

YUKINORI YANAGI

Money / Flower

Michael Janssen Singapore

September 27 – November 9, 2014



Flowers #01, 05, 39, 42, 50, 55, 56, 65, 66, 2012
Colored sand, plastic box, ants
22,3 x 22,3 x 2.5 cm each

Michael Janssen Singapore is pleased to present Japanese conceptual artist **Yukinori Yanagi's** first solo exhibition in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Entitled "**Money / Flower**", this exhibition features two series of works from Yanagi's *Ant Farm Project* (1994-ongoing) - *Money* and *Study for American Art*.

Appropriating iconic images, Yanagi first pours colored sand into Plexiglas boxes to recreate these images before releasing live ants into them. Roaming freely, these ants tunnel through the sand, transporting and mixing sand grains, creating patterns that inadvertently transform these images. Representing larger ideals, each image in the *Ant Farm Project* is a charged visual icon whose very nature, definition, function and meaning Yanagi disrupts and undermines by placing them at the mercy of an active, organic and (sometimes) random system: an ant colony.

Based upon the flawless coordination of specialized duties, the societal structure of an ant colony is a perfectly organized system that espouses efficiency, order and productivity. Traditionally considered a "righteous" insect, the dutiful hardworking worker ant is a popular metaphor in many Asian cultures and folklore. Yanagi's art however subverts this and the worker ant is instead used here to highlight the discrepancy between the self and the collective that is present in human society.

In "Money", a series comprising solely of images of currency notes, the ant becomes an allegory for urban life and social organization; bringing up issues of entrapment, forced accommodation, migration and constraint- a reality and consequence of today's restless urban culture as they go about what they have been programmed to do, unwittingly dismantling these normally static and rigidly protected power symbols as a result of mindless industry.

Reproducing the work of Andy Warhol in colored sand, Yanagi's *Flowers* (2012), is part of the series *Study for American Art* which he first began when he was invited to the Whitney Biennial 2000. A Japanese-born conceptualist living in New York at that time, Yanagi studied and investigated American Art before eventually deciding to reproduce these iconic images in his own unique style. Introducing another element to these iconic works, Yanagi's ant farm version enhances their existing ability to evoke certain social truths.

Yukinori Yanagi (b.1959 in Fukuoka, Japan. Lives and works in Hiroshima, Japan) is one of the most influential Japanese artists of his generation. His artwork adopts a critical viewpoint with respect to contemporary culture's prioritization of economic efficiency and rationality in the political and social sphere. Recent solo exhibitions include "Study for American Art" at Miyake Fine Art, Tokyo (2012); "Inujima Art House Project" at Okayama, Japan (2010, 2008); "Icarus Project" at Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan (2005); "Akitsushima" at Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan (2000). Yanagi has also participated in numerous international exhibitions such as the 2000 Whitney Biennial and most recently, the Liverpool Biennial 2012. The first Japanese artist to be awarded the Aperto prize at the 1993 Venice Biennale, Yanagi's works are also a part of a number of public and private collections most notably the Tate Modern (London, UK); MoMa Museum of Modern Art (New York); Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (Vienna, Austria); National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, Australia) and the Museum of Contemporary Art (Tokyo). Today Yanagi resides and works at Art Base Momoshima, a new art facility opened in 2012 in an abandoned junior high school in Momoshima, an island in Onomichi City close to Hiroshima.

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