

Soya Arakawa





»The Teacher«

Performance directed by Agnes
Scherer at Kinderhook & Caracas,
Berlin, 2019

Concept, visuals, lyrics and direction: Agnes Scherer

Performers: Soya Arakawa, Claudia Barth, Tobias Textor

Music: Tobias Textor

Duration: 12 min.

For this piece I was approached as a performer and puppeteer. I have cultivated a strong interest in puppetry for many years and studied different approaches to this form of art as a frequent visitor to Düsseldorf's puppet theatre. For »The Teacher«, it was required to move a teacher puppet in order to suggest that he is explaining the changing images behind him, but also to transport a manic nature of the teacher. I developed a range of very different styles in operating this puppet to make the teacher shift between contrasting modes of expression. In the end of the performance, I get covered and replaced by a »sarcophagus« with an effigy of myself.







Photo by Trevor Good



»Tag H«

Performance directed by miu at
FFT Düsseldorf (offsite), 2018

Concept, text, sound and direction: miu

Performer: Soya Arakawa, Pia Tomoko Meid, Bastian
Nonnenberg, Kenji Shinohe, Daniel Werner

Duration: 60 min.

Co-produced with Freies Forum Theater (FFT) Düsseldorf

Supported by the Kulturstadt of Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf

»Tag H« is a piece about a fictitious world in which left and right are swapped. As a performer I explore how this new paradigm affects the mind and body.





»Salon Story«

Performance with mobile ceramic kiln on pedestal for a sculpture by Henry Moore, Arp Museum, Rolandseck, 2018

»Salon Story« is a series of interventions which addresses the enormous effort around the production of ceramics. As a place for presenting this work, I chose a pedestal in front of the Arp Museum which belonged to a temporarily removed sculpture by Henry Moore. On this pedestal I built a kiln in which I fired a ceramic made with materials found on site, such as soil and wood. Using the object that resulted from this as a storytelling device, I told stories which combined autobiographical and fictitious elements. While I was trained in traditional Japanese pottery throughout my teenage years, I always wanted to become a sculptor in the modern tradition. Practicing the traditional craft on a pedestal of a sculpture by Henry Moore and retrieving an ambiguous object from this process was an inverted approach to the problem.









Photo documentation of the performance by Taja Ivanova

»Cupid and the Animals«
Operetta directed by Agnes
Scherer at TRAMPS London
(offsite), Museum Ludwig, Köln and
TRAMPS New York (offsite,
Brooklyn Academy of Music), 2017
and 2018

Concept, visuals, lyrics and direction: Agnes Scherer
Performers: Soya Arakawa, Claudia Barth, Francisco Aguilera
Cáceres, José Antonio Aguilera Cáceres, Lukas Goersmeyer,
Camillo Grewe, Tom Hardwick-Allan, Fabienne Kirschke, Katrin
Sons, Michael Taylor
Music: Camillo Grewe
Duration: 45 min.
Supported by the Nigel Greenwood Art Prize, TRAMPS and
Kunststiftung NRW

For this piece I was asked to perform in the role of a dripstone cave. With my singing I expressed the subjectivity of a stone, or spirit living in a stone, who is afflicted with emotions and the ability to feel his own suffering for the first time. Before each of the performing nights I spent the whole day preparing mentally for this very challenging act.





»Rat Rat«

Exhibition, A room with a view,
Düsseldorf, 2016

Mixed media installation in response to two subsequent encounters with a rat three years before

Eines Tages hat mich einmal eine Ratte besucht.

Sie hat meine Unterhose, die ich in der Toilette habe liegen lassen, gefressen...

Da lag sie und sah aus wie ein haariger Ball.

Ich wollte nach ihr greifen, und sie lief weg.

Am nächsten Tag hat sie mich wieder besucht.

Sie lag im Treppenhaus auf dem Rücken, und ich dachte sie sei tot.

Als ich über sie rübersteigen wollte, ist sie aufgeschreckt und davongelaufen.

Sie hatte geschlafen, komischerweise auf dem Rücken.

Dieses Ereignis ist schon 3 Jahre her, aber es ist in meiner Erinnerung sehr präsent.

