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SHIFT

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CHIM ↑ POM

6 1

PEOPLE | 2011.6.1 | Text: Yuko Miyakoshi

Revolutionist of the contemporary art?

Chim ↑ Pom was formed in 2005 with 6 artists. Since the start, they created works involving social issues such as “Thank You Celeb Project I’m BOKAN” that exploded luxury designers’ brand bags and plaster figure busts in Cambodia, and “Making the sky of Hiroshima ‘PIKA!’” which they drew a word “PIKA” by airplane in Hiroshima. The works have gained a high reputation and they have been invited to both national and

international exhibitions, such as 29th Sao Paulo Art Biennial, also Asian Art Award in 2010 as Japanese representative.



Chim ↑ Pom member Photo: Hiroyuki Matsukage
Ryuta Ushiro, Ellie, Yasutaka Hayashi, Toshinori Mizuno, Motomu Inaoka and Masataka Okada (Clockwise from the right bottom)

Their solo exhibition “REAL TIMES” includes their performance at Shibuya Station featuring Taro Okamoto’s “Myth of Tomorrow”, that reminds of Fukushima 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

SHIFT interviewed Ryuta Ushiro and Masataka Okada.

Please introduce the exhibited works.



'Never give up!' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom

Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: Since our artworks created in Hiroshima, we've been associated with Sunao Tsuboi, representative member of the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organization. We realized the importance of looking back at Hiroshima now after the East Japan Earthquake on 3.11 and the accident of nuclear power plant followed. "Never Give Up" is Tsuboi's motto he keeps saying over the past 50 years on his book or at talk-shows as well. It's a message for himself who survived critical conditions 3 times, a message aiming to abolish the nuclear weapons, and a strong wish for Hiroshima's recovery, which

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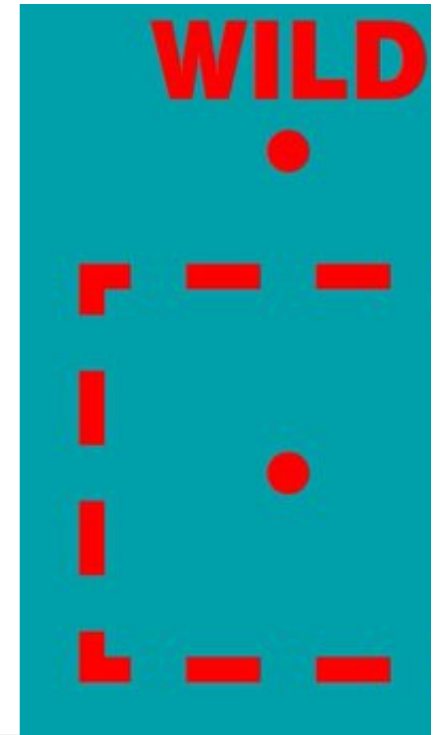
[Till tomorrow] Group Exhibition "WILD
bit.ly/2F1px8C The common thing among
who are all active in different fields is that
are "lone designers".

we thought could apply to today's situation. We asked Tsuboi to write it down and send by facsimile and placed it in a frame found abandoned in Soma City, Fukushima.



'Japanese Dog' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: "Japanese Dog" is a photographic work by Mizuno and Inaoka, taken in Soma City right after the quake. They reached the affected area through volunteer and other activities on their way. In front of a demolished house, they found an abandoned dog, that apparently used to be domestic. The dog stared at them for attention and started walking away inside the house. When they followed, they found a companion dog, blessed, laying on a mattress. The photo captured them.



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'Japanese Dog' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom

Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: We placed the photo in a frame collected in Natori City, Miyagi. We also created one with a drowned cow body, another with a cat standing still, to make all 3 into a series of work.



“For me, producing
an installation and
making a video
are the same”

Daisuke

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'Radiated Flowers -Harmony-' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: "Radiated Flowers -Harmony-" is a collaborative work with Junichi Kakizaki, flower artist. We collected flowers and plants in 30 km radius from the power plant, using the geiger counter to make sure they were clean. Then Kakizaki transformed them into Ikebana. The situation is crucial but this is the time when people need the beauty. We chose flowers as a symbol of the beauty of life. Plants cannot run away from the disaster. They stay there and follow their fate. The work is to show the contrast between flowers' remaining beauty and the human beings, who are troubled with the problems they caused on their own.

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'100 KIAI' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom

Ushiro: "100 KIAI" is a video work filming the youngsters we got to know in Soma City, Fukushima. Located closed to the power plant, Soma had less volunteer rescuers compared to other affected areas. Soma citizens are self-rescuing victims. They have feelings of both sadness and cheerfulness. We filmed whatever their message was, from "Let's survive" to "I want a girlfriend", which was done in a completely improvisational way.



