

TOKAS Project Vol.1

# Institute of Asian Performance Art: Tokyo



2018/10/13 (Sat) – 11/11 (Sun)  
Tokyo Arts and Space Hongo



## — Reconsidering East Asian performance art and media

Since its opening in 2001, Tokyo Arts and Space (TOKAS) has collaborated with overseas artists and curators, art centers, cultural institutions, and other parties to put on exhibitions and related programs. TOKAS is launching TOKAS Project in 2018, a program to explore various themes such as art and society from a multicultural viewpoint.

In TOKAS Project Vol. 1, TOKAS is welcoming Victor Wang, a curator based in London and Shanghai. “The Institute of Asian Performance Art: Tokyo” exhibition introduces three pioneers in video art from Japan, China, and South Korea while considering performance art and media.

## EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Exhibition Title: Institute of Asian Performance Art: Tokyo  
 Period: 2018/10/13 (Sat) – 11/11 (Sun)  
 Venue: Tokyo Arts and Space Hongo (2-4-16, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo)  
 Open Hours: 11:00 - 19:00 (Last Entry 18:30)  
 Closed: Mondays  
 Admission: Free  
 Organizer: Tokyo Arts and Space, Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture  
 Curator: Victor WANG (China/United Kingdom)  
 Artists: IDEMITSU Mako (Japan), ZHANG Peili (China), PARK Hyunki (South Korea)  
 Cooperation: Boers-Li Gallery, Gallery Hyundai, The Estate of Park Hyunki, Tokyo University of the Arts, David Roberts Art Foundation (DRAF)  
 URL: <http://www.tokyoartsandspace.jp/english/>

GALLERY HYUNDAI

DRAF

<Press Contact> Ichikawa (Ms.), Takeno (Ms.) PR section

Tokyo Arts and Space, Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture

3F, 7-3-5 Toyo, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-0016 (Located in MOT Temporary Office)

TEL: +81-(0)3-5633-6373 / FAX: +81-(0)3-5633-6374 / E-mail: [press@tokvoartsandspace.jp](mailto:press@tokvoartsandspace.jp)

## EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Wang, the curator of this exhibition, has researched the history and development of performance art in East Asia. When he took part in the 2017 TOKAS Residency Program, he researched the history of Japanese performance art via the avant-garde art activities, such as High Red Center and Zero Jigen.

Artists of that era were investigating performance as a new type of expression that differed from traditional methods. These transient performances were also recorded as videos and photographs, making them into lasting works of art. Afterwards, they skillfully used video—a new technology at that time—for distinct aesthetics and approaches that were not bound by the context of Western art. In this way, they expanded the breadth of their expression, such as by creating works with an awareness of personal and societal transformation.

Wang is also planning an exhibition with the same title to be held at the David Roberts Art Foundation (DRAF) in London in September 2018. It will include works by Jiro Takamatsu, Minoru Hirata, and Kim Ku Lim, artists from the late 1950s to 1970s. The Tokyo exhibition, which is the second edition, will focus on three artists who are video art pioneers from Japan, China, and South Korea: IDEMITSU Mako, ZHANG Peili, and PARK Hyunki. It will showcase their works from that time while looking at their links to the contemporary era.

## RELATED EVENTS

\*Please note that the participating artists are subject to change.

<p><b>ARTIST TALK</b></p> <p>Date: 10/9 (Tue) 18:30 - 20:30 (tentative)</p> <p>Speakers: <b>ZHANG Peili, Victor WANG</b></p> <p>Venue: Lecture Room 5-109, Faculty of Music, Ueno Campus, Tokyo University of the Arts (12-8 Ueno Park, Taito-ku, TOKYO)</p> <p>*With Japanese-Chinese interpreter.</p> <p>*Details will be announced on the TOKAS website.</p>	<p><b>OPENING RECEPTION</b></p> <p>Date: 10/12 (Fri) 18:00 – 20:00</p> <p>Participating Artists: <b>IDEMITSU Mako, ZHANG Peili, Victor WANG (tentative)</b></p> <p>Venue: Tokyo Arts and Space Hongo</p>
---	--

## CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION

### Victor WANG

Participated in the TOKAS Residency Program (Institutional Recommendation Program [2017/5])

#### ■Profile

Born in Canada in 1983. Lives and works in Shanghai and London. Graduated with an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London in 2014. Recent Exhibitions: “Michael Dean: Analogue LOL” ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai, 2018, “Zhongguo 2185,” Sadie Coles HQ, London, 2017, “Jac Leimer: Borders Are Drawn By Hand, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, 2016.



