

REPORT FROM YOKOHAMA

On The Waterfront

The second Yokohama Triennale, set in warehouses in an active port zone, had a subtext of international movement.

BY JANET KOPLOS

When Tadashi Kawamata was asked to take over planning for the second Yokohama Triennale on short notice, he was an unusual candidate, yet perhaps uniquely prepared. He is not a curator but an artist, and not an artist who curates, à la Mike Kelley and a number of others. Yet he has participated in international shows and projects since the early '80s, including two Documentas, the Venice, São Paulo, Lyon and Shanghai biennials and the Münster Skulptur Projekt. He has taught at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music since 1999.

Kawamata was thrust into this role following the resignation of architect Arata Isozaki due to scheduling and budgeting disagreements. Working quickly, starting less than a year before the opening date, Kawamata came up with a distinctive theme and selected three Japanese art professionals to help him execute it. (They are all men born, like him, in the early '50s: Taro Amano of the Yokohama Museum of Art, Takashi Serizawa of Tokyo's P3 Art and Environment alternative space, and Shingo Yamano of Fukuoka's Museum City Project.) Kawamata titled his Triennale "Art Circus (Jumping from the Ordinary)," and rather than aiming for sociopolitical declarations or institutional criticism, he went for populism. "Art Circus" aimed at local or, at most, regional appeal. It was programmed, like the most recent Documenta, with an elaborate list of activities that only those nearby would be able to

attend. But, more than that, "Art Circus" itself was full of participatory works and works that changed over time. In this framework, video was a natural; Kawamata also picked up on the bars, lounges and other recuperative sites now common to the biennial circuit. Here, crowd comfort was a primary, not a secondary matter.

All this is not to say that this Triennale was an empty-headed entertainment. Among the offerings by 86 artists and groups there were discomfiting images. Ingrid Mwangi (born in Kenya, lives in Germany) showed a video installation titled *Splayed* (2004) that presented the artist's pensive visage and her outstretched arms on three flat screens mounted high on a wall, like a crucifix, and you watched as she carved the words "monogamous" and "polygamy" into her forearms with a utility knife. There were also pointed, if amusing, comments about contemporary life: Hedi Hariyanto (Indonesia) showed *Where Is My Mom?*, a life-size cow form covered with flattened milk cans, attached to a big cylinder with formula labels on the outside and rubber nipples and terra-cotta babies' heads inside. Other artists' works touched on the psychological and the spiritual. Yet the show as a whole emphasized *doing*.

The event took place in a pair of warehouses on a pier in Yokohama's active port zone, where goods arrive from around the world. Triennale visitors were cordoned off from the remainder of the pier by chain-link fences not just for admission-collection purposes but because the site was restricted by customs and immigration rules. This venue provided a subtext of international movement, purposeful or inadvertent. Most of the participating artists journeyed to Japan from elsewhere, so an understanding of cultural dislocation, expatriation and difference seemed at the forefront of many minds.

A few works were sited off the pier. They included a "hotel room" in Chinatown (more on this later); pink decorations by Maria Roosen (Netherlands) on Yokohama Tower, a sort of lighthouse overlooking the harbor; as well as two works in the adjacent shoreline park. One of these was *Swimming Dragon*, by Jiang Jie (China), in which the peak of a long, undulating, Chinese-tile roof seemed to rise from and sink into the soil like a scaly creature; the other was a pointed gateway by Luc Deleu (Belgium) consisting of four orange shipping containers standing on end. It was visible from a distance to lead visitors to the ticket booths (blue shipping containers) at the near end of the pier. Intrepid souls could walk a (half-mile) chain-link corridor to the warehouses under red-and-white-striped pennants by—of course!—Daniel Buren (a shuttle bus was easier but its route less festive). Within one of the warehouses, you could climb a bridgelike scaffolding by Keiichi Ikemizu (Japan) for an almost bird's-eye view of a portion of the fair, or you could sit at a collaborative work that included



View of Daniel Buren's *On the Waterfront: 16,150 Flames*, 2005, fabric and mixed mediums. Photo Shigeo Anzai.

video, DVD and audio hookups, computer booths and tables with newspaper clippings. This well-wired site of exchange and information, titled *Melting Pot*, was the work of Open Circle, a Mumbai artist-initiated nonprofit organization founded in 1999.

