

October 31, 2014

Dear visitor,

Since the 70s onward, I have very often worked on the physical realm of my existence, namely my body.

For example, in "Weight (Human ball)" (1978, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 90), I made stain-less steel balls, each of which had the same weight as my body at the time of its production. In "The metal having the length" (1976-78), I measured the length of each segment of my body and created original standard rulers based upon these measurements.

Another important aspect of the body, I think, is the fact that it ends its vital activity when death arrives. In "Body Contract" (1973-ongoing), I divided my body into 80 parts and have been making contracts with various people to oblige each of them to preserve one of the parts after my death. On the other hand, in "Body Contract: Failed Backstage Deal of the Body" (1984), I played dead on the street in Nara for the entire duration during which I was supposed to be performing on a stage in Tokyo.

In February 2014, I received an email from Yuki Okumura, a young Japanese artist whom I met several years ago. He proposed to have a joint talk in Yokohama in March, at blanClass, a space for experimental performances seemingly popular among young artists. Yuki said that he liked my project "Body Contract," but, according to him, the project is actually more about my consciousness even though – or rather, because – it strictly excludes this amongst all the elements of my existence. Ha! Therefore, what he ultimately hoped to gain from me through the talk was an "exceptional" contract dealing with my consciousness – concretely speaking, as eventually disclosed in our public conversation, a promise that I will execute what he terms a "posthumous performance" after my death. What an artistic challenge! I said I'd think about it, and since then I have been slowly developing my idea. Let's see.

In the meantime, as an immediate reaction to his proposal, I began a totally new project: giving others all the sounds of each of the pronunciations of the Japanese 50-character syllabary (or perhaps all the possible sounds that I can make) that I will pronounce from the point of its promise on until I die. This time, I am giving "shi" to all the visitors of this two-person show with Yuki. There is no special reason for this particular choice, but "shi" happens to be the pronunciation for various Japanese words such as death, poetry, four, C, and even the onomatopoeia of urinating.

I believe the continuous dialogue between Yuki and I will create interesting work into the future, perhaps even after my planned retrospective, which is to take place when I've become 100 years old on August 24, 2047. Looking forward...

All the best, with love,

Shuzo Azuchi Gulliver
(ghostwritten by Yuki Okumura)