Eine Frage, die ich mir immer gestellt habe, ist, warum ich in meinen Bildern keine Motive wie Menschen oder Blumen habe.

Vielleicht könnte die Ratte mein Motiv werden oder auch nicht.

Soya Arakawa, März 2016

One day a rat visited me.

The rat ate my underpants, which I'd left lying in the bathroom ...

The rat was laying down and it looked like a hairy ball.

I wanted to grasp him, and it he away.

The next day he visited me again.

He was lying on his back in the stairwell, and I thought he was dead.

When I wanted to step over him, suddenly he was startled and ran away.

Strangely, he had slept on his back.

This event happened already 3 years ago,

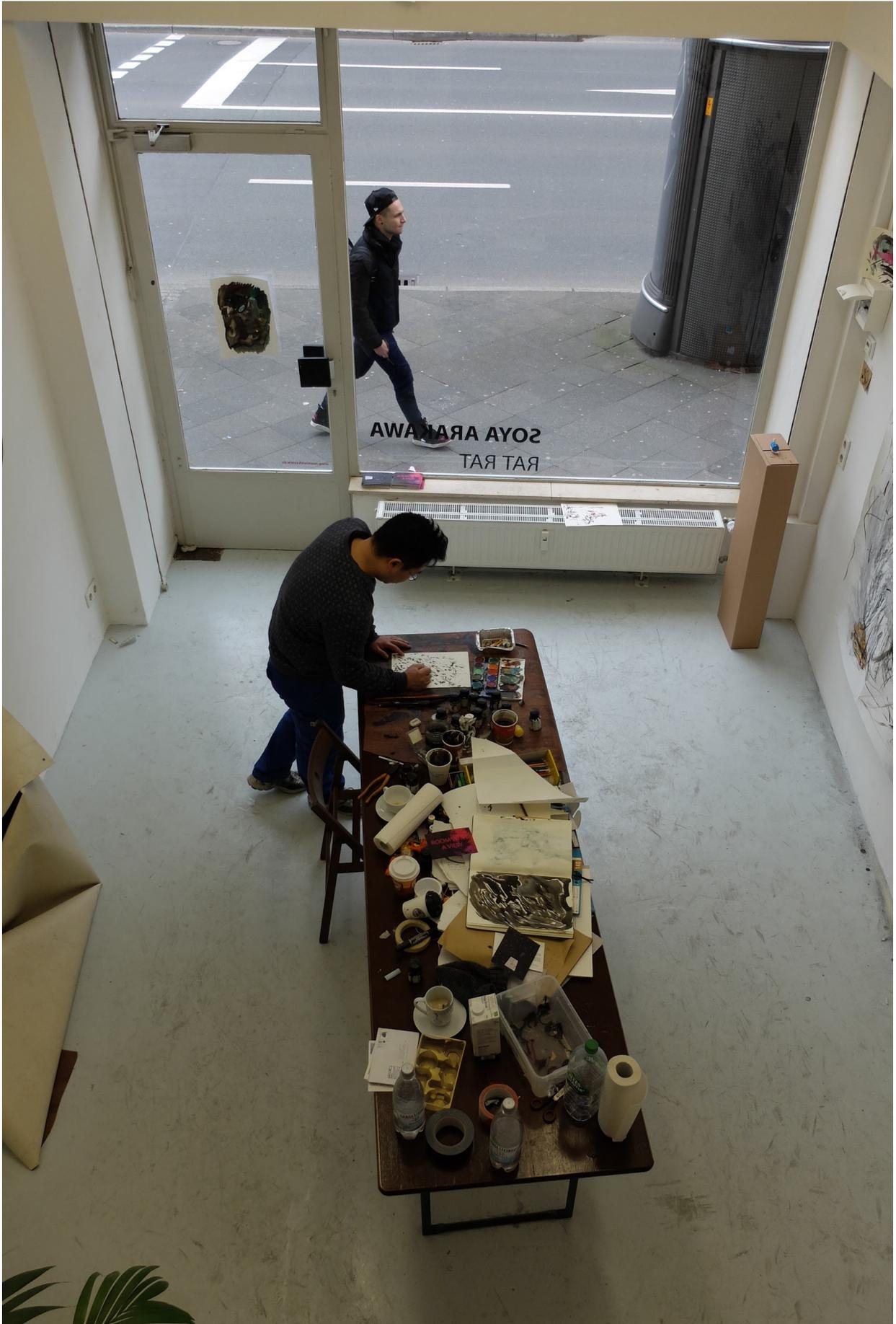
but it is still very present in my memory.

