

Gallery 3

Beyond Pages, 1995-1997

Custom-made table with digitizer tablet, table lamp, chair, data projector x 2, PowerMac 7600, speaker

Beyond Pages is representative of Fujihata's hybrid multimedia arrangements of physical objects and interactive computing. The 'book' on the table is activated by the viewer's use of a special pen, which triggers the turning of the pages and the manipulation of the images (i.e. an apple has a bite taken out of it, a door opens, a light switches on and off). This work also proposes new semantic issues, wherein the viewer is simultaneously confronted with the written object, the image of the object and the virtualization of the object. As Jeffrey Shaw has remarked; "*Beyond Pages* definitively and convincingly shows us that our information spaces are no longer bound within their traditional wrappers (book, stage, screen, canvas, etc.) - instead they can manifest themselves as ubiquitous presences that move between and link together the totality of things in a new imaginary of being."

Off-Sense, 2006

PC+Monitor x 6 (Expandable), data projector, LAN

The physical space of the gallery becomes entangled with the navigable space of the virtual environment in *Off-Sense*. This sprawling installation of computer hardware provides access to a virtual world, where avatars float, roam and communicate autonomously through a self-enclosed environment. Based on the question of whether computers can emulate human conversation, these avatars explore the

networked space and engage in nonsensical exchanges with each other (in an approximation of human discourse that is drawn from databases conforming to specific Q&A rule-sets). The viewer observes all of this from the outside, as if looking into a fish tank, with the jumble of cabling and monitors that occupies the gallery space contrasting sharply with the clean and wireless virtual world.

Biography

Masaki Fujihata was born in Tokyo, and graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Toyko University of the Arts. He currently teaches at Toyko University, in the department of Inter Media Art. Masaki Fujihata has exhibited in galleries and museums around the world, including Centre for Image Contemporary, Geneva, Switzerland; Art Space Kimura, Tokyo, Japan; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; PS1, Long Island, New York, USA; firstsite gallery, Colchester, UK; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, Portugal; KIASMA, Helsinki, Finland; and ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany. In addition, his series of 'Field-Works' projects have been included in a number of international art exhibitions including Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria; Transmediale, Berlin, Germany; Future-Cinema, Karlsruhe, Lille, Helsinki and Tokyo; and Yokohama 2001: International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, Japan. Fujihata also participated in Web3D Art and the exhibition symposium for Lab3D at Cornerhouse in 2003.

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Fri 22 August - Sun 19 October

MASAKI FUJIHATA

The Conquest of Imperfection

curated by Kathy Rae Huffman

The Conquest of Imperfection is the first major UK exhibition of Japanese media artist Masaki Fujihata's acclaimed interactive work, featuring eight installations created by the artist between 1996 and 2008, including a new work created specially for Cornerhouse.

Fujihata's immersive and spectacular environments have extended the field of artistic practice to incorporate a number of new technologies and traditional visual techniques; computer graphics, the Internet, GPS, location based and distributed computing, interactivity, virtual reality and animation, video and sculpture. Requiring the participation of the gallery audience, the artist addresses questions of human perception. These works encourage the viewer to reflect on their own identity and experience, as well as the nature of existence itself. For Fujihata, "the conquest of imperfection" represents a mode of enquiry whereby physical reality is deemed inferior to the new, virtual reality of computers. His practice therefore seeks to transcend the 'real' through the incorporation of the spectator into the networks and environments of the artworks.

"My image of reality is that of a machinery with quite a lot of gaps and loopholes, and my work is based on the idea that our goal with employing new forms of expression, media and tools is perhaps to locate and expose such concrete, imperfect parts."

Fujihata's practice is highly collaborative, involving research and cooperation with engineers, technicians, academics and artists. However, it also displays a particularly individual (and intrinsically Japanese) aesthetic of elegance and simplicity, of wonder and conceptual rigour. In seamlessly merging cutting-edge technology and artistic tradition, Fujihata's work provides the viewer with a seductive entry point into the emergent digital landscape while, at the same time, instigating a critical investigation of the ongoing breakdown of boundaries between the physical and the virtual.

This exhibition features a selection of works from *The Conquest of Imperfection*, originally shown at the Center for Contemporary Graphic Art and Tyler Graphics Archives Collection, Fukushima, Japan, 2006.

A catalogue accompanying *The Conquest of Imperfection* (in Japanese and English) is available for sale in the gallery bookshop.

exhibition funders



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Gallery 1

Unformed Symbols, 2006
Custom-made table with loud speakers, data projector, PlayStation 3

The deck of cards laid out on the table seems to separate and fly off of their own accord, moving over the surface and settling into new patterns and positions. In *Unformed Symbols*, images are projected onto the table alongside actual cards, yet animated to split apart, shuffle and change suits. The use of playing cards serves as a metaphor for the illusionistic practice of the magician (or con man), while the non-interactivity of the piece introduces another element of deception into the work. The scale and presentation of these objects, usually intended for play, catches the viewer off-guard when they come to life and refuse to react to their presence. In this way, the piece subverts the expectations of the viewer who anticipates interaction.

