

**Open Talk about AIRs
Microresidence Series 2012**



MICRORESIDENCE! 2012

アーティスト・イン・レジデンス、マイクロレジデンスからの視点
Artist in Residence, from a Micro Perspective

Open Talk about AIRs Microresidence Series 2012

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Open Talk about AIRs Microresidence Series 2012

In the build up towards the “MICRORESIDENCE!” program and as a further development upon the initial survey based research into microresidencies Youkobo Art Space initiated a series of 4 talk events as part of the ongoing program “Open Talk about AIRs”. This program was first established in 2005 to mark 5 years of Youkobo Art Space, again realized in 2011 to mark its 10th anniversary, bringing together a small group of artists to share honestly their experiences of various residencies across the world. In the series initiated for 2012 the program took a particular focus upon the experiences of artists who had undertaken residencies at microresidencies through the introduction of Youkobo, revealing the important opportunities which develop through such networks and providing the chance for each artist to reflect upon the relevance of these experiences to the development of their work, while appraising the suitability of the residence environment and facilities for the work which they had attempted to undertake. In this supplement is a summary of each artists’ comments upon their residence program, along with additional perspectives from the residencies themselves, the directors of which joined the discussion via skype in order to share in this feedback process. Through this program Youkobo hopes it has been able to inform a wider range of creatives of the various microresidence opportunities available while also providing a chance to examine the unique characteristics which microresidencies hold.

AIRs: Open Talk About Artist in Residencies New Series No. 1

2012 Micro Residencies – Vol.1 15th April 2012 18:00-19:30, Youkobo Art Space

Microresidence in Finland : KulttuuriKauppila and Art Break in Ii, Finland.

Art Break (Kaisa Keratar) x Kyougo Matsumoto KulttuuriKauppila (Mari Maunu) x Yoshiko Maruyama



As part of Youkobo Art Space's ongoing research into microresidencies (small scale, independent, often artist run residence spaces) a new series of talks have been instigated in which artists who have participated in microresidencies join with their hosts via skype to assess their experience and its impact upon their work since. As the first of these events artists Kyougo Matsumoto and Yoshiko Maruyama joined with the directors of Finnish residencies KulttuuriKauppila and Art Break, both based in the northern rural town of Ii. Each artist first introduced about their activities during the residence which then the hosts responded to with further contextualization of the residence and insights into the particular characteristics of microresidencies. A general outline of the discussion is offered below:

The manner in which Matsumoto joined the residence program of art break reflects an important role of microresidencies and the possibilities of their cooperation through a network, as having held a long standing interest to join a residency program in Finland but facing lack of success with various applications to larger institutions he was made aware of the art break program through the introduction of Youkobo.

Microresidencies provide an important opportunity to artists who have the determination to undertake a residence in a particular place, but who are thwarted by highly competitive application procedures. As Youkobo has a long standing relationship with Kaisa and Antti and knew of their new initiative to establish an artist in residence program in their own home, they were able to directly recommend this program to Matsumoto. This form of recommendation and sharing of information between residencies and artists is something we particularly hope the Microresidence Network will nurture. Furthermore Matsumoto's interest in Finland was particularly deepened by his encounter with a Finnish artist during his stay in another residence program in Hamburg, which indicates how one residence experience can lead to another, revealing the important network which such programs enable.

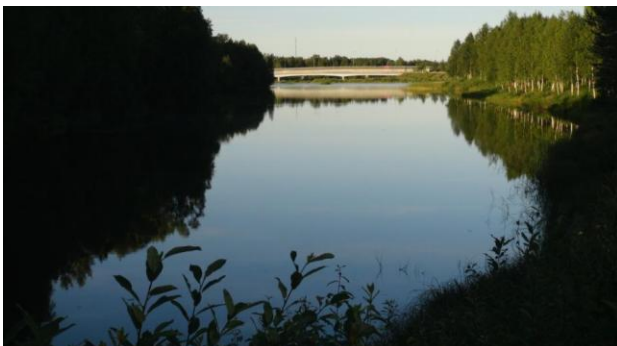
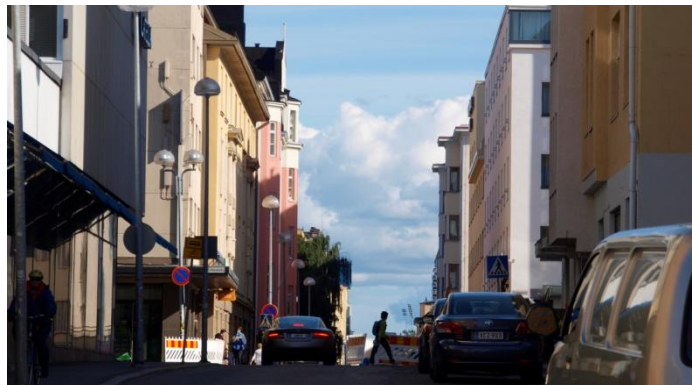
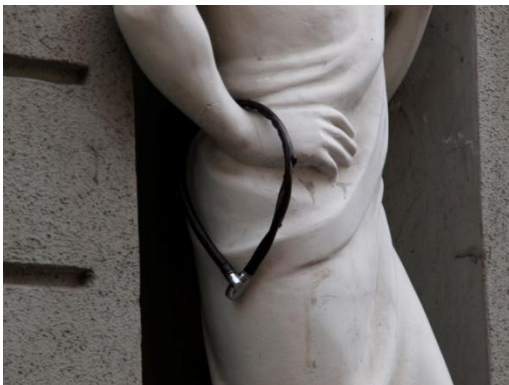
I. Residency experiences by Kyogo Matsumoto

