

Immaterial World



Force

“Force” visualizes gravity that is normally outside the realm of consciousness using the force of silicone oil that naturally falls from a point 5 meters high. The bands of falling silicone oil also resemble binary codes, making it look as if a large volume of information is pouring down in space. This work is on display at ZKM Atrium in Karlsruhe, Germany, until September 4, 2016.

2016
Mixed media
Installation view, “New Sensorium-Exiting from Failures of Modernization,” ZKM, Karlsruhe
courtesy of SCAI THE BATHHOUSE

Sculptor Kohei Nawa, a contributing artist in the “Tokyo Caravan” event being held worldwide in the run up to the 2020 Tokyo Games, produces work that challenges conventional notions of production and perception.

KUMIKO SATO

KOHEI Nawa is a leading sculptor who has been implementing a variety of projects in Japan and abroad. His works are not always sculptures in the conventional sense.

“PixCell-Deer#24,” a piece in Nawa’s “BEADS” series, for

example, is a stuffed deer completely covered with transparent glass beads of various sizes. Viewers clearly understand the presence before them is a deer, but they cannot see its body surface directly. Instead, the countless glass beads act as lenses onto details of the deer’s body such as its hair when viewed up close.

Nawa bought the stuffed deer on the Internet.

“When I saw anything of

PixCell-Deer#24

2011
Mixed media
h: 2020 w: 1820 d: 1500 mm
Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

courtesy of SCAI THE BATHHOUSE
photo: Nobutada OMOTE | SANDWICH

substance on the Internet displayed on the monitor as a mere collection of pixels, as the Internet became widespread, I felt that everything and every landscape





Kohei Nawa
photo: Nobutada OMOTE | SANDWICH

“I think facing materials and space and expressing a theme are forming sculpture,” explains Nawa. “Materials have a variety of physical properties. That’s why I sometimes use liquids. For example, I think

would come to be computerized one after another,” he says.

Digital images, which we casually receive every day, appear to undergo a complete change when their resolution is adjusted. “BEADS” is a series of experimental works aimed at freshly visualizing this notion or effect.

Nawa has created series using a variety of materials that sculptors have traditionally avoided, such as the “SCUM” series using expanded polyurethane, and the “LIQUID” series using silicone oil. An idea called “CELL” is at the root of these series. “CELL” is a unit comprising human perceptions, as well as the given meaning of organic cells. The pixel, a unit comprising digital information, is also designed based on the principle of human perceptions.

SCUM-Apoptosis

“SCUM” is a work in which expanded polyurethane, produced by causing a reaction between two liquid chemicals that have the properties to swell and harden, covers entire objects.

2011
Mixed media
Installation view, “KOHEI NAWA-SYNTHESIS,” Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo

courtesy of Gallery Nomart and SCAI THE BATHHOUSE
photo: Seiji TOYONAGA | SANDWICH

it’s possible to produce a ‘sculptural’ experience using sounds as materials, too.”

Nawa’s studio is located in Fushimi, a suburb of Kyoto, where he spent his university years. The old private houses that remain along this riverside area are blessed with many trees and tranquility, an atmosphere for which Kyoto is well known. The studio is a renovated sandwich factory, hence its name, SANDWICH. Nawa has turned this studio into a production base for fellow artists along with staff members and students from

Kyoto University of Art & Design, where he teaches. SANDWICH adopts a production approach called “creative platform” that assembles a team of artists and craftsmen working in different genres, project by project.

“I liken it to ships,” says Nawa. “The image is to put different crew members on a ship for each project and row out to a destination together. Different people aim at completing one thing together using different approaches, without restrictions on materials, fields or methods.”

The fields Nawa works in are increasingly expanding thanks to this open platform. Nawa has recently begun managing projects such as the design of Koutei, an art pavilion at Mt. Tenshin Shinsho-ji temple in Hiroshima Prefecture, and the stage design for “VESSEL,” a collaborative dance performance with Belgian choreographer Damien Jalet. 