'Level 7 feat. Myth of Tomorrow' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

*On May 1, 2011, it was scandalously reported that Chim ↑ Pom added to Taro Okamoto's "Myth of Tomorrow" at Shibuya Station a piece reminding the nuclear power plant accident. The show exhibits the original panel piece added during the performance.



Is the work to show a succession of Okamoto's work or a homage to the artist?

Ushiro: "Myth of Tomorrow" is a nationally-famous public art. What's important when producing and exhibiting outdoor is if the work can simply entertain the viewers, not the way art appreciators appreciate. The work is not about our feeling for Okamoto nor collaboration, but consists of "Level 7 and Myth of Tomorrow".

Okada: We get more direct feed-backs outside than inside galleries.

Ushiro: The work is titled "Level 7 feat. Myth of Tomorrow". It is not remixed, collaged,

sampled, nor collaborated but literally a featured work. We can say the Level 7 chose to feature Myth of Tomorrow. We don't think so far there has been such featured style of artwork, which we like very much.

How do you get inspired?

Ushiro: Most of our meetings take place in Shibuya, and the idea hit us when we were watching "Myth of tomorrow". It is a "chronicle of atomic bombs" referring to Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Daigo Fukuryūmaru. And now Fukushima... we saw an empty corner on the drawing which ends with the sea...why not add Fukushima Power Plant there... that's how the idea got its shape.

Looking at this incident along with chronicle is crucial. Even with the lessons we learned during the 20th century from the thread of the atomic bombs, we count on nuclear energy in the 21st century. The work implies that the "Myth" of safe nuclear power plant has blinded Japan that was once nuclear victim during the 20th century, and become exposed again in 21st century. We generalized that following the art history.

When did you install the work?

Ushiro: Between 21-22h.

There must have been many observers at the site.

USHIRO: Of course. We placed the panel against the wall, hanging a part on the acrylic protective wall with weak adhesive masking tape behind the panel.

We prepared well and made it through very well and didn't take much time.



'REAL TIMES' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom

Ushiro: There is an observatory which now closed inside Fukushima 1 Nuclear Power Plant property . We shot this photo before it became closed. It is a video work filming a 40 minute walk from the entrance to the observatory. The title is "TIMES" referring to that famous journal: more specifically, REAL TIMES that reports now. From the observatory, we could see the demolished and smoking buildings and the contaminated Pacific Ocean. We took out a white flag, to which we first added red circle to make a national flag and then logo of nuclear power plant. We couldn't understand why even the media no longer cut into the area ever since the evacuation order. Even so, there are still people working in the plant. The media keep sending out the same image filmed from 30 km away from the place. We wanted to know what was exactly going on there.

Having these experiences changed the work list of this exhibition. The building we added to Okamoto's work are actually something we saw with our own eyes and not something we saw on TV.



'Without SAY GOODBYE' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: "Without SAY GOODBYE" is a work we presented in the middle of the field closest to the power plant, with a scarecrow wearing protective clothing and a gas mask.

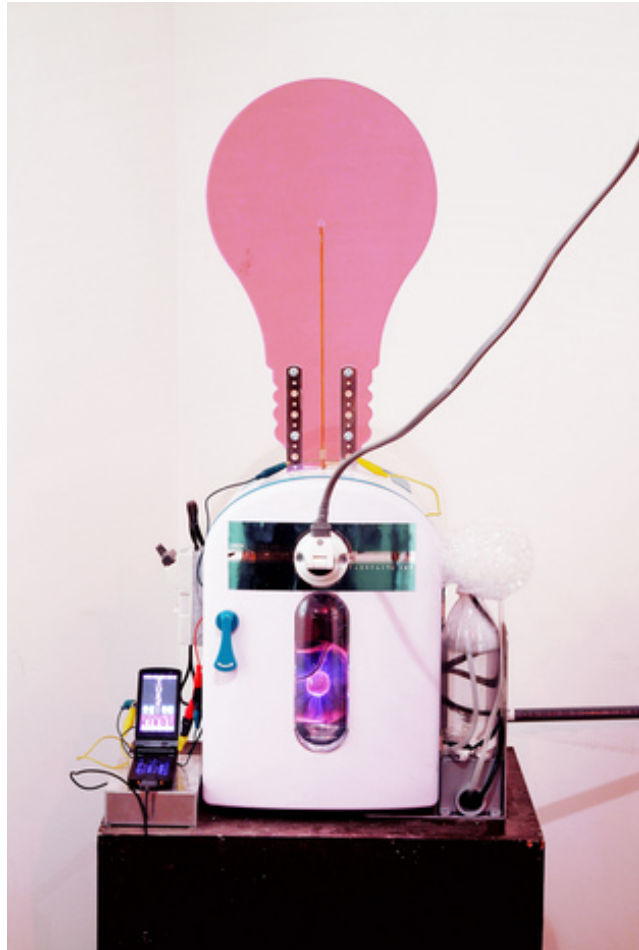
Okada: In the area there is scarcely any one but the employees of the plant wearing protective cloths, conceivably ready to die.

