Texts about / Texte über Shimabuku

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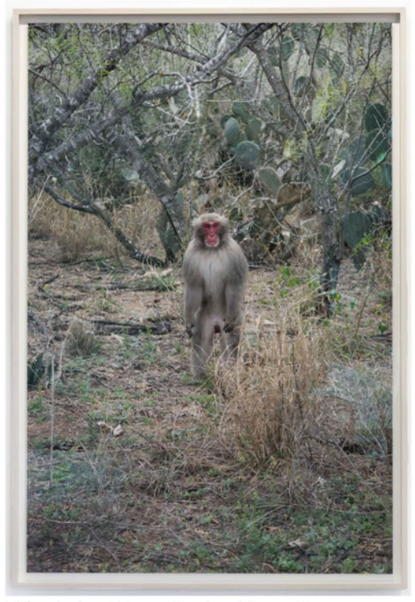
ART

HYPERALLERGIC

In 1972, Snow Monkeys Were Sent to a Texas Desert. Do They Still Remember Snow?

Curious if the monkeys' memory of snow remained decades later, artist Shimabuku brought a pile of it to the desert.

Kealey Boyd 5 days ago



Shimabuku, "Snow Monkey Stance" (2016) (courtesy of the artist and Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles ©Shimabuku)

DENVER — Due to habitat loss around Kyoto, 80 Japanese snow monkeys were sent to a Texas desert sanctuary in 1972. Adapting to life with rattlesnakes and consuming cacti, the monkeys are thriving generations later. Curious if the memory of snow remained, artist Shimabuku brought a pile of it to the desert. The results of his experiment are seen in "Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?" (2017), currently on view at the Denver Art Museum. Years ago, he traveled with an octopus only to find the creature was hoarding a stone on the journey. What insight might snow monkeys provide?

In 2016, Shimabuku traveled to the primate sanctuary to see the monkey transplants for himself. Their identifying features of pink faces and cloudy gray hair remained, but the monkeys were noticeably larger than their Japanese kin — translating "everything is bigger in Texas" from lore to fact. In an interview with Hyperallergic, artist Shimabuku noted, "Texas people drink so much soda," which is why he decided to use "a local material, ice from the petro station," to make a frozen mound. This 'Snow Mountain' would test the monkeys' memory.

Shimabuku, "Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?" (2016), video still, (courtesy of the artist and Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles ©Shimabuku)

"They come one by one. Some monkeys wanted to keep the ice to themselves, then they got bored," Shimabuku observed of the 22-minute video. "Some shared. Some were bossy … like people." The snow became a forbidden fruit with many monkeys grabbing a handful and running off. But most of them nervously nibbled nearby with a shifting gaze. "I didn't expect them to eat it. [In Japan] they eat flowers, trees and insects. But it is new for them to eat rattlesnake and cactus." When asked why it was important to test if monkeys remembered their place of origin, Shimabuku laughed and said, "maybe it is not important. Memory is a bridge between animals and people."

Various nonhuman animals appear in traditional Japanese folktales, both real and imagined. According to anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney in the book *The Monkey as Mirror* the Japanese monkey is a reoccurring creature in stories due to its similarity to humans and its symbolic threat "to the human animal boundary."

Shimabuku, "Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?" (2016), video still, (courtesy of the artist and Freedman Fitzpatrick, Los Angeles ©Shimabuku)

When the monkeys became pests to businesses and residents of Kyoto, perforating the barrier between wild and urban spaces, it landed them in Texas. In his book *JAPANimals,* Brett Walker notes that it was early in the Meiji restoration of the late 19th century when the zoological park first opened its gates in Japan. Urbanization and population expansion made it less likely to encounter animals in a natural habitat. Part museum and part prison, the zoo formalized the divide between humans and animals. By teasing out the human characteristics of nonhuman animals, Shimabuku challenges that divide.

"Memory can be at a cellular level. The monkeys looked at the ice and they grabbed it. Some hadn't seen ice for generations, and still they reacted spontaneously," noted Shimabuku. In his 2000 piece with the octopus, titled "Then, I decided to give a Tour of Tokyo to the Octopus from Akashi," the

artist explored the urban landscape, including a fish market, with an octopus companion he obtained himself while fishing. At the end of the video, Shimabuku discovers his traveling octopus was carrying a rock the entire time. “Some octopus carry many small rocks, or a shell, or one big stone. It is like a puppet for a child, or pillow for an adult,” he said. When I asked him why he thinks an octopus would collect an object, he responded, “I would ask people why they collect things.”

“Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains?” observes the navigation of brutal environmental changes while prompting a theoretical discussion of what remembering looks like — both very human actions. While snow is an alien substance to the Texas-born Japanese snow monkey, the suggestion that they covet it may reflect a form of knowing. The spectacle of Shimabuku’s work depends upon what is in view as much as what is hidden.

Do snow monkeys remember snow mountains? *by Shimabuku continues at the Denver Art Museum (100 W. 14th Ave Pkwy, Denver) through February 3. This installation is curated by Rebecca Hart, Vicki and Kent Logan Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.*

MORE FROM HYPERALLERGIC

Shimabuku

par Lilian Froger

« Pour les pieuvres, les singes et les Hommes »,

Le Crédac, Ivry-sur-Seine, 14.09 -16.12.2018

Dès l’entrée de la première salle de l’exposition, le chant régulier et strident des cigales nous enveloppe. Ces trilles d’insectes, bande-son caractéristique des étés japonais, proviennent du film *Ériger* (2017), conçu initialement pour le Reborn-Art Festival à Ishinomaki, dans l’une des régions les plus touchées par le tsunami du 11 mars 2011. On y voit le résultat d’un geste simple effectué par Shimabuku : celui de

planter dans le sable, à la verticale, des branches et des morceaux de bois flotté échoués sur une plage. Métaphore évidente de la détermination à se relever après que tout a été détruit, ce mouvement est redoublé par la quarantaine d'éléments (briques, tuiles, blocs de pierre) qui constituent la sculpture *Ériger (Ivry)*, prélevés dans les restes de bâtiments récemment démolis dans la ville et installés au sol devant le film, tous placés en station verticale.

Avec ces morceaux de bois ou de pierre disposés d'aplomb de manière rudimentaire, auxquels s'ajoutent les six tas de terre formant la sculpture *Terre d'Ivry, eau et lumière* (2018) placée près des fenêtres, ou encore les deux récipients remplis d'eau de *Quelque chose qui flotte / quelque chose qui coule* (2010), cette première salle a comme des accents Mono-ha. On y retrouve le même attachement aux matières naturelles (le bois, l'argile des briques et des tuiles, l'eau, la terre) dont la présence physique est clairement affirmée dans l'espace d'exposition. Les gestes produits sont élémentaires, sans grandiloquence. Le résultat s'avère cependant moins austère que chez les artistes de Mono-ha – tels Narita Katsuhiko ou Suga Kishio –, malgré le dépouillement formel des œuvres et le même recours aux matériaux bruts. Ainsi, *Quelque chose qui flotte / quelque chose qui coule* rappelle la série *Kûsô – Mizu* [Le vide en toute chose – Eau] réalisée à la toute fin des années 1960 par Sekine Nobuo, mais dans une version légère, les sculptures d'eau étant ici animées par des citrons verts et des tomates qui flottent à la surface ou nagent en cercle dans le fond de la bassine. Mouvantes ou instables, les œuvres de Shimabuku sont toujours en devenir, à l'instar de ces tas de terre où germent déjà toutes sortes d'herbes et de plantes. C'est aussi ce que montre la vidéo *Les Feuilles nagent* (2011) dans laquelle on ne discerne dans un premier temps que des algues remuant tranquillement dans l'eau, avant de s'apercevoir qu'il s'agit en fait d'un dragon de mer feuillu, cet étrange animal qu'on dirait la croisée de

l'hippocampe et du végétal.

Le monde animal est très présent dans le travail de Shimabuku, pour ne pas dire central, et l'exposition lui consacre deux salles : l'une pour les pieuvres, l'autre pour les singes. Depuis 1990, l'artiste a mené de nombreux projets avec et pour les poulpes, où il les fait voyager, tente d'en pêcher avec des pots en céramique, et crée des rencontres avec d'autres êtres vivants (hommes, chiens ou pigeons). Dix scripts accrochés au mur détaillent les circonstances de ces actions sous la forme d'un récit à la première personne. Dans la même salle est projetée la double vidéo *Demander aux Repentistas – Peneira & Sonhador – de remixer mes travaux sur les pieuvres* (2011), qui apporte un nouveau regard sur ces projets et une nouvelle voix pour les raconter : deux chanteurs de rue brésiliens décrivent en musique et avec beaucoup d'emphase la considération de l'artiste envers les poulpes, tandis que les films documentant certains de ses projets sont montrés sur la partie gauche. Plusieurs œuvres reviennent enfin sur le caractère collectionneur des pieuvres, qui conservent des coquillages, des cailloux ou des morceaux de verre récoltés au fond de la mer, présentés ici sous vitrine.

