

Signs and Sounds – Songs and Whirls

Atsushi Fukunaga is interested in exploring the topic of communication in a broader sense. He believes that communication goes beyond the structure of language and the cultural structures: every one of us, through our inner sounds – the most deep and spontaneous one – can get in touch with one another, even if our background and history are different and distant.

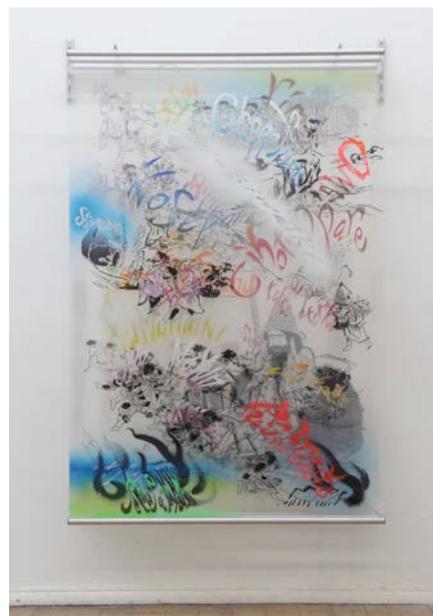
Fukunaga likes to collaborate with people from different communities and explores onomatopoeias and ways to reproduce those inner sounds through the human voice or the written words. In order to achieve this, the Japanese artist approaches this research through two main bodies of work, one which is made of sound pieces and the second relating to collages and layers overlapping.

In the sound pieces, Fukunaga asks strangers to emit the sounds of creatures and environmental sounds, then records them and creates symphonies of weird sonic collection, which diffused in the darkness of a room or outside in the nature mix with the actual sound background of the place. The result is an all-encompassing soundscape in which visitors are immersed, without let them know if what they are listening to are real creatures, human voices or spirits gurglings.

The plastic works on collages recall the overlapping sounds by physically bringing together different layers carrying on written letters and drawings. Over the years, Fukunaga practice has expanded: from small squared objects recalling the photographic frames that instead of a picture show a condensed portrait of written sounds and onomatopoeia related to a certain part of the world, to large transparent foils hanging from the wall. For these last one, the artist asked people to directly connect with the piece by writing their idea of a sound after looking at a specific image. The written onomatopoeia is then combined with the image and with other pictures read through the same process by other people. One of these collages has a more political take, because it was realised during a residency the artist made in Sapporo and explores the effects of the Japanese colonisation on the island – a territory that had his history and language erased by the coloniser over the centuries. The artist, however, doesn't want to relate necessary to politics when creating his work and albeit his practice might be read as such, he finds that as quite reductive, since Fukunaga is researching on what connects us through non-verbal communication, and not on the uses of languages of power only. His last series of work takes origin from the universally known fairy tales from Hans Christian Andersen. The artist selected a number of fables from the Danish author's famous collection and extracted some passages depicting synesthetic images. He then



The images of sound installations



Echoic billboard – Aino Fuzoku Emaki – 2017 / Polyester film, poster hanger, vinyl film, marker pen / 183 x 120 x 20 cm / Translation in Ainu language

asked people to read them and to say the sound that specific image produced in their mind. The chosen passage and the transliterated sound created by the human reader are then put together by the artist on mirrored surfaces, creating small objects carrying these combined, synesthetic excerpts. Fragments that, once again, are put together in the combination of multiple objects placed together. However, the layers are here horizontally displayed, immersing the visitor in a labyrinth of mirrors in which he or she can sometimes see him or herself.

Atsushi Fukunaga plays with reversing the idea of near and far, disrupting any hierarchies of languages and histories. Visitors are invited in a joyful, chaotic universe, in order to understand that there is no “us” and “them”, asking us to rethink of our artificial categories made to cope with the world.

Elisa Rusca, art historian

Berlin, 2018



Storyteller – Hans Christian Andersen – 2018 / Glass, mirror, frame, vinyl film, wire / dimensions variable / 22 pieces