

## MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

*What can be done? We must risk mortality and decay.*  
—Yuji Agematsu

One of the distinguishing features of Agematsu's singular art he has been producing in New York for more than 30 years is that in it the gap separating the activity of collecting things from that of making art has collapsed once and for all. What brings the two together, what makes one equal to the other is the primacy of intense and focused observation.

What, then, are we to make of an archive which goes in reverse, or of an exhibition which accelerates its demise? What are we to think of an art work in conflict with self-importance, including the self-importance endemic to art and preservation? How are we to understand an artist whose work consists almost exclusively of small acts of neglect; someone who almost always makes the same thing and yet never repeats himself, to whom his own work, honed on the tiniest details, becomes pleasantly incomprehensible and has the tendency to dissolve upon seeing it, so that only a few hours after encountering it, one can barely remember the ephemeral matter of which it was made?

...

One of life's hardest jobs, it turns out, is to make a quick understanding slow. When we began, I was omniscient, and interested in opinion rather than creation. I had forgotten, I suppose, a terrifying thing I warn others against—measly palliatives. My slogan was, "No amount of assertion will make an ounce of art," but I forgot it. Too much of a temptation to get in the first critical word, I guess. Don't get me wrong, I like trying out ideas on his work, but I am suspicious of how quickly they come. For every darkened thought on capitalism, comes another in love with the way our lives are grinding the earth to a halt, or still another about the distinctions we make between what is and isn't animate. Thinking hasn't been the problem, as it so often is; the problem has been the number of thoughts one can pant after. Waste is of intensest significance. It is emblematic, in some ways, for how we invest a universal subject with pet knowledge and particular anxiety. It means and means and means, and in some hands can mean too much.

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It must be a difficult step for any artist to decide to work with trash, to take it, with all its rigid contrivances, folly, and lapses in taste, at all seriously. But Agematsu overthrows the genre with his free-wheeling conception, facility, and ingenious, almost childlike, love of contradiction. Precise and superabundant, deadly serious and ebullient, filthy and dignified, Agematsu exposes us to these opposites, and if he wishes to make something black, to also confront beauty. He never fails to be in awe of the sense of mystery that attaches itself to the particulars of things. It is this awe and his facility that keep this work from being yet another example of de-contextualization, which received its awkward name in the late twentieth century and was a fixture of that century's visual culture. Burial masks decorate orthopedics' waiting rooms, airplane propellers on display in coffee shops—these are familiar forms of the practice of taking something from where it belongs and putting it where it doesn't belong, to be merely observed.

...

The traces he does leave are so faint as to be effaced altogether. Sometimes he cheats and adds a little glue, but he never imposes his will. Found things, as Agematsu likes to say, are so much more bent than he could ever make them. What the city delivers is never stale. It stupefies, it awes, and finally it even embarrasses one's own meager imagination.

Odd how matter so factual can amount to such an extraterrestrial mood. It is eerie, isn't it, when what at first seems incidental returns with significance. Of course, in art we expect matter, however mundane, to return changed, and yet, specific moments of transformation, when they do appear, can still take us by surprise. I'll never get used to the feeling of a dead thing becoming warm and capable.

...

At the time, Agematsu shot so many photographs that he was unable to keep up with the editing, gradually gave up trying to do so, and by the end, had stopped looking at—or processing—what he'd shot. The idea that we

photograph to find out what something will look like photographed became, effectively, to not bother finding out what something will look like photographed, to photograph for the sake of photographing. This is a high stakes wager—have we so internalized what making and collecting images does to things that we no longer need to look at them? I am tempted to count these photos a prolific chronicle of human behavior, but this gets it backward. Agematsu is an anti-sociologist. He likes the city the way Beckett liked the circus. The city is a backdrop, a stage for something else, something that goes unsuppressed, a posthumous vibe, the illogical feeling that this work was made by someone who is already dead.

—Robert Snowden, *Yuji Agematsu*, Yale Union, exh. pamphlet, 2014

*Yuji Agematsu (b. 1956, Kanagawa, Japan) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Agematsu studied with Tokio Hasegawa, a member of the band Taj Mahal Travellers, and the jazz drummer and choreographer Milford Graves. He has had solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery (New York, 2017 & 2019), Contemporary Art Centre (Vilnius, 2019), Lulu (Mexico City, 2019), the Power Station (Dallas, 2018), Artspeak (Vancouver, 2014), Real Fine Arts (Brooklyn, 2012 & 2014), Anthology Film Archives (New York, 2004), and TZ'Art & Co. (New York, 1994). In 2014, Agematsu mounted a large scale exhibition at Yale Union (Portland, OR), which was accompanied by the monograph ZIP: 01-01-14...12-31-14, published by Yale Union, Thea Westreich Wagner/Ethan Wagner Publications, and Artspeak. Agematsu was prominently included in the 57<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2018), and was previously shown in Speak Lokal, Kunsthalle Zurich (2017), Serialities, organized by Olivier Renaud-Clément, Hauser & Wirth (New York, 2017), The Keeper, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, New Museum (New York, 2016), and Looking Back / The 7th White Columns Annual, selected by Richard Birkett (2013). His performances have taken place at the Swiss Institute (New York, 2018), Artists Space (New York, 2017), and as part of the solo presentation Walk on A, B, C, organized by Jay Sanders for the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 2016). His work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Walker Art Center, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Brooklyn Museum, The Israel Museum, The Columbus Museum of Art, the Loewe Foundation, and the Pinault Collection.*

# MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

## YUJI AGEMATSU

Born in Kanagawa, Japan, 1956  
Lives and works in New York

### EDUCATION

**1984**

BA, Friends World College, New York

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

**2020**

Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, NY (forthcoming)

**2019**

1995 & 2003, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, NY

zip: 05.01.14 . . . 05.31.14, Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius, Lithuania

Mexico City: April 1 to 13, 2019, Lulu, Mexico City, MX

**2018**

*Day by Day*, The Power Station, Dallas, TX

**2017**

*Self-Portrait*, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, NY

**2015**

Real Fine Arts, Brooklyn, NY

*Walk on A, B, C*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

**2014**

Artspeak, Vancouver, Canada

Yale Union, Portland, OR

**2012**

Real Fine Arts, Brooklyn, NY

**2004**

Anthology Film Archives, curated by Andrew Lampert, New York, NY

**1993**

TZ'Art & Co. (Frederieke Taylor), New York, NY

### SELECTED GROUP & TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

**2021**

*La Mer Imaginaire*, curated by Chris Sharp, La Fondation Carmignac, France (forthcoming)

*Le Contre-Ciel*, curated by Olivia Shao, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong (forthcoming)

**2020**

*Cito, Longe, Tarde*, Haynes Project, Chicago, IL

*Yuji Agematsu & On Kawara: Au jour le joue*, La Maison de Rendez-Vous, Brussels, Belgium

*Strange Attractors: Lost In Space*, curated by Bob Nickas, Apalazzo Gallery, Brescia, Italy (forthcoming)

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**2019**

*Japan Is America*, Fergus McCaffrey, New York, NY

*On the Backlot*, Balice Hertling, Paris

*City Prince/sses*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

*Material History: Yuji Agematsu, Charles Harlan, Nari Ward*, JDJ | The Ice House, Garrison, NY

**2018**

*Other Walks, Other Lines*: curated by Lauren Schell Dickens San José Museum of Art, San José, CA

*Maison Dakota*, Super Dakota, Brussels

*We the People: New Art from the Collection*, co-curated by Jan Sirén and Tina Rivers Ryan, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY

*Carnegie International, 57th Edition*, curated by Ingrid Schaffner, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA

*Strange Attractors: The Anthology of Interplanetary Folk Art, Vol. 2: The Rings of Saturn*, organized by Bob Nickas, Kerry Schuss Gallery, New York

*The Point is to Exchange It*, curated by Leah Pires, Shanaynay, Paris

*Something (you can't see, on the other side, of the wall from this side) casts a shadow*, curated by Juana Berrío, SOMArts, San Francisco, CA

*Separation*, organized by Matt Moravec, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York, NY

*READYMADES BELONG TO EVERYONE*, curated by Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen, Swiss Institute Architecture and Design Series: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, New York, NY

*Objects Like Us*, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT

*Ritual*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO

*The Lulennial II: A Low-Hanging Fruit*, curated by Andrew Berardini and Chris Sharp, Lulu, Mexico City

**2017**

*Social Surfaces*, Artists Space, New York, NY

*Botánica*, curated by Todd Von Ammon, Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA

*Sunlight arrives only at its proper hour*, curated by Mitchell Albus and Olivia Shao, 356 Mission, Los Angeles, CA

*Another Man's Treasure*, Edward Ressler, New York, NY

*Speak Lokal*, Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland

*Serialities*, organized by Olivier Renaud-Clément, Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY

**2016**

*The Keeper*, New Museum, New York, NY

**2015**

*2035*, Forde, Geneva, Switzerland

*National Gallery 2: Empire*, Chewday's, London, UK

*A Walk . . .*, Tripoli Gallery, East Hampton, New York, NY

*System of a Down*, Ellis King Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

**2014**

*Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY

*Warm Side of Zero*, Overduin & Co., Los Angeles, CA

**2013**

*Reckless Head*, Michael Benevento, Los Angeles, CA

*Looking Back / The 7th White Columns Annual* – Selected by Richard Birkett, White Columns, New York, NY

**2012**

*Neue Alte Brücke & Real Fine Arts*, Valentin, Paris, France

*Vision Quest*, Nicole Klagsbrun, New York, NY

**2010**

*Knight's Move*, performance program, organized by Jay Sanders, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY

**2009**

*Pipe Dreams*, Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY

**2005**

*City/Space/Image: The 'Indiscreet Gaze'*, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan

**1995**

TZ'Art & Co. (Frederieke Taylor), New York, NY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**2019**

