

Press Release

Masaki Fujihata | *E.Q.*

Projection Equipment Supported by Canon Marketing Japan Inc.

July 6th (sat) – August 31st (sat), 2019

Tokyo Gallery + BTAP | Tokyo

7F, 8-10-5, Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0061

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Tokyo Gallery+BTAP is pleased to announce *E.Q.*, an exhibition of the works of Fujihata Masaki.

In 1968, Tokyo Gallery hosted two exhibitions under the theme of sight: *Tricks and Vision: Stolen Eyes*, an exhibition that questioned the idea of visual perception, and *Computer Art: Media Transformation through Electronics*, an exhibition by the CTG (Computer Technique Group) that captured images using new forms of media. Today, the Japanese art scene is dominated by media art. *E.Q.*, an exhibition by a media art pioneer, revisits the relationship between images and visual perception.

In engineering, ‘EQ’ is an abbreviation for ‘equalization’, and in the world of images, an equalizer is a device used to colorize images. However, the term ‘equalise’ originally referred to the act of balancing the left and right sides of a mathematical equation. It follows that ‘equalization’ can be used in a media technology context to refer to the act of correcting the distortions that arise when an image is converted into different media.

In *E.Q.*, images captured in real time by a high-definition camera are converted into sets of coordinates by a computer and projected onto a screen. The images projected are representations of the viewer’s body, but unlike a reflection in a physical mirror, these images, rendered in an unfixed, digital medium, are always transitory. An interactive work of *E.Q.*’s calibre could only be the work of Fujihata Masaki, an artist who has consistently pursued radical expression under a theme of visual perception.

An opening reception with the artist in attendance will be held from 4pm on Saturday, 6 July. All are welcome.

For press inquiries: Tomson Chen

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Opening Hours | (Tues-Fri) 11:00-19:00 (Sat) 11:00-17:00

Closed | Sun, Mon, Holidays

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E.Q.

Masaki Fujihata May 2019

The image as something that may be possessed, rather than merely seen, is a relatively recent development. By their nature, images are ever-transitory, and it was not practicably possible to physically fix an image until the invention of photography in the 19th century, in a marriage of chemistry and optics. The ability to fix images, a feat previously not thought possible, led us to question what it actually means to ‘see’ something.

The discipline of painting responded to the invention of photography by distancing itself from the pursuit of imaging, instead stubbornly defining itself in terms of *paint* and *pictures*. The invention of photography also led to the emergence of the term ‘visual arts’, which encompassed new media such as photographs and video. However, as the visual arts scene ultimately moved away from the pursuit of exposing the true nature of images, the use of the term ‘visual arts’ merely succeeded in muddying definitions.

The advent of digital technologies has enabled us to freely manipulate images that would otherwise never have been recorded. Once again, the human body and its image are able to dance with one another in real time. Rather than relying on optics, digital image manipulation uses algorithms to produce images – an algorithm is a mathematical formula, a means for solving a problem, or steps for performing a task. In order to create a new process for performing a task, you need to first paint a picture in your head – after all, we know that if you do not have an image in your mind of what you are trying to achieve, you will probably fail. Algorithms have enabled us to create visual images that have meta dimensions.

The only thing that directly links visual perception to an image is the body of the viewer. Originally a reflection in a body of water, this type of imaging only became referred to as a ‘mirror image’ with the advent of more modern technology. A person viewing herself in a mirror is forced to use her body in order to view an image of her visual appearance, in a phenomenon governed solely by physical and optical relationships. However, digital technology has opened up infinite possibilities for reflecting subjects in reproductive media. Unlike the phenomenon whereby a person, after seeing a mirror for the first time or seeing a photograph of herself for the first time, finally accepts the image as herself and ceases to question it, images rendered in non-fixed, digital media are transitory in infinitum, and present an infinite number of questions.

