

Shimabuku: *Instrumental*

09_09_2022 – 08_01_2023

Can art be instrumental or useful? Shimabuku's work gives this recurrent demand an absurd spin, while reaffirming art's essential role in the realm of the imagination.

In the autumn of 2022, WIELS invites you to liberate your imagination with the solo exhibition of Shimabuku (born 1969, Kobe). In *Instrumental*, he offers an alternative worldview through 20 artworks in various forms and formats, including videos and installations. In a surreal way, he turns our vision upside down, but from a different perspective than the Belgian one. From his native Japan, he travels to rediscover the world beyond its conventional borders, leading us through foreign landscapes but also through different musical traditions. Short, poetic texts recur as a constant travel companion to his work.

For his first exhibition in Belgium, a selection of Shimabuku's recent works is presented together with lesser known or rarely shown projects. They highlight the importance of music for Shimabuku, as evidenced by its central role in the videos shown here. The title also evokes the many instruments that he creates, from manual tools and ingenious inventions to functioning musical instruments. For example, in *Bow to Bow* (2016) he transforms an archer's bow to a bow for playing the double bass: an instrument of war becomes a jazz instrument.

Another video, *Some Things happen twice: an Elephant comes from the Sea* (2021), tells the story of the first elephant to arrive on the Japanese archipelago. The work's soundtrack is inspired by the elephant's trumpeting and features the artist himself playing the trumpet as he accompanies the elephant's arrival. Several works reveal Shimabuku's ongoing engagement with the animal kingdom. After a deep-sea-dive exploring sculptures for octopuses, he takes an octopus on a guided tour across Japan, a journey that is then retold by Brazilian street singers.

Besides sound sources, the instruments in the exhibition also include utensils. For example, in *Oldest and Newest Tools of Human Beings* (2015), Shimabuku juxtaposes iPhones and prehistoric stone tools. By emphasising their common size and ergonomic form, he triggers us to examine both as extensions of our bodies. Shimabuku's projects reveal his limitless curiosity about the world and awaken ours.

Curator: Zoë Gray

Press visit: 7 September 2022 from 11:00 until 13:00 in the presence of the artist.

About the artist

Shimabuku (b.1969, Kobe, Japan) lives and works in Okinawa. Recent solo shows include le Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2021); le Crédac, Ivry (2018); Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; Kunsthalle Bern (both 2014); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (both 2013), Le Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'île de Vassivière (2011), among others. His work has featured in many international exhibitions, including 14th Biennale de Lyon (2017), 27th Biennale de Venezia (2017), Okayama Art Summit (2016), Havana Biennial (2015), Taipei Biennial (2014), Sharjah Biennale (2013), Yokohama Triennial (2011). Shimabuku is represented by Air de Paris (Romainville), Amanda Wilkinson (London), ZERO... (Milano), Nogueras Blanchard (Barcelona/Madrid) and Barbara Wien (Berlin)

The exhibition is generously supported by The Japan Foundation.

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