Unformed Symbols: Another Side, 2008
Custom-made table with loud speakers, data projector, PlayStation 3

The new work *Unformed Symbols: Another Side* also recreates a card game, but this time as if it were seen from the reverse side, with only the plain backs of cards visible. Real cards and projected images of them are again mixed, with

the projections sometimes hovering over actual cards, and inviting the viewer to play with them. On certain cards, the faint outline of a fingerprint appears. The fingerprint acts as a trace of the individual's identity and a testament to their existence, yet Fujihata also makes it appear as a record of (inter)action, as if the viewer was able to activate its motion. Evoking the sleight of hand manoeuvres that make cards appear from the magician's sleeve, technology plays tricks on the viewer's perception.

Portray the Silhouette, 2006
Table, chair, cup, data projector, PC

The projected, pre-recorded silhouette of a figure pouring tea into a cup overlaps with the actual shadow of a teacup and table in the gallery. The amalgamation of virtual images and physical objects, and the inclusion of the viewer's shadow in the projection, creates an immersive environment that induces a sense of disorientation in the spectator. In *Portray the Silhouette* the integration of the spectator into the pre-recorded material is accomplished through a simple device - the positioning of the projector. Fujihata's use of shadows refers to the silhouette's status as a precursor to photography and film, establishing a clear lineage between media art and early developments in technology.

Floating World to Floating Point: An introduction to Japanese media art
Thu 11 September, 6.00pm
Keith Whittle, director of Sunderland Digital Media Research Lab (/sLab), explores contemporary Japanese media art. Japan has produced some of the leading figures within the international media art community but does Japanese media art hold distinct characteristics that have contributed to its international appeal, and if so are such attributes informed by production and curatorial strategies different to those found in Europe?
£3.50 full / £3.00 concs.

Exhibition Tours
Sun 14 September, 5.00pm
& Thu 25 September, 6.00pm
Join artist and lecturer Andrew Bracey for an introductory exhibition tour of *The Conquest of Imperfection*. The tour on Sun 14 September will be BSL interpreted by Siobhan Rocks.
Free

Gallery 2

Morel's Panorama, 2003
Custom-made panorama camera, PC, data projector, Macintosh, loud speakers

In *Morel's Panorama*, imagery fed from a panoramic camera (installed in the centre of the gallery) is mapped onto a rendered cylindrical image projected on the walls of the exhibition space in real-time. This imagery is integrated with a pre-recorded set of cylindrical images of Fujihata reading a section of Adolfo Bioy Casares' novel *Morel's Invention*. This story about a special device which perfectly records images, sounds and sensations (wind, smells, etc.), projecting them as 3-D recreations, and the inventor's encounters with the site of projection, is often used in reference to Virtual Reality. Resembling the panorama paintings of 19th Century Europe and the panopticon (a surveillance device used in prisons), the spectator is immersed in, yet never central to, the work. They wander through a field of real-time and recorded information, like the fictional Dr. Morel, exploring the gap between subjective experience and reproduced reality.

Pixel and Eyes, 2006
Digital photo frame x 5

Images of eyes, alternating with close-ups of computer pixels, are displayed on a series of digital photo frames. The juxtaposition of the real and the virtual, the representational and the abstract, acknowledges the technology that comprises these realistic images. At the same time, the work is about the fetishisation of the medium and the LCD (liquid crystal display) monitor's unique method of presenting information through EL (or what Fujihata refers to as "a kind of luminescent backlight").

Unreflective Mirror
2005-2006
Surveillance camera, surveillance video monitor, custom-made polarized filter glasses, PC, data projector x 2

This virtual mirror effectively erases the presence of the spectator, manipulating and questioning notions of identity and corporeality. The viewer, donning a pair of special glasses, finds that the mirror reflects only these glasses, which move in accordance with the wearer. He is at once present and invisible, able to interact in the piece only through the effacement of his own body. At the same time, the placement of a video camera captures and relays the image of

this viewer onto a monitor behind him, which is simultaneously reflected in the virtual mirror. The processing of the individual's image by the mirror and the camera therefore produces different effects, complicating the spectator's sense of self-perception.

Online Content

Sites of Production: Asian Travelogues
Throughout a residency in Yokohama and period of travel in Asia, artist Erika Tan will record moments of contact through interviews, shared dialogues, observations, images, and writings on her blog, providing reflections on practice and production. The blog includes an interview with Masaki Fujihata that took place in his studio, and explores aspects of his exhibition at Cornerhouse.
Tan is artist in residence at BankART 1929, Yokohama, Japan during summer 2008 as part of a *A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling*, a /sLab project developed in partnership with BankART 1929 and Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art.
Erika Tan is a UK-based artist and curator from Singapore whose work has evolved from an interest in anthropology and the moving image. She is a research member of TrAIN, the Transnational Art, Identity and Nation research department at the University of Arts, London.
<http://sitesofproduction.wordpress.com>

Dave Griffiths: Ozymandias
Manchester-based artist Dave Griffiths' work *Ozymandias* deploys a database of movie cue-dots (tiny signals that mark the transitions between film reels) collected from free digital TV broadcasts to create a montage of fragmentary film clips. This work is available to view online accompanied by a new essay by Chris Clarke which will explore the use of the archive in Griffiths' practice. Dave Griffiths is represented by Bureau Gallery, Salford.
www.cornerhouse.org/masakifujihata
www.bureaugallery.com