

IKON

Exhibition Guide

24 July – 15 September 2013

SHIMABUKU

***Something that Floats/ Something that Sinks*
First and Second Floor Galleries,
Tower Room and Café Opus at Ikon**

Shimabuku was born in Kobe, Japan in 1969 and since 2004 has lived in Berlin. Through artwork he proposes new ways of living arising out of an intense fascination with the natural world and our place in it, making the familiar strange and encouraging us to enjoy our experiences as if they are happening for the first time. This exhibition includes video, photographs and sculptural pieces dating back to the early 1990s, when he first emerged as an artist in Japan, up to the present day.

Ikon's first floor galleries feature a number of works made by Shimabuku in the UK. An early performance, *Tour of Europe with One Eyebrow Shaved* (1991), involves the artist shaving off his left eyebrow to attract attention on the London Underground. A later work, *Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition* (2003), tells the story not only of a dog named Swansea Jack who saved 27 people from drowning during the 1930s, but also a swimming competition for dogs devised by Shimabuku as an homage to the life-saving dog.

Food forms a regular theme in the exhibition: *Shimabuku's Fish and Chips* (2006) sees a submerged potato in the River Mersey meeting live fish. Shimabuku describes *Fish and Chips* as '... a meeting of the sea and land. Fish and Chips signs

are all over the place in English towns. To me, it's like the towns are brimming with simple and beautiful poetry. One day I wanted to make my own version of Fish and Chips. So ... I made a film about a potato swimming to go meet a fish.'

Cucumber Journey (2000) revisits a work made with Ikon in which the artist travelled from London to Birmingham by canal boat, spending two weeks pickling vegetables.

Ikon's second floor galleries are filled with works made abroad, particularly in Japan. In his video *Then, I decided to give a Tour of Tokyo to the Octopus from Akashi* (2000) Shimabuku travels with an octopus, taking a bullet-train to Tokyo. Like tourists, they visit the Tokyo Tower and the famous Tsukiji fish market before getting back on the train to return the octopus to the Akashi Sea. The artist refers to this work as his Apollo project, involving an adventure far from the natural habitat of the octopus. 'Would the octopus be pleased at receiving the gift of a trip to Tokyo? Or would it be annoyed?' he asks.

The unexpected has characterised much of Shimabuku's work and he is a poet of the everyday, not so interested in discovering reasons why. This is epitomised by *Something that Floats/ Something that Sinks* (2008), a work through which the artist draws our attention to the mysterious fact that some pieces of fruit and vegetables float in water or appear to swim, while others sink.

The exhibition continues in Café Opus at Ikon. *Ice Cream with Salt/ Ice Cream with Pepper* (2010) encourages visitors to season their vanilla ice cream with salt and pepper.

Offsite, Shimabuku has devised *A Project with The Big Issue* which includes a limited edition publication entitled SHIMABUKU

in the UK. This is only available from *The Big Issue* vendors outside Paradise Forum. Ask the vendor for your free copy when purchasing *The Big Issue*.

Shimabuku has made a limited edition print, *Leaves Swim* (2013), edition of 50, priced £150. Available online at www.ikon-gallery.co.uk

Shimabuku's work has been exhibited internationally at Sharjah Biennial 11 (2013); 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2013); Negotiations, Beijing (2010); Sao Paulo Biennial (2006); Venice Biennale (2003) and Biennale of Sydney (1998).

This exhibition is supported by The Henry Moore Foundation, The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation and the Japan Foundation.

Visit the Resource Room where you can find a selection of books, audio and film.

If you have any questions about the exhibition please ask the Visitor Assistants in the gallery.

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While travelling from London to Birmingham, I gathered recipes from people I met ...I watched the cucumbers slowly turn into pickles.

**Pickle recipe
(makes one large jar of cucumber pickles)
Courtesy of Shimabuku**

Ingredients

6–10 cucumbers
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup rice vinegar
(or cup white wine vinegar)
1 cup water
50g brown sugar
2 fresh dill leaves
1 bay leaf
1 cinnamon stick
4 black peppercorns

Preparation

Day one

Wash the cucumbers and trim at the ends so they are a little shorter than the jar. Sprinkle with salt. Let stand overnight with a weight on the container lid, draining excess liquid.

Day two

- 1) Drain and rinse the cucumbers, pat dry and pack in the jar.
- 2) Mix the vinegar, water, sugar and salt in a saucepan and heat just to the boiling point.
- 3) Slowly pour the hot liquid over the cucumbers in the jar.
- 4) Add the dill and bay leaves, cinnamon stick and peppercorns.
- 5) Possible to eat the next day. Flavour will continue to develop over time.



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