***Institute of Asian Performance Art: TOKYO******Text by: Victor WANG***

For the second edition of Institute of Asian Performance Art, IAPA collaborates with Tokyo Arts and Space (TOKAS), Tokyo, to explore the impact that Asian artists have had on video as an art form, and the different experimental approaches that pioneering video artists from China, Korea and Japan utilized during the 1970s-1990s.

Simultaneously material and immaterial, the medium and genealogy of what is termed 'video art' has had many offshoots and parallels globally, with characteristics and beginnings that often connect it more appropriately to the other temporal arts of music, performance, dance, theatre, or cinema.<sup>1</sup>

The medium and format of video art is directly tied to technological developments that were rooted neither in the European art-historical tradition, nor in an identifiable critical discourse as an art medium. Therefore, artists from Japan, Korea and China were able to develop and shape their own alternative aesthetics and approaches to video-making outside of a Western narrative, and under very different political and social conditions.

Divided into three solo presentations between the three TOKAS Hongo galleries, the exhibition looks at the inter-regional dialogues occurring in East Asia, and the unique approaches to the medium that were developed by pioneering artists Park Hyunki, Zhang Peili, and Mako Idemitsu.

Influential Korean video artist Park Hyunki not only helped to introduce video art to the local Korean art scene<sup>2</sup>, but also developed a distinctive body of work that incorporated performance, and sculpture, informed by Eastern philosophy and culture. This includes pieces such as *Media as Translators* (1982), both a performance and installation that incorporated nature. This event removed the domestic television from its usual setting, integrating it into an outdoor event lasting several hours that subverted its commercial function, while confronting ideas of ritual, landscape, de-materiality and Minimalism from an Eastern context, and examining a type of fluidity between nature and technology.

In *Video Inclining Water* (1979), performed for that year's São Paulo Biennale, Park tilted a video monitor displaying an image of water in different directions to give the illusion that the monitor was filled with water. Moving between image, site, nature and body, monitors were often used as performative devices and as material, as extensions of the medium and the content displayed, to be incorporated both within the white cube and outside of it.

The rise of portable video technology in the 1960s and '70s in Asia, such as the introduction of the Sony 'Portapak' in 1967-8 and the development of the VHS format, was key in placing the tools of the medium in the hands of the artists and cultural producers in the region. In the case of China, even without a developed art market or much interrelation with Euro-America, artists had been producing video works years before Western video art was 'systematically introduced to China... in 1992'<sup>3</sup>. Prior to this time, there were strict entry regulations in force in China in relation to foreign media and art content.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art*, Part 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea Press release, 'Park Hyun-Ki Mandala', January 27–May 25, 2015, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea" (Korea: NMMCA, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Pollack, 'Breaking and Entering: In His Videos, Zhang Peili Destroys and Restores to 'Capture and Emphasize Time'', *ARTnews* (5 May 2017).

Zhang Peili, considered the first Chinese artist to work in video, manipulates viewpoint and framing, and in particular a sense of time, to create unconventional recordings of repeated specific banal actions, such as breaking glass, washing and shaving or scratching oneself, over long durations or looped across several monitors.

Peili was an early proponent of conceptual art in China. Works like *30 x 30* (1988), widely recognized as the first work of video art by a Chinese artist, have at their centre an investigation—in this case, through the meticulous and monotonous task of repeatedly breaking a 30 by 30 centimeter mirror, and gluing it back together—into a complex form of time manipulation through video technology. This also, in part, asks questions about the performative function in early video art. In speaking about the work, Peili says that he “wanted to do something and say something about video, but I felt that I was also doing a performance”. The work is a recording of a live event with no audience, an approach that he describes as being both “video and performance”<sup>4</sup>.

Pioneering Japanese artist Mako Idemitsu is often credited as an ‘important precursor to feminist art in Japan’<sup>5</sup>. Experimenting with film and video art since the 1970s, Idemitsu often examines the domestic as gendered space in Japanese society. For example, in her 1977 work *Another Day of a Housewife*, the home becomes a site of domestic labor and physiological suppression of Japanese women. Often in her video works, a television monitor is present as a symbolic subjectivity, or external protagonist, watching as the housewife performs daily tasks. Works such as *The Marriage of Yasushi* (1986), explore how the personal and the private space within Japanese households set the stage for family dynamics and the interrelationships between, for example, mother and son, wife and husband, and the division of labor based on gender to be formulated and reinforced. Works such as these also comment on a specific social condition that has developed in Japan since the mid-1960s, one that has simultaneously functioned as both a ‘domestic support unit’ that has helped sustain the expansion and high growth of the economy in Japan<sup>6</sup>, while dividing the labor roles between men and women in society.

As a medium heavily dependent on technology, and which has been varied in its distribution, development, and access to production facilities and equipment in the region, the genre has been especially difficult to historicize—raising complicated questions around issues of ‘modernism’ and ‘modernity’ in fine art discourses relating to Asia.

