

Activity Report

Young Basque Artists' Residency in Japan Part. 3

A Collaboration of AIR and Art University 2022

バスクの若手アーティストの日本滞在制作の活動記録(その3)
AIRと美術大学の協働 2022

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JOSHIBI Artist in Residence

Forword

Tatsuhiko Murata | Youkobo Art Space

A program for young Basque artists for residency in Japan under the support of the Basque Country in Spain, which started in 2018, was forced to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic after two years of continuation. It has been two years since the Japanese government decided to prohibit the acceptance of foreign travelers. In March 2022, I received an email from Mr. Urtzi Arriaga Argote, the local coordinator of this program when the gradual relaxation of travel acceptance conditions began under the background that the domestic system for dealing with corona is in place in 2022. Preparations of residency program have begun for Youkobo Art Space to reopen as a residence after two years of closure.

As a condition of acceptance by the government, only for business and study abroad activities where the acceptance is ready, and the person responsible for acceptance is clear.

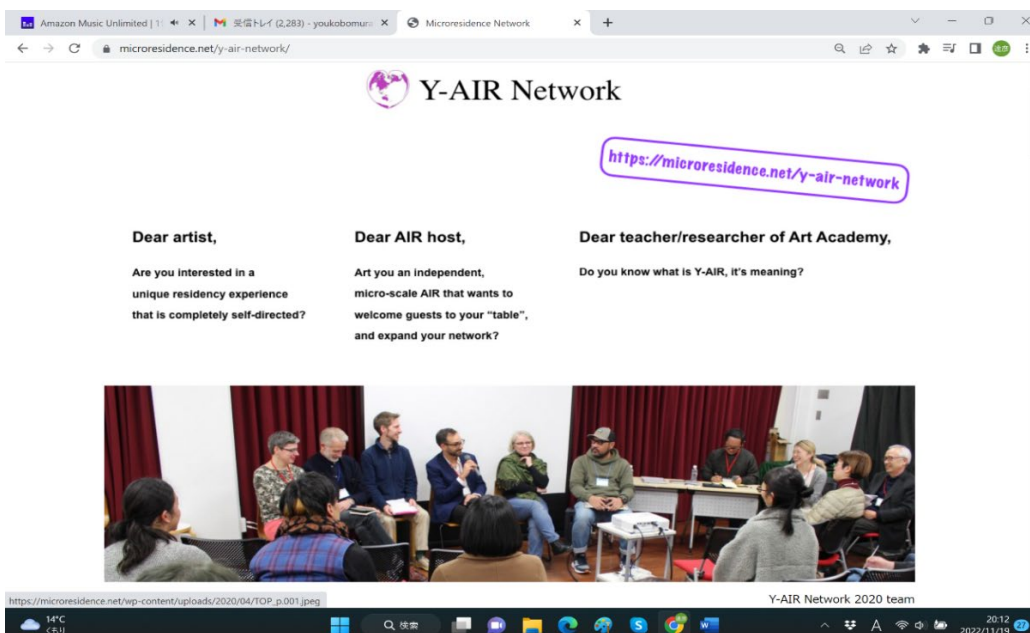
After submitting a guarantee by the person in charge to the government, it became possible to accept visa if the person who planned to research or business was good health condition and had a vaccination certificate against COVID-19. At Youkobo, we have been implementing various activities in collaboration with AIR and art universities, and although there were no obstacles to clearing this condition, we honestly had no idea about COVID-19 countermeasures in the region together with the artists. It was a situation of groping in the dark.

People talk about eradicating the corona virus and coexisting with it, but as a long-term social problem, we are promoting new activities with the awareness that we are a member of the local community.

It talks about the global social changes brought about by the pandemic and the changes in people's sensibilities. The basis for forming a society of mutual understanding where people can interact with different cultures and accept differences will be the fact that face-to-face interaction is an important element of human interaction will not change from before COVID-19.

We believe that this will be the basis for resuming residency operations.

We look forward to the resumption of the practical activities of "Y-AIR, AIR for Young", which began in 2012 through trial and error with art university professors and microresidence operators in Japan and overseas, and the development of new activities.



