

## Visions of Exchange

### Mercedes-Benz Art Scope Award 2009–2017

Daimler Contemporary Berlin

June 2 — November 4, 2018

#### Artists

Eva **Berendes** (D), Rita **Hensen** (D), Ryosuke **Imamura** (J), Taro **Izumi** (J), Meiro **Koizumi** (J), Satoshi **Ono** (J), Benedikt **Partenheimer** (D), Hiroe **Saeki** (J), Tokihiro **Satō** (J), Jan **Scharrelmann** (D), Menja **Stevenson** (D)

The exhibition "Visions of Exchange" presents the last eleven scholarship recipients of the "Mercedes-Benz Art Scope" artist-in-residence program. This art and culture program established in 1991 by Mercedes-Benz Japan began as support for Japanese artists with a stay in Monflanquin, in southwest France, near the Pyrenees. Thanks to a cooperative agreement with the Daimler Art Collection, Stuttgart / Berlin, the program has reoriented itself since 2004 and established itself as a Japanese-German cultural exchange. A three-month stay in the cities of Tokyo and Berlin allows the artists selected by the jury to deepen their knowledge of the host country's culture, to make new contacts, and to develop artistic projects and ideas from the impressions they have gained. Exhibitions in the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo and the Daimler Contemporary in Berlin present the scholarship recipients and thus a selection of the contemporary art scene in each host country.

The focus is on works that have emerged from the program, complemented by works that permit insight into the origins of the work. Very different in their media, forms, and aesthetics, these works reflect the individual perception of the initially foreign and the impulses and insights that arise from the impressions gained: in approaching the new by gazing through the camera; in the artistic appropriation and transformation of found materials and phenomena; intrinsic to the works, in relying on the traditions of abstract imagery.

## Visions of Exchange

### Tokyo / Berlin

Photographic, video, and sculptural works form the start of the exhibition. They reflect observations and experiences, especially of the urban spaces in Tokyo and Berlin, and compress them into memorable images.

For more than ten years, **Menja Stevenson** (\*1982 in Rottweil, Germany) has been "collecting" impressions and images, actions and postures, atmospheric moods and accidental constellations of objects by photographing, describing, and filming them; translating them from one medium into another. The in-situ work *Heimatgrün*, 2018, reveals "found photographic moments" (M.S.) from Tokyo, from her hometown of Stuttgart, and

from Berlin, and superimposes them on photographs that show the urban environment of the Potsdamer Platz from the windows of the Daimler Contemporary.

The sculpture *Hole III*, 2018, by the sculptor **Jan Scharrelmann** (\*1982 in Stuttgart, Germany) also focuses on the interface between inside / outside. This sculptor's vivid work frequently develops from contrasts, ambivalences, and contradictions. This affects the materials and formal decisions as well as the relationship to the surrounding space and possible readings for the viewer. Since approximately the year 2000, this artist has been working in various groups of works with Styrofoam as his basic material – a fragile, light material that is used for insulation, packaging, etc. – and pigmented epoxy resin, which hardens completely and is used for insulation and other purposes. With these material opposites (fragile / hard), the sculptures in our exhibition also go further into the contrast of solid outer form and sculptural opening, of white and glossy lacquered surfaces, of geometric angularity and irregular color traces.

**Benedikt Partenheimer's** (\*1977 in Munich, Germany) series of *Views of Mt. Fuji*, 2015, stage – borrowing from the color woodcut series of the Japanese painter and woodcut artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) – the spiritually charged national symbol of Japan, Mt. Fuji, which is seen not just from a new perspective in the landscape, but also in its role for the country's cultural self-image. The surreal images of the *Vending Machines*, 2012, (in total, approximately 6 million such snack machines mark the urban image of Tokyo) on the opposite wall are – as is typical for this artist's photographic series – aesthetic individual works and social criticism simultaneously. Against the transparency of the nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima, which marked his stay, they provide a critical view of energy politics in Japan and internationally: the energy consumption of all these machines corresponds approximately to the volume of energy generated by a nuclear power plant in one year.

The artist **Taro Izumi** (\*1976 in Nara, Japan) calls the supposed dualism of reality and fiction into question in a playful and humorous manner in his works. *Footprint of melted sorbet*, 2017, uses 22 monitors to provide a view of the sky over Berlin and views from behind of people looking up. The city map in the center of the installation reveals not just where the snapshots were taken, but also where the people are looking. Graffiti elements that Izumi discovered during his exploratory tours in Berlin cover the acrylic glass plate mounted over the city map, as well as the videos using montage. Automatically, associations arise between the map, the urban and geographic information communicated, and the actual location that it depicts.

### **Transforming the Everyday**

In the area of tension between different media and techniques, the next room devotes itself to the aesthetic, material, and action-related aspects of everyday practices and rituals, art, and craft traditions.

In her *Grid* series, 2013, **Eva Berendes** (\*1974 in Bonn, Germany) works with objects and materials from interior and product design, fashion and art, which she recontextualizes and

combines plastically. The free-standing *Screens*, 2012, and the sculpture *Untitled (architecture)*, 2009, which with the ceramics presented and open back side resembles a component of a pop-up shop, oscillate between various contexts and image traditions: they can be part of the urban infrastructure or pieces of furniture and at the same time, assemblage, still life, relief, display, base. The delicate structure and ornamental colors of the cloths answer the architecturally structured *Screens* with a porous, transparent hole structure, both forming an explicit contrast to the cool, tiled surface of the base sculpture.

