

Katsunobu Yaguchi



The work of Katsunobu Yaguchi, a Japanese artist, reflects his passion for repurposing objects and places that would otherwise have been abandoned, lost or discarded. He pays particular attention to townscapes, old houses, and traditions that are falling into decay. Since 2008, Yaguchi has dedicated himself to pursuing his project, titled “Washingtown”, which was initiated by transforming an old abandoned house he found in Mito, the capital of Ibaraki, Japan, into a café and a community hub where local residents came to connect, share, and create together. The house, a two-story building, was built from scrap wood and other salvaged materials by its late owner’s hand in the aftermath of World War II. Yaguchi’s artistic practice developed through varied experiences at this building and spanned a wide range, from production of newspaper, management of a local festival, to creation of collaborative art with surrounding neighbors, until it faced demolition in 2013.

The deconstruction of Washingtown took great strides towards its own transformation, making significant changes to Yaguchi’s choice of the medium and the method. His work has encompassed photography, film and video, painting, drawing, sculpture, performance, and installation since then. He produced large amounts of photographs and footage of the house demolition, titled “Washingtown Documentaries”, many of which were showcased in the Prism sector, Paris Photo, Paris, in 2017. The house was dismantled by the artist’s own hand, and all the architectural elements were carefully preserved. Two years after the demolition, he started to self-build an alternative space for art by reusing those elements at the same location. He was also entrusted with full refurbishments of two other vacant houses next door to the space, where he set up his own studio in 2016 and built a new café in 2018, which marked the beginning of a new phase in his artistic career. Yaguchi has been exploring the Tohoku region of Japan for the past year. He came across another derelict building in Kanegasaki, a town in Iwate, and is currently embarking on new projects.

Yaguchi was born in Ibaraki, Japan, in 1978. He moved to the UK in 2002, and completed Postgraduate Diploma in Drawing at Camberwell College of Arts, London, UK in 2004. He presented a number of experimental performances in Europe from 2004 to 2008. Solo Exhibitions include “The progress of Cafe New Washingtown”, Keiko Ogane Gallery, Ibaraki, Japan (2018), “Washingtown Documentaries”, Paris Photo, Paris, France, represented by Keiko Ogane Gallery (2017), “Tomatoravel”, Art Tower Mito, Ibaraki, Japan (2009). Group Exhibitions include “No photography”, Sage Paris, Paris, France (2019), “Imprisoned, Jailbreak, Imprisoned, Jailbreak”, multiple locations, Tokyo, Japan (2016), “HongoNoShow”, Hongo, TWS Hongo, Tokyo, Japan (2012), “Otomo Yoshihide / ENSEMBLES”, Art tower Mito, Ibaraki, Japan (2010), “Transit station”, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (2010), “Spectre vs. Rectur”, The Residence, London, England (2007), “Cross Polly nation”, General public, Berlin, Germany (2006).