

Press Release

Obayashi Foundation Research Program

What would an artist-conceived “City” look like?

Exhibition: AIDA Makoto “GROUND NO PLAN”

Dates Saturday, February 10–Friday, 24, 2018

Venue Aoyama Crystal Building B1F/B2F, 3-5-12 Kita-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo

The Obayashi Foundation has recently launched a new assisting program, “Visions of the City—Obayashi Foundation Research Program.” Based on the recommendations of our five-member selection committee¹, every two years an artist or a group of artists from Japan or abroad endowed with an abundance of free-ranging ideas and a strong interest in cities will be selected to examine and investigate the various problems facing urban areas from a completely different perspective than that of conventional urban planning, and will then make suggestions or proposals for an innovative or ideal natures of cities, or a city that the artist would like to live in.

The first recipient of the “Visions of the City” grant is AIDA Makoto, an artist whose subject matter deals with everything from nymphets, the erotic and grotesque to war, violence, and politics and who has been, and continues to be, scathingly critical of contemporary Japanese society. AIDA Makoto’s “GROUND NO PLAN” funded by the grant will be held at a special event space in Omotesando, Tokyo, from February 10 to February 24, 2018. AIDA plans to make use of various media including drawings, conceptual drawing, scale models, paintings, installations, film and texts to depict the future “City-” and “Land-”scape that he envisions.



© AIDA Makoto Courtesy of Mizuma Art Gallery

Exhibition

Title Exhibition: AIDA Makoto “GROUND NO PLAN”

Dates Saturday, February 10–Friday, February 24, 2018

Admission Free

Hours 10:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. (7:30 p.m. on Friday)

Venue Aoyama Crystal Building B1F/B2F, 3-5-12 Kita-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Contact Tel. +81-(0)3-3546-7581 (Obayashi Foundation office) / Email: obf-zaidan@obayashi.co.jp

Website <http://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/>

Presentation

A presentation by AIDA Makoto will be held in conjunction with the exhibition. (Japanese only)

Date Sunday, February 11, 2018

Admission Free (pre-registration required)

Time 1:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m. (doors open at 1:00 p.m.)

Venue Roppongi Academyhills (Roppongi Hills Mori Tower 49F, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo)

How to apply Pre-registration on the Foundation’s website is expected to begin in late December 2017.

About the Work

In the past, beginning with “Shinjyuku-Gyoen Grand Transforming Project” (2001) and the “人 (Hi-to = human being) Project” (2002), I have created several works in which I purposely put forward plans as kinds of thought experiments for public spaces that were either “practically impossible to implement” or ones that “should never be implemented” in the first place. This exhibit will likely be an opportunity to retrospectively present this type of work along with some new ideas.

These works will sometimes be specific structures, sometimes just vague ideas about the environment. In each case the plan is to range widely from “realistic to unrealistic,” from “serious to gags (some black, some not)” without any sense of unity. The impression will probably be that of “a bunch ideas let loose to roam freely in total chaos.”

As is standard practice, the heart of the exhibit will be conceptual drawing and scale models of plans. But there will also be a lot of placards containing texts in which I pose questions and try to answer them. That is because, as an artist who is a complete outsider when it comes to architecture and urban planning, I want to be as subjective as possible about the fun or risk of committing to urban planning (since city planning, especially, is a genre that tends in principle to “look down on” things, extreme caution is necessary.)

When it comes to the present and future state of Japan and Tokyo, to be honest, I can’t help feeling pessimistic. But I don’t want this exhibit to reflect that or make it into something dark and gloomy. I hope to gain “wings of imagination that let me make an astonishingly giant leap,” but—anyway, I will try my best.

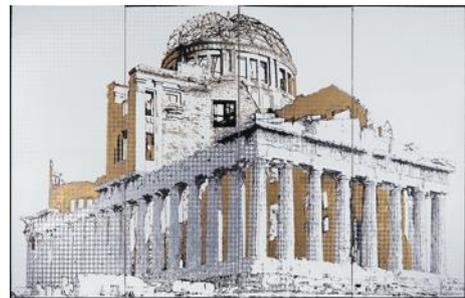
AIDA Makoto

Background

Born 1965 in Niigata. In 1991 he graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts' Fine Art Department with a BFA and a MFA in oil painting. Moving freely to and fro between society and history, across the borders between contemporary and pre-modern, east and west with a body of work that includes pretty young girls, war paintings, and salarymen, Aida's distinctive style featuring bizarre contrasts and scathing critique has earned him a sizeable following among people of all ages. His works in such varied fields as painting, photography, film, sculpture, performance, installation, literature and manga have been exhibited widely both within Japan and abroad.