In contrast, by moving between the practices of artists working in video in Asia, Asian video histories are increasingly being recognized in the cultural sphere as a networked constellation of social, political, economic, technological and historical concerns and relations. Meeting and weaving together at different points and times, they construct a wider dialogue and links within the region, often confirming unique origins and approaches to the medium, and offering new ways of connecting these histories and practices with the wider world.

---

<sup>4</sup> Pollack.

<sup>5</sup> Norio Nishijima, ‘Myth of the Heart: The Film and Video World of Mako Idemitsu’, <http://makoidemitsu.com/myth-of-the-heart-by-norio-nishijima/?lang=en>, accessed April 12, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Hiroko Hagiwara, ‘A Bright, Shiny, Fabricated Family Life Mothers, Sons, and Daughters in the Work of Mako Idemitsu’, <http://makoidemitsu.com/a-bright-shiny-fabricated-family-life/?lang=en>, accessed April 18, 2018

## ARTISTS

\*Please contact PR for more images

### IDEMITSU Mako (Japan)

Born in 1940; the fourth daughter of Idemitsu Sazo, the founder of Idemitsu Kosan. Having attended the elementary, junior high and high schools attached to Ochanomizu University, she enrolled in Waseda University's First Department of Literature. After graduating, she went to study in New York. She later married abstract painter Sam Francis and had two children. Searching for a means of creative expression transcending her role as wife and mother, Idemitsu set out to become a video artist. On a feminist basis drawn from her own experience, she continues to consider issues such as parents and children in the home and the social friction that results when women live as creators. Her books include *"What a Woman Made"* (Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2003).



1. *WOMAN'S HOUSE*, 16mm film, 1972

#### ■Profile

Recent exhibitions: "The Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions 2018 'Mapping the Invisible,'" Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, "MOMAT Collection," Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 2017, "The EY Exhibition: The World Goes Pop," Tate Modern, London, 2016.

### ZHANG Peili (China)

Zhang Peili is internationally recognized as the first Chinese video artist, and within Mainland China, who is appreciated as most influential figure in the development of experimental art practices both as an artist and as the dean of the New Media department of the China Academy of Fine Art in Hangzhou. He is one of the most respected representatives of the 1985 New Wave Movement in China. Zhang set out his career as a conceptual painter, but soon chose video, new media installation and photography to be his media of artistic practice. In his works, Zhang Peili addresses the subjects of the individual and power relations within the Chinese society and beyond. His earlier works deal with the aesthetics of boredom and have treated themes of social and political control. Zhang Peili's works are implicitly political, and he is famous for his incisive use of irony that maintains a consistent mocking tone without descending into satire.



2. *30 x 30*, Single channel video (PAL) sound, color, 31'53", 1988

#### ■Profile

Born in Hangzhou (China) in 1957. Lives and works in Hangzhou and Shanghai. Recent solo exhibition: "Zhang Peili:

Record. Repeat," The Art Institute Chicago, 2017, Recent group exhibitions: "Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2017-18, "Wrap Around the Time: Remembrance Exhibition for Nam Jun Paik's 10th Anniversary," Nam June Paik Art Center, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea, 2015, "Passage to History: 20 Years of La Biennale di Venezia and Chinese Contemporary Art" The 55th Venice Biennale 2013, "AVANT-GARDE CHINA: Twenty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art, The National Art Center, Tokyo, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 2008-09, "HAPPINESS: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR ART AND LIFE," Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2003, "Alors, la Chine?" Pompidou Centre, Paris, 2003, "Inside Out: New Chinese Art," P.S.I Contemporary Art Center, New York, 1998.

### Park Hyunki (South Korea)

As a pioneer of Korean minimal video art, Park Hyunki approached the medium with an Eastern philosophical disposition and re-interpreting it as a spiritual symbol of materialism and Western technology. Park radicalized his work with a low-tech simplicity that treated the television monitor and televised image as sculptures in and of themselves, while circumscribing themes of meditation and material reflection.

#### ■Profile

Born in Osaka in 1942. Moved to Daegu, South Korea in 1945. Major solo exhibitions: "Park Hyunki 1942 – 2000 MANDALA," National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, Korea, 2015, "The pioneer of Korean Video Art Hyunki Park: A Retrospective, Gallery HYUNDAI, Seoul, 2010. Major group exhibitions: The 1st and 3rd Gwangju Biennale, Korea, 1995, 2000, The 15th Sao Paulo Biennale, Brazil, 1979. Passed away in 2000.



3. *Video Inclining Water*, Performance photo documentation, 1979

© The Estate of Park Hyunki, Courtesy the estate and Gallery Hyundai