1. Introduction

In Matsumoto's presentation he outlined very clearly his timetable which he followed through the residency. His comment that 2 months is too short a time to undertake a residence is of course his personal opinion and reflects that each individual artist has a different sense of time when it comes to residence programs depending upon their personal way of working. Matsumoto's approach is highly organized dividing research, procurement of materials, production, presentation and even allowing time for research of further residence opportunities in the region.

2. Summary of residency activities

In terms of the specific residence program he joined at art break this was completely self devised with the help of the managers Kaisa and Antti. Set within the beautiful nature of northern Finland, in a small rural village Matsumoto was pleased to be able to have the space and time to focus upon his work without distraction and was well supported by his hosts who could not only provided well equipped facilities, including his own sauna!, but also helped source materials for him and coordinated in detail his exhibition of work, which would not have been possible without them. The hosts even cooked for him each day and they would regularly eat their meals together, showing the close personal relations which can be built through such attentive microresidencies.



3. General advice for those joining residence programs

Finally Matsumoto offered some advice based on his various experiences as to how artists should perhaps approach their residence. What is most important is that the artist is clear of their objective before joining the residence, which does not necessarily mean they have a definite idea of exactly what they will produce within this time but rather that they are able to envisage the particular course they would like to take and what ideas they wish to explore. When joining a residence artists are given access to the network of their hosts, they are offered a research base and support to focus on their production which is very often a site specific response. Residencies often offer the chance of community exchange and engagement with local artists and local residents/schools which allow for different forms of interaction and new perspectives on the area and one's work. Also in many cases residences can also offer openings into the art market. However one residence can not provide all of these opportunities to the highest degree, one must consider carefully which residence is best suited towards one's work. In the case of art break it is able to offer the time and space for one to focus on one's work, it has a context suitable for site specific development, the hosts are able to share their wide network within the region and connect the artists with the local community.

II. **Summary of Art Break by Kaisa Keratar**

Kaisa, when introducing the objectives of art break herself, stressed her motivation towards supporting mobility and international exchange of artists within the inspiring environment of li. She further expressed the inspiration gained from Youkobo and how it had served as a model for the establishment of the art break residence program, again reflecting the ability for even an individual artist/coordinator to initiate their own microresidence and the support and guidance which can be offered from established programs to newly founded programs.

The program which Kaisa runs is highly flexible, always catering to the individual needs of the artist, principles which may be discovered at the heart of many microresidencies and which set them apart from large institutions. Kaisa takes a strong belief that in a residence the process is of upmost importance and goes to great lengths in order support this process to the best of her ability. The benefits of running a microresidence are characterized by taking pleasure in the ability to share one's skills and be able to connect the local together with the international, which may be seen as a key motivation for many microresidencies, while she also identifies this as the particular social merit of art break in the ability to bring people together.



III. Residency experiences by Yoshiko Maruyama

Yoshiko Maruyama joined the residence program of KulttuuriKauppila for 1 month in 2010 as part of an exchange program with Youkobo Art Space, which also included her participation in the international event li Biennale of Northern Environmental and Sculpture Art <http://www.artii.fi/> also organized by KulttuuriKauppila, giving her ample opportunity to meet with a wide range of both Finnish and international artists as well as engaging closely with the local community, a dialogue which was also further built through the “master class” lecture series and children’s workshop which she also contributed to.

Maruyama was particularly impressed by the friendly reception she received not only from KulttuuriKauppila but also the local residents, greatly valuing their lack of inhibition to share their views and perspectives providing with much valuable and insightful feedback. The strength of interest amongst locals formed an impression of a highly diverse open international inter-generational cultural scene despite the area itself being so isolated.

Staff support was also of a high quality with a dedicated assistant being on hand to offer support in all aspects of production. KulttuuriKauppila also has an extensive network which provides particular support to visiting artists in connecting them with local, regional and national art scenes, providing exhibition and presentation opportunities in other venues and also offering a high degree of visibility to the artists’ projects through strong press coverage.

IV.