Dans la salle dédiée aux projets avec les singes, ceux menés dans le désert texan sont les plus fascinants, à la mesure de l'histoire qui les introduit. En 1972, un groupe de cent cinquante singes des neiges est déplacé de Kyôto vers le Texas. Ils s'adaptent

progressivement à ce nouvel environnement aride et la communauté de macaques prospère désormais parmi les cactus. La vidéo *Les Singes des neiges du Texas – Les singes des neiges se souviennent-ils des montagnes enneigées ?* (2016) rend, là encore, compte d'une action simple, aussi poétique que visuellement captivante : l'artiste dépose dans le désert un tas de glace pilée et filme les réactions des descendants de ces singes japonais qui n'ont eux jamais connu la neige. Pendant vingt minutes, on les voit hésiter, s'approcher du petit monticule blanc, goûter timidement la neige, jouer avec elle. Nous sommes d'ailleurs nous-mêmes comme en plein désert, entourés dans la salle d'exposition d'un décor de grands cactus identiques à ceux qui constituent le cadre naturel de la vidéo.

Les hommes et les animaux sont les acteurs et les destinataires des œuvres de Shimabuku, toutes ses œuvres constituant autant d'adresses, comme le suggère le titre de l'exposition : « Pour les pieuvres, les singes et les Hommes ». L'artiste élabore les conditions pour qu'il se passe quelque chose, sans jamais être certain de la réussite de ses actions. Les singes reconnaîtront-ils la neige ? Les poulpes se saisiront-ils des sphères en verre coloré dispersées à leur intention dans la mer ? Tout est de l'ordre du probable et du potentiel. Dans le film *La Mer et les fleurs* (2013) projeté dans la dernière salle, l'artiste jette des corbeilles de fleurs à la mer, celles-ci s'éparpillant au gré des vagues. On ne sait où elles échoueront, ni si quelqu'un les verra. Alors qu'à

9.10.2018 Shimabuku | Zérodeux | Revue d'art contemporain

l'écran les couleurs se dispersent peu à peu à la surface de l'eau, la fragilité et l'impermanence des gestes de Shimabuku apparaissent soudain dans leur plus grande intensité.

(Toutes les images : © André Morin / le Crédac)

SHIMABUKU

Then, I decided to give a tour of Tokyo to the octopus from Akashi 2000 (Filmstill)

Shimabuku
b. 1969 in Kobe, Japan
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Something that Floats / Something that Sinks, 2008

Shimabuku is an attentive observer who travels the world and then processes his personal experiences of curious everyday phenomena as symptoms of culturally specific traditions in poetic, humorous works. The artist detaches the phenomena he observes from their original contexts and re-stages them in new situations. In 1991, for instance, he travelled Europe with only one eyebrow, having shaved off his other one. It was a source of irritation that brought him into conversation with a range of people and led to new encounters. In 1992, he organized an exhibition for monkeys at the Monkey Park in Kyoto. In 2000, with a live octopus, he visited a food market where dead octopuses were being sold, before releasing the animal in its natural environment. These kinds of conceptual Actions are the starting point for Shimabuku's installational works in the exhibition context, which embrace sculptural and drawn as well as video and photography-based elements.

The work presented in the exhibition, *Something that Floats / Something that Sinks*, shows two water-filled aquarium-like Plexiglas containers into which various fruits and vegetables have been placed. Some of them float just under the surface of the water, others just over the bottom of the tanks. The work was inspired by an everyday observation the artist made when preparing fruit and vegetables: some fruits and vegetables float in water, while others sink. Shimabuku began experimenting and found that the phenomenon does not depend on the type of vegetable or fruit – fruits from the same tree can behave differently in water. There is no scientific explanation for this. It is not a genus or species-related characteristic but a feature of each individual fruit.

