around suited me perfectly. In the city, where travelling around to see the sights often took several hours on public transport, it was relieving to be able to work at home. The surrounding areas of the residency were easily accessible by the bicycle that the residency offered me. The residency staff was very friendly and helpful, making it easy and pleasant to work at Youkobo. I also made friends with Australian and Slovakian artists who worked at the same time in the residence, as well as with few Japanese artists to whom the residency staff introduced me to.

During my stay I mainly concentrated on hand bind mixed media artists' books. Since the city is quite clean, almost all I found on the streets was the empty cardboard boxes in front of the shops. The limited material supply forced me to concentrate on what was available, and I noticed that the cardboard fitted well with the packing materials, such as adhesive tapes and tarpaulins, that I had utilised before. It also fit within the recurring theme of the mix of low, high and subcultures in my works. My main work from the residency period was a large-scale artist's book, where brown cardboard in slightly different shades was combined with traditional washi-Japanese paper. I found the washi paper to be an ideal paper to use in these kind of books. I got to see how it is produced in a local workshop, and also brought a stock of it back home.

The most impressive museums of contemporary art for myself were the Mori Art Museum and the ICC Center, where I saw the most advanced and most interesting VR works so far. However, for my own works, I often get the most out of museums of other fields or older art. From these I found the Museum of Japanese Hand Crafts, Ota Memorial Museum, the Santory Museum, the Bonsai Museum and the Bonsai Village around it and the small Kite Museum to be the most inspiring. I also did a few day trips to the mountains and some older temples outside Tokyo. I also attended the Open Studio exhibition organized by the residence. Here I presented a variety of works composed out of recycled and found materials. In addition to local actors, I met people from the Finnish Cultural Institute at the opening of the event. After the opening, the exhibition was open to visitors for four days. I found my stay at the Youkobo very inspiring and fruitful, and believe that the experience is gonna have a positive impact for my work also in the future. I would like to express my warm gratitude to Mr. and Ms. Murata and the whole Youkobo staff for making this possible.



Antti Nyysölä

Antti Nyysölä is a Finnish artist, whose work is based on painting and its tradition. Yet in realisation he utilises many different sorts of found, everyday materials such as cuttings, tarp, adhesive tapes, stickers and paper. The chosen material partly forms the content of the work, and also leads the way for the visual motif. Sublime and classy themes are dealt with using aesthetics familiar to low or countercultures. The works exist between abstract and figurative, painting and sculpture, or they are all of these at the same time.