Many other works in the Triennale were also team efforts. Among the largest groups were five Thai artists collectively known as SOI Project and five Chinese artists and an art director in the Long March Project (organized in 1999). The works by the Thai artists (*soi* means "back alley") included a lounge, games, music and installations. The Long March participants, with their interest in historical and geographic frameworks in a variety of Chinese locations (and a few foreign ones), offered performances and installations on such disparate subjects as building codes, psychic powers, the Lion Dance, "false documentary" videos and Chinatowns.

Tricks and Treats

In the entry area was a painting by the late Jiro Takamatsu (Japan, 1936-1998) that was huge yet could easily be missed. Takamatsu's "shadow paintings" were considered tricks when they were painted in the late '60s: as if literalizing Rauschenberg's notorious white canvases of the early 1950s, Takamatsu actually painted shadows to make it appear that a person was standing between the canvas and a light source, or that some object nearby was block-

Luc Deleu: *Speybank*, 1999/2005, shipping containers; at Yamashita Park. Photo Janet Koplos.





Jiro Takamatsu: *Shadow on the Wall at a Construction Site (Reproduction)*, 1971/2005, vinyl paint on canvas, approx. 10 by 41 feet. Photo Bob.

ing the light. The choice of placing *Shadow on the Wall at a Construction Site (Reproduction)*, 1971/2005, at the beginning of "Art Circus" established Kawamata's claim that the viewer would, in fact, be part of the work, since lighting was arranged so that shadows of passersby mingled with the painted ones.

Another work with a gimmick, albeit a gentle one, was a small corner room by Jakob Gautel & Jason Karaïndros (artists from Germany and Greece, respectively, now based in Paris) that was empty save for a bare lightbulb under a glass cover on a stand. A label at the door explained that in utter silence, the light would come on. Of course, there was no possibility of that at the preview or on the opening day, but the thought was a pleasant diversion from the clamorous reality. The title, *Angel Detector*, derives from a French expression that calls a lull in a conversation "an angel passing by."

Recalling the self-reflexive activity of Nam June Paik's 1974 *TV Buddha* (an antique Buddha figure watching his own videotaped image on the monitor he faces), Toshihiro Yashiro's *Kaitenkai—Everything Disappears and Is Reborn* had a Buddhist theme. This work consisted of dozens of video cameras of various sorts, on tripods, standing in a cluster and all pointing toward an empty space. On the tiny display screen of each camera was a playback of a mysterious figure spinning horizontally just above the floor in that now-empty space. As you moved among the cameras, you saw that each offered a unique perspective on the same event—the figure became larger on cameras nearest the space, and you could see that the person was lying face down on some sort of wheeled board and was using one arm for rotary propulsion. The cameras and tripods themselves appeared collegially in each other's pictures. They might have been a community of mourners, each one offering a different vision of the departed. It was disappointing to find the work repeated in other parts of the Triennale site—at least, until it occurred to you that this might represent the repetitiveness of rebirth.

Breakneck Speed, a video by London-based Richard Wilson, by contrast, seemed a straightforward story until the end. This work was presented just outside one warehouse, in a semitrailer. You mounted a few wooden steps to enter the back doors of the

cargo space and stood to watch a video on the far wall showing a rocket racing through the Triennale warehouses, entering that very trailer, and setting off an explosion of Chinese firecrackers. But then the camera pulled back from this scene, and the photographic recounting of the firecrackers turned into a painting, and then the camera pulled back still further and showed the outside of the trailer in which you stood; the trailer doors closed and the truck drove away. For a moment, you felt kidnapped.

Equally disconcerting and amusing were the videos of Craig Walsh (Australia) on screens exposed by several half-raised garage doors in the warehouses. In these crowd scenes of people perhaps waiting to cross a street, a few individuals notice the camera and come close to peer into it. This could be a study in human behavior, but as you saw them from inside

Ingrid Mwangi: *Splayed*, 2004, three DVD loops, three plasma monitors, painted wall. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



the warehouse, the peering people seemed to be giants standing just outside.

Okinawa-born and New York-based Yuken Teruya showed his now-familiar low-tech transformation of paper shopping bags in an installation called *Notice—Forest* (2004). Eleven bags, their sources ranging from McDonald's to high-fashion stores, projected from a wall. The top of each bag was cut and bent down to form a delicately leafed tree inside the bag. The cuttings suggest not just a fantasy landscape but an acknowledgement of material source—since paper comes from trees—and perhaps a reference to merchandising and environmentalism as well as sheer craftsmanship.