It's been two years since we were confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and phrases like "with COVID" or "new normal" entered our language. We have attempted to make real and virtual communication work together, going back and forth in this unstoppable continuum of time, making full use of our imagination amidst the challenges, as we grope in the dark for ways to live our lives with flexibility, and also look for ways to continue to create new encounters. In other words, I believe this is a moment –an opportunity–in which creativity is required of us all.

The Artist in Residence (AIR) program requires international travel by artists, and as such, its operations and functions were shaken to the core, forcing many artists and AIR institutions to suspend their programs or postpone them until further notice. In an attempt to at least continue activities at some level, we saw many experimental online initiatives sprout. This proved to be an opportunity for artists to discover new forms of research and communication with the host organization or community. In the EU, it even sparked debate about "Green AIR", from green energy, and how online modes of activity can positively impact the climate crisis by decreasing the use of energy and the carbon footprint that AIRs traditionally contribute to because of the need for artists to travel. However, that did not mean that the desire to travel dried up. On the contrary, we were all waiting eagerly for borders to reopen and travel to resume.

The first "wind" arrived from Basque Country, Spain. Since 2018, Youkobo Art Space has been receiving artists who won the chance to participate in an AIR in Japan as part of the prize for the Ertibil Bizkaia Awards for emerging artists sponsored by the Basque Government. To make the most of this residency for the artists, and to provide an educational opportunity for students, this program has been conducted in partnership with the Joshibi University of Art and Design. After a 2-year pause of the program, 6 winning artists from the 2020–2021 cycle traveled to Japan, from which Daniel Llaría arrived at Youkobo, and Natalia Suarez Ortiz de Zarate joined our inaugural installment of JOSHIBI AIR this year. Each artist conducted their art residencies in their respective institutions, and participated in programs such as open studios, guest lectures in universities, and artist talks with university students. The experience reiterated to both the artists and host institutions how invaluable it is to be able to meet face to face and spend time together. Additionally, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Ertibil Bizkaia, a group show was organized at 3331 Arts Chiyoda with artists participating in the Koganecho AIR (Yokohama, Kanagawa, Japan), which allowed for the results of the program to be widely publicized.

With only a few months to go before we end the year 2022, we witness a resurgence in cultural events in Japan that involve participation of overseas artists. Even on the international stage, large-scale art festivals such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta are fresh in our memory. On the other hand, we have also witnessed conflicts between nations, resulting in the deaths of many people, while others have escaped their countries as refugees. AIRs have also been historically known to serve as shelters for artists. As AIR organizers, I believe that we are able to provide safe environments for artists who travel to create, and at the same time contribute to world peace through interactive exchanges that deepen our understanding of foreign cultures. Through an ever-blowing wind that brings in fresh air, we strive for a world where we can all thrive.

Overview

1. About the Program

Through partnership with the Cultural Department of Bizkaia Regional Government, Spain, Youkobo has initiated activities to host winners of “ERTIBIL BIZKAIA”, a funding program that aims to support emerging young artists of the Basque Country, Spain.

In 2018, the first year it was accepted at Youkobo, Tokyo and Studio Kura in Kyushu, under collaboration with the Joshibi University as a part of the YAIR activity between AIR and art university.

In 2019, together with Youkobo, Koganecho AIR, Yokohama and Paradise AIR, Matsudo both in Tokyo area.

In the third year, after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19, the number of artists scheduled for residency in Japan increased to six,

in July and August 2022, a two-month residency programs were held at four locations together with “Joshibi AIR”, which was newly started at Joshibi, has also joined as an acceptance program.

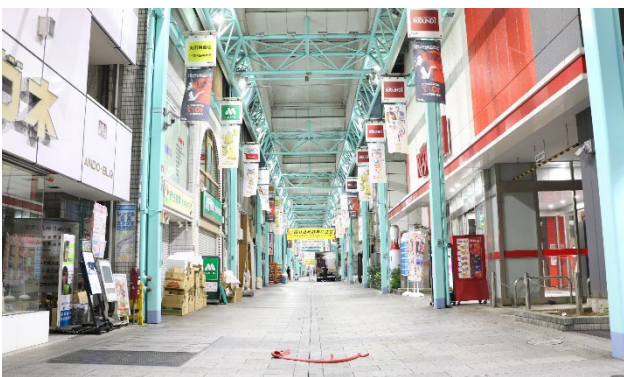
2. Daniel Llarfa, artist in residence 2022, summary of activities at Youkobo

Graduated from the University of the Basque Country in 2009, followed by a master's degree in The New School for Design, New York in 2017. He actively presents his works through creative activities, including residencies mainly in Europe and the United States. He was planning to come to Japan in 2021 as an award-winning artist of “ERTIBIL BIZKAIA 2020”. Taking advantage of the easing of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, the opportunity to residency in Japan for two months from July to August 2022 has been realized.

