

IKON

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham
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website. www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Shimabuku

Something that Floats / Something that Sinks

24 July – 15 September 2013

Ikon presents the first major survey of work by Shimabuku (b. Kobe, 1969), including installation, video, drawings and sculptural pieces dating back to the early 1990s, when he first emerged as an artist in Japan, up to the present day. As an artist, Shimabuku holds an intense fascination with the natural world and the countless manifestations of human culture within it, encouraging us to break with established habits of perception and enjoy experiences as if they are happening to us for the first time.

From the beginning, incongruity has characterised much of Shimabuku's work. In *Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere* (1994), the artist stands, on a spring day, by a railway line in Kobe in the guise of Santa Claus. Enchanted by the thought that Christmas occurs during the summer months in the southern hemisphere, he hoped to inspire passengers who might catch a fleeting glimpse of him from the train window, with dreams of Christmas in the summertime. Later works are similarly surreal, for example *Ice Cream with Salt / Ice Cream with Pepper* (2010) which involved the artist giving away vanilla ice cream seasoned with salt or pepper.

Ikon's first floor will be filled with works made by Shimabuku in the UK. In an early performance *Tour of Europe with One Eyebrow Shaved* (1991) the artist shaved off his left eyebrow whilst on the London Underground before travelling across Europe, an act that drew attention to his appearance and prompted conversation with strangers. Through *Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition* (2003) he relates the story about a local dog who saved 27 people from drowning during the 1930s. 80 residents of the Welsh town entered their pets into a swimming competition organised by the artist as a kind of homage. 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, whilst *Cucumber Journey* (2000) revisits a work made with Ikon in which the artist travelled from London to Birmingham by canal boat, using the two week journey to pickle cucumbers.

Ikon's second floor galleries feature works made abroad, particularly in Japan. In his video *Then, I decided to give a Tour of Tokyo to the Octopus from Akashi* (2000) we see Shimabuku with an octopus in a fishtank taking a bullet-train to Tokyo. Like tourists, they make visits to the Tokyo Tower and the famous Tsukiji fish market before getting back on the train to return the octopus back home in the Akashi Sea. The artist refers to this work as his *Apollo* project, involving an adventure far from the natural habitat of the octopus. We easily imagine how weird our world must

seem to such a creature whilst being reminded of how extraordinary an octopus actually is.

The exhibition takes its name from the artwork *Something that Floats / Something that Sinks* (2008), through which the artist draws our attention to the fact that some pieces of fruit and vegetables float in water or appear to swim, while others sink. It is beautiful in its appearance, graceful in its simplicity, and epitomises his practice as a whole. Shimabuku is not so interested in discovering the reasons why, instead preoccupied, through a joyful approach, with unions of myth or mystery and the everyday.

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

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
2. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
3. For more information, high-res images and to arrange an interview with the curator please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk
4. Sample Images:



Shimabuku
Catching Octopus with self-made ceramic pots (2003)
Performance / video installation

Courtesy the artist

Cont.

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Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere (1994)
Performance / photograph

Courtesy the artist



Shimabuku
Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition (2003)
Performance / video installation

Courtesy the artist



Shimabuku
Then, I decided to give a tour of Tokyo to the octopus from Akashi (2000)
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