

Crystallizing Ideas - The Youkobo Returnee Residence Program Part 3  
"Reflection and Expectation - YOUKOB0 30th Anniversary"  
- Clinton King & Julie Curtis, and magnificent artists



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## Introduction of the Program

Artist residencies play a vital role in artists' creative practice, offering spaces for experimentation in a supportive environment that help artists to explore and connect in meaningful ways to different cultures and surroundings. This leads to new discoveries that “crystallize”—often at some indeterminate later stage in the artists' career—in new forms of creation.

To celebrate and reflect on 30 years of hosting and supporting art professionals, Youkobo Art Space launched the Youkobo Returnee residency Program, YRP, on 2017, inviting artists who have previously undertaken a residency at Youkobo to further develop their creative research. In addition, the participating artists will present work in an exhibition at Youkobo Art Space, while public talk events will be held to discuss, among other things, the significance of residencies for artists and hosts in relation to the invited artists' previous and current experiences at Youkobo. We actively provide opportunities for collaborative activities with local artists and exchanges with overseas artists during the residency period at the same time.

## Evaluation of the AIR Program

Returning to Youkobo in October 2019, Clinton and Julie are one of 345 artists who have joined the AIR Program at Youkobo since it first started hosting artists in 1989. Established as Youkobo approaches its 30th anniversary in 2019, YRP is a program that also provides an important opportunity to consider the value of AIR. It is said that the activities of AIR are difficult to evaluate. This program offered a chance to discuss, quantify and make visible the value of AIR, an important research theme that Youkobo has pursued over the past few years.

This report examines the value and appreciation of AIR from the activities of a group of artists, the third invitation of YRP of 2019, which started at the 30th anniversary of Youkobo based on AIR operation.

Verification, verbalization of evaluation, digitization, etc. it is an important point of view of the subsidy business, here, I would like to mention the aspects that cannot be achieved or that cannot be achieved, and the events that are always valued.

We believe AIR is a artist's own creative center, and that's all. Therefore, we think that it is important for users as artists to independently speak about AIR's own evaluation. It is primarily for the artist to choose the opportunity and place for the residence and creative work, and Youkobo refuses only when it is impossible to fulfill the activity request of the artist rather than selecting the desired artist. If we dare to add, we think that the existence of Youkobo itself, which is a place and an opportunity to support the artist's way of life and his/her exists. We think that the trajectory of the artist's growth is only in the scenario that follows. Our aim is to visualize the value of AIR for artists who continue their creative activities.



2017  
David Franklin



2018  
Saara Ekstrom

## Residency Activities

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Youkobo is positioned as one of the important periods of activity, usually in November, synchronized with the 22 Trolls in the Park”, as an open art festival at the Zempukuji Park, a local metropolitan green park.

At this time of 2019, here an introduction of the background of the five artists residency at the same time.

An artist unit, two artists, invited for the YRP 2019 program, an local artist who has been working with us for 30 years, an artist, recommended by an international organization and a researcher of the exchange program between Microresidence Network. It was a lively active studios for a total of five people.

It was "Youkobo 30th Anniversary Autumn 2019" with each unique theme intersects, and international and diverse participation from the Northern Hemisphere (Europe and the United States) and the Southern Hemisphere (Pacific Oceanian).

### ①Clinton King & Julie Curtis | Residency period 2019.10.01 -11.30, residency space AIR-2

A good couple of artists, based in NYC Brooklyn. Clinton works with a variety of media, including sculpture, video, and painting. Julie is a French artist who stands out in painting and sculpture. In 2005, they had a long-term residency about 2 years at Youkobo, and after returning to Japan for the first time in 12 years, This time was a two-month creative residency while working as a busy living artist. The opportunity as a starting point, Youkobo was the importance place for creative work and good for connect art communities as an artist.

### ②Ryozo Takashima | Working period 2019.10.01-11.30, creative space Studio-3

He was one of the first participating artist of Trolls in the Park starting year, in 2002, and also cooperated when commenting on open air exhibition using local public parks. He reproduced some of his recent works which they do not pair with recent Japanese contemporary art which is spreading follow the "braveness" earnestly in a blocked air in the society.

### ③Hikaru Clark | Residency period 2019.10.01-11.30, residency space AIR-1

Every year, Youkobo accept a selected artist from the AsiaNew Zealand Foundation. Hikaru is the fourth artist based in Auckland. He appealed his outcome during the residency through research and study focusing on the architectural transition taking place in Tokyo for the 2020 Olympics, and background achievements such as Japanese architectural philosophy “Scrap and Build” as opposed to the permanent concept of Western architecture.