2019 July 20 (sat) 15:00-16:30

Talk: Masaki Fujihata

The artist will discuss the concept and background of “E.Q.”. Of particular focus is the issue of the violence of technology and how humans are reflected in images. The history of painting has mostly been tied to thematic expression. However, in the modern age, painting and ‘image’ has developed in parallel when humans begin to explore the visual experience itself. There becomes a split in painting and the image. The artist will discuss the relationship between painting and the image and its historical development.

2019 July 27 (sat) 15:00-16:30

Discussion: Masaki Fujihata × Kurose Yohei

Household electronics, manga, anime, Otaku culture: these cultural phenomena are unique to Japan and are inevitably tied to Japanese art and its future direction. Art has begun to shift from a certain liberality to a something that reflects more practicality. It has also begun to demonstrate more visual expression through technological means. Fujihata will speak to Kurose about the next generation’s perspectives on and interest in art.

Kurose Yohei

Artist, art critic. Born in Kochi Prefecture in 1983. graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts, Graduate School of Fine Arts, Advanced Art Expression Major. Genron Chaos * Lounge New Art School Chief Lecturer. Kurose Yohei (b. 1983), is an artist, curator and art critic. He holds a doctorate degree from Tokyo University of the Arts. In 2010, he formed the art group “Chaos * Lounge” with Umezawa Kazuki and Fujishiro Uso. He curated “Chaos * Lounge” in 2010, “Chaos * Exile” in 2011, “Chara-crush” in 2014 and “Chaos * Lounge New Arts Festival in 2017 to name a few. He published *Sentiments of Information Society* in 2013.

2019 August 21 (sat) 18:00-19:30

Dialogue: Masaki Fujihata × Yuk Hui

It is undeniable that the modern concept of art was developed in and spread from Western Europe. With that in mind, can we in Asia consider (or reconsider) art removed from that conceptual foundation? This *dialogue* welcomes Hong Kong philosopher Yuk Hui to discuss the issue of art, Asian cultures and technology.

Yuk Hui

Yuk Hui studied Computer Engineering and Philosophy at the University of Hong Kong and Goldsmiths College in London, with a focus on philosophy of technology. He currently teaches philosophy at the institute of philosophy and art (IPK) of the Leuphana University Lüneburg and is also a visiting professor at the China Academy of Art and Visiting Associate Professor at the School of Creative Media of City University in Hong Kong.



Fujihata Masaki (1956-)

A pioneer of media art in Japan, Fujihata Masaki achieved fame for works such as his 1980s computer graphics work *Mandala1983*. In the 90s, he created *Beyond Pages*, now regarded as an interactive art classic, in addition to such works as the network-themed *Global Interior project#2*. These works represent connection, and the back-and-forth journey between the digital realm and reality.

Fujihata's *Field-works* series, a project released around the same time utilizing GPS, deployed data the artist obtained using a unique approach in a controlled cyberspace environment. This new project, which one might refer to as the future of film or the evolution of media, defied imitation. Fujihata has exhibited over ten such projects around the world, but is best known for *Voices of Aliveness*, which he produced in Nantes, France in 2012, a work that brings together the cries of cyclists together in cyberspace.

In 2016, Fujihata published *anarchive n°6*, a self-compiled archive of his works, in Paris. In 2018, the artist focused on Hong Kong in the 50s, 60s and 70s with his public art project *BeHere*, which uses augmented reality to superimpose the past on the present.

Fujihata was first awarded the Golden Nika Award at Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria) in 1996, the first Japanese national to receive the honour, and went on to receive the Award on multiple subsequent occasions. In 2010 he was awarded the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Art Encouragement Prize. In 2016, he was awarded the Medal with Purple Ribbon by the Emperor of Japan.

Fujihata has been involved in the establishment of Keio University's Faculty of Environment and Information Studies since 1989, Tokyo University of the Arts' Intermedia Art Department since 1999 and Tokyo University of the Arts' Graduate School of Film and New Media since 2005 (before taking early retirement in 2015). He has also served as a visiting professor at Kunstuniversität Linz (Austria) since 2017 and Hong Kong Baptist University since 2018.