

PRESS RELEASE

“history in art” pop up show at MKG

February 4 – March 4, 2017

12-7pm

Closed on SUN, MON and National Holidays



MAHO KUBOTA GALLERY pleased to announce an exhibition featuring the findings of research by contemporary art study collective, History in Art. The exhibition brings together the group's work of discussions and other practices that shine the light on aspects of history that have not been written about or discussed in public before.

History in Art is a study collective made up of artists, critics, and others engaged with art in various forms. Its name is derived from the book *Geschichte im Gedächtnis* (History in Memory) by German historian Aleida Assmann (b. 1947). A reading group in 2013 that discussed Assmann's book led to the formation of the collective.

In *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, Assmann attempts to find history in things that are fragile and not left behind in concrete form, such as stories in memories, experiences, and verbal communication. She interprets as history things not previously considered to be part of the historical record. Examples include the awkward mood that spreads throughout a family get-together when the father speaks excitedly about war, or the experience of performing a historical play about a famous event in history such as the birth of Christ or the campaigns of Napoleon. Assmann is not the only researcher to take this approach, and recent work in the field of historical studies has been drawing attention to sources such as the lifestyles, memories, and testimonies of common people, which had been overlooked by or left out of historical descriptions.

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There is also a trend in art towards viewing key events of History with a capital H from different perspectives. For example, in *The Act of Killing*, the documentary film released in Japan in 2014, directing the camera at the people who carried out the anti-communist purge that occurred in Indonesia in 1965 enabled the movie to capture the memories of the perpetrators, which had not been the focus of previous accounts. Two works shown at Documenta 13 by Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller were attempts to present the experiences of the exhibition space itself as history by enabling viewers to vicariously experience the past through the medium of sound, one in the form of an audio installation and the other in the form of a video walk. And, Apichatpong Weerasethakul's medium-length feature film, *Mekong Hotel*, which interweaves elements of documentary and fiction, reveals the existence of a past that includes both historical events as well as things that did not make it into the annals of history through the actress who plays a ghost telling of individual and collective memories that overlap on different levels.

Beginning with Assmann's work, History in Art has, of course, considered a variety of phenomena as it has pondered how to interpret history from various perspectives with respect to art. The subjects mentioned above are both a sampling as well as the core elements of History in Art's interests. The approach of imagining events of the past based on historical records, and then creating art based on those imaginings is very different from the approach taken by traditional historical studies, and provides a reference for the group as it explores ways to think about things that one hasn't experienced and events one couldn't have known about, and considers how to interpret them in order to make them easier to contemplate. In addition to activities conducted as a group, such as readings and discussions, History in Art is engaged in presenting the art and writings of individual artists and critics who are members of the group, and in the planning of projects and exhibitions. This exhibition incorporates activities of both the group and individual members.



top left : Yuki Iiyama "Looking for the person who is engaged in a certain occupation" 2016-2017, single channel video ©Yuki Iiyama
bottom left : installation view of "L'histoire" 2016 ©Chihiro Yuasa
right : Mai Endo "La Toilette" 2017, single channel video ©Mai Endo

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History in Art

History in Art is a study collective comprising artists, critics, and others engaged with art in various forms, who came together in 2013 at the instigation of art critic Atsushi Sugita and others. The collective began as a club reading works by German historian, Aleida Assmann, and conducts group discussions and screenings. Eight members are involved in this exhibition.

Show Participating Members

Daisuke Awata (critic), Yuki Iiyama (artist), Fumio Inoue (organizer), Mai Endo (artist, actor), Atsushi Sugita (critic), Kana Takahashi (curator), Chihiro Yuasa (artist), Akira Rachi (artist)

With the cooperation of

TARO NASU, WAITINGROOM, Yoshihisa Otani, Yasuto Masumoto, Meiro Koizumi

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