

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?

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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 was born in 1956 in Kanagawa, Japan. He 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 TZ Art & Co. (1994), Anthology Film Archives, New York (2004), as well as at Yale Union, Portland (2014), Artspeak, Vancouver (2014), and Real Fine Arts, Brooklyn (2012 & 2014). His work was included in the 57th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh. In 2015, he was the focus of Walk on A, B, C, organized by Jay Sanders at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Among other group exhibitions, Agematsu's work was included in The Keeper, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, New Museum, New York (2016), Speak Lokal, Kunsthalle Zurich (2017), Serialities, organized by Olivier Renaud-Clément, Hauser & Wirth, New York (2017), Ritual, curated by Courtenay Finn, Aspen Art Museum (2017), as well as in Looking Back / The 7th White Columns Annual, New York, selected by Richard Birkett (2013). Self-Portrait, his first large scale one-person exhibition was held in 2017 in both spaces of Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York. In January 2018, he will open a solo show at the Power Station, Dallas with an accompanying catalogue, and will participate in Objects Like Us, curated by Amy Smith-Stewart, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT in the spring of 2018. His work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Pinault Collection.

In 2015, the monograph ZIP: 01-01-14...12-31-14, was published by Artspeak, Thea Westreich Wagner/Ethan Wagner Publications, and Yale Union.

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

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

2019

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: 3rd 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 Algus and Olivia Shao, 356 Mission, Los Angeles, CA

Another Man's Treasure, Edward Ressle, 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

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

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

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

"There's Something About Yuji Agematsu," *Canvas Wall Art*, March
Cotter, Holland. "Looking Back: The 7th White Columns Annual," *The New York Times*, February 7
Pollack, Maika. "Looking Back / The 7th 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*, August
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
François Pinault Foundation
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York