

Hiroshi Fuji

Born in 1960 in Kagoshima, Japan

Lives and works in Fukuoka

Admiring Japan's traditional culture, Hiroshi Fuji chose Kyoto as a place to study the art of dyeing while pursuing his undergraduate degree. However, finding a gap between his expectations of, versus the predominant trends in, contemporary art at that time, he shifted his interests toward performing arts and began experimenting with "the activities that go beyond the existing framework and system of arts," that quite ironically brought him back into dialogue with the core elements of contemporary art.

Consistently engaged with the social, Hiroshi's interactive projects focus on people, their activities, and the realities of life. For him, art is about exploring "a possible system that causes an unexpected event rather than creating an object, e.g. an artwork." Art is neither an image nor an object, rather it is a system employed to bring about a creative activity that occurs within a community that embraces this activity, allowing it to foster and grow. He coined the term "OS," art as operation system, to summarize this idea.

Turning formerly useless and valueless societal objects into purposeful, meaningful entities is a hallmark of Fuji's artistic practice. The two years that he spent in Papua New Guinea as a member of Overseas Cooperation Agency from 1986 to

1988 provided him a memorable encounter with a "skinny dog." At first, he undervalued skinny stray dogs as a life with no use; yet upon seeing these forlorn creatures actively hunting wild pigs, he quickly revised his thinking. Paying homage to the dogs' scrappy fortitude, as well as serving as a reminder of his own misguided thinking, Hiroshi made a series of "skinny dog" sculptures from the wood of a dismantled house. The "skinny dog" has since become an icon of his work.

Domestic Waste Zero Emission (1997-2003) and *Vinyl Plastic Connection* (1999) further explored notions of function through waste and recycling. For these projects, Fuji, along with his wife and children, collected plastic materials from their domestic waste, classifying them by colors and shapes, and turned them into an art installation.

The experience of working with the Austrian artist group WochenKlausur in 1999 showed him how art can function as an agent of social change within local communities, which reinforced his notion of art as OS. This experience, along with his earlier projects, informed Fuji's conceptual approach to *Kaekko* (2000), a work based on the model of the bazaar. *Kaekko* is a simulation of commerce for children to exchange their no-longer-wanted toys. It operated in more than a hundred communities in and out of Japan, first initiated by Fuji and currently organized by a local community on its own. *Kaekko* is emblematic work of Fuji's artistic practice which has evolved into various works such as *Dream Bird* (2006), *Happy Flower* (2006), and *Reverse Club* (2006) -

all made from the remained toys from the bazaar - that were prominently exhibited at the 12th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh (2006) and the touring show, *Beautiful New World* (2007).

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