The clear, minimalist arrangement of the work invites one to reflect on this surprising fact and to wonder about its cause. Shimabuku's work recalls a playful experiment by means of which he evokes a wealth of associations. At the heart of these is the observation that the things around us lead lives of their own that shape the 'aesthetic of the everyday' parallel to their more conventional, predictable aspects. Shimabuku urges us to attend to ostensibly insignificant, ordinary everyday phenomena and shows us how small things may entail far-reaching causal relations, ecologically and socially. Hence the artist transforms the seemingly banal into the fantastic.

MR

13. Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach, Food - Ökologien des Alltags, Kerber Verlag, Bielefeld 2016

Shimabuku *Sea and Flowers*

« *We have to meet tortoise before alien life forms.* » (1)

Japanese artist Shimabuku often adds short texts written by himself to his artworks. He uses a concise language, of a rare simplicity in the context of presenting contemporary art. The commentaries of the Berlin based artist are nonetheless precise and efficient, and they never fall into the caveat of attempting to justify the apparent absurdity of the piece. A profound wonder, a passing emotion, a gnawing question or even a singular encounter which led him to keep a tortoise in the space of the Wilkinson gallery in London (2), to film an aquatic ballet between a potato and a fish (3), to buy the entire stock of a street vendor on the streets of Moscow (4), or yet again to marinate pickles for two weeks inside a barge on a canal taking him from London to Birmingham. (5).

This strange collection of objects, of facts, of situations and beings began when Shimabuku was a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. One day, he put a squid inside the fridge of the apartment he was sharing with another student. To the young Japanese student, it was just food ready to be cooked, whereas his roommate saw the lifeless animal as a hilarious, yet repulsive, curiosity. The same day, his roommate invited friends over to observe and take pictures of the dead squid. Without him fully realizing it, this "show" was Shimabuku's first exhibit: "Exhibition in the refrigerator."

Following this first "piece", which was the result of a confusion due to two different cultural perspectives, Shimabuku didn't stop reiterating these types of displacement: the artist himself, or objects and situations producing strange and poetic combinations. The context of art, and more particularly the space of representation, allow him to formally reveal elements of an everyday nature that are proper to him, yet still surrounded with a halo of "mystery." Let's consider the fruits and vegetables floating inside two aluminum basins filled with water, a piece present in the Wien Lukatsch gallery. The work reconstitutes an absolutely banal experience for most of us. Yet, Shimabuku noticed that when he was washing the vegetables before cooking them, some tomatoes floated and others sank. Without looking for a scientific explanation, the artists simply offers to share his wonder (6).

The trivial experience which is offered to us, like many initiatives by the artist, creates a new "encounter" with our everyday life. Beyond simply revealing its banal aspects, it brings up a form of beauty, a poetry of displacement which doesn't work with the usual esthetical tricks. Many of Shimabuku's works are a recreation of situations he encountered in the past, to which he barely adds anything. He is, in a sense, a real "appropriationist". In Sea and Flowers (2013), the documentation of a performance shot on super 8 film, which displays a usage of poetry maybe more evident than in the floating tomatoes, Shimabuku, on a boat at sea, places several flowers petals on the waves. His production can thus be compared to a multitude of photographs, simply capturing sparks of the real, like the compilation of a permanent tourist: « With photography, you can take a mystery as a mystery ». (7).

The apparent simplicity of the artist's works could have him pass for an eccentric (8), and yet it is, to who can appreciate it, the expression of a stupefying lucidity on his environment. It is a rare hindsight, decontaminated of our daily practice, which he seizes, silently reinterpreting an absurd reality.
Similarly to his collected stone garden (Octopus Stone, 2013), Shimabuku's exhibitions take on the vast shape of an ongoing wonder-room, with multiple locations.

"There are places to which you can only travel slowly, and there are things that can only be made slowly." (9)

Gauthier Lesturgie
English translation: **Sarah Pearce**

1-"Have you ever seen a tortoise yawn? conversation between Shimabuku and Chiara Parisi", Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'Île de Vassivière, 2011.
2- My Teacher Tortoise, 2011.
3- Fish and Chips, 2006.
4- A Great Day, 2011.
5- Cucumber Journey, 2000.
6- Something that Floats / Something that Sinks, 2010.
7- Shimabuku, Chiara Parisi, op. cit.
8- During the *Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition* (2003), where the artist organized a swimming competition for dogs in Swansea, Wales, one of the residents questioned him on the purpose of organizing such an event and considering it art? The artist replied that he did not have a choice; it had to be "art", since they lived in sad times, and these kinds of things could only happen in the context of "art".
9- Shimabuku's text for Cucumber Journey, 2000.