Ushiro: We built the scarecrow to pay homage to them. The field is contaminated, no longer can get harvested, but still needs to be protected from something. The scarecrow has a mission of guardian and might stay there for next 10 years.

Okada: A victim of the incident with the mission in hand.

Ushiro: The title "Without Say Goodbye" is literally fading away without saying goodbye.

Okada: "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap" is a written work done on the tent site. It is originally a song written by AD/DC, and is also a name of the dirty technique that a villain character called Stand from "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure" has. It is literally describing the current plant situation and we repeatedly wrote that.



'Libido-Electricity Conversion Machine "EROKITEL" third and practical version "KIBOU"' (2011) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Kei Miyajima Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

Ushiro: This is the third generation "EROKITEL", which is the device we invented a long time ago. People say that the petroleum will extinguish and clean energy should take over. We thought making use of the sexual desire instead, which has extraordinary potential. We put a 3-line ad on a sports tabloid "Chixxx Pom EROKITEL" with mobile phone number and we do get phone-calls. The device is connected to the mobile, and when it receives a call, it lights up the device.

The first generation was with a normal electric bulb, and the second one installed in the US with a device that lit up by a thunder. Due to the power plant incident and the power cut caused, we improved the third generation for home use and named "Hope". This latest one lights up the room 20% brighter.

Which is the work you put the most effort on?

Ushiro: All of them. Tsuboi's "Never Give Up" is one. "Japanese Dog" is exhibited at a charity show organized by Japan Art Donation. Each of the works has meanings.



'BLACK OF DEATH' (2007) © Chim ↑ Pom
Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

How did the earthquake affect the way you work?

Ushiro: We've already done away-artworks in Hiroshima and in Cambodia. We also did a performance gathering crows in Shibuya, which was then edited and presented at a gallery. The basics of how we work haven't changed.



'Making the sky of Hiroshima 'PIKA!'" (2008) © Chim ↑ Pom
Photo: Cactus Nakao Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo

But one thing that is surely changed is that we all became a part of this big social issue. Assumably one day in the future we will be questioned regarding what we did as artist of the time. From society to its thought, even from the past to the future, all eyes are on us. This applies not only to us, but to every single Japanese citizen.

Most tend to think that your works are with strong messages.

Ushiro: Social issues exist in the reality and we are just witness of them. All we do is taking off the filter that keeps you away from facing those issues which can be easily ignored. We are not appealing any messages or directions but basically just reflecting the reality. The show is titled "REAL TIMES" simply because we like something real. We see real, feel real and express real. That's all.

Okada: Sometimes people misread and make up messages.

Ushiro: Of course there is criticism. But is it for us as creator or for the society itself through our work? For example, "SUPER RAT" has been criticized by animal rights groups. But the reality is that hundreds of rats are killed every day. We are attacked as an icon presenting that unseen reality.



'SUPER RAT' (2006) © Chim ↑ Pom
Courtesy of Mujin-to Production, Tokyo
Stuffed rats captured in Shibuya Center-Gai, imitating Pikachu

You also have many video works.

Ushiro: A video camera is nothing but one of the mediums. We do sculpture, photograph, or paint. It all depends what we want to express and where we want to reach. Taking photos as if you paint on a canvas gives a journalistic touch when presenting actualities. We want to reach out for things that are regarded as untouchable and present them in an interesting way of expression.

What are your upcoming plans?

Ushiro: In Japan, there are not many artists who do things like we do. It was when we realized we were a rare case that we started being invited abroad. Out there, there are artists who do alike. We hope this will become a worldwide interesting movement. In any case, we will keep eyes wide open and try new and interesting things.

Do you think of moving abroad?

Ushiro: Since the beginning, our inspirations come from what we live. We were born and raised in Shibuya and love to create in Shibuya. What's needed is being in Japan and connected to the world.

What are your upcoming projects?

Ushiro: "REAL TIMES" will tour in Osaka in June. In September, we will present another

solo exhibition at Mujin-to Production, where we would also like to launch self-produced projects. Please check the latest news on Mujinto's website.

Chim ↑ Pom "REAL TIMES"

Date: May 20th - 25th, 2011

Place: Mujin-to Production

Address: 1F Matanabe Bld., 2-12-6 Miyoshi, Koto-ku, Tokyo

Tel: 03-6458-8225

Addmition: 500 yen (A part of the admission will be donated to the quake victims)

<http://chimpom.jp>

Text: Yuko Miyakoshi

Translation: Ayako Ishii

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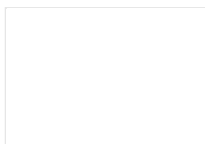
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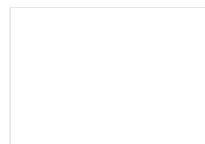
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