

Midway Contemporary Art

Midway Off-Site

Tetsuya Yamada

Waiting

October 10, 2020 – June 9, 2021

Note: *Waiting*

Waiting came out of my daily experience of living under the Stay Home Order during the pandemic. Gathering together had become unsafe, and arts venues had to close. I challenged myself to think of new ways to watch live performance, without a crowd of people, which became the motivation for the piece.

This allowed me to reimagine what performance could be, and how it could be viewed in person. I thought about the experience of viewing a sequence of still images of physical movements, and how that could be like watching a performance but in the viewer's own time.

I have been working in ceramics as a medium for almost 35 years and have thought a lot about the idea of "Hand-ness". While there are many techniques within hand work, I have arrived at a place where I distinguish between two different technical characteristics: 1) Mechanical craft, for example, how to use machines to do things (how to run the table saw, etc.). 2) Hand work as a body movement: interacting directly with materials, using muscle memory to achieve a result – processes of wheel throwing, carving wood and so forth. The idea of hand work/gesture as movement led me to re-visit the 12th-century Japanese Scroll of Mudra (Met collection).

My experience of waiting at home during the pandemic put me in mind of *Machiai*. A *Machiai* is a waiting hut where the guest waits for the host to welcome them during the traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony, which can take up to four hours. This summer's intensification of civil rights issues in public conversation became an additional layer of inspiration for the piece. It pushed me to consider the expanded meaning of waiting. How could the idea of waiting be proactive, rather than passive? If so, what does it mean to wait?

Waiting gives participants a chance to explore that question, and to find relationships between the body/spirit and the rest of everything.

— Tetsuya Yamada, 2020