### ④Yang Chen | Residency period 2019.10.01-11.30, residency space R-3

Two months of research and study as an exchange artist/researcher with AIR exchange between MicroresidenceNetwork, 'studioName', Leicester, UK. Yang is a PhD student at the Leicester University, living in London. The aim is to understand the relationship between the postwar Japanese art collective "JIKKEN KOBO", an experimental studio group and the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, and to clarify the theoretical framework. He actively participated in the 30th anniversary event of Youkobo during her residency.



## Artist Talk and Discussion Event

Schedule : November 10, 2019, Part-1 | 11:00-14:00, Part-2 | 15:00-17:00

Venue : Youkobo Art Space: Lounge and studio space for each artist

Theme : "Reflection and Expectation, Youkobo 30th Anniversary with respected artists"

Special guest: Taro Igarashi (Architectural History, Critic, Ph.D.)

Facilitator : Makiko Tsuji, Yang Chan

Interpreter : Satoshi Ikeda

Part1 sub-theme, "Reason for Everything?...". Two-person exhibition entitled "Tandem", a solo exhibition "1984 + 36", an open studio "In the spirit of good sport", these three artists floor talk in their own studio.

After that continuous talk at the lounge and a lively discussion were held.

In Part2, the sub-theme, "How We Achieved Everything...? Youkobo 30th Anniversary", Reports on the activities of Youkobo 30 years, followed by people and people from the involvement of participating artists, we believe that we were able to share the current state of networking, which is connected from related institutions, etc., from various aspects and further exchange through the network.

The year before the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, which is an international event against the background of huge costs, was held in the next year, it was an activity that can be read strongly reflected in the artists' consciousness.

Talks of a change of the art market of the New York City from a global perspective, stories of Oceania countries that have revealed the way of dignity to indigenous peoples, theme of the state and cultural arts,

Western and non-Western arts, Art and Architecture, the Capital and local cities, Individuals and groups,

Freedom and Rights ..., we think that a strict and meaningful sharing of discussions was possible.

At the same time, it may be a totally local phenomenon, the public organization/politicians comrades, including the meandering movement of the ongoing "Aichi Triennale 2019", which was being held mainly in Nagoya City, and reviewing the cost of holding. It was a lively debate involving the social background of the time, such as mysterious controversy and the growing flame of public will.

During free discussion with participants who have various background of the world was a good opportunity to raise many issues and to consider the future direction.

Based on the understanding of each diversity, we would like to expect the emergence of a society where different cultures are accepted. We wish that this island county is full of local art events and that a gradual cultural revolution is not underway like the past Chinese Cultural Revolution.





## Book Ends (a story)

Clinton King

It was the summer of 2006 when I first arrived at the Youkobo Art Space. This also marked the beginning of what would be my first time living in Japan for an extended period of time—two years in all—that was profoundly transformative for me.

My arrival in Japan was accompanied by an identity crisis: After several months of living in Japan, the dust had settled, and the initial excitement of being immersed in a new culture gave way to a deeper sense of unease. In this new context, I felt the inadequacy and limits of what had previously been comfortable, perhaps inherited, customs and habits. When your friends don't share your humor, when your clothes don't quite work, when your language fails you, when your references fall flat, when no one knows your favorite music or movies, you discover how much of your identity is dictated by external, context-specific signifiers. I felt raw. The person I realized I wasn't fell away on that first trip. And I had to rediscover my true self in Japan.

Something changed in me during my first visit to Youkobo, which I will always remember as the stomping grounds of my first transition to adulthood. The time I spent there forced a dramatic evolution in how I conceived of myself and my relationship to the world, and, by extension, my artistic practice.

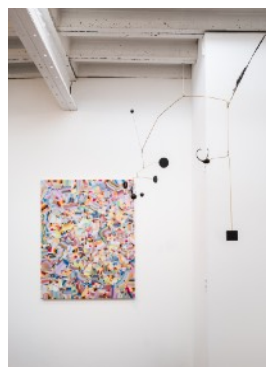
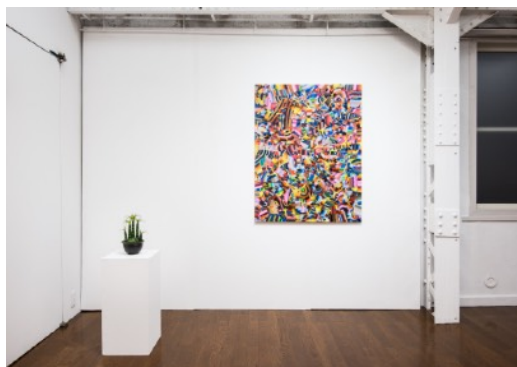
For these reasons, returning to Youkobo, after more than a decade away, meant far more to me than simply attending an artists' residency. For me, Youkobo offered much more than the time and space to work in Japan. It offered an opportunity to consider all that had happened in the intervening twelve years I had spent, since leaving Youkobo, as an artist in New York. As artists build their careers, there is a push to always be moving forward and trying something new—to show in a new gallery, to partner with a new curator, to attend a new, different residency program. But there is a genius in Youkobo's adherence to hosting returning artists. As I found, it is, ironically, in returning someplace one has been before that one can fully grasp how much has changed, and be honest about how one has evolved.

This pilgrimage back to Youkobo, after a decade of working in New York, helped bring to the fore phenomena that I find difficult to recognize in my own environment. It provided, as on my first visit, a perspective that I am sure I could only have gained at Youkobo, which represents a formative time in my life.

Being at Youkobo had both immediate and longer-term influences on my work. As on my first visit, I went through a period of shedding preconceived ideas of who I was and what my practice consisted of. Though I received an MFA in sculpture, I have, in recent years, turned away from sculpture to work primarily in painting. Yet being back at Youkobo gave me the freedom, and urge, to revive my sculpture practice. I made several mobiles while I was there, each of which drew from uniquely Japanese forms: One, for example, incorporated a crow feather from a Shinto shrine, a black seed pod from a local plant, and black rubber forms from Tokyu Hands. Another consisted in part of a miniature temple bell, an

Being forced to work in such a tight period of time made me see the limitations and strengths of my practice. My painting involves extremely time-intensive, time-oriented work, and, under the time constraints of Youkobo, I was forced to sit back and let my intuition take control. It made me discover how much room there is for intuition in my practice, and that I want to be freer in dispensing with preconceived ideas of what can and can't be with my work, while letting the practice take over.

While at Youkobo, the artist Julie Curtiss and I listened to a book on tape in our studio: Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*. In Murakami's novel, there is a supernatural stone that the main character turns over to enter a parallel world—the stone serves to open and close the way to this alternate realm. Reflecting on Murakami's work and my time at the residency, I saw that Youkobo had been, for me, a bookend: It represented the opening and closing of the artistic practice that has occupied me for the last 12 years in New York. I realized that it was, in some respects, time for a closing, and a time for a new opening. As I had been on my last visit to Youkobo, I was ready to start fresh with a new approach to my work, and a new body of work.



## Circling back

Julie Curtis

This past fall, I had the privilege of returning to Youkobo Art Space as part of their Returnee Residency Program. I had previously been in residency at Youkobo more than ten years prior, in 2008, and both tenures proved to be formative artistic experiences, each in their own way.

When I first arrived as a Youkobo resident ten years ago, I was just beginning my career as an artist and, fresh from school, feeling somewhat isolated as I sought to connect with an artistic community with which I could exchange knowledge and ideas. Youkobo not only linked me with an international brain trust of artists and provided me with a platform that enabled me to push myself and my practice, but, most importantly, showed me what a supportive, encouraging, and compassionate art community looks like.

My initial time at Youkobo helped lay the foundation for the work I am doing now. During that visit, I was drawn to the elaborate beauty regimens that are marketed to Japanese women and illustrated in almost perturbing detail in instructional pamphlets, which I collected along with local fashion magazines and adapted into drawings using Sumi ink. This body of work, presented in a two-person show with Clinton King titled "Split Ends," addressed themes of artifice and nature, beauty and the uncanny, cultural norms and the body—themes that continue to inform my practice.

