

Press Release April 17, 2025

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

“Visions of the City - Obayashi Foundation Research Program”

Ho Rui An Selected as Fifth Recipient



The Obayashi Foundation has selected Ho Rui An, an artist and writer from Singapore working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory, for its fifth recipient of the Visions of the City - Obayashi Foundation Research Program.

This program, unlike any other in the world, supports artists in Japan and abroad who can expand the theme of the city in their artistic expression in ways that are different from conventional urban planning, providing an opportunity for them to exercise their unique artist's perspective to present a new vision of a city.

Regarding the selection of this recipient, selection committee chairperson Shino Nomura commented, “Ho's perspective in researching and investigating the impact of historical conditions on contemporary nation states and market mechanisms, looking at East and Southeast Asia by examining the trading networks of some of the world's most essential commodities brings into relief so-called meta-markets, an important yet invisible foundation that shapes cities. What light will this research shed on cities and contemporary society using narratives as only an artist can? We look forward to the novel proposals that are sure to come from this artist from the youngest generation yet to be selected for this grant.”

As previous recipients Makoto Aida (first recipient), Theaster Gates (second recipient), exonemo (third recipient), Minouk Lim (fourth recipient) have done, Ho will conduct research and investigation activities for the length of the 2025 fiscal year. Details on presentations and activities will be announced as they are decided.

| Fifth grant recipient

Ho Rui An

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Through lectures, essays and films, his research examines the relations between labour, technology and capital across different systems of governance in a global age. He has presented projects at the Shanghai Biennale; Bangkok Art Biennale; Gwangju Biennale; Jakarta Biennale; Kochi-Muziris Biennale; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Kunsthalle Wien; Singapore Art Museum; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; and Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media, Japan.

Reference Images



Upper Left - *A Petropolis in a Garden with a Long View* (2024) Courtesy of A+ Works of Art, Photo: Quinn Lum

Upper Right - *Figures of History and the Grounds of Intelligence* (2024) Courtesy of A+ Works of Art, Photo: Quinn Lum

Lower Left - *24 Cinematic Points of View of a Factory Gate in China* (2023) Courtesy of the artist

Lower Right - *Student Bodies* (2019) Courtesy of the artist

| Chairperson Comment

The Visions of the City - Obayashi Foundation Research Program, created by the Obayashi Foundation in 2017, is a grant that provides an opportunity for artists to investigate, research, and propose ways for cities to be. The selected artists so far have used the grant to indicate new perspectives on cities from their own unique perspectives, building on their prolific artistic achievements.

This time, with our fifth recommendation/selection committee, partially due to the post-pandemic, not only artists based in Japan but around the world were nominated. The conflicts, disasters, and disparity issues erupting around the world had no small impact on the artist selection process for this city-themed grant. One characteristic of the selection process this time was the way many of the nominated artists were known for production and activities that could not be contained within the narrow definition of 'art,' centering their practices on fashion, street culture, social media, performance, and more.

After careful deliberation, we selected Ho Rui An, born and based in Singapore, to be the grant recipient. He is known for creating lecture performances and video works that take a critical perspective on global capitalist systems and explain how contemporary capitalist economics came to be in East Asia and Southeast Asia—not to mention the deep-rooted impact of the West—drawing from broadly researched historical and contemporary cultural materials. Ho's perspective in researching and investigating the impact of historical conditions on contemporary nation states and market mechanisms, looking at East and Southeast Asia by examining the trading networks of some of the world's most essential commodities brings into relief so-called meta-markets, an important yet invisible foundation that shapes cities. What light will this research shed on cities and contemporary society using narratives as only an artist can? We look forward to the novel proposals that are sure to come from this artist from the youngest generation yet to be selected for this grant."

