

The Japan Pavilion  
Biennale Arte 2017



la Biennale di Venezia

57. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Takahiro Iwasaki

Turned Upside Down, It's a Forest

ENG

Takahiro Iwasaki was born and raised in Hiroshima where he currently continues to base his practice. Born in 1975, Iwasaki himself has of course no personal experience of the atomic bomb. Nevertheless, the history of Hiroshima appears to deeply permeate within his works. The city of Hiroshima was instantly annihilated as a consequence of the atomic bomb, and although it had previously served as a military city, its image had changed 180-degrees after the war to be widely recognized as a city of peace.

Iwasaki's use of figurative representation in his works, in other words, the way something comes to present itself in an entirely different manner when happening upon a certain detail, is indeed connected to Hiroshima's experience. The use of everyday objects in Iwasaki's case draws influence from the numerous artifacts housed in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which convey daily necessities that have

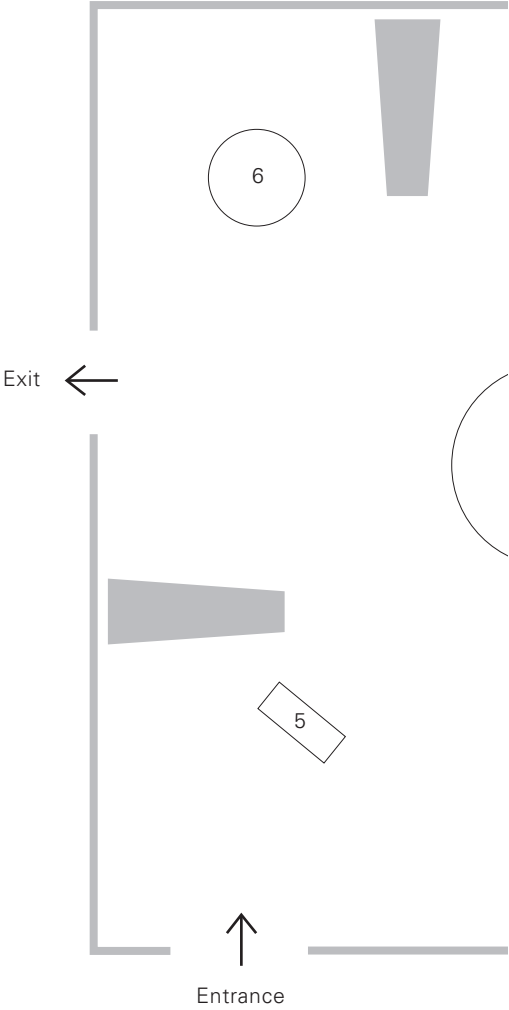
instantaneously been distorted and made devoid of their function. The fine delicacy of his handiwork that could even be described as craft-like, seemingly traverses the worlds of the micro and macro, forming a connection with the atomic bomb in which the power of miniscule atoms had destroyed an entire city.

In 2011, Japan experienced an accident at one of its nuclear power plants. The accident had once again strongly posed the issues of the relationship between the city as a place of consumption and the rural areas facing population decrease, as well as bringing to light Japan's energy issues. Iwasaki's works through the perspective of Hiroshima as a city in a rural area that had once been destroyed by the atomic bomb, question the attitudes of Japanese people towards science and technology and the way in which we confront nature.