Wien Lukatsch Gallery, Berlin, September 3 – October 31, 2014.

Have you ever seen a tortoise yawn?
Conversation between Shimabuku and Chiara Parisi

Shimabuku, Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'île de Vassivière, 2011

Chiara Parisi: We will start talking about what is a show for you. As you have said once, in a way, your first exhibition had to do with an octopus that you placed in the refrigerator when you lived in San Francisco with another student who did not really like the idea of having this kind of animal in the house. Against all odds he became the spectator of his own fridge, inviting friends to see an artwork at his place.

Shimabuku: Yes, I lived in San Francisco as an art school student. It was already more than 20 years ago. When I started to live with my roommate, he begged me "Please don't put any fish or octopus in the refrigerator". He was from Kentucky; it wasn't at all a custom for him to eat fish in those days.

At the time, I said "OK ", but later, I started to think why couldn't I put what I liked in the fridge? Eating fish is my culture and the refrigerator also belonged to me. So one day, while my roommate was away, I bought some fish and octopus leg at a Japanese supermarket. Shortly after he came home, he noticed the fish and octopus in the refrigerator. As soon as he found them, he yelled "Ugh! ", I wondered if he would get mad, but all he did was call a friend on the phone.

The friend, who lived in the neighbourhood, came over immediately, and both of them took turns opening the refrigerator door over and over saying "Ugh!" each time. They seemed having a lot of fun.
That time something really happened between my roommate and me and even to my roommate's friend. So I called it "Exhibition in a Refrigerator". For me, an exhibition is a thing that makes some changes among people.

CP: Since this first experience, you have been working with animals (octopus, monkeys, dogs, birds…) and here, in Vassivière, you decided to work with a tortoise. An emblematic animal that is, among other things, evocative of eternity.

Does the presence of all these animals in your work signify an interest in another kind of reality, another vision of time, another way of communicating?

Shima: Animals are interesting because they have quite a different way of life than people. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand why it is so big, why it is so slow etc., but they have their own way, so you just have to accept them the way they are. Looking at animals is also captivating and quite interactive. Everyone gets something different from animals. For example, some people will see an octopus as a devil or a creature from outer space, but some will say: "It looks delicious!"

This time in Vassivière, I bring an African spurred tortoise in the art centre. That is a work called "My Teacher Tortoise". I think people will be surprised when they will see a living tortoise, it is something they did not expect in an exhibit room. But it is not only about surprise. People will be able to walk into the tortoise's pen and meet one on one. This way, people can get close to the tortoise; each of them will have a personal relationship with the tortoise.

In those days, I was thinking of making a work about "having a break" or "slowness", and then I had a chance to go to an aquarium. I met a tortoise there. It was a special area for kids, but on a weekday afternoon the place was empty, I could spend time alone with the tortoise for a long time. Of course, a tortoise is a typical creature that symbolizes slowness; actually it is maybe too typical. Because of that, I was looking for something different than a tortoise at the beginning. But after having the chance to look at a real tortoise in the aquarium, I was completely amazed. Have you ever seen a tortoise yawn? It is beautiful.

CP: I do hope that we will have the chance to witness the yawning of your tortoise. In the wood of sculptures, there is a billboard work: "Make animals smile". The audience is invited to think about their condition as viewers and, in the same time, about the condition of animals. Your work, especially on the island that is known for sheltering many animals, interrogates us about this possible inversion.

Shima: As a matter of fact, if there are people and animals in the same space, animals are looking at people too. But very often, people tend to forget about it. I say this with humor. And on Vassivière island, the interesting thing is that the vast majority of the inhabitants are animals. You told me that there are only two people actually living on the island. If I recall correctly, it was you and another person who are taking care of the island, right? But there are many animals. So it seemed natural to make something for the island's animals.

CP: I also feel that the title of your exhibition Man should try to avoid contact with alien life forms is offering an extremely poetic interaction between the public and the animals, closely linked to the presence of the tortoise.