Summary of KultuurKauppila by Mari Maunu



Mari Maunu is acting managing director of Kultuurkauppila during the maternity leave of Leena Lamsa. She first introduced further the background of Kultuurkauppila, which was established by local artists in 2006 with the dream of making a space for art where everyone would be welcome and the residence program was a part of this dream. Since starting the residency Kultuurkauppila has welcomed over 20 guest artists from all over world and now regularly invites 6 international artists each year to join its program which although focuses upon visual artists is open to all genres. The usual length of a residence is 2-3 months in which the artist is offered time and space to work in peace in a relaxed environment surrounded by the inspiration of nature. The residence provides a large studio and apartment equipped with all modern facilities, while there is also an opportunity to exhibit in the centre's gallery space, as well as the possibility of making an exhibition in the art museum of Oulu which Kultuurkauppila also has close connections with.



A particular characteristic of Kultuurkauppila is the emphasis upon local engagement with a wide range of public programs including workshops, seminars, “master class” lecture series and collaborations with schools which engage a wide range of the local residents from children to senior citizens and has built a valuable dialogue between artists and the local neighbourhood of Ii. The success of this engagement is reflected in the decision of the local authorities to establish a high school for international art which Kultuurkauppila are also contributing their cooperation towards. This reflects Kultuurkauppila’s dedication to providing a platform in which artists from around the world may gather and share their skills and knowledge with local people while also being able to learn about Finnish life in a close cultural exchange.

In terms of artistic merit Kultuurkauppila does not necessarily critically assess this upon its overall activities, but ensures the artistic quality of its program by taking care to survey the skills, merit and enthusiasm of artists who apply to join its program and pay particular attention in their selection as to the ability of the artist to bring something new to the local area. The ability of the artist to contribute something to their new environment demonstrates a wider social and cultural impact of such residencies.

Mari also showed her support towards the microresidence network which she sees as offering a key platform for the development of each residency’s activities, providing the opportunity to share ideas and experiences as well as offering advice and guidance between peers and bringing visibility to the important function of such programs, which particularly lies in their ability to provide a once in a lifetime experience for the artist, with the ability to affect a significant impact on their artistic expression.



V. Conclusion

Being in the same small town, and having many overlaps in their activities the two residencies certainly intend to form an even closer relation in the future and frequently cooperate together, while at the same time making a distinction between their programs and emphasizing their own individual approaches towards what an artist in residence can be. The success of these two residencies in making a significant contribution to the local area is highlighted by the highly positive reaction of local people to their art programs, with locals becoming more receptive to the arts, frequently engaging with the visiting foreign artists, attending exhibitions, workshops and seminars and generally seeming to open up more. Such an impact upon the local neighbourhood demonstrates the social and cultural impact which microresidencies may provide upon a very human scale.

AIRs: Open Talk About Artist in Residencies New Series No. 2

2012 Micro Residencies – Vol.1

20th May 2012 18:00-19:30, Youkobo Art Space

Microresidence in Portland, England : Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust

Masami Aihara & Takahiro Ishii @ PSQT

Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust is based on the site of a former quarry on the island of Portland, UK. This island is steeped in prehistoric history its rock being studded with the fossils of previous millennia, while the same stone being famed for its use in various iconic British buildings, the island having been a site of major quarrying since the 19th century. Set within this environment of natural beauty and geological significance stands Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust, established 30 years ago upon the site of a former quarry with the aim to open up the creative and educational possibilities of these surroundings.

The project was founded by Hannah Sofaer after organizing an international symposium for artists on the island. With the inspiration to connect art with the fields of geology, architecture, environment and local community regeneration PSQT has come to build an international reputation for its wide variety of facilities and cross-disciplinary approach.

As part of a program developed in conjunction with the London Olympics, the Cultural Olympiad, PSQT held a series of exhibitions and events highlighting the cultural wealth of the island, and as part of this the artists Takahiro Ishii and Masami Aihara were invited to undertake a residence for approximately 1 month between April-May 2012 at the recommendation of Youkobo Art Space.

In discussions of the possibilities of a future support network between artists Hannah and Paul expressed their wish for a network which would allow its members to share and apply models of best practice which could also address various issues such as audience outreach, the role of the arts in regeneration and the ways in which artists shape and relate to our cultural landscapes and society.

Furthermore in touching upon the potential of further cooperation with Youkobo and other Japanese artists/arts organizations PSQT also suggested the possibility of furthering ties with Japan through a collaborative project under the theme of “Questions of Landscape” in which artists from Britain and Japan could come together to share their various cultural contexts.