One question that I have always asked myself is why I have no motifs in my pictures, such as people or flowers.

Maybe the rat could be my motive or not.

Soya Arakawa, March 2016











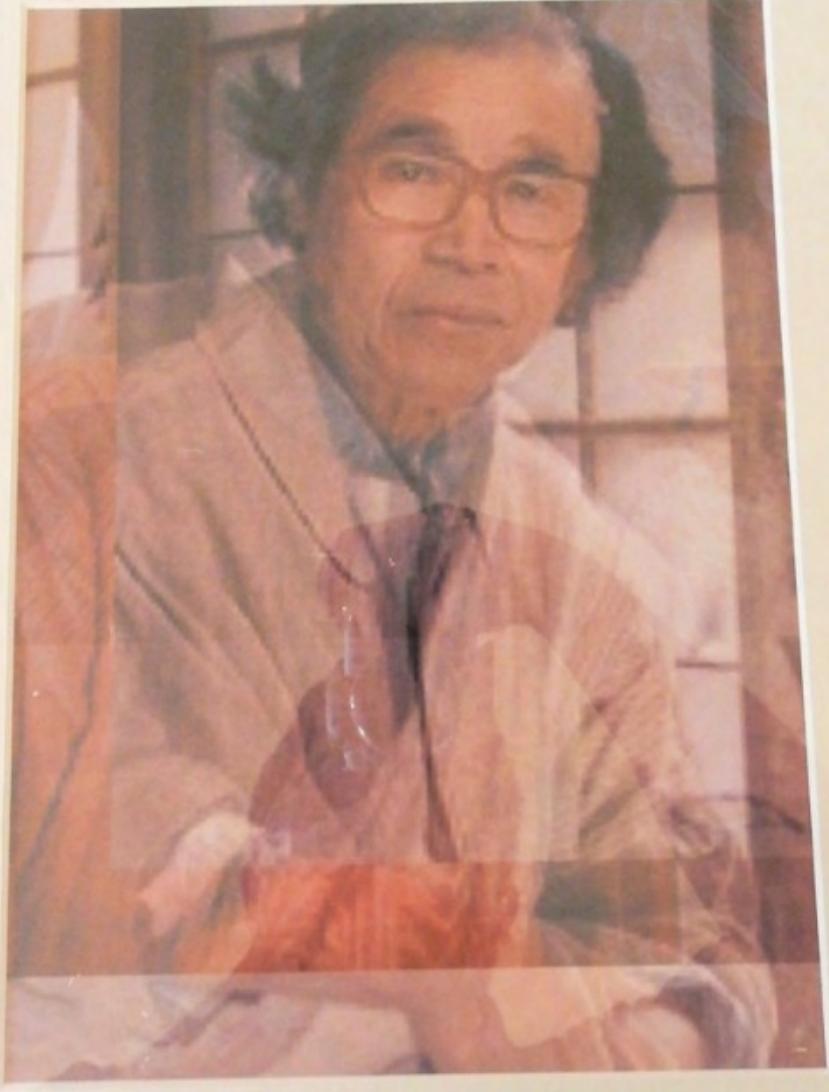


»Ceramic«

Performance with Raku-Ceramics,
wood, photos and singing at
Malkasten Düsseldorf, 2013

My father is a ceramicist and throughout my youth I was forced to study the craft of pottery. Twelve years ago, I finally decided to leave it behind. But after I came to Germany, I realized that I was still strongly influenced by my relationship with pottery. In March 2013, I was visiting Japan and worked at my father's workshop. Then, I asked him to teach me more about the history of ceramics every night. He still wanted me to become a ceramicist and I once again decided not to follow his call. At the same time I decided to adopt what he wants to pass on to me, especially the techniques and a special glaze which is his invention and the recipe for which he doesn't want to tell to anyone but me. Pottery as such is of extreme importance to me, and I find it primarily emotional to contemplate it. I developed a performance based on a song to pottery, which to sing can only be a very emotional act for me.