Other works seemed more one-note in their devices, such as "drawings" on the floor created with the ends of gold chains dangling from the ceiling, or "sculptures" of animals made of carpet fluff, resting on a carpet. Both these works, by Tonico Lemos Aua, a Brazilian living in London, were crowd-pleasers, however.



View of Craig Walsh's *Cross-Reference—35:27:02N/139:39:36E*, 2005, video, garage door. Photo Keizo Kioku.

Who/Where Am I?

One of the larger displays was provided by Yoshitomo Nara in association with an Osaka design collaborative called graf. Nara portrays loneliness or anger-generated juvenile malevolence; he calls up the emotions even as he, at 46, steps into middle age. Ironically, the poignancy of his work has turned him into a celebrity in Japan. This multipart construction and display was organized to suggest a two-story seaside tenement complex of buildings topped with corrugated-metal roofs. It featured a drawing studio that was cluttered yet as isolating as a monastic cell; a high-ceilinged lounge, the walls papered with hundreds of drawings of children sent to Nara by

his fans; and a sales window where one could buy catalogues and other goods. Nara seems to be picking up the marketing emphasis of his friend Takashi Murakami, who, mercifully for me—considering his overexposure in New York—was present only in the form of gift-shop merchandise.

One of Nara's signature pieces is a preternaturally cheerful, if stiff, white puppy—an idealized memory of a childhood pet. Here you looked through peep-holes in a closed freight container to see a peaceful pack of these puppies in an over-lit all-white space. Hanging on the outside of Nara's building was a pair of plastic cases in the form of peace symbols, which contained sock dolls—these, too, sent by his fans.

A Japanese artist who uses the name Pyuupiru created an installation based on perceptual effects. *Love Reincarnation* (a Kusama-ish title) consisted of a tall enclosure defined by scaffolding wrapped with yarn and guarded by large knitted creatures that might have escaped from a Dr. Seuss book. Entering through a tunnel and following an up-and-down ramp, you encountered a cascade of thousands of gold origami cranes suspended in the middle of a dark space, and finally arrived at a video of a naked woman projected onto a mirror on the floor. According to the catalogue, the work is autobiographical and represents changes in the artist's state of mind in recent years. It was more appealing as a purely visual experience.

Many works had to do with placing oneself in a social identity—one linked, but only partly, to physical location. Mella Jaarsma, a Dutch-born artist who has lived in Indonesia since 1984, created *Shelter Me*, a group of building-costumes sized for a single person. She arranged for several to be occupied during the preview. One had a Chinese temple roof with camouflage-cloth drapes above a drawer-like structure; another was wrapped with photo-posters of decoratively painted cars and rugs in a market, and had car mirrors protruding near the top. To see real arms and legs emerging from these costumes gave a sense not of a knowable individual in there but rather of a shadow population, those whom we pass by—at home or when traveling—without understanding and without response.

Yao Jui-Ching of Taiwan offered mixed messages in his photo installation *The World Is for All—China Beyond China* (1997-2000). The gold-framed black-and-white images were raised on metal legs and arranged in a circle; they faced in toward a laser pointer in the form of a gun, which viewers could manipulate. Each image depicts a Chinese gate in a non-Chinese city, including New York, Toronto, San Francisco and Yokohama; centered in front of the gate is an individual with his arms raised in surrender, below a sky that has been painted gold.

Kawamata titled his show "Art Circus (Jumping from the Ordinary)." Rather than aiming for sociopolitical comments or institutional criticism, he went for populist participatory works and frequent change.



Chen Zhen: *Purification Room*, 2000/05, found objects, clay, mixed mediums. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.

On the pointer stand, in English, is a fragment of the Miranda warning ("You have the right to remain silent . . ."). This work suggests a mixture of cultural dislocation, dreams of wealth, vulnerability and being isolated and silenced by foreignness.

Chen Xiaoyun (China) presented four 10-minute videos on adjacent screens that sometimes

showed different images and sometimes one long continuous view. *Several Moments Extending into a Night II* (2005) involved repeated imagery such as a trembling man lying in a shower room, glinting chrome washers scattered around him, his glasses discarded; a train with lighted windows rushing in the night; a naked man climbing "up" a crude ladder as it lies on a floor; fireworks; someone holding a red flag on top of a junkyard pile; someone standing in water near a pier and bridge, holding an umbrella; a woman in high-heeled sandals walking gingerly through a bamboo grove; people going down subway stairs. The intercut scenes range from ordinary to ominous. The implication of the whole seems to be the helplessness of an individual and the rapidity of change.