I. Residency Experiences by Masami Aihara

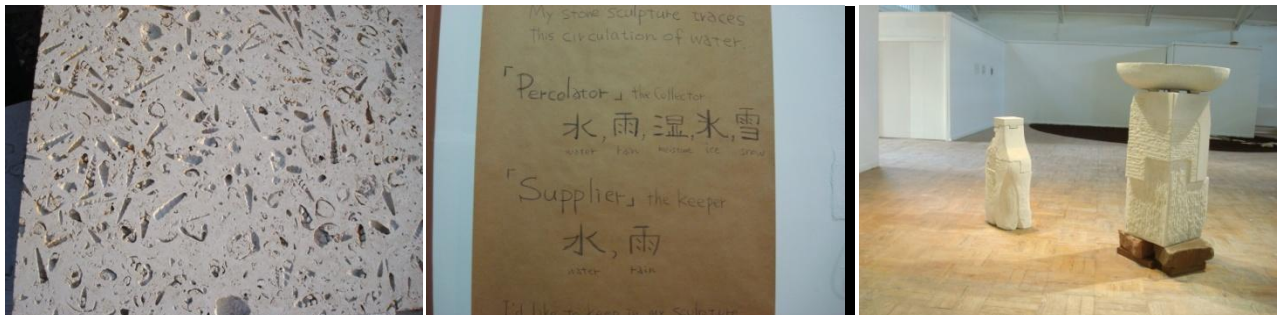
Aihara is an experienced sculptor based in Hokkaido with a practice which focuses upon stone carving. Given her specialism in stone PSQT was a highly suitable environment in which to pursue a residency. Arriving on site she was highly impressed by the nature and history of the island which PSQT is also most active in promoting, and observed that the centre was highly integrated with the community of the island.



During her residence Aihara developed a sculptural work from the Portland stone which she hand selected and carved through the use of the various tools available for use at PSQT, not only tools for hand carving but also rather more industrial tools such as compressors etc. also being on offer. Working in rather wet and windy conditions at the time she was cheered on by the warm goodwill of all the staff at PSQT.



Taking this opportunity to work with such famed stone Aihara made the decision to experiment a little more with the material she was utilizing, and where as she would normally create sculptural works of smooth clean surfaces, in this case she also interspersed this with the natural textured surfaces of the original rock and her careful carving came to reveal the ancient fossils of water which had once run through the stone.



Although she did not meet many local artists from Portland itself, PSQT is a centre which brings together artists and creatives from all over the UK and beyond, providing a hub of creative exchange and numerous encounters and artists and those who wish to learn stone sculpture techniques regularly pass through on various short stay courses which are provided as part of PSQT's education program. The various artists, landscape architects, geologists and stone enthusiasts share the same facilities and work side by side each other in an environment which greatly encourages communication and cross fertilization.



Perhaps a difficult issue for artists working with stone is that of transportation, how can they take their work home with them after completing it? This is especially difficult for artists who are visiting from overseas. It is often the case that artists donate the work to the sculpture park for example, however PSQT is also actively seeking sponsors and also offering the opportunity for artists to sell their work.

In conclusion Aihara commented that although a little isolated everything is close at hand through public transport, with PSQT being the perfect residence for those who wish to work closely with stone while at the same time being immersed in a place of natural and historical significance.

II. Residency Experiences by Takahiro Ishii

1. Introduction

Through his residence at Portland Sculpture & Quarry Trust, Ishii came to engage with a material he had little often used before, that of stone. But the work he came to pursue was not that of carving stone, but instead investigating the use of stone in Japanese and British gardens, paying particular attention to the key words stack, lay and assemble. Depending on the environment the materials used for production may change, and through these materials one may delve into one's own culture, and this encounter of a different environment may be said to be a central point of significance in joining a residence program.



In addition once the residence exhibition had been completed Ishii requested to extend his stay and taking Portland as his base he went on to travel around the south of England from East to West for the purpose of research, the development of which may be seen in this exhibition.

2. Overview of Work produced while in Residence

During his stay Ishii undertook research into the use of stone in both Japanese and British gardens. His research methods included comparing the contents of various books he had brought with him from Japan with those he was able to access in Britain through libraries and bookshops, collating information from relevant websites, and photographing Portland itself and the neighbouring suburbs. Based upon this information he undertook a series of drawings and created a blog in order to provide some structure to the research and transmit it to others, while amongst this holding the hypothesis that the simple actions of to stack, lay and assemble come to be associated with different representations depending upon the cultural context.



In his exhibition, Ishii developed an installation based upon Japanese gardens while also incorporating the cultural differences between Japan the UK he had come to identify through his research. At the same time holding the thought that – a residence is not just an opportunity to absorb another culture but also to share one's own culture – he also introduced the variations of the Japanese garden in terms of Paradise Garden, Zen Garden and Tea Garden through his exhibition.

After his exhibition Ishii went on to pursue his research by visiting various world heritage sites, botanical gardens and flower shows across the south of England and collecting various information and new ideas.



Furthermore after the completion of his residence Ishii went on to stay in Germany and the Netherlands, further continuing his research into various gardens and flower shows.

Main Sites of Research :

- RHS Chelsea Flower show 2012 (London / England)
- Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (London / England)
- Garden Museum (London / England)
- Georgian Garden (Bath / England)
- Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Garden (St Ives / England)
- Bennetts Water Gardens (Weymouth / England)
- Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens (near Weymouth / England)
- Sissinghurst (near Cranbrook / England)
- Floriade (Venlo / Holland)
- Botanisches Museum Berlin (Berlin / Germany)
- Gärten der Welt (Berlin / Germany)

3. Residence Advice

Between 2010-2011 I stayed in Germany not through an artist in residence but through my own means. If I compare this experience with that of my time in Portland, I can identify that a clear attraction of residencies is the level of support provided. Of course this level depends upon the residence, but we may expect a basic level of support towards one's everydaylife, production and exhibition, as well as in building communication with others.