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Kiln and potter's wheel,
that's my childhood.

Clay and industrialization,
that's my childhood.

My first sculpture was a Lion made of ceramic.

Maybe I was 3 years old – quite a natural thing to
make.

Making something out of clay. It's natural that I liked
clay.

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Ceramic Ceramic Ceramic Ceramic

I practiced and practiced.

More than a hobby, less than a profession.

I practiced with adults, for who it was just a hobby.

For more than 5 years, I concentrated on ceramics.

But I quit when I was 16 years old.

Since then, for 13 years,

I've refused to make ceramics.

I've hated my father's esthetic,

I've hated my home.

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I didn't draw, I didn't make anything.

But I thought, I will be an artist, according to my Environment:
just clay and local artists were surrounding me.

So it was natural to work in ceramics
and also natural to be forced.

My training to become a professional began
and I thought I would be a ceramic artist.

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I started to make sculptures and
drawings,
and practiced Zen meditation in high
school.

Still using clay to make sculptures,
but not for pottery,
Not to be a ceramicist.

I thought I had quite some talent as a
sculptor,

I thought I would be an artist without
any doubt,
and after high school

I went to a public art college.

There I realized, I was determined to
be an artist.

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Now I'm in Germany, since 2009.

I've been feeling deeply influenced by pottery and also My father's esthetic. I
decided to work

with my father for a month.

Last march I asked my father to teach me about ceramics
and every night I was given a lecture

On the history of ceramics.

Listening to his talk,

stories about pottery and legendary ceramic artists

was fun, to work with him and make some ceramic works

was fun, but I felt nothing new. Nothing happened, as I expected.

Again, I decided not to be a ceramicist.

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etc

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Pottery has a certain esthetic.
An esthetic which my father recognizes.
An esthetic which I hate.
Defining for myself the esthetic of pottery, I could define it
As an esthetic which I always hated
And which embodied to me the other possibility,
The other way there was for me.
I won't be a ceramic artist, but

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»Project Cicciolino«
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and
Kanazawa Bidai Gallery, Japan,
2013

Documentation of an encounter with a bearkeeper and his
bears, photos, pieces of wood, frames

After I had completed the work »Legend of the artist« in 2011, the idea of my future death by being eaten by a bear became extremely meaningful to me. Because all the other things, like the place where I'll exhibit my work or the titles of my works I can organize myself, but my death would be quite hard to organize. But if I were to die at the age of 52, the age of my death on the tombstone I had crafted, I would obviously be unwilling to give in to this fate. So I started to seek for a compromise between the biography I had written of my future self, and my real life. 2 years had passed after the work that predicted my future, when I found and met a man who lives with 8 bears, and took some photos at his place. Initially my plan had been to take a typical artist's self portrait with the bears. But when I stood in front of a bear for the first time, the bearkeeper didn't give me any advice, and I just felt a fear which I had never experienced before. With this fear I was unable to act as a typical artist for the portrait, and instead fighting the fear was all I did. I realized that the incident will happen when the time comes.

I talked to the bearkeeper about my prevision of dying in the fangs of a bear later on – with hesitance, because it sure did not seem like a good story for him. After hearing it, he said: »That's good, so you can be in harmony with nature«.