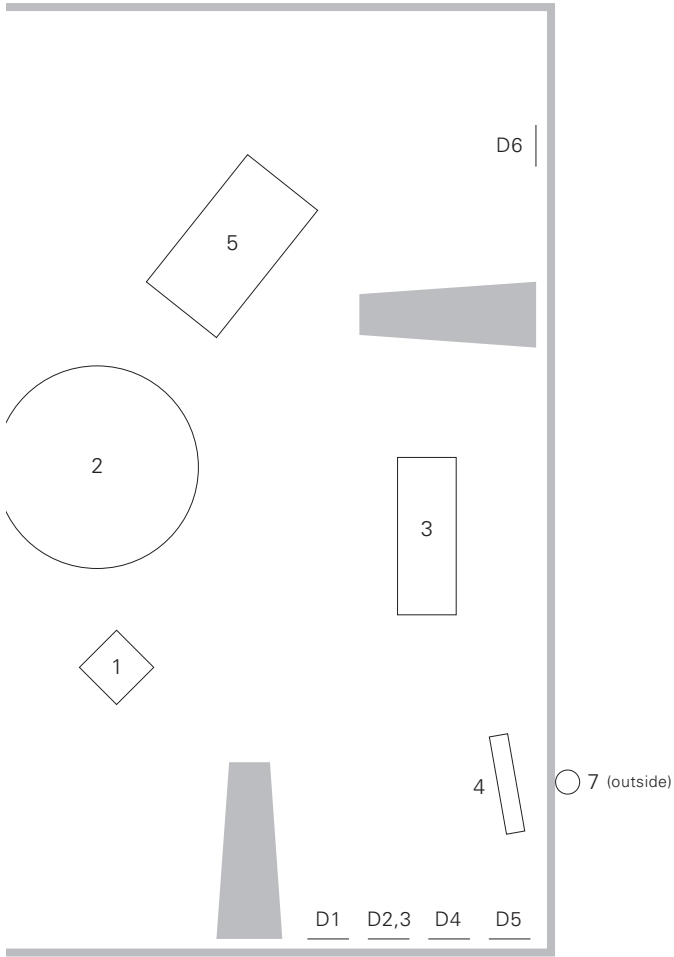
Meruro Washida  
Curator

# Exhibition Map

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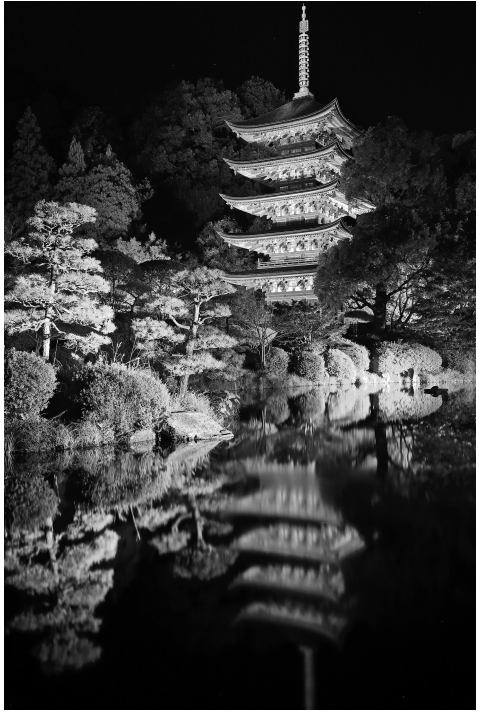


*Reflection Model (Lapis Lazuli)*  
2014  
Japanese cypress, plywood, wire  
302 x 67 x 67 cm  
collection of TsuNaGu-en- System Inc.

## 1. Reflection Model (Lapis Lazuli)

An intricate work made of Japanese cypress that derives its motif from the five-story pagoda in the grounds of Ruriko-ji, a shrine located in the city of Yamaguchi, approximately 100 kilometres away from Hiroshima. The reflected image on the lake is created in the exact same manner as the section that stands above the water.

As a result, it serves to indicate the presence of water although it does not physically exist within the work. Ordinarily, the image reflected upon the water should appear as if fluctuating, however in this work the section that stands above the water and its reflected image are created as identical. Consequently, the work gives rise to an uncanny sense of time and space that transcends the ordinary temporal realm, and at the same time renders the boundary between reality and the image ambiguous.



Five-story pagoda, Ruriko-ji Temple, Yamaguchi  
courtesy of Wakuwaku Zekkei Shashin Tabi (<http://wakutabi.net>)



*Out of Disorder  
(Mountains and Sea)*  
2017  
sheets, towels,  
dust cloth, Chinese ink  
dimensions variable

## 2. Out of Disorder (Mountains and Sea)

Sheets, towels, and clothing gathered in Venice and Japan are stacked in a pile on the floor. Upon closer observation however, one can discern that thin threads have been pulled out of these fabrics to create intricate constructions of steel towers, Ferris wheels, rollercoasters, and railway tracks. Though this intervention, what had seemed to be in disorder when seen as mountain of laundry, comes to embody a sense of principle that is reminiscent of the providence of nature. The steel transmission towers carry electricity from thermal and nuclear power plants located far away from cities, and is a common sight seen in the mountains of Japan's rural areas. The Setouchi region is one of such areas that had developed as an industrial zone, with its coastline reclaimed and a series of chemical plants built along it.

In ascending the stairs provided in the piloti for one's head to emerge through the opening, viewers are able to observe this landscape from the perspective of the sea that is made from dust cloths dyed in Chinese ink. Ink, in the sense that it is made of hardened soot, is indeed dirt, and thus overlays the image of an ink and wash painting with the image of a group of factories begrimed in soot.

\*This work can also be observed from the piloti.