I think it is important to first clarify the objective of your residency and then collate information on various residencies which are available, giving thought towards the level of support they provide, the program which they facilitate and the kind of artists which they are looking for. Based upon this you may select a residence most suitable for your purpose.

On the otherhand if you go to another country just as a lone artist you must manage everything yourself. And in the process of trial and error towards securing a place to stay, to make and exhibit, while also engaging with others is one

filled with many difficulties, however the experience gained through such action is a highly rich one. Therefore I feel there are also many possibilities to be found in not holding a concrete purpose for your stay and the process of trial and error in responding to the changes in one's environment.

Further more in living abroad, whether this be part of a residence or not, while it is easy to focus upon the various experiences to be gained, we must also consider what experiences we may provide to the people we encounter and to consciously move towards introducing elements of one's own culture, considering what we might feedback into this other space.

AIRs: Open Talk About Artist in Residencies New Series No. 3

2012 Micro Residencies – Vol.1

3rd June 2012 17:00-18:30, Youkobo Art Space

Microresidence in Tokyo : Youkobo Art Space

Saran Youkongdee @ Youkobo Art Space

Thai designer Saran Youkongdee joined the residence program at Youkobo Art Space for two months between April-May 2012 as part of the Japan Foundation's JENESYS program. In this time he realized a workshop series for children at the neighbouring Momoi Daishi Elementary School, presenting the work in Zempukuji park as part of the Spring "Trolls in the Park" event. Furthermore he developed his own personal work responding to the environment of Tokyo and presented in an exhibition in Youkobo's studio. Saran had indicated his interest to join not only a city based residence but also to experience the Japanese countryside too. Youkobo therefore took this opportunity to cooperate with fellow "microresidence" Studio Kura based in the rural landscape of Itoshima city, Fukuoka prefecture. Saran after completing two months of residence at Youkobo then went on to undertake a further months residence at Studio Kura set within a very different context and allowing him another insight into the landscapes and cultures of Japan.

It was from Studio Kura that Saran joined with Youkobo staff via skype to reflect upon his experiences at Youkobo Art Space. Before Saran's commentary Tatsuhiko Murata gave an overview of Youkobo's activities and its research into microresidencies as a contextualization.



Youkobo Art Space is a gallery, studio and residence based in Suginami ward, Tokyo close to Zempukuji park and has been established under this title for 10 years. Before this it was already a space for the arts, being used as Hiroko Murata's studio, an art school and exhibition space. It further developed into a space for artist in residence at the suggestion of overseas artists expressing their wish to join such a program, and given Tatsuhiko and Hiroko's experience overseas they hoped to offer such opportunities of international creative engagement to other artists. Therefore they came to officially initiate this program in 2001 with the aim to support artistic practices and attempt to raise the role of artists in society.

The facilities consist of a small complex of gallery, lounge and office, along with two studio spaces and apartment accommodation for two artists. Those joining the AIR program come from all over the world and may stay from anywhere between 1-6 months. Youkobo also simultaneously runs a gallery program, focusing mainly upon Japan based artists whom are also encouraged to engage with the visiting international artists too.

After the Great Earthquake of 3.11 the building had to be reinforced and Youkobo took the opportunity to renovate its first floor with a more contemporary designed gallery and lounge space.

As a multipurpose arts space with several different programs running in parallel Youkobo holds great significance to the exchange and discussion between the various artists and creatives joining these programs and builds its activities around this through talks, exhibitions, workshops, and also connecting to the local community. Such community engagements have included the 1 month “Trolls in the Park” an outdoor exhibition taking place each Autumn in Zempukuji park, a schooling program “art kids” held every month in the neighbouring elementary school and the Spring Trolls in the Park program when resident artists lead workshops for the school children and again present their work in the park. This is the role Saran took up also during his stay.



Youkobo is a clear example of how a residence may be rooted in its surrounding community while also connecting upon an international platform, being small in terms of space and resources but able to engage upon a global scale. Some examples of these engagements include numerous exchanges with other art spaces overseas, including a particularly strong connection with Istanbul. Further more as a member of Res Artis and having being active in the domestic network of J-AIR Youkobo has come to connect with residency programs across Japan and internationally.

Through such international engagement Youkobo has come to identify other residencies which share the same small scale, artist centred model separate from large institutions and has come to refer to such residencies as “Microresidencies”. Recognizing such a presence and the important role these microresidencies have to play Youkobo has engaged in research hoping to connect with such organizations and cooperate with them, just as Youkobo and Studio Kura have done in the case of Saran’s residence for example. At the time of this discussion 30 microresidencies around the world had expressed interest to form a cooperative relationship in some form. Youkobo hopes that through such an undertaking this may finally feedback to the artists themselves and strengthen their position in society and ability to produce good work.