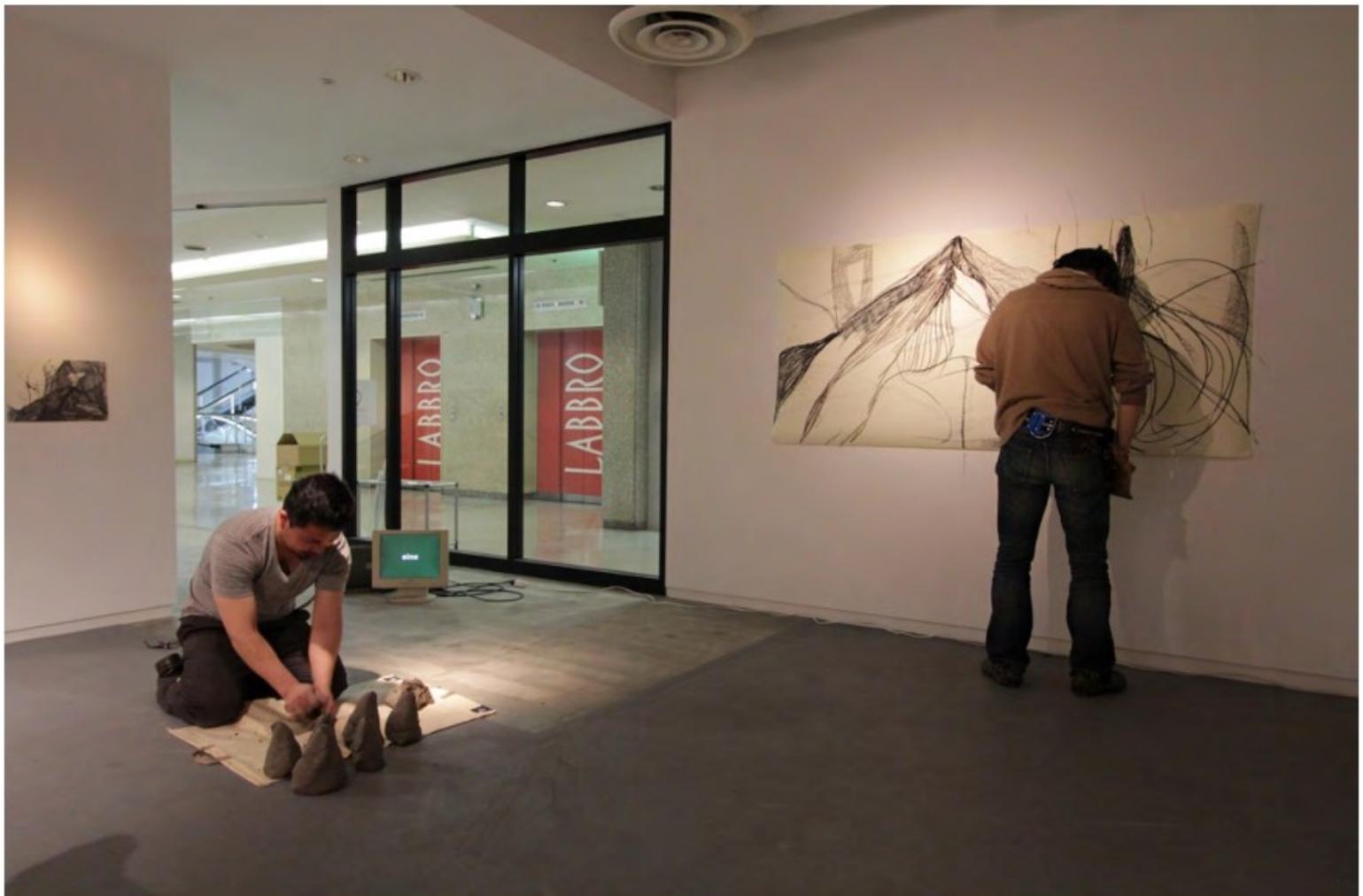








Reshowing the work about my bear encounter in Japan, the artist Daisuke Inoue and I did a performance which reflected upon it and was presented alongside. In this performance, Daisuke Inoue built a representation of the Rocky Mountains with clay, which I kept destroying, just to see it being rebuilt by him immediately after.





»Legend of the Artist«

Giant paper maché trophy and
tombstone with story of my life,
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, 2011

Soya Arakawa

1984-2037

Born on May 12th in Hamamatsu-shi next to the military site in Hamamatsu. His father was an architect and ceramicist. Thus, Soya discovered his love for clay very early on in his life.

