

The University of Newcastle

Mandy Francis

PhD candidate

Fiona Lee

BA Hons

Nerida Ackland

BA Hons

Tama Art University

Shimojo Saeko

4th Year student

Chigasaki Keiichi

4th Year student

Fukui Hitomi

graduate

IMAGE FRONT:

Nerida Ackland *Body Baskets*
100 metres of rice rope and light bulb
dimensions variable, 2010

JAAM

Japan and Australia Art Musings

JAAM was a collaborative project with DFAM, University of Newcastle; TAMA Art University Tokyo; The Australian Embassy, Tokyo; Art Front Gallery, Tokyo; the Echigo Tsumari Festival of the Earth, Niigata Prefecture Japan; and The Brian and Rohma Cummins Award.

The JAAM project took place at Australia House during 4 August to 5 September 2010. Australia House is a beautiful traditional farmhouse located in the small village of Urada in the mountains of the Niigata prefecture, Japan. This farmhouse is operated by the Australian Embassy as a residency and, after discussion with myself and Professor Noda from TAMA, we were invited to take up a collaborative residency, each accompanied by three students from our respective institutions. The purpose of this residency was an intensive workshop and research experience for both staff and students ending in a seminar and an exhibition. The students taking part in the project were selected because of the relevance of the project to their research.

The Echigo Tsumari region is famous for the Triennial exhibition which is foremost in the world for advancing the cause of art as a generator of community collaboration and participation. Creativity in both art and architecture is used as a means to reinvigorate the socio-economic structure of this rural area of Japan. International artists such as Boltanski, Abramovich, Gormley and Turrell have made permanent artworks and buildings which attract visitors from all over the world. The Echigo Tsumari project, over the past ten years, has inspired a whole new genre of art as a vehicle for social change and education as well as impacting on population and economic growth in the region.

Professor Anne Graham

Chair of the School of Drama, Fine Art and Music

The JAAM project was made possible with generous support of Dr Rohma Cummins and the late Dr Brian Cummins, The Australian Embassy, Tokyo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations) Professor Kevin McConkey and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Education and Arts) Professor Terence Lovat.

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JAAM

Japan – Australia Art Musings Program



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



Exhibition Dates
20 – 30 OCTOBER 2010

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Nerida Ackland



The landscape of the Echigo Tsumari prefecture is electric green, so fertile that vegetables grow on the side of the road like weeds. The community of Urada were so generous and genuinely interested in the project. We were truly welcomed.

I collected my materials for the JAAM project from Mushashi-think Japanese Bunnings, a wonderland of resources for the three-dimensional artist. Without any concept of what I might create I collected raw, unprocessed ropes and strings. One of these materials was one-hundred meters of rice rope, which over the next twelve days I would coil and stitch into a Body Basket, a womb-like object, a form-hugging comfort place. The material was coarse and would scratch my arms and legs. Holding the tension create a firm enough stitch was laborious and hurt my hands.

My work has a direct connection to my body. Movement, and the positioning of my body determines the resulting

form. The act of making is embodied in the work, so the objects become almost artefacts from a performance.

Living in the studio, being able to make art all day, everyday was such a luxury. We each felt so lucky to be there doing what we loved, we worked hard and we had fun together. The JAAM project was an incredibly opportunity and an experience I will never forget.

Fukui Hitomi



My work is inspired by botany and the beautiful shapes of natural forms. I turn these sensual shapes into abstract sculptures in which I attempt to embody the elegant grace of flowers and insects. When I first visited the village of Urada, in the Niigata prefecture, the landscape was covered in snow and I mostly looked at the beautiful traditional architecture, and considered how to locate my work in Australia House. I chose a room

with gridded windows so that my work would be backlit and also the fluid forms would stand out against the geometry of the window frame. On my second visit in summer I responded to the abundant vegetation; the atmosphere is humid and the soil is very fertile. We were surrounded by trees and flowers moving in the breeze and the sounds of frogs, bees and birds. I hoped to capture some of this atmosphere in my work.

Mandy Francis



I love the challenge of creating sculptures that are made with a wholistic approach... encompassing the site, history, material sourcing, interactive experience and social fabrics. The time spent at Australia House, Urada Japan was explosion of these experiences and provided the mental and visual fabric that fed the sculptures that I made there. I used red and white road works signs and yellow coated form ply in 'Infrastructure, Thankyou Mr lizuka-san' to exemplify a plethora of meanings, such as the importance of transport in a small town like Urada and to showcase the celebratory colours of Japan. Rice paper, shadows and miniature rusty wire houses were employed in 'Urada' to display the uniqueness of the traditional Japanese farm houses, which were dotted

all over the landscape and the strong yet contradictory Japanese culture today.

Chigasaki Keiichi

Urada is a very small village located in a valley with a river and a road running through the centre. The population of Urada is mainly composed of older people and children, the teenagers and young people are leaving this agricultural, rural area and moving to the cities. This made me think about the road, the way out of the valley and also the changing nature of the population and activities that occurs in places over time. Australia House has been through many changes; we met the family who had lived there for generations,



they visited us. I thought it must be strange for them to see their house being occupied so differently, the feeling of the house would have been quite different. Then it occurred to me that the house changed not just through its occupants but also through time, seasons and socio-economic imperatives. In my animation I show these changes, I show the traffic travelling the road, people coming and going, the seasons, and the changing climate. I attempted to create a feeling of the house as a responsive, communicating organism

that could inform us about how to live, how to occupy places and spaces in a more sensitive, responsible way.

Fiona Lee

This work draws influence



from the unique melange of architecture evident in rural Japan. The juxtaposition of bold geometry and sensitive tradition in local architecture reveals a strong sense of cultural identity which inspired me to create two artworks; the continuous thematic thread being the notion of shelter.

Shimojo Saeko

Australia House in Urada is surrounded by forest, we were told that wild badgers lived under the house and bears inhabited the forest! We did not see the badgers or bears but we did see evidence of much wildlife, snakes and frogs and so many buzzing insects! I wanted to make works which would perhaps make people think about animals and their place in the world. I used a very inexpensive material, a kind of tarpaulin, this was to emphasise the fact that I was not using fur; it was very challenging to make three dimensional forms out of a flat piece of material, I took care to make correct



patterns so that my animals are very recognisable. My brightly striped animals hang on the wall a little bit like trophies, but they are not trophies they are rather reminders of the other inhabitants of the world whom we must look after. I wanted my works to be appealing and cute but also to provoke thought and to perhaps inspire change.

IMAGES:

Nerida Ackland
Installation Detail, Body Baskets
100 metres of rice rope and light bulb
dimensions variable, 2010

Fukui Hitomi
Resident of the House
oil on ply, 2010
dimensions variable

Mandy Francis
*Infrastructure, 'Thank you
Mr lizuka-san'*
reclaimed timber
size variable, 2010

Chigasaki Keiichi
*The House (screenshot),
M4v, 2010*

Fiona Lee
Primary Structure (dome)
archival digital photograph,
2010

Shimojo Saeko
Rabbit
woven plastic fabric, 2010
Bear
woven plastic fabric, 2010