The delicate, large-format monotypes *e / the master's table*, 2016, by **Menja Stevenson** document an art-historical and practical examination of the Japanese tradition of the Ukiyo-e woodcut. However, for her the point is not a current interpretation of the great masters of this art, but rather a surprising close-up view of the activity of the printer, whose name is lost to the history of art. Together with the printers, the artist has re-purposed their work tables with all their traces of use into printing plates. The color gradients on Japanese paper, whose size ratio corresponds approximately to a traditional Japanese front door, expose the honorable history of the printing plates and the effort and work involved in this ancient craft.

The installative arrangements of drawings, objects, and photographs by **Rita Hensen** (\*1960 in Bedburg, Erft, Germany) appear at first glance to be reduced, poetic reports of artistic thinking and observation. The drawn ideas, motifs, and text fragments of the drawings as well as the imperfect woods of the wall objects and their playful montage preserve the spontaneity and traces that are articulated through the immediate action. Only when they are regarded more closely are additional levels of meaning revealed. Using various forms of "translation" and "transformation," the artist conveys impressions, motifs, and visual findings of her time in Tokyo in physical objects, photographic snapshots, and drawn-written circling as aesthetic reflection.

### Floating Worlds

The translation of observations from nature, urbanity, and traditions of Japanese fine art also mark the abstract image worlds in the complicated drawings of **Hiroe Saekis** (\*1978 in Osaka, Japan). The minuscule, repeating, and yet slightly modified forms seem to float like individual ecological organisms against the white image surface: volatile, continuously exposed to the natural process of change. The artist works with pencil, a thin black architect's pen, and sometimes with accents of ink and acrylic, usually on smooth, chalk-white paper, which supports the surreal, extremely artificial aspect of her shapes. With the first creation of the drawing, the empty space of the paper is already defined and qualified as an active moment of image expression. The molecular, natural-seeming, black-white shape complexes gain their suggestive concision from the greatest possible contrast to the cool white of the image space, in order to establish a harmony of its own order with this at the same time.

In the cabinet, **Meiro Koizumi** (\*1976 in Gunman, Japan) presents the double projection *Defect in Vision*, 2011, which examines the topic of blindness and links it to the question of historical fallibility. It's the end of World War II, and Japan is beginning to use the "Kamikaze"

("godly wind") air attack tactic: suicide attempts, often by pilots who have volunteered for this duty, on US Navy ships in the Pacific. A couple is eating in a traditional Japanese living room, talking about how they are hoping for the end of the war. The repeating scene constantly reveals new information about the historical context, about the actors, their physical state, and last but not least, about the meaning of the conversation. The film was made during the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima and draws on the population's new readiness to sacrifice itself. The topic of blindness also has another connotation in this context. While in films, blindness is usually something simulated by the actors, in Koizumi's work, blind people play the roles of people who can see.

**Satoshi Ono's** (\*1980 in Gifu, Japan) colorful, expressive art reflects the overlap and permanent potentialization of images in the world wide web by placing motifs, ornaments, and topics from different contexts with image formulas and quotations from East Asian and Western European art history in new relationships. In this way, his pictures are connected and penetrated by German Romanticism, Neo-Expressionism, Shintoism, and Buddhism. Very personally charged and interpreted figures are transformed in his painted panoramas into natural depictions with some invented and some clearly recognizable motifs. Thus, the tropical plant *pandanus tectorius*, with its sword-shaped leaves and its pineapple-like, bright orange fruits, appears again and again, as painted in former times by the Japanese painter Tanaka Issen (1908-1977).

### Urban Landscapes

In the final rooms of the exhibition, it is the city space and its materiality that inspires the artists in their works. **Tokihiro Satō's** photographs *An Hour Exposure, 1991-92/2017* consists of a total of five diptychs. The black and white photographs taken at the beginning of the 1990s show urban spaces in Tokyo's Shibuya and Mita districts. 25 years later, in 2017 the artist visited each place again in order to take color photographs of them. The area around the photographs creates a before-and-after effect, which records the urban construction changes in the cities. Satō photographs with a large-format camera, which enables long exposure times and generates, with the help of mirrors and flashlights, the illuminating effect characteristic of his work, which also plays out in these photographs. The long exposure technique hides moving people and objects and interrupts for just a moment the inexorable movement in the city. The empty urban spaces of Japan stand in contrast to the reality of fast life in the big city. Satō's images work with surreal effects and the separation of the motifs from the spell of passing time. For the first time in 2017 a former Art Scope scholar was invited as a guest artist to present new works and trace the artistic development.

**Ryosuke Imamura's** (\*1982 in Kyōto, Japan) installative arrangements of miniature objects and videos are quiet, reserved, sometimes dreamy in their presentation. The videos were made in Berlin, one of the two shows digital edits. The spatially refined arrangement of the objects draws the viewer immediately into a story that melds concrete memories and experiences with imagined images. In *Quiet knocking*, 2014, the artist connects a small table, a ceiling lamp, a cylindrical coil, and an LP via small hammers with one another. Brief

electronic impulses trigger a rhythmically knocking at irregular intervals. The light, movement, and sound of the video address all of the viewer's senses and connect space and objects to create an image that can be experienced holistically.

**Eva Berendes'** decorative objects provide the conclusion to the exhibition tour. They refer on the one hand to abstract geometries, and on the other to ornaments and patterns of private and public spaces. Her images, reliefs, and sculptures arise from craft-related work processes such as cutting, sewing, batik, bleaching, etc. Her hanging work can be regarded as a relief due to the spatial depth of its folds and at the same time sounds out the fragile border between private and public space.

Renate Wiehager / Wiebke Hahn