Avgikos, Jan. "Yuji Agematsu: 1995 & 2003," *The Brooklyn Rail*, June

Fenstermaker, Will. "Yuji Agematsu," Critics' Picks, *Artforum.com*, May

Sharp, Chris. "Yuji Agematsu as 'Primal Historian'," *Mousse Magazine*, No. 67, Spring

"Adhesives: Aggregating Identity. A Walk With Yuji Agematsu (03-15-19, 4:04-4:56 PM)," *CCS Recollection*, No. 1

Bocchi, Paolo. "Yuji Agematsu: Urban Ikebana," *D360*, March 28

Belcove, Julie. "Marking Time with Yuji Agematsu," *The New Yorker*, January 21

**2018**

Cohen, Alina. "The Carnegie International Puts Joy before Politics," *Artsy*, October 18

Dafoe, Taylor. "The Carnegie International Wants You to Feel 'Museum Joy' Again, With Mr. Rogers, Vietnamese Coffee, and Its Own Past," *Artnet News*, October 18

Pobric, Pac. "Pittsburgh's Carnegie International is a DIY (Do Interpret Yourself) exhibition," *The Art Newspaper*, October 17

Russeth, Andrew. "Labors of Love: The 2018 Carnegie International Is Buoyant, Beautiful, and Strangely Conservative," *ARTnews*, October 15

Casadio, Mariuccia. "The art in a pocket," *Vogue Italia*, No. 818, October

"Getting Their Due," The Artsy Vanguard, *Artsy*, April

Piseno, Tabitha. "Yuji Agematsu," Critics' Picks, *Artforum.com*, February

**2017**

Campbell, Andy. "Sunlight arrives only at its proper hour," Critics' Picks, *Artforum.com*, June

Battaglia, Andy. "Search & Preserve: Yuji Agematsu makes monuments to travels near and dear," *ARTnews*, Summer

Müller, Christian Philipp. "With or Without," *Texte zur Kunst*, No. 106, June

Yu, Wang. "Yuji Agematsu: Self-Portrait," *Artforum.com.cn*, March 25

Heinrich, Will. "Galleries: Yuji Agematsu," *The New York Times*, March 24

Droitcour, Brian. "Yuji Agematsu," The Lookout, *ArtinAmerica.com*, March 23

**2016**

"The To-Do List in New York: Brooklyn," *Harper's Bazaar Japan (Travel Guide)*, October

Voon, Claire. "Preserving the Stories Behind Painstakingly Compiled Collections," *Hyperallergic*, September 14

Cotter, Holland. "Art in Review: 'The Keeper' Reveals the Passion for Collecting," *The New York Times*, July 21

Gioni, Massimiliano and Natalie Bell (eds.). *The Keeper*. New York: New Museum (exhibition catalogue)

**2015**

Russeth, Andrew. "The Year in the Galleries of New York," *ARTnews*, December  
"Artists' Artists," *Artforum*, December

Kitnick, Alex. "Yuji Agematsu, Real Fine Arts, New York," *Artforum*, September

Shen Goodman, Matthew. "Yuji Agematsu," *Frieze*, No. 173, September

"Yuji Agematsu at Real Fine Arts," *Contemporary Art Writing Daily*, June 4  
"Who Won New York's Frieze Week 2015?," *New York Observer*, May 19  
Battaglia, Andy. "The Frieze Art Fair, Frame by Frame," *Wall Street Journal*, May 15  
"500 Words: Yuji Agematsu," *Artforum.com*, May 5

#### **2014**

Yerman, Marcia G. "Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond," *Huffpost Live*, October 31  
Irvin, Nick. "Yuji Agematsu," *Art in America*, September  
Raymond, Jon. "Yuji Agematsu," *Artforum*, September

#### **2013**

Fujimori, Manami. "New York," *Bijutsu Techo*, Vol. 65, No. 982, April  
"There's Something About Yuji Agematsu," *Canvas WallArt*, March  
Cotter, Holland. "Looking Back: The 7<sup>th</sup> White Columns Annual," *The New York Times*, February 7  
Pollack, Maika. "Looking Back / The 7<sup>th</sup> White Columns Annual at White Columns," *GalleristNY.com*, January 15

#### **2012**

Tsai, Eugenie. "Vessel Elements: Artists to Watch, Yuji Agematsu," *Canteen*, Fall/Winter  
Haynes, Ebony L. "Yuji Agematsu, Real Fine Arts," *C Magazine*, Winter  
Van Voorhees, Roger. "Yuji Agematsu," *The Brooklyn Rail*, May  
"Goings On About Town," *The New Yorker*, April 30  
Smith, Roberta. "Art in Review: Yuji Agematsu," *The New York Times*, April 19

### **GRANTS & AWARDS**

#### **2015**

Biennial Award, The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation

### **PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY  
Brooklyn Museum, New York  
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH  
Pinault Collection  
Loewe Foundation, Madrid, Spain  
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York