Chie Matsui (Japan) created five one-person pavilions with roofs of lavender organza held up by wires from the warehouse ceiling, making a sort of village whose boundaries were defined by carpeting cut in an amoeboid shape. In each was a video showing slow or no movement. Among the active ones were: a woman lying on a studio floor in a white slip, eating a pear and wiggling her feet as she listens to music; possibly the same woman slithering down a long institutional stairwell; a bare room with red-painted walls in which a woman in black underwear emerges via a ladder through a trap door, staggers across the room and descends through another floor opening. All the scenes are sensual yet often emotionally vacant. Perhaps the same non-feeling—maybe it should be called suppression—characteriz-

View of Keiichi Ikemizu's scaffolding installation *Konnichiwa This Is Yokohama Soko*, 2005. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



Abe, a young artist from western Japan having his first national, let alone international, exposure, sees his work as combining the parts of the art world: artist, process, object, market.

es the re-creation of *Purification Room* (2000/2005) by Chen Zhen (b. 1955, China, d. 2000, France). In a bland rectangular space, chairs, shoes, a typewriter, TV and VCR, a locker, loveseat, mattress, clothing and other random goods, chaotically strewn, seem to have just emerged from a flood that unified them with a coating of pale earth.

Visitors to *MELO Green*, by one of the SOI Project artists, Wisut Ponnimit, may have provoked visitors to ask "where am I" for purely physical reasons. Ponnimit constructed a sequence of telephone-booth-size black rooms, beneath a twinkling net of electric stars, in which you had to close a door on one side and then open a door on the other after viewing a little painting or two hung on the walls of each space. It's hard to think of a presentation involving more physical activity per image on the part of the viewer, or more privacy, the opposite of salon-style.

Other works also incorporated movement within limited realms. Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller's *Hillclimbing* (1999) is most notable for its miniaturization and subjective point-of-view camerawork: viewing a 45-second loop on a small monitor, you look down at exposed tufts of dry grass as you seemingly crunch your way up a snowy slope accompanied by a small dog. Sydney artist Shaun Gladwell's video *Yokohama Linework*, while longer, has the same kind of blinkered view: projected on the floor is a video in which you seem to

look down at your foot on a skateboard as you cross the varied pavements of the city.

Hiraki Sawa's *Trail* is a black-and-white video that was projected large in a closed room. In it, tiny shadows of camels—or occasionally an elephant or bird—traverse an unoccupied domestic space (the Japanese artist's London flat), plodding around a sink, across a radiator, upon a window sill. Sawa has created a mesmerizing dream-scape in faintly jerky digital motion that evokes a silent movie, here accompanied by repetitive, echo-y music (by Dale Berning). Travel as circular motion was represented by Michael Sailstorfer's installation *Time is Not a Highway*: the German artist stacked truck tires in reserve as a motor turned one against a wall until the tread wore out. Presumably he measured the duration of the Triennale in bald tires.



Taisuke Abe: *Forest of Every Day*, 2005, mixed-medium installation. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.