Shino Nomura

| Selection committee

Chairperson: Shino Nomura (Senior Curator, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery)

Vice Chairperson: Kenjiro Hosaka (Director, Shiga Museum of Art)

Committee: Shihoko Iida (Curator) Koichiro Osaka (Founder / Director, ASAKUSA) Tomoko Yabumae (Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo)

| About "Visions of the City - Obayashi Foundation Research Program"

This creative grant program is carried out every two years by Obayashi Foundation with the aim of supporting artists' research and investigation activities on the theme of "cities." Launched in 2017, the program is being held this year for the fifth time. Based on recommendations of a five-member selection committee, the program awards grants to artists with an abundance of creative ideas and a strong interest in the life of cities. Selected artists carry out research and investigations on issues facing urban areas, from original perspectives that differ from conventional approaches to urban planning, and present ideas and proposals for approaches to a city in which they would like to live or to an innovative or ideal type of urban environment.

Artist's present their work in exhibitions, talk events, performances, and other ways befitting their media, and a limited-edition catalogue is also published.

<https://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/>

| Message from the Chairman

This foundation was established in September 1998 under the name Obayashi Foundation to Promote Urban Studies. As the name suggests, we have worked to advance the development of urban research in Japan by supporting those engaged in research activity to help actualize urban planning that will enrich the lives of city residents. In September 2010 the foundation received accreditation from Japan's Cabinet Office as a public interest incorporated foundation. In September 2011 we changed

the name to our current name, Obayashi Foundation, while maintaining the same fundamental philosophy.

Following the postwar reconstruction period, Japan achieved remarkable economic growth and became a materially wealthy nation while at the same time creating highly efficient and convenient urban environments. But even though these cities had come to be viewed as rich, it would be difficult to say whether the inner lives of the people residing in them had truly become richer. Considering that, for some time after the war, Japan was engaged in frantic efforts to revive its battle-scorched land, as well as the fact that our country experiences an extraordinary number of natural disasters, it is not surprising that the nation's top priority for many years was to build a durable infrastructure to protect the lives of its people.

On the other hand, there are many impoverished areas in the world where, for people who live there, the facilities in place are merely a means by which to go on living. The entire world, moreover, faces common problems including excessive population concentration in cities, air pollution caused by widespread automobile use and industrial agglomeration, depletion of the natural environment, and abnormal weather due to greenhouse gas emissions. In today's Japan, where the decreasing birth rate and the aging of society have led to population decline, there has also been an emergence of various social problems such as the abandonment of vacant houses and the phenomenon of people dying alone in their homes.

Isn't there some way to rethink urban development as a way to make people's lives richer and more fulfilling, and contribute to the study of cities in terms of interaction among human beings? Cities and people co-exist, and our idea was to support research on the various relationships between them in a wide range of fields connected with cities and people, including the arts, the economy, the environment, and history.

Rather than call upon experts on cities or urban engineering, in this program we are asking artists from Japan and overseas who have an abundance of creative ideas and a strong interest in cities to consider various issues facing cities and conduct research on approaches to a city in which they would like to live or to an innovative or ideal type of urban environment.

Actually, I don't think there has ever before been an organization that supports artists who research and think about the subject of cities. The grant program "Visions of the City - Obayashi Foundation Research Program" is meeting that need.

Takeo Obayashi
Chairman of the Board
The Obayashi Foundation

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Appendix | Previous recipients



Grant Program No. 1 (2017)

Makoto Aida

Exhibition: "GROUND NO PLAN"

Archive:

https://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/event/2017_aidamakoto/

Courtesy Mizuma Art Gallery



Grant Program No. 2 (2019)

Theaster Gates

Research and presentation: "To Be a Maker: Finding Afro-Mingei"

Catalog: "ECONOMIES OF MINGEI" Archive:

https://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/profile/2019_theaster_gates.php#pager01

Photo: Rankin



Grant Program No. 3 (2021)

exonemo

Catalog: "Infected Cities"

Archive:

https://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/profile/2021_exonemo.php#pager01

Photo: Niko



Grant Program No. 4 (2023)

Minouk Lim

Exhibition: "Hyper Yellow"

Performance: "S.O.S - Run Shin Shin"

Artist Talk:

Catalog: "Hyper Yellow"

Archive:

https://www.obayashifoundation.org/urbanvision/profile/2023_minouk_lim.php#pager01