

the time is now.

Heidrun Holzfeind

December 3 - 30, 2022

Supported by Austrian Cultural Forum Tokyo

*energy-free live & talk event on December 18th, 19:30-21:30

ASAKUSA is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in Japan by Austrian artist and filmmaker **Heidrun Holzfeind** (1972-), "the time is now." The latent power of space in architecture and landscape that transmutes society has political implications on human behavior while also contributing to the formation of personal identities. Holzfeind's oeuvre of video, photographic, and installation works speak of her painstakingly thorough research exploring the socio-political impacts of twentieth century architecture based on utopian ideologies, functionality, and rationality.

the time is now. (2019) is a two-part video installation produced in Japan. The setting for the first film, projected on the main screen, is the Inter-University Seminar House complex designed by architect Takamasa Yoshizaka, a protégé of Le Corbusier as well as a major pioneer of Japan's modernist movement. The unique structures were built in the suburbs of Tokyo (Tama Hills, Hachioji) to establish autonomy and interactions that transcend faculty and student boundaries in response to the deteriorating standards of mass-produced university education during Japan's high-growth postwar period.

The stage is its main building, an iconic concrete inverted pyramid surrounded by bamboo groves and cricket song, reminiscent of an archeological site (see footnote 1). With this modernist "temple" as a backdrop, the shamanic improv duo **IRO, Toshio Orimo** (1946-) and **Shizuko Orimo** (1944-2019), invoke spirits in a ritualistic performance. Shizuko, dressed as a miko (shrine maiden), incants a prayer, or norito, based on animistic Shinto practices. After summoning water spirits and microorganisms, she dances with kagura bells, accompanied by Toshio on the Noh flute and uchiwadaiko fan drum. Returning to the "other world," as represented by Shizuko's dance on the bridge leading to the main building, their ritual transforms into an improvisation with a Shizuko on wood bass and Toshio on piano. With Shizuko's lively vocals in counterpoint, found footage is inserted between the tension-filled performance. Images of youth rebellion groups of the 1960s and 70s defending themselves in strongholds or in scrums or attacking their oppressors, overlap with present-day anti-base protesters who continue to struggle against the ongoing destruction of Henoko Bay in Okinawa. The film culminates in a lamination of clips of IRO's 1986 final punk concert—featuring the explosive energy of Shizuko's electric guitar, and reaches a climax with the duo's kotodama, or word-spirit, "Maburi Henoko," referring to the Okinawan word for "spirit" or "soul."

The second film, exhibited on the first floor, depicts the daily scenes and ideas behind IRO's lifework. Toshio and Shizuko, filmed at their home in Kawasaki, explain how the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident shocked them into going analog, getting rid of electric instruments to create unplugged, or "energy-free" music (see footnote 2). Through this transition, they became more influenced by indigenous sounds as well as Shinto rituals and this developed into their own interpretation of the kagura dance/ritual, "punk kagura" (see footnote 3), which they performed at shrines throughout Japan. The Orimos are not only activists creating clever placards and taking to the streets to oppose war and the US airbase at Henoko, and to promote voter participation, they are also enterprisingly self-sufficient, producing cassette tapes under their original "Shaman Label," repairing their house (which they call their "playhouse"), and procuring used musical instruments and making their own. Alchemized by clashes and fusions of daily activities, art, and music, the two endlessly co-create and explore the potential of the relationship between man and woman in an animistic rather than a patriarchal framework. With these small practices of resistance, they do not intend to change society or the world, rather, these are acts of civil disobedience in order to resist being governed (see footnote 4).

At a time when small tectonic shifts are occurring in many parts of the world due to the ever-accelerating shaking of institutional foundations laid down in the name of modernity, this exhibition poses the following questions: In an East Asian nation that has undergone a series of political, economic, social, and cultural transformations due to rapid modernization in the late nineteenth century, how have the supernatural, the feminine, indigenous animism, and masculine modernism been internalized and expressed in the process of collective identity? How does this dichotomy support and transcend the process of individual and social internalization? Can stories of individual disobedience and resistance in historically landscaped images dismantle and agitate the entrenched whole and reconcile it with the cosmic ecology?