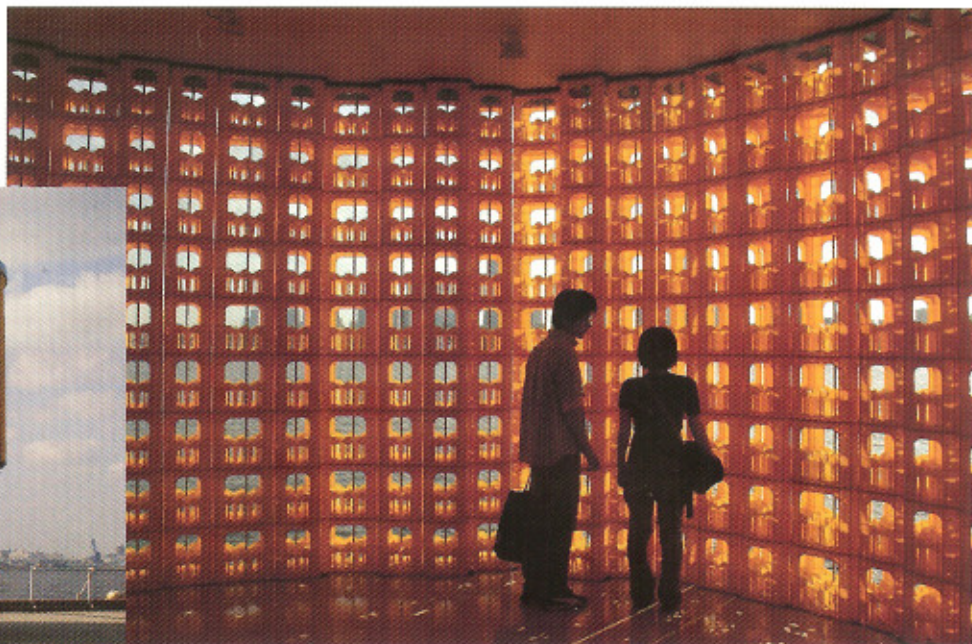
Change and Participation

The Triennale scheduled numerous performances of many types by many artists, a few—such as Kim Sora's sessions in which a brass band played her altered versions of familiar tunes—incorporating a continuing display in addition. In this case, there were worktables and racks of costumes via which your imagination could roam freely. There were also improvisational performances of sorts by visitors to the musical installation *No. 55*, by Wang Te-Yu (Taiwan). You exchanged your shoes for white slippers before stepping up to a white platform on which were mounted three long, low tables. The tables and walls surrounding them were made into stringed instru-



Left, overview of ©urartorm Inc.'s *Super(m)art@Yokohama*, 2005. Photo Keizo Kioku. Above, detail showing statue of Pierre Restany. Photo Janet Koplos.

Exterior and interior views of Winter and Hörbelt's *Kastenhaus 720.9*—Yokohama Belvedere, 2005, shipping containers, plastic crates, mixed mediums. Photos Bob.



ments, with a variety of wooden blocks, paper cups, plastic bottles and other ephemera serving as bridges for taut colored strings stretched between screw eyes. You could sit on a white cushion while plucking the strings and moving these bridges to vary the tones.

Another favored motif was games. For example, Ping-Pong tables were set atop terrariums with cacti and flowering plants in a work by Couma, a five-person Kyoto collective. *Extra Practice* included rounds of table-tennis by Couma, and the equipment was also available to Triennale visitors, with all the action projected closed-circuit on a nearby wall. Another SOI Project artist, Udom Taepanich, had a popgun shooting game called *Make Laugh Not War*, and *Twenty-One Go* was a Long March installation/performance based on the game of Go.

Atelier van Lieshout's *Bar Rectum*. Photo Bob.



Curatorman Inc. is a collaboration of Thai artist Navin Rawanchaikul and Perth-based curator and critic Helen Michaelson; their *Super(m)art @ Yokohama* was an elaboration of a game installation previously presented elsewhere, here adding almost two dozen Japanese contributors. It consists of comics, texts, oversize figures of recognizable art-world celebrities and others, plus various game boards on tables, with dice-cube seating, all playing on the idea of art as a risky business.

Business, in fact, was another feature of the Triennale: the business of producing souvenirs for sale. Set alongside the Mori Art Museum's bookstore and giftshop, Taisuke Abe's *Forest of Every Day* was a tree-shaped environment with people inside the tree trunk sewing small stuffed toys for sale. The dolls were suspended upside down from clothespin

carousels that hung like foliage. Abe, a young artist from western Japan, here gained his first national, let alone international, exposure. He sees his work as combining various parts of the art world: artist, process, object and market. Akihiro Kuroda, from Japan's northern island, Hokkaido, had a wall of charcoal portraits well under way when the Triennale opened. His plan was to continue capturing visitors' visages to add to those of Yokohama citizens on view, in an impulsively assigned variety of styles. While these were not for sale, the activity recalled that of a street artist. Kuroda shifted the ground by titling his work *Every encounter, every human life, I don't want to think that we are powerless in the world*.

