

Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival 2012: A Turning Point

CONCEPT

The Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival 2012 will be held under the theme of a “turning point.” The Great East Japan Earthquake and the tsunami and nuclear accident that followed brought Japan to a turning point, leaving us no choice but to reconsider our ways of thinking and life styles. Through this art festival, centered on the theme of a “turning point,” we will utilize both new works of art produced here in Niigata, and works of art that inspire reflection in order to not only provide an opportunity to look back on what has come before us, but also a place to think about and discuss the future.

The second “Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival” will be directed by Hiroyuki Ogawa, who has conducted a variety of civic and cultural activities in Niigata. He intends to coordinate with four other directors who are active in various fields, and will orchestrate this art festival while maintaining a dialogue with local residents. The festival will be held mainly around the Shinano River where it runs through the heart of Niigata City, and will take the form of a journey into the worlds of fine art, dance, music and drama, accompanying artists who are active domestically and internationally. The festival will encompass works that weave tales about places, memories and the lives of the people; projects that will bring individuals from different standpoints together to exchange varying opinions; and live performances where being and place intertwine.

While Niigata has been blessed with natural resources since ancient times, it is also an area that has been repeatedly ravaged by floods, and in the 1960’s the Agano River experienced organic mercury pollution, which led to a spread of Minamata disease. After the March 11th disaster, considering anew the lives and actions of the people of Niigata—people who inherited the Jomon culture, carved out their own farming culture, and faced difficult social issues, all while remaining closely intertwined with nature—can teach us universal values and truths that transcend any single location.

Starting this winter (2011) before the art festival, we plan to hold symposiums on the subject of coexistence with nature, initiate children’s projects, have discussions and organize community meetings, while facilitating citizen-proposed events throughout the year. Our aim is for this art festival to act as a platform for reexamining the community and culture in this region known as Niigata in order to seek a better way of living. We have planned the event “Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival 2012: A Turning Point” in the hope that the diverse expressions and actions born from artists’ and citizens’ understanding of “now”—the present—will encourage all the people involved in the festival, including viewers, to carefully consider the questions, “where have we come from?” and, “where are we going?” in order to find their own “turning point” within themselves.

OUTLINE

Project Title	: Water and Land - Niigata Art Festival 2012 : A Turning Point
Period	: July 14 th (Sat)–December 24 th (Mon, on a national holiday)
Venues	: The lower reaches of the Shinano River and the surrounding areas within Niigata city
Event Director	: Hiroyuki OGAWA (Event Director)
Artistic Directors	: Tetsuo SATO (Professor of Art Education) Yuu TAKEHISA (Museum Curator) Yoshihiko TANJI (Artist) Hisako HORIKAWA (Dancer)
Organizer	: Water and Land - Niigata Art Festival Executive Committee
Support	: The Fukutake Foundation for the Promotion of Regional Culture

EVENTS

- Art Projects (by invitation or application (open to the public))
- Citizen Projects
 - 1) Citizen Projects - Supporting projects proposed and implemented by citizens
 - 2) Children's Projects - Planning and managing children's projects with universities and educators
- Symposiums

Four symposiums based on the theme, "Coexistence with Nature," will be held in order to reexamine the relationship between nature and humans from various points of view, and to explore the possibility of developing a sustainable society

General Coordinator : Takashi OHKUMA (an honorary professor of Niigata University · the representative of the NPO Niigata Waterfront Association)
- Other

Before and during the period of the festival we will implement various small projects, such as lectures and discussion meetings planned by directors and citizen supporters. One such project will be to host discussions in reaction to the many art projects (including this festival) held throughout Japan in recent years with the goal of reexamining the relationship between art and the public.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Hiroyuki OGAWA (1962-, lives in Niigata city)

Hiroyuki Ogawa is an event director and the representative of NPO Bunka Genba. He became a freelance event organizer in 1992 after working at a private museum (The Loft Museum Ten) that primarily shows contemporary art. After establishing Bunka Genba (NPO status as of 2004) in 1992, Ogawa began holding multiple genres of cultural events that emphasized Niigata's unique culture. Ogawa has taken numerous positions for various art projects including: NPO Niigata Eya Director; NPO Echigotsumari Satoyama Co-operating Organization Director; Niigata City Art Museum Steering Committee Member; Production Committee Member for the documentary film "Living on the River Agano"; The Agano River Basin Area Field Museum Project (Niigata Pref.) General Director; Executive Committee Representative for "Spring, Celebration," an event commemorating Niigata City's establishment as a designated city; The Water and Land Art Festival 2009 Citizen Supporters' Meeting

Representative; and The Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival 2012 Investigative Commission Leader. He is the writer and editor of the book, "Resurrecting Ango Sakaguchi," and the Niigata cultural criticism magazine, "Kaze Daruma"

Tetsuo SATO (1958-, lives in Niigata city)

Tetsuo Sato is a scholar and professor of art education at Niigata University. He graduated from the School of Art and Design at the University of Tsukuba. He entered the University of Tsukuba Doctoral Program in Art and Design, but later withdrew. Sato has been teaching art education at Niigata University since 2003, exploring the foundation of art and art education with perspectives from various fields such as ecology, image theory and sociology. Some of his major articles include: "Postmodernism Art as the Criticism of Representation"(1992) ; "Space as Art, Art Education, and Eros"(1998); "To Break the Boundary of Subject; Affordance, Rhythm, and Art Education"(2003).