Heidrun Holzfeind: *the time is now*, film still, 2019. (c) Heidrun Holzfeind.



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Artists

Heidrun Holzfeind (b.1972, Lienz/ Austria)

Studied art history at the University of Vienna and sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and in New York, currently based in Berlin, Holzfeind's interest in modernist architecture and the function of social utopia inherent in society has led her to explore the relationship between history and identity, personal narratives and political narratives through video, photography, installations and artist books. She has been invited to exhibitions and screenings at museums and festivals around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Museum of Modern Art (Mumok) in Vienna, and the Istanbul Biennial. She has received high acclaim in Austria and elsewhere, including the Camera Austria Prize and the Austrian Arts Council Outstanding Artist Award.

IRO

Shamanic improvisation duo formed in 1981 by the married couple, Toshio Orimo (1946-) and Shizuko Orimo (1944-2019). At the time of its formation, they performed in eruptive, high-energy improvisations that added elements of punk noise to free jazz. Shocked by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, they exchanged their electric instruments for analog, unplugged or "energy-free" ones. Influenced by indigenous sounds and Shinto rituals, they developed their own interpretation of the kagura dance/ritual, which they call "punk kagura," performing ritual and dance at shrines throughout Japan. Their musical explorations go hand-in-hand with their activist involvement in peace and anti-nuclear movements and their free-spirited way of life that vehemently rejects commercialism in allforms.

Footnotes

1. Takamasa Yoshizaka (1917-1986), an architect, thinker, and alpinist who worked on many mountain and regional projects, was strongly conscious of human-based environments, and his designs attempted to harmonize with the environment, topography, and climate. From the outset of its planning, the Inter-University Seminar House complex emerged organically with its surroundings.
2. Music critic Kenichi Takeda (1948-) of Japanese anti-pop music group, A-Musik, coined this word in 1984. See liner notes by Takeo Udagawa for the "IRO: anima animus" LP released on the occasion of the Heidrun Holzfeind's exhibition of the time is now. at the Secession, February 1 to March 31, 2019.
3. Underground culture critic Takeo Udagawa (1957-) has described punk kagura as "a form of magic, including the possession rituals performed in ancient Shinto (which predates Shrine Shinto)," and as "an extreme form of syncretism which enshrines multiple and conflicting spiritual existences." See liner notes by Udagawa above.
4. See James C. Scott, Two Cheers For Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play, Princeton University Press, 2012. Holzfeind's next production (currently in progress), "The 49th Year," attempts to reflect on labor and movements in postwar Japanese society from the angle of leftist movements of the 1970s.

Event Information

Soft Opening

A soft opening will be held with the artist present and a musical performance will follow.

Saturday, December 3, 2022 from 5 PM
@Asakusa

Artist Talk and energy-free Live

A talk by Heidrun Holzfeind and philosopher/anarchism researcher Motonari-gensai Mori will be held together with an energy-free live performance by Toshio Orimo from IRO and a shakuhachi musician Sabu Orimo. Seating is limited, so please make reservations in advance.

Sunday, December 18, 2022, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM
@ASAKUSA

Program: Live performance by Toshio Orimo (piano) and Sabu Orimo (shakuhachi), and a talk by Heidrun Holzfeind and Motonao-gensai Mori.

Entrance fee: 1,500 yen

Reservation: Please send an email with your 1) name, 2) e-mail address, 3) telephone number, and 4) number of people who wish to attend to team@asakusa-o.com

Exhibition Information

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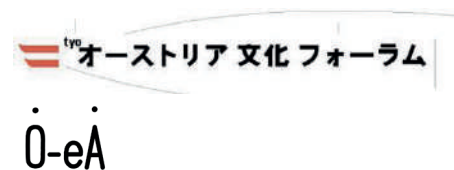
Opening hours: Noon - 7PM every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday or by appointment.

Venue: ASAKUSA

1-6-16, Nishiasakusa, Taito, Tokyo, 111-0035

Supported by:

Austrian Cultural Forum Tokyo, 0-eA



This exhibition is a part of a program "Politics of Not-Knowing".

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ASAKUSA is a 40-square-meter exhibition venue for contemporary art programmes committed to advancing curatorial collaboration and practices.