Significant solo exhibitions in recent years include "Monument for Nothing" (Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2012-13), "So, this is what they call 'Still Alive'" (Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2015), and "Let us dream of evanescence, and linger in the beautiful foolishness of things." (Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, 2016).

Images for Publicity Purposes / Past Works



Top left: “Grand Plan to Alter Shinjuku-Gyoen National Garden” (detail) / 2001

Top right: “No One Knows the Title” (War Picture Returns) / 1996 Photo by Kei Miyajima

Bottom right: (right) “The Aida Family (Manifesto)” / 2015

(left) “The Video of a Man Calling Himself Japan’s Prime Minister Making a Speech at an International Assembly” / 2014

View from the exhibit “An Exhibition for Children: Whose Place is This?” Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo / 2015 Photo by Kei Miyajima

All works © AIDA Makoto Courtesy of Mizuma Art Gallery

About the Assisting Program “Visions of the City – Obayashi Foundation Research Program”

The Foundation was established in September, 1998 as the Obayashi Foundation to Promote Urban Studies. As the name implies, we have endeavored to advance the development of urban studies in Japan by supporting those engaged in research activities leading to urban development that would enable people living in cities to have richer, more fulfilling lives. In September, 2010, we received official accreditation from the Cabinet Office as a public interest incorporated foundation; the following September we changed our name to the Obayashi Foundation, but continue to maintain our same basic philosophy.

After the period of postwar reconstruction, Japan achieved high economic growth and became quite wealthy in a material sense; the urban environment also became more efficient and more convenient. Although cities in Japan could be said to have become richer, if asked whether the inner lives of people had truly become more fulfilling, one would be hard pressed how to answer. If we recall how for some time after the war Japan was desperate to revitalize its war-scorched land and that ours is a country with an unprecedented level of natural disasters, it is understandable that the building of durable infrastructure to protect people’s lives has long been the government’s top priority.

On the other hand, when we look around the world, there are many poverty-stricken regions, and for the people in them whatever facilities there may be are merely a means of carrying on their lives. Although this can be said of urban areas throughout the world, cities have given rise to numerous problems such as excessive concentration of populations, air pollution from industrial clusters and the widespread use of automobiles, the loss of the natural environment, and the occurrence of abnormal weather conditions as a result of greenhouse gases. In Japan recently, as an aging population and a low birthrate lead to a population decline, social problems are also arising, such as abandoned houses and people dying alone and their deaths going unnoticed for long periods of time.

Wouldn’t it be possible to contribute somehow to the study of cities with a focus on interaction among people by rethinking urban development as a way to make people’s lives richer and more fulfilling? Cities exist, people exist, and there are many relationships between the two; this means thinking about supporting studies in a wide range of areas related to people and cities they live in—the arts, the economy, the environment and history, for example.

Now, our foundation is asking not experts on cities or urban engineering but artists from Japan or abroad who are endowed with an abundance of free-ranging ideas and a strong interest in cities to consider the various problems facing cities and do research on innovative or ideal forms of cities and cities that they themselves would like to live in.

When I think about it, never before has there been an organization that provides support to an artist to think about or study the topic of the city. The assisting program “Visions of the City—Obayashi Research Program” meets that need.

Takeo Obayashi, Chairperson
The Obayashi Foundation
October 2017

※ 1) Selection Committees

Chairperson	Fumihiko Sumitomo	Director, Arts Maebashi Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts, Graduate School of Global Arts
Vice Chairperson	Shihoko Iida	Independent Curator
Committee	Shinobu Nomura	Curator, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery
	Kenjiro Hosaka	Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
	Tomoko Yabumae	Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

Comments from the Chairperson of the Selection Committee

What sort of vision for the city would an artist come up with? Supporting such a project has a forward-looking, future-oriented feel to it; in fact, I think it is quite radical. The time when a utopian creativity was popular no longer exists; today, economic and administrative rationale pervades every aspect of the city. If we want to know the sort of city an artist might envision, one that dares to give expression to an individual’s sensitivity, it would be completely different, I believe, from what the national or local government or a business would design. In our urgent pursuit of coexistence with others and harmony with the global environment, shouldn’t we entrust our hopes and dreams to such a vision? With these ideas in mind, the selection committee members proposed the names of many artists and selected the one most suitable for this project. Our discussions ranged widely over many aspects from past works to generational differences, but among them I think everyone agreed on the choice of Makoto Aida for its radicalness. I am confident that Mr. Aida’s selection as the first person to receive this new form of support for artistic creativity will strongly communicate the message this project has and will continue to have.

Fumihiko Sumitomo
Director, Arts Maebashi
Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts,
Graduate school of Arts

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