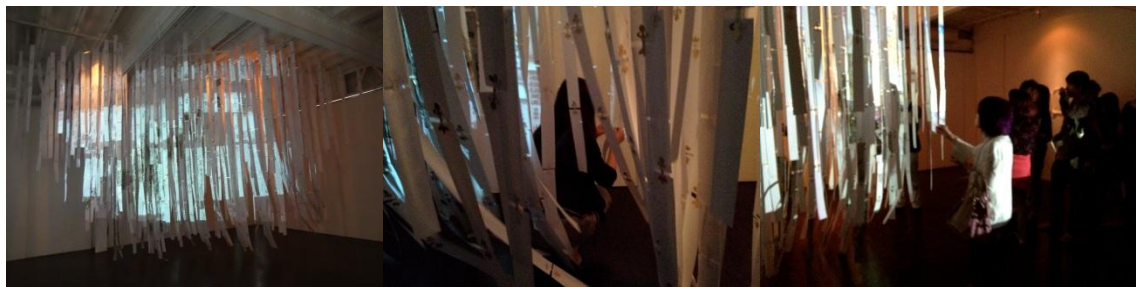
As a first step towards this Youkobo held its first Microresidence meeting in December 2011 bringing together Studio Kura’s Hirofumi Matsuzaki, Singapore based Instinc’s Shi Yung Yeo and via skype Hanoi based Nha San Studio’s Linh Nguyen in which the members discussed the possibilities of a microresidence network and the opportunities for cooperation, with a particular stress upon the close relations built between members of such organizations enabling for example previous collaborations between INSTINC and Studio Kura and again this time between Youkobo and Studio Kura.

Saran Youkongdee

For Saran his experience in Tokyo has been a series of firsts. His first time to join a residence, to hold a solo exhibition and his first time to work with children, all of which have offered him much positive inspiration. In particular his collaboration with the neighbouring elementary school for the Spring Trolls in the park has left a strong impression upon him. Under the title of “Tree in My Mind” pupils of Momoi Dashi Elementary School each created their own tree from various junk wood, recycling materials to create new colourful designs reflecting the individual personality of each child and exhibited for several weeks in a small copse in Zempukuji park.



Prior to joining the residency Saran had an outline of the work he wished to pursue at Youkobo however upon arriving in Tokyo he felt a strong impulse to respond to his new environment and to adapt his project in accordance with this, coming to develop a unique work reflecting similarities and differences between Bangkok and Tokyo, and developed through visits to a paper making factory where he was able to learn new techniques of paper making. His final installation consisted of hundreds of paper strips linked together in a hanging sculptural form upon which images of Tokyo were projected. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to write upon these paper strips their impression of the city. This small action of participation caught the imagination of many, with a total of 70 people contributing to the work in total. His experience in a new environment and the large sized, high ceilinged space enabled him to realize such a work.



After this introduction Saran went on to answer the following questions:

Why did you choose to undertake a residence at Youkobo?

Before joining the residence Saran had expressed his wish to the Japan foundation to experience something between the city and the countryside. Youkobo was introduced to him as a space within Tokyo but outside of the central city and offering the opportunity to connect to a slightly different context.

What form of exchange have you engaged in with local artists?

Saran formally identifies himself as a designer and works within the fields of Design in Thailand so joining the program at

Youkobo gave the opportunity to build a dialogue with artists and to build an appreciation for the artist way of thinking which is often conceptually or aesthetically driven while designers often tend to be more pragmatic.

Being your first time to join a residence program what impact may this have had upon your work?

This residence has offered many new experiences and inspirations which has led Saran to consider how he may further build a relationship with Japan and develop a form of collaboration with Thai artists and designers.

What feedback do you have to offer upon Youkobo?

Saran could only offer a glowing report of Youkobo's facilities and support, being most appreciative of the various connections Youkobo offered to him to enter into the Tokyo scene.

We heard you have a plan to make you own space in Bangkok once you return?

Saran intends to develop a shared studio space based in an old factory where artists and designers may come together, share ideas and bring them into reality. He also hopes to establish his own residence program where foreign artists may also join this creative dialogue, gaining some hint from his stay at Youkobo.

Youkobo has defined itself as a microresidency and is now attempting to connect with other such residencies. Having joined a microresidency what strengths do you think it possesses as such and what is it able to achieve which larger institutions may not be able to?

Saran responded to such a question by stating he does not consider Youkobo to be small or micro. It may be so in terms of space but in terms of its connections and network its scale is quite significant.

Finally a question was posed from Studio Kura's Hirofumi Matsuzaki to Tatsuhiko Murata as to the goal of gathering Microresidencies upon an international platform.

