

Press Release

Tadasu Takamine

Too far to see

4 May – 17 July 2011

Ikon presents the first European exhibition by Tadasu Takamine (b. Kagoshima, Japan 1968), one of the most thought-provoking video and installation artists currently working in Japan. The presentation includes a selection of video pieces touching on sex, politics and sexual politics, all made since Takamine's emergence as a solo artist from his involvement with the radical performance group Dumb Type.

Kimura-san (1998), a controversial video work featuring footage of the artist masturbating a disabled friend, was originally presented at Ikon in May 2002. Revisited for this exhibition, the video highlights a need for sexual relief in people with disabilities which is often unacknowledged or ignored by wider society. Whilst sympathetic and unpatronising, the performance provoked heated debate at the time both amongst audiences and in the local media.

The subject of the film, *Kimura-san* (Mr Kimura), is confined to a wheelchair or bed, barely able to control his limbs having suffered arsenic poisoning as a baby through contaminated infant milk formula. He is unable to talk, feed himself or perform any toilet activity without help. He can think clearly and is able to make noises with his mouth. The artist cared for Kimura-san during the 1990s, during which time he became closely aware of Kimura-san's gestures. In a recent unpublished interview Takamine describes his sudden realisation of Kimura-san's sexual desire and the fact that it could only be fulfilled through the assistance of other people. The video shown here combines original footage of Kimura-san before, during and after orgasm, alongside edited documentation of the 2002 performance at Ikon.

Inertia (1998) involves the uneasy combination of a young woman and a bullet train. The woman lies close-up and feet first on top of a carriage whilst the rest of the world flashes past; the fast rhythmic ambiance of the railway strictures and the powerful electric hum of the train dramatise the fruitless gesture of the woman pushing her dress down over her legs against the force of the wind. The situation is intensely sexual, unstoppable and exhilarating, clearly derived from classic fetishism and Freudian dream and nightmare scenarios.

God Bless America (2002) was a highlight of the 2003 Venice Biennale, a comment on the global intrusion of American culture in the post-9/11 world. Takamine and his female partner lived within an entirely red room for seventeen days, filming themselves work, sculpt, eat, sleep and have sex. In the resulting time-lapse film, the pair frenetically kick and punch into being a sculpture: a giant head, bearing a likeness to George W. Bush, which continually sings *God Bless America*. As with the artist's other works in this exhibition, a tense drama develops that suggests a human condition diminished without reasonable freedom. Like *Kimura-san* it asserts the value of free will.

This exhibition, organised in collaboration with Yokohama Museum of Art and Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue.

Elements of this exhibition contain explicit images that some people may find offensive. Access is restricted to persons aged 18 and over.

Premiering concurrently with this exhibition is *Seven Angels*, a new opera produced by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and The Opera Group with sets designed by Tadasu Takamine. Inspired by *Paradise Lost*, *Seven Angels* interprets the themes of John Milton's masterpiece for a modern audience. *Seven Angels* will tour nationally to several venues following its premiere in Birmingham at CBSO Centre on Friday 17 June 2011.

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. Press Preview, Tuesday 3 May 2011, 12-8pm
2. A selection of images is shown below
3. *Seven Angels* is a Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and The Opera Group production, co-produced with ROH2 and Tramway. It premieres in Birmingham before embarking on a UK tour:

Seven Angels

Friday 17 June 2011, 7.30pm & Saturday 18 June 2011, 2.30pm

CBSO Centre, Berkley Street, Birmingham B1 2LF

In advance: £14 full price, £8 conc, £5 under 16s

On the door: £16 full price, £10 conc, £6 under 16s

Ticket Line:

To book, call 0121 767 4050 or visit www.bcmg.org.uk/diary.php?showid=214



Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
TEL. +44 (0) 121 248 0708 / FAX. +44 (0) 121 248 0709
WEBSITE. www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

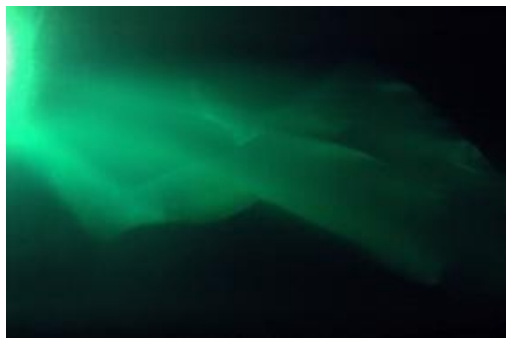
Music: Luke Bedford
Words: Glyn Maxwell
Music Director: Nicholas Collon
Director: John Fulljames
Designer: Tadasu Takamine

Visit www.theoperagroup.co.uk and www.bcmg.org.uk for more information.

4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm.
Free entry.
5. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and receives core funding from
Birmingham City Council and Arts Council West Midlands. Ikon Gallery
Limited trading as Ikon. Registered address: 1 Oozells Square, Birmingham B1
2HS.
6. For more information and images please contact Helen Stallard, Press and PR
Consultant, on 0774 033 9604 or h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk

IKON

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Tadasu Takamine
Water Level and Sound Organ
 (2004)
 Video Still
 Courtesy of the artist



Tadasu Takamine
Inertia (1998)
 Video still
 Courtesy of the artist



Tadasu Takamine
God Bless America (2002)
 Video still
 Courtesy of the artist