Rest and Refreshment

If works like Abe's and Kuroda's saw to viewers' impulses and desires, other artists saw to more direct needs. Wolfgang Winter & Berthold Hörbelt operate collaboratively from Frankfurt to create airy structures made of plastic beverage crates. Their *Kastenhaus 720.9—Yokohama Belvedere* was a circular enclosure with walls of yellow-orange plastic crates stacked nine high, the structure sitting on the pier atop two shipping containers and accessed by a spiral staircase. On the white floor inside were a few cushions. Light, air and fragments of the harbor view passed through the latticed modules, making a simple and satisfying retreat. A second work by the pair provided a similar combination of pleasure and beauty indoors: they created color-block resin bench seats suspended in a dark space, which lit up when you sat down on them to enjoy a slow swing. A pun was perhaps inevitable, but the title *Swingerclub Yokohama* did not suit the grace and peace of the experience.

Atelier van Lieshout (Netherlands) created a typically prickly service venue: a café housed, seemingly with a smirk, in a glossy red, yellow and brown, shaped-fiberglass digestive tract. There even seems to be a joke in the list of materials making up *Bar Rectum* (which was also seen at Basel last June), since it ends with "PU foam." This is quite in keeping with Joep van Lieshout's ear-

Niscino's *Villa Kaihoutei* was a temporary hotel room built around an elaborate pavilion in Yokohama's Chinatown. Brilliantly painted columns and a tile roof formed an amazing canopy for the bed.

lier works, before he founded a collective, which included a catalogue of his line of garish-hued fiberglass bathroom fixtures, and a maximum-bad-taste furry trailer that he parked in front of a SoHo gallery a few years back. Yet the piece was a little disappointing, considering the Atelier's provocative establishment of a "free state" in Rotterdam, an idea that would have sparked off the Triennale's expatriate undertones.

Parisian Didier Courbot showed a series of Type C prints, each titled *needs* with the name of a Japanese or European city following in parentheses. In these images he is seen affixing a birdhouse to a city utility pole; repairing a missing slat on a park bench with two short, raw pieces of wood; polishing a bicycle that's leaning against a sidewalk railing, and the like. More to the point, he also offered *Pocket Parks: Benches made of wood and other materials according to those seen during various journeys*. The seats showed humor—and clunky craftsmanship—like that in the photos, including, for example, standing segments of logs topped with red upholstery, and 2-by-4 frames with foam-and-velour cushions. They were happily available to weary visitors.

One more need was met by Tazro Niscino, a Japanese artist based in Cologne. Following some pieces he's done in Europe, Niscino appropriated a monument and made a hotel room. His *Villa Kaihoutei* was a temporary prefab structure built



Interior of Tazro Niscino's Villa Kaihoutei, 2005. Photo Keizo Kioku.

around an elaborate pavilion at the edge of Yokohama's Chinatown. From outside it looked as if hoarding enclosed a monument under repair. But when you climbed a set of steps you found a reception desk where you could book the room from 6 p.m. until the Triennale opened at 10 a.m. Inside was a more or less conventional hotel room, with a modular bathroom, a sofa, a TV and, in the middle of the space, below the extraordinary canopy formed by the brilliantly painted tile roof and decorated columns of the pavilion, a king-size bed. Over the run of the fair, 156 people slept there for a modest sum.

In less than three months, the exhibition drew a respectable attendance of 189,568 visitors. That it was considerably fewer than the 350,000 who attended the first Triennale in 2001 might be ascribed to the lesser novelty of being second; to the slightly out-of-the-way location as opposed to the previous venue in a redevelopment project near the Yoko-



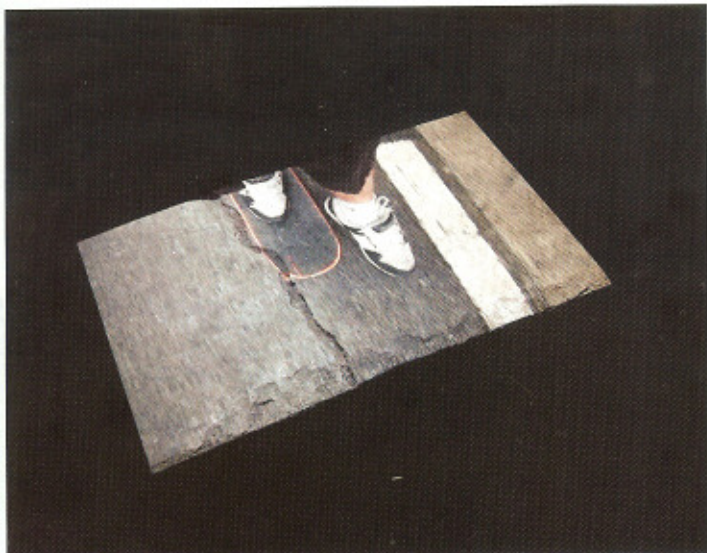
Chie Matsui: An Allegorical Vessel—Rose, 2005, fabric, wire, video, mixed mediums. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.