In an open response Tatsuhiko observed his hopes to gain some insight into the direction needed through Matsuzaki himself. If the cooperative relationship is to be pushed forward on a large scale then perhaps we could imagine an international microresidence GM with numerous members coming together. Yet numbers are not important. What counts is face to face meeting between individuals and whether this is just several or hundreds is not of central concern.



AIRs: Open Talk About Artist in Residencies New Series No.4

2012 Micro Residencies – Vol.1

18th June 2012 17:00-18:30, Youkobo Art Space

Microresidence in Fukuoka : Studio Kura

Saran Youkongdee @ Studio Kura

Studio Kura was established in 2007 by the artist Hirofumi Matsuzaki, as a result of his experiences of living and working in Europe, building a network of relationships with various international artists and gaining insight into artist in residence programs. Upon returning to Japan he felt that the opportunities for foreign artists to join residence programs was limited to the big cities and had the inspiration to establish his own residence in the countryside area of Itoshima city, Fukuoka prefecture. Just 45 minutes train ride from Fukuoka city and in an area with many local artists including Hiroshi Fuji the residence is conveniently located for artists to engage in the region upon several different levels. The studios and gallery of the residence are based in traditional rice storehouses known as “kura”, hence its name, and is situated by the side of wide open rice fields with a mountain range to its rear.

Already within just 5 years Studio Kura has welcomed over 21 artists from 12 different countries. A particular feature of Studio Kura is of course its connection with nature and the local farming community which offer a unique experience for residence artists, whom Studio Kura also attempts to introduce to traditional Japanese craftmaking techniques and local crafts people in the area.

Studio Kura may be a rurally located residence but its vision is one of highly international perspective and has actively pursued cooperative relationships with other residence programs including joint residencies with Singapore based INSTINC and with Youkobo, as well as receiving and providing recommendations of residence artists from/for Akiyoshidai Artist Village and 3331 Arts Chiyoda. Studio Kura has also initiated the Itoshima Arts Farm, an art festival taking place in the fields surrounding the residence site, linking artists with the local community.

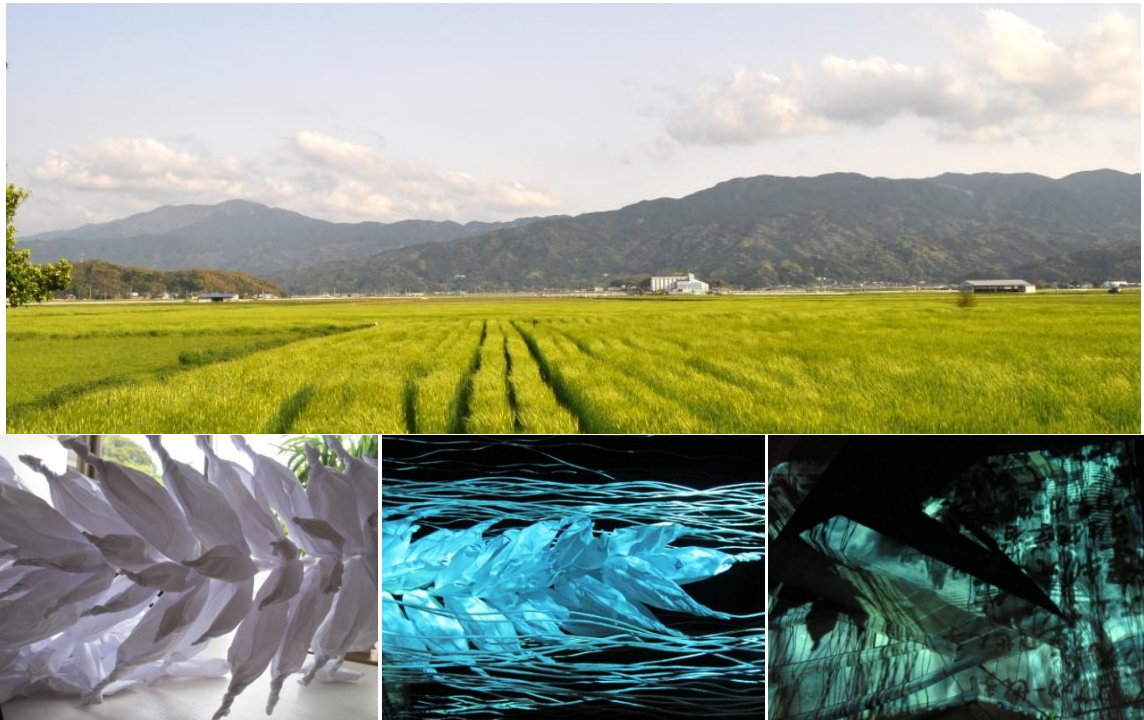


Residency Experiences of Saran Youkongdee

Saran undertook a 1 month residency at Studio Kura in which time he realized an exhibition of new work and a workshop.