Shima: I found the sentence "Man should try to avoid contact with alien life forms." as a newspaper headline some time ago. And it was extremely poetic to me. But at the same time, I took it as a strong message. For me, it meant that we still have many things to do before trying to meet alien life forms. There are still so many different types of people to meet on this planet. There are many creatures to encounter on this planet. We have to meet tortoise before alien life forms. In our society, we tend to believe something new or far is always better, but I have doubts about that idea. So I have realized that sometimes it is better to stop.

But in fact, the article's meaning was quite different. The quote is from Cosmologist Stephen Hawking. What he meant was not metaphoric. He said: "If aliens ever visit us, I think the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America, with the catastrophic consequences we all know about."

I decided to use the sentence "Man should try to avoid contact with alien life forms." anyway, as a metaphorical way to say that stopping or turning back can be a positive experience.

CP: I am very touched by the extraordinary and beautiful coincidence of your name's meaning; 'Shimabuku' means 'island' and 'bag'. This is also linked to your personality and your passionate need for creating and telling stories.

Shima: Actually, my name Shimabuku consists of 2 Chinese ideograms, the one for "Shima" means "island", and the one for "buku" means "bag" or "sack". It is very normal that Japanese names are made of 2 or 3 Chinese signs, but normally it makes sense. For example, famous Japanese novelist's name, Mishima means 3 islands. "Mi" means "3". "Shima" is the same ideogram than mine. The Artist's name Ono means "small field". "O" means small. "No" means field. Like these, most of Japanese people's names make sense, but my name doesn't make sense. I don't understand the combination of island and bag. Even when I was a child this was mysterious. Maybe it was my first real surrealistic experience. Something I can't understand about myself. I have lived with this feeling all my life. It has influenced how I make work. As you know, my work often addresses the special encounters between things.

CP: You often say that when you were 18 years old, you wanted to be a poet or a tour guide. It's true that your work deals with language, with the notions of fable, legend, and narrated stories.

Shima: Yes, I wanted to be a poet or tour guide when I was a teenager. For me, a poet and a tour guide are similar, because they are showing something special to people. They lead the way to special places. What I am doing now is similar to that.

CP: Thinking about your work, I see a lot of similarities between art and the culture of a given country. In particular, I am thinking about the video that you are presenting in the Studio here in Vassivière. You say about its title "Fish & Chips" that it is the "most poetic word combination in English cityscape."

Shima: For most people "Fish & Chips", is a very normal combination of words. I think it is quite a beautiful and poetic, because there is a meeting of the sea and the land. English cities are filled with those words! You will see "Fish & Chips" signs everywhere in England. For me, it is like a huge art installation made by people over a long period of time. When I was invited to the Liverpool biennial, I wanted to make a work relating to this "Fish & Chips" idea. So I decided to make a video work where chips, in essence a potato, are going to meet a fish underwater. I wanted to make my own "Fish & Chips".

CP: Did you shoot the video by yourself? Did you dive?

Shima: Yes, I went diving myself with an underwater camera. But I was not alone, there were other divers assisting me.

CP: How did you make the potato swim so well?

Shima: Many people ask this question, but actually a potato is quite a good swimmer! That also amazes me. You should try to swim together with a potato once. It is a beautiful experience.

If I go back to your question about the relationship between my work and language, sometimes, some words become the starting point of my work. "Onion Orion" is an example. Maybe, some people or writers enjoy this kind of wordplay in notebooks or in their head, but very few people realize it in reality. It becomes my art. "Onion Orion" is an interesting work. Ever since I made this work, whenever I look up at a starry sky, I see onions floating. And I think about ancient people who put names to constellations, people who saw the Great Dipper in the sky.

CP: I like this idea of constellation very much and I feel it is something that goes through your entire body of work, along with the idea of taking some time to look at things which are close to us. In fact, I see all your works (such as "Flying me", "Leaves Swim", "Something that Floats / Something that Sinks") as the construction of a constellation that requires us to be slower, more contemplative maybe? Would you agree with that, to consider your work as a constellation?

Shima: I was never conscious about my whole work as a constellation. It is a beautiful and interesting metaphor, and maybe it is true. I am interested in the concept of a constellation, because it is something where people see the relationship between stars, certain forms in the nothingness, in the abstract starlit sky. And it is something to put a name on something that didn't have a name before. I think my work is similar to that.