On my most recent visit to Youkobo, I returned eager to pursue a new body of work focused on a phenomenon, unique to Japan, that has long fascinated me: food sampuru, the hyper-realistic, strangely-beautiful plastic food samples that restaurants use to entice visitors. Food has become a recurring theme in my work, often as a way to explore the porousness between the seductive and the repulsive, as well as to investigate the surrealist elements of modern life, in which our corporeal appetites are titillated with the extravagant, abnormal, and bizarre. Thanks to my residency, I was able to create an entirely new series of sculptures, using materials I would not otherwise have had access to, and surrounded by sources of inspiration that deeply enriched the work. I also used the residency as an opportunity to return to painting in black and white—this time in gouache—and to lay the foundation for future work. During my time in Japan, I traveled to see Shinto shrines, ukiyo-e prints, Buddhist temples, and other forms of traditional Japanese art that have left me invigorated with new directions, ideas, and questions I am keen to tackle in my practice. For example, seeing the iconography, use of space, and painting techniques used in painted panels at temples and shrines has inspired me to embark on a new series of prints that will draw heavily from this firsthand experience.

The unique community fostered at the Youkobo Art Space continues to be a defining part of the residency, and something for which I am deeply grateful. Both during the organized talk event in which I participated and via more informal channels, I was able to engage in rich dialogue with the fellow residents, which I believe left each of us with a more nuanced and more global perspective on the art world. From hearing from fellow resident Yang Chen about the differences between Japanese museums compared and their overseas counterparts, to sharing my perspective as a New York resident on the relationship between politics and art, these conversations offered important opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. I was gratified to share my work with the local community through Youkobo's "Trolls in the Park" festival and my two-person exhibition, "Tandem," with Clinton King. In both instances, I was delighted to see how my sampuru-inspired sculptures provoked people to think differently about a familiar phenomenon. It was clear from viewers' reactions that the series had shifted their perception of these sampuru—highlighting, perhaps, the artistry in these everyday objects, while also probing the uncanniness of objects that both repel and attract. I welcomed the conversations I was able to have about craft and process—discussions that are different from those I've had with viewers of the work in other contexts.

As Youkobo Art Space celebrates its third decade of existence, and more than a decade of shaping me personally, I can't help but look back with deep gratitude on an organization that has provided me with the space, community, and resources to travel beyond the familiar and tap into invaluable wellsprings of inspiration. Though the residency has come to an end, Youkobo's influence on my practice will continue for many years to come.



## Thoughts on entering into '2020

Takashima Ryoza

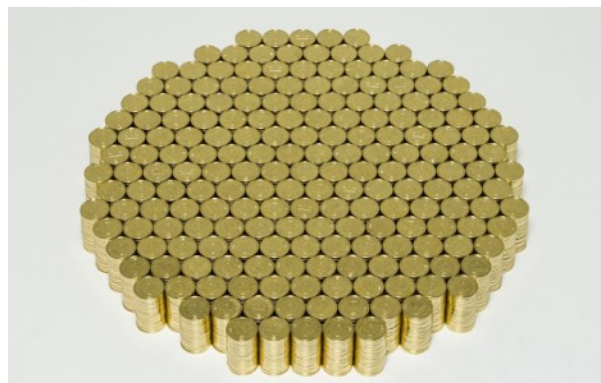
The relationship between the individual and the collective, and the idea of the nation as a broader form of the collective have been the driving force of my art practice. In modern Japan, where my practice is based, it seems as if 'toughness' is thought to be the only qualification for the 'right' leader. Without interrogating its true meaning, everyone seems to follow the image of a strong, authoritative figure. I cannot help but sense the oppressive air of conformity looming. Concerned with such trends in the modern world, I have explored the totalitarian slogans from George Orwell's novel 'Nineteen Eighty Four', 'WAR IS PEACE. FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.' as the theme of my practice for the past few years. This catalogue brings together a new series of works with the title '1984 + 36'. As suggested in the title, this body of work imagines the state of Japan in the very near future, 36 years after 'Nineteen Eighty Four'.

In truth, I am uncertain if it is possible for an individual to come up with any useful answers when dealing with such huge issues as the state of the nation, and no answer can be unequivocally right or wrong. After all, what impact could a no-name artist hope to have? However helpless we might feel, we must continue to ask ourselves and others to interrogate the status quo and our own standpoint in order to orient ourselves toward the right direction; to welcome the year '2020', not '1984 + 36'.

[ Long appendix ]

In August 2019, just as we were about to complete the editing of this catalogue, the exhibition "After 'Freedom of Expression?'" at the Aichi Triennale 2019 was shut down after the organizers received numerous threats objecting to a controversial work in the show. It is not the first time we have seen an overt self-policing and censorship by the organizers of a public exhibition in response to a public backlash. However, this was a notable case where the head of a local council, who is supposed to represent his community, censored a public exhibition and demanded a public apology from the organizers purely based on his own subjective opinion, and yet his action attracted considerable support from the general public. There is no doubt that the year '1984 36' is approaching. With my sincere hope to stop it in its tracks together, this catalogue is my humble contribution.