On wall, photographs from Didier Courbot's "needs" series and, in foreground, benches from his "Pocket Parks." Photo Keizo Kioku.



hama Museum, a shopping mall and an amusement park; and to the controversy surrounding Isozaki's withdrawn concept. Still, the Triennale's public-centeredness reflects well on the city of Yokohama, and the event's international interactivity was likely a great encouragement to young Japanese artists. But even with a general appreciation of the show's accessibility, it's possible to dispute Kawamata's founding assertion that in this presentation, art would be a dialogue rather than a monologue. Only in a few cases did visitors actually engage with the artists, and besides, the familiar contemporary notion that an art work is "completed" by the viewer implies that an interchange is inevitable. □

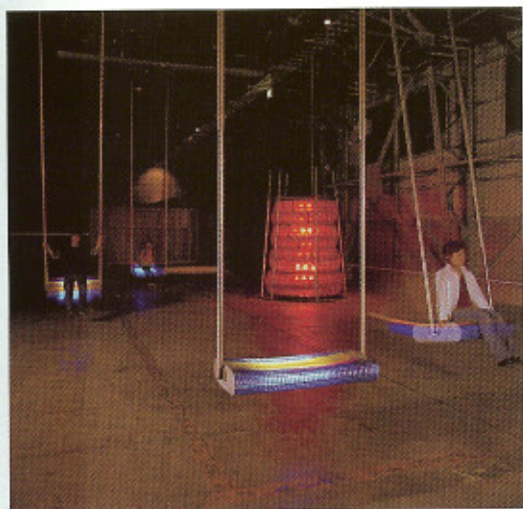
"Art Circus (Jumping from the Ordinary)" was on view at Yamashita Pier, Warehouses No. 3 and 4, Yokohama (Sept. 28-Dec. 18, 2005). A second, documentary catalogue will supplement the 238-page exhibition handbook.



Shaun Gladwell: Yokohama Linework, 2005, DVD projected on floor, 16½ minutes. Photo Keizo Kioku.



Hedi Hariyanto: Where Is My Mom?, 2005, flattened milk cans, terra-cotta and mixed mediums. Photo Keizo Kioku.



Wolfgang Winter and Berthold Hörbelt: Swingerclub Yokohama, 2005, resin, lights, and mixed mediums. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



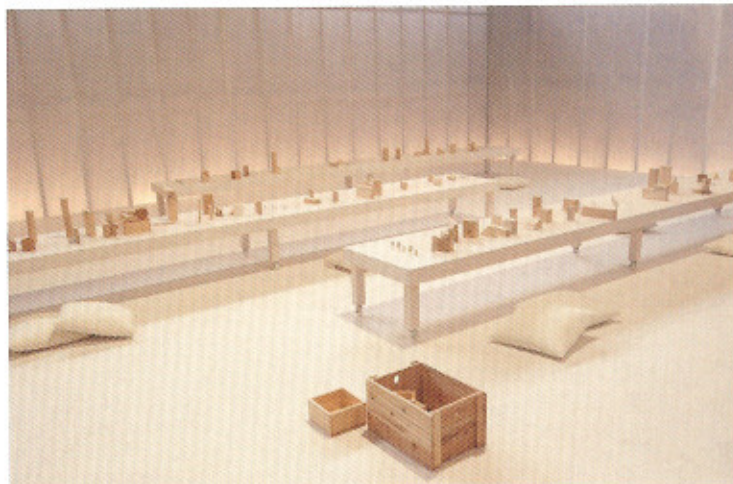
View through a peephole in Yoshitomo Nara and graf's Yokohama Seaside Tenement, 2005. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



Mella Jaarsma: Shelter Me, 2005, mixed-medium wearable constructions. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



View of Pyyupiru's installation Love Reincarnation, 2001-05, scaffolding, yarn, video and mixed mediums. Photo Mikio Kurokawa.



Wang Te-Yu: No. 55, 2005, sound installation. Photo Keizo Kioku.