Laundry in Venice  
photo by the artist



Steel towers in Japan  
photo by the artist



Industrial zone along coastlands in Setouchi  
photo by the artist



Sesshu Toyo, *View of Ama-no-Hashidate* collection of Kyoto National Museum



*Out of Disorder  
(Offshore Model)*

2017

plastic sheet,  
disposable bento box, straw,  
rubber band,  
plastic bottle, table  
88.5 x 250 x 100 cm

### 3. Out of Disorder (Offshore Model)

The work takes its motif from oilrigs that extract process oil from undersea oil fields in Japan's coastal borders. Made of petroleum products such as a Japanese disposable lunch box, straws, and plastic sheets, the overall black hue in addition to deriving its impression from crude oil brings to mind oriental ink and wash paintings created using Chinese ink. The context in the backdrop of this work is the dispute regarding East Asian maritime borders and the rights of undersea resources, which has become a prominent issue due to China's recent economic development and expansion policies. The black plastic that covers the table serves to figuratively represent the water's surface, yet the ratio of the table draws reference from the Japanese rock garden in Kyoto's Ryoan-ji temple. The garden is a leading example of "Karesansui," a means to express the rippling surface of water without using water itself, but instead through a carefully composed arrangement of gravel that is raked to create a pattern. The manner by which the drifting plastic rubbish and oilrigs are arranged, are in reference to the arrangement of rocks within this rock garden. The "Karesansui" style is also that which had been developed in Japan while deriving influence from Chinese gardens and ink and wash paintings.



Oilrig  
courtesy of Japan Drilling Company



"Karesansui" (Japanese rock garden), Ryoan-ji temple, Kyoto  
source: Kyoto no Sakura Free Shashin (<http://kyoto-sakura.net>)



*Out of Disorder*  
*(Turned Upside Down, It's a Forest)*  
2017  
deck brush, dust cloth  
10 x 24 x 142 cm

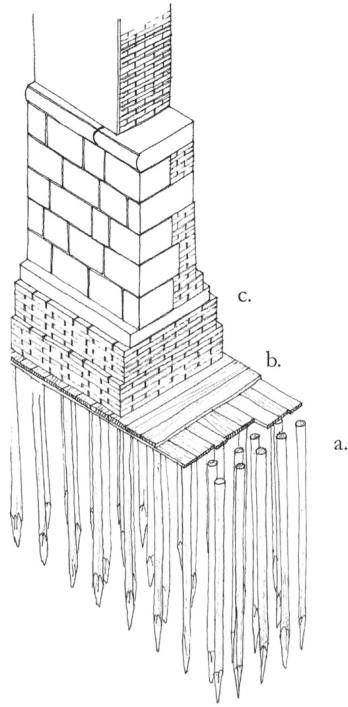
#### 4. Out of Disorder (Turned Upside Down, It's a Forest)

A work created by means of improvisation, appropriating a deck brush used to wax the floors of the Japan Pavilion to figuratively represent the wooden stakes beneath Venice. This type of deck brush with firm bristles is not often found in Japan. The city of Venice is built on an infinite number of stakes that have been driven into the lagoon. The title of the exhibition, "Turned Upside Down, It's a Forest," while drawing inspiration from these stakes, presents the intention of changing one's perspective to explore different ways of looking. That which has been made by compacting the thread pulled out of the dust cloth on the brush, is the Santa Maria della Salute church that stands along the Grand Canal.

You're walking on a vast upside-down forest,  
strolling above an incredible inverted wood.

—————Tiziano Scarpa

translated by Shaun Whiteside, *Venice is a Fish*, London: Serpent's Tail, 2008



- a. pali di legno infissi a percussione fino a rifiuto
- b. doppio strato incrociato di tavoloni di larice o rovere
- c. muratura di fondazione

**Foundations under Venetian buildings**

courtesy of Corte del Fontego editore. source: Franco Mancuso, *Venezia è una città. Come è stata costruita e come vive*, Edizione aggiornata, Venezia: Corte del Fontego editore, 2016, fig. 14



Santa Maria della Salute church  
photo by the artist



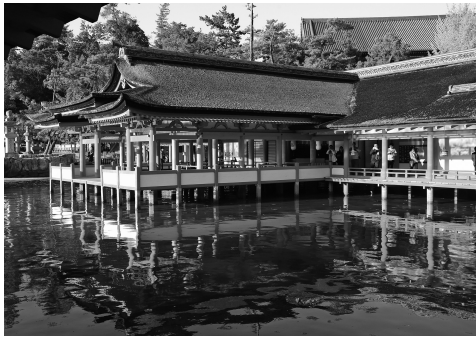
*Reflection Model  
(Ship of Theseus)*  
2017