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## In the spirit of good sport, 2019

Hikalu Clarke

Sukarno, the Indonesian President, denied entry to Israeli and Taiwanese delegates to Jakarta for the 1962 Asia Games. He had prevented the athletes from entering due to his governments political alignments to Palestine and the Peoples Republic of China.

To the International Olympic Committee, this act was a direct provocation of its mission to separate politics from sport. Sukarno replied by arguing that the IOC was inherently political, as North Vietnam and the PRC were not admitted members - Indonesia's membership was suspended for violating the Olympic Charter.

That April, ten countries (Cambodia, China, Guinea, Indonesia, Iraq, Mali, Pakistan, Vietnam, and the USSR) with Sukarno at its helm, announced a counter to the Olympics;

"The International Olympic Games have proved to be openly an imperialistic tool ... Now let's frankly say, sports have something to do with politics. Indonesia proposes now to mix sports with politics, and let us now establish the Games of the New Emerging Forces, the GANEFO ... against the Old Established Order."

Whilst GANEFO's revolutionary pitch paralleled the rhetoric of the Eastern Bloc, it employed many of the ritualistic processes of the Olympics. Regardless of its contrasting ideological stance it adopted the same language of its opponent.

In this instance it is difficult to see whether this method of co-option was an attempt at pastiche or a reclamation of celebratory action. Regardless of ideological positioning, GANEFO still allowed countries of the 'Old Established Order' to compete – in turn became a universal sporting event under the banner of revolution.

The Olympics proclaims an idea of sporting purity but is intrinsically linked to the political realm by the IOC's multi-billion dollar contracts and donation programme.

Sukarno himself was mired in a similar fallacy. Whilst Indonesia was under Dutch Colonial rule, Sukarno was imprisoned until invading Japanese forces in World War Two freed him. As an individual so critical of imperialism, Sukarno had been able to attain power because of it.



## Understanding Japan : Two Months Residency at the Youkobo Art Space Yang Chen

When my supervisor forwarded the email from studionAme about the research residency programme at Youkobo, I thought it was a rare opportunity because, usually, organisations only provide residency for artists. I applied and hoped that this residency could allow me to gain a deeper understanding of Japan. I had been to Japan several times previously but only stayed about ten days on average. I felt such a short period could not let me see the other side of Japan, which was more than tourism. Additionally, I discovered more documents on the National Diet Library's digital database that could only be viewed at the site in Tokyo. So I hoped if the residency accepted me, I would be able to spend enough time in the library to get those documents and might discover something new. Fortunately, I was selected. As the time of departure got closer, I had a mixed feeling of excitement and anxious because I was about to start a new life in a more or less unfamiliar country.

After I arrived at Youkobo, I immediately had the chance to meet the other artists. All of them were much older than me, so I was hoping to learn new things from them. Surprisingly, the organisation entered its thirtieth year and would hold a talk event. I was glad that I participated in the preparation and execution of the whole one-day event. It was my first time to be surrounded by Japanese. Some of them could speak English while some could not. Even we had the language barrier, people were still trying their best to communicate with each other. One of the most valuable experiences I had here was that I finally got a chance to learn how the Japanese art world works at the present. I was impressed that Gadan was still so powerful in controlling the Japanese art world. As a system that has existed for over a hundred year, its vitality made me wonder how they persistently protect the tradition. During my research, I noticed Japanese culture had two sides, tradition and innovation. This two sides could be seen at the moment. For example, you could see the most advanced and human-like robot at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, and you could also see Japanese artisans continuously producing handicrafts using the skills that never changed for over hundred years. Additionally, before the talk event, I visited every artist's studios to get a sense of their works. This year Youkobo had four artists in total: two from New York, one from New Zealand and one from Japan. The two New York artists did their residency here twelve years ago; they were invited back to reflect on Youkobo's thirtieth anniversary. The Japanese artist was also an old friend of the organisation. It was inspiring to see their works and noticing the conceptual differences between Japanese and Western artists. During the talk event, I learnt that people in the Japanese art world were having concerns about the Tokyo Olympic 2020; this event might significantly alter the Japanese art world in the future.

Beyond the talk event, I was invited to give a presentation at the Musashino Art University. It was out of my expectation. I valued it a lot because you would not have a chance to be in touch with people in the university as a mere tourist. The audiences were first-year and third-year students from the oil painting department. So I decided to walk them through the history of the Japanese art museum. They were quiet and did not ask me any questions. Their tutor told me they were also having difficulties in inspiring young art students. I was curious about whether this situation would be changed after 2020.

Indeed, I spent a lot of time working in the National Diet Library. I discovered many new documents, including the official reports about establishing the museum system in the Meiji period. The material mentioned Japan needed to learn from the South Kensington Museum and the Grand Exhibition at Hyde Park. Basing on the new documents, it is clear that the art museum for contemporary (Meiji) artworks was never a part of the museum system. Instead, the promotion of art related to awarded competitions which were decided by the government. The relevant discussion about the emptiness of the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum never occurred in documents since Meiji and even until the postwar period, which is the gap that my research can fill. I also had a new idea about the museum canon and the Gadan canon. Unlike the Western museums which artists are trying to enter, the art museums in Japan did not have this function. Instead, Gadan decided whether an artist can be promoted. Avant-garde artists tried to challenge Gadan in the postwar period using alternative spaces but failed continuously.

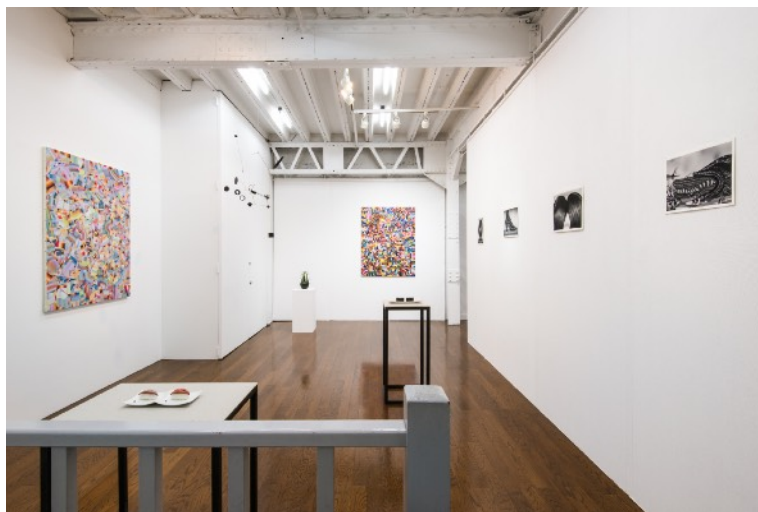
Overall, the two months I spent at Youkobo allowed me to see Japan and the Japanese art world from a different angle. I'm happy to come back again in the future.



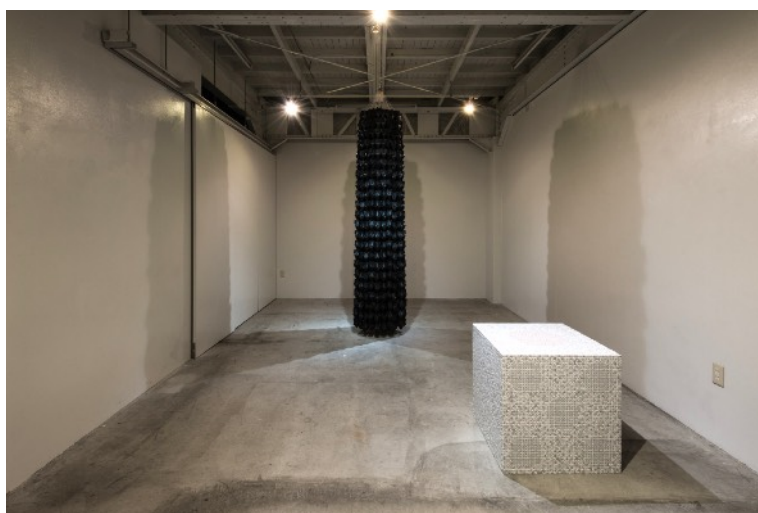
## Exhibition

Photos of works by Masaru Yanagiba

TANDEM / tandem  
Clinton King & Julie Curtiss  
Studio-2, Youkobo Art Space



1984 + 36  
Ryozo Takashima  
Studio-3, Youkobo Art Space



In the spirit of good sport  
Hikalu Clarke  
Studio-1, Youkobo Art Space