During his two-month residency at Youkobo Art Space, he developed his first creative activities in Japan, including STOP-MOTION/TIME-LAPSE, music, drawing, sculpture, and collage. In particular, the STOP-MOTION shooting was enthusiastically carried out day and night in the vicinity of Youkobo, downtown areas such as Shibuya, and coastal areas such as Koto and Tsukiji. How many frames were recorded? We look forward to the culmination of the work after returning to Japan.

In July, he actively participated in student exchanges and workshops at Joshibi together with Natalia Suarez, who was in residency at Joshibi AIR at the same time.

In August, we believe that his stay in Japan during the summer was fulfilling, as he spent a week exploring the Kansai art scene, including Setouchi as inland sea area and Kyoto.



▪ **Artist Talk with Natalia Suarez@Joshibi AIR**, July 25, 2022 (Monday) 14:30–16:00

A 3rd year student of Joshibi acted as moderator and held an artist talk with Natalia about their own artist works ,streamed on YouTube.

* youtube distribution video link: <https://youtu.be/PtzOyhrP4Gg>



▪ **Open studio @ YOUKOB0**, Saturday, August 27, 2022, 12:00–19:00

An opportunity for him to present the results of his creative activities during his two-month residency at his own studio, and receive criticism from Prof. Teiko Hinuma and other visitors.



Dystopia

Daniel Llaría

I remember Tatsuhiko said that Tokyo, at the end of the day, it's just a huge Metropolis and that getting to know Japan implied being out of the city. At that moment I agreed with him, we had just arrived back from our trip on JPR and our impression had been that the city was way harsher than the smaller places.

That is to say that I don't dare making assumptions about Japan since I only experienced its version of the neoliberal metropolis for two months. Tokyo affected me in many ways, but it was specially the sense of dystopia it exuded the one that really stuck with me. This is likely due to the fact that my gaze, and subsequently my art, tends to focus on labour, identity and the infinite ways neoliberalism can exploit a body.

I arrived in Tokyo with the idea of continuing a stop-motion piece that I had started back home, around the mountains where my grandad used to be a peasant. My idea was juxtaposing these two radically different landscapes and cultures, establishing a narrative through opposites in which the main character will articulate about the meaning of belonging to a place, a culture and an occupation.

The character I animate is the cast of an old scythe, initially a symbol for my ancestor's work and identity that now, through the act of mold casting, is rendered pink and flabby and therefore a symbol for my work and my identity.

Parallel to this process, I produced two sculptures that belong to a work in progress series in which work clothing is rendered useless by the sculptural gesture. The nature of creative work and the role of the visual artist in the culture industry is set along other forms of labour with a clearer role in the production chain.

While in previous pieces centered on blue collar workers and manual labor, here it is white collar employees the ones alluded through the white shirt so widely observed in the streets of Tokyo. The ones here are so worn out that their collars are yellowing.

This assembly walks the line between precariousness and majesty, a sort anti-monument for the atomized and exploited, a witness for life experiences deemed irrelevant for the bigger narrative of history and thus, as impermanent and this fragile sculpture.



Photo by Daniel Llaría

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Cooperation :

Cultural Department of Bizkaia Regional Government, Spain

Joshi University of Art and Design, AP Lab

JYOSHIBI Artist In Residence

Published by

Youkobo Art Space, December 2022

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Photography

Daniel Llaría, JOSHIBI AIR, Youkobo Art Space

This booklet forms part of a series of publications by Youkobo titled MICRORESIDENCE! Digital versions of back numbers are available online: www.youkobo.co.jp/microresidence

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