Throughout his childhood he suffered from very severe asthma, because of which he spent much time confined to his bed. This time he used for intensive reading. In high school years he drew a lot, made sculptures from clay and practiced Zen meditation. In 2007, he graduated from art school. After his graduation he went to Taipei for an artist residency. In 2009, he came to Germany to study at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf. In 2011, he had his first spectacular solo show. More exhibitions followed in the UK, France, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and the USA.

During this time he presented his probably most popular works such as »Comedy show«, »Big star?« and »No Concept«. In 2018, he moved to the USA where he pursued his practice in a very concentrated way. There, works such as »Gold Rush Shock«, »American Size« and »Knock Back« came into existence. On January 18th, 2037, while hiking in the Rocky Mountains, he was attacked and eaten by a bear. His last wish was that there should never be a retrospective on his work. Nevertheless, in 2038 there were several big retrospectives, especially in Germany, the USA and Japan.



Soya Arakawa 1984 - 2037

Geboren am 12. Mai in Hamamatsu. Sie ist die Tochter des berühmten Keramikgelehrten und
in Hamamatsu. Sein Vater war Architekt und Keramikmeister. So entdeckte Soya
Sehr früh seine Liebe zum Material Ton. In Kindertagen hat er an schwarzen Pflaster und
war dabei häufig die Pfeil geballt. Diese Zeit nutzte er zum intensiven Lesen. In
der Oberschule zeichnete er viel, fertigte Skulpturen aus Ton und praktizierte
Zen-Malerei. 2007 absolvierte er die Kunsthochschule. Nach dem Abschluss
ging er nach Taipei um am "Art in Residence" Projekt teilzunehmen.
Im Jahre 2009 kam er nach Deutschland und studierte an der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.
2011 hatte er dann eine spektakuläre Einzelausstellung. Es folgten weitere Ausstellungen
in Dänemark sowie in England, Frankreich, Österreich, den Niederlanden, Belgien und in USA.
In dieser Zeit präsentierte er seine wohl bekanntesten Arbeiten wie "Comedy Show", "Big Star?"
und "No Concept". In die USA zog er 2018, wo er konzentriert an seinen Wägen arbeitete.
Dort entstanden Arbeiten wie "Gold Rush Shack", "American Size" und "Knockback". Am 18. Januar 2037
wurde er beim Wandern in den Rocky Mountains von einem Bären angegriffen und verspeist. Sein
letzter Wille war, dass es niemals eine Retrospektive über ihn geben sollte. Dennoch gab
es 2038 mehrere große Retrospektiven besonders in Deutschland, in den USA und Japan.



Soya Arakawa

1984 - 2037

Geboren am 12. Mai in Hamamatsu-Si; neben dem Herdungsstützpunkt in Hamamatsu. Sein Vater war Architekt und Keramikünstler. So entdeckte Soya sehr früh seine Liebe zum Material Ton. In Kindertagen litt er an schwerem Asthma und war deshalb häufig aus Bett geleselt. Diese Zeit nutzte er zum intensiven Lesen. In der Oberschule zeichnete er viel, fertigte Skulpturen aus Ton und praktizierte Zen-Meditation. 2007 absolvierte er die Kunsthochschule. Nach dem Abschluss ging er nach Taipei um an 'Artist in Residence' Projekt teilzunehmen. Im Jahre 2009 kam er nach Deutschland und studierte an der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. 2011 hatte er dann eine spektakuläre Einzelausstellung. Es folgten weitere Ausstellungen in Deutschland sowie in England, Frankreich, Österreich, den Niederlanden, Belgien und in USA. In dieser Zeit präsentierte er seine wohl bekanntesten Arbeiten wie 'Comedy Show', 'Big Star?' und 'No Concept'. In die USA zog er 2018, wo er konzentriert an seinen Werken arbeitete. Dort entstanden Arbeiten wie 'Gold Rush Shack', 'American Size' und 'Knockback'. Am 18. Januar 2037 wurde er beim Wandern in den Rocky Mountains von einem Bären angefallen und verspeist. Sein letzter Wille war, dass es niemals eine Retrospektive über ihn geben sollte. Dennoch gab es 2038 mehrere große Retrospektiven besonders in Deutschland, in den USA und Japan.