Japanese cypress, plywood, wire  
pavilions: 84 x 249 x 354 cm  
ootorii gate: 137 x 96 x 46.5 cm

## 5. Reflection Model (Ship of Theseus)

This new work is based on the motif of the Itsukushima Shrine in its state of dilapidation after a typhoon. The Itsukushima Shrine was built over 800 years ago upon the ocean in a bay in the Miyajima Island, located near Hiroshima. The most important part of the shrine is the main hall situated at the far side when viewed from the entrance of the exhibition room. The elevated stage and corridor that have been built in front of the main hall and closer to the sea, has intentionally been built to destroy easily when inflicted with external force. By being easily destroyed, external forces are weakened, eluding any substantial damage and serving to protect the main hall.

The title of the work, "Ship of Theseus" is derived from the paradox that raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced is able to maintain its identity as the same object.



Itsukushima Shrine  
photo by Keizo Kioku



Itsukushima Shrine, after typhoon in 2004  
© THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN



*Tectonic Model (Flow)*  
2017  
books, table  
138 x dia. 130 cm

## 6. Tectonic Model (Flow)

Many books have been stacked in an unstable manner on top of an antique table found in Venice. The bookmark strings have been unraveled and made into the shape of cranes. As a result, the book begins to appear like a building that is currently under construction. The books that have been selected concern subjects such as the mechanisms of earthquakes, science and technology, as well as those relating to issues of energy. The title "Tectonic" holds a double meaning that refers to "construction method," and "changes in the earth's crust." The books that have been stacked in an unstable way, through it imply the instability that is harbored within the earth itself. Although the earth appears solidly firm, if observed over a long time-span, it is indeed that which is in constant flux.





Cranes  
photo by the artist



*Out of Disorder (Upside Down)*  
2017  
sock  
dimensions variable

## 7. Out of Disorder (Upside Down)

As an improvisational work made on site, a colorful sock is attached to the sign “GIAPPONE” installed on the outer wall of the Japan Pavilion. A three storied pagoda made out of the threads pulled out from the sock is suspended upside down. The shape of the upside down pagoda appears to look like a tree, also forming a connection with the title of the exhibition, “Turned Upside Down, It’s a Forest.”

[ Exhibition ]

The Japan Pavilion  
at the 57th International Art Exhibition  
la Biennale di Venezia

Turned Upside Down, It's a Forest  
May 13–November 26, 2017

Artist  
Takahiro Iwasaki  
Curator  
Meruro Washida

Organizer  
The Japan Foundation  
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Jun Takeshita, Maria Cristina Gasperini

Local Coordinator  
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Rie Shimoda  
Photography  
Keizo Kioku

Translation  
Kei Bengler

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In cooperation with URANO

[ Exhibition Guide ]

Text by Meruro Washida  
Translated by Kei Bengler  
Designed by Rie Shimoda  
Photographs of exhibited works by Keizo Kioku  
Published by the Japan Foundation

Artist: Takahiro Iwasaki

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Iwasaki was born in Hiroshima in 1975, and currently lives and works there. He received his Ph.D., Art from the Graduate School of Arts, Hiroshima City University, and completed the M.F.A. program at the Edinburgh College of Art.

Iwasaki held a solo exhibition at the Asia Society in New York in 2015, and solo exhibitions at the Kurobe City Art Museum and the Oyama City Kurumaya Art Museum in the same year. He has also participated in international exhibitions including the 10th Lyon Biennale (2009), Yokohama Triennale (2011), 7th Asia Pacific Triennale (2012), 2013 Asian Art Biennale (National Taiwan Museum of the Arts), 8th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale (2014), as well as numerous group exhibitions including "Roppongi Crossing 2007 – Future Beats in Japanese Contemporary Art" (Mori Art Museum, 2007), "Happiness in Everyday Life" (Contemporary Art center, Mito Art Tower, 2008), "trans x form" (Aomori Contemporary Art Center, 2013), and Nissan Art Award 2015 (BankART Studio NYK).

Curator: Meruro Washida

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Curator at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa  
Washida was born in Kyoto in 1973.  
He Completed the Master's program in art history at the University of Tokyo.

Washida plans contemporary art and architecture exhibitions based on themes such as local communities and participation. Major projects include Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA (2005), Atelier Bow-Wow (2007), Jeppe Hein (2011), Shimabuku (2013), and Mitsunori Sakano (2016), and group exhibitions such as "Kanazawa Art Platform 2008" (all of which were under the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa).