

Nicola Moss

My practice investigates the value of healthy environment to communities and individuals. I have a particular interest in the sense of well-being contact with green space, can provide in our everyday lives.

During residency at Youkobo Art Space Tokyo in 2017, I researched 'The 10 Year project for Green Tokyo' (Tokyo Metropolitan Government Project); observing many green spaces of this densely populated metropolis. The residency was an opportunity to experience universal desires for healthy urban lifestyle through the lens of another culture.

Plants observed in the ground - street trees, parks, home gardens - are heavily pruned and structured almost like architecture. In contrast, walking neighbourhood streets revealed personalised pot plant collections, gathered on doorsteps and hanging from window grills. To my eye these organic accumulations of green appeared 'wild', yet contained without roots in the ground. The expression of individuality and freedom in these mini environments, cobbled from containers of previous use and recycled materials, intrigued me.

As cities around the world grow, adapt to changing climate and aim to increase canopy cover; plants are used to enhance social cohesion and liveability of built environments. During 5 days of open studio I conversed with visitors and asked them to complete a short questionnaire, describing their garden if they had one, or green space they visit, and values they felt plants contribute in their everyday lives. This cultural exchange of our relationship to environment was poignant and personal in response.

I return to Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo for residency and exhibition in September 2018. 'Tokyo wild' will feature works on paper developed from conversations, questionnaire quotes and observations in the city. I will also take with me Australian responses to the same questionnaire questions as an exchange of responses.

So why did I come to Tokyo? Well I have watched for over a decade the development of housing on the Gold Coast; with new town centres turning what was once farmland and bushland into medium and high density housing suburbs. Brisbane and Gold Coast City are growing regions, evolving into more densely populated and built environments. Where does green space fit within this development and how does our relationship with green space change as the environment around us evolves? We understand the importance of green space - for biodiversity, for clean water, to combat heat and air pollution, to make our cities liveable and contribute to our sense of well-being.

Exploring green space in Tokyo and researching the '10 Year Project for Green Tokyo', is in a way, taking a view of a possible future. Youkobo Art Space, sits within Suginami City, one of the 23 special wards of Tokyo. It has a very similar population to Gold Coast City with around 565,000 residents. The difference is scale and density - Suginami City occupies 34.06 km square, while Gold Coast City occupies 414.3 km square.