Having stayed two months in the Tokyo metropolis he was met by a very different environment amongst the fields of Itoshima. Being a city dweller this new lifestyle was a little challenge for him at the start as he realized there are no subway or door to door public transport services here, but after settling in he became able to appreciate the beauty of the

surrounding farmland and the long standing culture which has grown up in Itoshima in coexistence with nature. Taking this opportunity Saran wished to formulate a response to the unique environment and history of this place.



In his residency at Youkobo Art Space Saran had attempted work which sought to link Thailand and Japan. But in this case rather than overtly stress the ties between the different nations he approached the subject with more subtlety looking at the points of commonality, in particular through reference to food, in particular highlighting rice and other grain foods. He produced his sculptural work from delicate white Japanese “washi” paper in the image of the grains available in the local area and referencing the simple, near minimal lifestyle he perceived in Japan, along with ideas of following the line of time which was felt particularly potently in this environment, with a sense of long preserved traditions, long life and the long stories contained within these. In research for this work he visited to a Japanese paper factory in Yame, Yamaguchi prefecture, with a history of 50 years in an area where there were once over 100 such factories but now there is only one left. A similar issue is also being faced in Thailand, with an urgency to pass on traditional craft skills to the next generation. Saran also displayed an interest in learning more of the local history and traditions of the area which he was introduced to through Matsuzaki’s father who is a Japanese history teacher. He not only immersed himself in local culture but also in the local contemporary art and design scene building a rapport with residence artists at Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and enjoying weekly gatherings with local artists and residents with an opportunity to talk of many different subjects.



A Comparison of Youkobo Art Space and Studio Kura

In comparing his experiences between the residencies at Youkobo and at Studio Kura Compare he commented upon the contrast of environment between the two and also the opportune timing in which he was able to visit each location enjoying the cherry blossom in April in Tokyo and joining the Itoshima Art Farm festival in June. Originally planning to present similar work in both residence spaces he was moved by his new encounters to take the opportunity to develop work inspired by this context. Although at first feeling slightly hampered by the less convenient transportation links he found a different rhythm enabling him to appreciate the beauty of the surrounding landscape and its nature and tranquility offered much inspiration to him.

When asked having experienced a stay at two microresidencies what definition does he draw to such a phrase and what potentials do they hold outside the system of institutions Saran offered up the word “connection”. In his own creative processes he always attempts to connect the people around him and he strongly appreciates the similar pursuit to connect which Studio Kura and Youkobo lead. This may include the close connection they try to develop with the artists as well as the manner in which they also attempt to plug the artist into the local community and art scene. Saran particularly appreciated the introduction of both residencies to local craftspeople which enabled him to gain new insights into local creative production and also provides stimulus for its practitioners. This form of exchange on an international and skill based level is of keen interest to Saran and he has suggested the possibility of developing such potentials further with Thailand through even further skype discussion sessions or face to face exchange. Further more he has so much appreciated his experience joining these two residencies in Japan that he has come to consider setting up his own residence program in partnership with a traditional paper factory he is associated with in Thailand.

Saran gained a wide range of experiences and inspirations through this residence with a key opportunity to engage with Japanese design and style which he much admires and responding to this in his own work, which he further hopes to exhibit within other international platforms.



Goals for the Future

A comment was also posed to Matsuzaki framing his initiation of an artist in residence program through personal efforts as a position of artistic pursuit removed from the capitalist model and a question was asked as to what vision he is carrying forward from now. In response Matsuzaki commented that it is that very perseverance, sustainability and continued effort that he is determined to follow into the long term future, to have a model which is not dependent upon institutional funding. This brings us to the importance of a microresidence network which may be able to provide mutual support for residencies outside of the institutional model. Yet here was also brought up an uncertainty as to what the goal of network is and what shape it will take, in response to which Murata commented that it is best to perhaps see how it will develop naturally.

Perhaps one way in such a collective of microresidencies could function is by sharing the various issues they face and working together to tackle them. One such issue which Studio Kura faces for example being the need for more people to help with residence, but upon a low budget basis. Yet it should also be directed to sharing opportunities and developments, which Studio Kura continues to follow as witnessed by the establishment of a “Studio Kura Award” for 3d design students in Singapore to join a short residence here. Here the event conclude with both Youkobo and Studio Kura directors agreeing that it was great to connect two residencies together in this way of joint artist residency.

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また、関連の詳細記録も併せて参照頂きたい

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- ・ 別冊 2 ー マイクロ・ディレクターズ・トーク・2012 年 10 月 30 日の記録
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This is also accompanied by supplementary materials providing further detail on microresidencies

- ・ Main booklet MICRORESIDENCE! 2012
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- ・ Supplement 2 ー Micro Directors Talk Document – 30th October 2012
- ・ Supplement 3 ー Open Talk about AIRs Microresidence Series 2012
- ・ Supplement 4 The Macro Possibilities of a Micro Art Space
 ー An Interim Report on Microresidence Research published June 2012

MICRORESIDENCE! 2012

アーティスト・イン・レジデンス、マイクロレジデンスからの視点
Artist in Residence, from a Micro Perspective

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