Yuu TAKEHISA (1976-, lives in Mito, Ibaraki Pref.)

Yuu Takehisa is a curator at the Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito. After graduating from the School of Policy Management at Keio University and working in a photographer's studio, she moved to London in 2002. From 2002 to 2005 she earned her MA in Creative Curating at Goldsmiths College, University of London, before proceeding to work as an independent curator until 2007 when she became a curator at the Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito. Additionally, she is a member of the MeToo Promotion Studio, which is a local group of professionals and college students who implement grassroots creative activities such as music events, handwork workshops and talk events with artists and musicians. Through her experience with both public and private projects, Takehisa has continued to examine not only the public nature of art, but also the relationship between art and society, and art and community. The major exhibitions she has curated include: "Reflection: alternative worlds through the video camera" and "Otomo Yoshihide 'Ensembles 2010 - Resonance.'" She is also the producer for Mito's community-based collaborative art project "Otomo Yoshihide 'Ensembles Parade. '"

Yoshihiko TANJI (1960-, lives in Niigata city)

Yoshihiko Tanji is an artist and professor of art environment at Niigata University. He has been teaching at Niigata University since 1998 after completing a fine arts graduate program in painting at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. After showing his art work at galleries like the Nihonbashi art gallery in Tokyo, Tanji participated in numerous events including: the Echigo-Tsumari Triennial (Niigata) in 2003, 2006 and 2009; his own project known as, "Boats as Time Machines - Dreams from 100 years ago," which was shown at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art in 2007; the Yokohama BankART – Find Mobo / Moga Project" in 2008; <CIRCULATION> at the Water and Land-Niigata Art Festival in 2009; the Setouchi International Art Festival in 2010; and another the ongoing project, "Uchino de Art," an art project that is set in the Uchino district of Niigata city, and has taken place every other year since 2001.

Hisako HORIKAWA (1955-, lives in Niigata)

Hisako Horikawa is a dancer. She studied at the Bigakko Kosugi Takehisa Music School, and then

studied impromptu dance under Min TANAKA. She worked with Tanaka during every performance for the Shintai Kisho Institute, the Bujuku, the Space plan B and the Shintai Kisho Farm from 1978 to 1998. As a result, the life of farmers greatly influenced her ideas about dance. Horikawa participated in “the Hakushu Art Camp (Hakushu · Summer · Festival)” as a member of the executive committee from 1988 to 1997. Horikawa has actively performed both at various places throughout Niigata as well as abroad since moving back to Niigata city in 1998. In 2006 Horikawa established the “Supporting the Traditional Bon Festival Dance Club,” and is an active participant in Niigata City’s Bon festival dances. During The Water and Land- Niigata Art Festival in 2009 she performed twelve outdoor solo dances while also participating in numerous grassroots citizen projects such as the Children’s Mud Dance company, Shinto music/dance festivals and folk music theaters.

Geographical Features of Niigata City

Niigata city stands at the mouth of two large rivers that flow into the Sea of Japan: the Shinano River, which is Japan’s largest river in terms of length and water volume, and the Agano River, which is Japan’s third largest river in water volume, and Japan’s widest river at its lower reaches. The heart of Niigata City, a port city that prospered thanks to trade on the Sea of Japan and the north-seas fisheries, lies around the mouth of the Shinano River. Until the start of the 17th century the present mouth of the Agano River didn’t exist; instead the river turned to the Shinano River, pouring into the Sea of Japan through a much larger river mouth.

The rows of sandbars and dunes along the coastline formed as the Tsushima Current pushed back the sand and earth that the two rivers carried out to sea. The water that was dammed up by these dunes in turn came to form countless marshes, both large and small, and resulted in the formation of a low-lying marsh region. Niigata’s port acted as a junction between the inland waterways formed by these marshes and the rivers in the area, and the transportations routes on the Sea of Japan.

Land reclamation projects beginning in the 17th century led to the creation of drainage channels and drainage pump stations, and the marshes were transformed into the vast rice paddies that stretch across the Niigata Plain. Among Japan’s large cities, Niigata City stands out as a city where rice paddies cover a large area within the city limits. In Niigata City there are a number of towns that were once river ports. Additionally, there are marshes such as Toyonogata, Fukushimagata, and Sakata, which still embody the former landscape. An industrial area has developed between the mouths of the two great rivers. In the South-Western part of Niigata City there are many historical religious sites scattered around Kakuda Mountain and Yahiko Mountain, which have been famous religious sights since times of old.

About the Water and Land –Niigata Art Festival

This will be the second Water and Land – Niigata Art Festival—the first having been held in 2009 under event director Fram KITAGAWA, who focused on Niigata’s two main characteristics: water and land. Art work exploring the history, memories and culture of Niigata were presented indoors and outdoors throughout the city, taking place at such locations as lagoons, drainage pump stations, museums and houses.