»Ten thousand leaves and a big
fish«

Altes Wäschegegeschäft August
Fröhls, Mönchengladbach, 2015

Holzschnitt, Keramik, Holz

The Lady from the now abandoned laundry shop August Fröhls, the father of Japanese philosophy and I: the stories of these three persons are eager to get mixed up, while the differences of their experiences also generate a feeling of incompatibility. This becomes the basis for my poems which aim to stimulate abstract imagination. Near the shelf with random ceramic objects I placed a text in black and white – it is a poem translated (for the first time) from Japanese into German. I selected it from an ancient book that includes a collection of poems written by thousands of people, some of them kings, some unknown villagers. The title »Ten thousand leaves« is an incorrect translation: actually, in Japanese, the title is »Ten thousand poems«. But one of the characters also means »leaf«. This gap between the correct translation and the mistranslation inspired my imagination and opened up the possibility for a new poem.

The father of Japanese philosophy did not turn his writings into a book fast enough to spread them to younger generations. At that time, to publish a book would have required making woodcuts. Eventually, the philosopher's son did this work – working long into the nights by candlelight. He became blind. I had a chance to see the original woodblock of this book, and became drawn into this history and fascinated with how handcraft and cultural progress are directly related.





Der Winter hat sich versteckt und der Frühling ist gekommen.
Die Vögel, die noch nicht sangen, beginnen zu singen.
Die Blumen, die noch nicht blühten, beginnen zu blühen.

Ich kann sie nicht ausreißen,
da die Berge mit Dickicht bewachsen sind.
Ich kann sie nicht berühren, da das Gras hoch wächst.
In den Herbstbergen sehe ich Bäume,
und die Blätter färben sich gelb und rot.

Ich reiße sie aus und behalte dies in Erinnerung.
Wenn ich dort grüne Blätter sehe, lasse ich sie und klage.
Es ist schade.
Ich bin bei den Herbstbergen.



Das kleine Mädchen lebt in Stadt M. Im
Wäschegeschäft im alten Stil
stand ihr Vater an der Theke und daneben war ein
hoher Stuhl,
ringsum von Holzregalen umgeben.
Sie sah den Vater telefonieren.
Sie wartete mit Stolz erfüllt.

Eines Morgens ging das Mädchen durch den Laden.
Da sah sie zwei Braunbären.
»Den blauen Pyjama für den großen
und den floral gemusterten für den kleinen«, empfahl
der Vater.
Er rief ihr zu: »komm her«.
»Sind Stammkunden«, sagte er leiser.

Die Zeit verging
und sie wurde eine Lehrerin in der Hauptstadt.
Weit weg von der Heimat.
Ein Freund lud sie zu sich ein. Auf der Reise
dachte sie an den Vater und die Mutter. Ihre Ankunft
hatte sich um einen Tag verzögert,
darum warteten ihre Eltern und ihre Nichte bereits.
Zum erstenmal redete sie mit Leidenschaft über ihre
Arbeit
und erinnerte sich dabei an die Arbeit ihres Vaters.
Sie entschied ihm während ihres Besuches zu helfen.

Der Vater stand früh auf, putzte den Staub weg
und polierte die Theke.
Pyjama aufhängen und Klinken wischen - das waren
ihre Erinnerungen.
Und das kleine Mädchen war stolz auf diese simple
Arbeit. Der Vater, der wie immer im Laden stand,
bügelte die Wäsche noch einmal sorgfältig.

Jeden Abend lehrte sie der Vater
über die Geschichte der verschiedenen Formen
und des Gebrauchs von Unterwäsche und
Schlafkleidung.
Ein großes Missverständnis –
das war die Arbeit ihres Vaters für sie.
Sie dachte immer, er würde die Ware nur verkaufen.
Wenn sie sein Geschäft nicht erbt, wird es nicht
weiter bestehen.
Obwohl sie sicher ist, dass sich in der Stadt danach
nichts ändern wird, entschied sie sich sein Werk zu
achten.

Sie übernahm sein Geschäft,
und sie respektierte die Werte der früheren
Generationen.

Allerdings wird dieses Geschäft nun geschlossen,
hier