CP: Can you also talk about another work of yours "Ice Cream with Salt / Ice Cream with Pepper"?
Shima: That is the work I presented for the first time in my show with Pierre Joseph at Air de Paris in 2010. Then, after this show, I had a little event to serve ice cream with salt and pepper at a gallery space in Today museum in Beijing. It was in a group show. Having some vanilla ice cream with salt and pepper, it sounds bad, but actually the taste is quite good. It is quite a miracle taste. You should try! "Ice Cream with Salt / Ice Cream with Pepper" is a small adventure and revolution in our daily life. It is a kind of statement and a message for our whole life.

CP: It is not only this work, you often make works about food or cooking: "Cucumber Journey" in 2000, for example. What is the relationship between food or cooking and art for you?

Shima: I think cooking and art are similar. They are both about unexpected meetings of far away ingredients to create something delicious, something good. Both in art and in cooking, a single ingredient

can be used in so many different ways. You need creative imagination to question what's edible and what combinations might result in something delicious. It's also necessary to have the courage and openness to try them out.

CP: "Something that Floats / Something that Sinks", is also a work related to cooking.

Shima: Yes, when I was washing tomatoes in my kitchen, I discovered that there were floating ones and sinking ones. And I was wondering why. Maybe there was a scientific reason, but I decided later to show this as a mysterious thing. It is not interpretation, I want people to have the same experience I had in my kitchen. It may be such a little thing really, but in that respect, one thing I am doing throughout my practice is giving a place for such little things.

CP: Can you tell about the work "Doing something you didn't plan to do"?

Shima: A golf practice cage is installed in the Art centre's Little Theatre. The visitors get to play golf, something that they did not plan to do in a museum. There's always something that opens up when you do something you didn't think about doing. Even me, I never imagined I would ever play golf. But one day, a friend asked me to play together, so I did it. I found it interesting. What was interesting is while I was starting to know a bit about golf, I also started to talk with some men who had been talking difficulties before.

CP: About the event you organized in Wales "Swansea Jack Memorial Dog Swimming Competition", you told me that many people thought you just documented an existing local event when they looked at the video and photos.

Shima: It became a really natural event, so I was also feeling that I was just documenting an event that's been going on for generations. Someone asked me "What's the purpose of organizing a dog swimming competition and call it art?" I answered I didn't have a choice, it actually had to be art because we live in a sad era in which things like this are only possible under the context of art. There used to be a time when the community leader or the goofy neighbour took it upon themselves to organize events and festivals around town. But now, in the name of efficiency, there are less and less people doing things that at first glance seem pointless. For that reason, especially in this day and age, I feel that art should take on a broader role in our society.

CP: You also have melancholic photo works, showing things like a red apple seemingly out of place in a snowy landscape, fragile boughs in the snow, some withered tree branches, an empty basket, a container being hoisted caught in a beam of sunlight.

Shima: I like photographs very much. I have always had old film cameras and I like taking that kind of photo. Photography is interesting to me, because it is a media that can catch something you don't understand at the moment you don't understand it. I didn't know why there were apple and tangerine on the snow. I took them without understanding. With photography, you can take a mystery as a mystery. By using old cameras, something unexpected is always possible. You see the rainbow light reflections of the lens. You have to accept and enjoy something you don't understand.

CP: Your whole body of work but also your process of working, of thinking about exhibitions, offer the public another kind of relationship with time which seems to allow us to create a pace of our own, to install a sort of tranquillity.

Shima: I like to do things softly and quietly. Actually, I am often moved by this kind of behaviour. I am not moved by a loud voice and I know there are some people who like it this way. Revolutionary things don't have to always be loud.

CP: One last question, in Vassivière, the whole exhibition leads the visitor through a metaphorical vision of your work. You said that you think about it as "a forest" with "many, many points of entry, and many paths running through it". Your attitude toward the public is always sensitive in relation to the apprehension of your work.

Shima: When I make a show, I think it is important to leave some space for the audience to freely think and imagine. I think seeing an exhibition is not only about understanding the artist's intention. More than that, I think that seeing an exhibition is a chance to feel and think by or for yourself. This is not only a place to see but also a place for experience.