



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ART-AID: Basel Project for Japan

Exhibition: “Remembrance of the Future to Come”

Location: Former “Plug in” (Sankt-Alban Rheinweg 64, 4052 Basel, Switzerland)

Dates: 11-29 June 2011 / 11:00-18:00. Closed on Mondays

Special hours during Art 42 Basel (June 15-19): 10:00-22:00

Admission: Free. Your donation for the 3/11 disaster victims would be appreciated.

Artists: Joseph Beuys, Ingo Günther, Naoya Hatakeyama, Shinji Ohmaki, Yoko Ono

Curator: Shinya Watanabe

Supported by: The Embassy of Switzerland in Japan, The Embassy of Japan in Switzerland

Reception: 11 June 2011 (Sat) 18:00-20:00

Artists’ Talk: 12 June 2011 (Sun) 11:00–13:00

“The Great East Japan Earthquake: How Art Can Find Its Own Way” (English only)

Speakers: Ingo Günther, Shinji Ohmaki, Koh Sato, Shinya Watanabe

What is the role of art after a catastrophic event? Confronting the enormous power of nature unleashed by the 3/11 earthquake and tsunami, many Japanese artists and art professionals felt powerless. Yet, we are uplifted by a comment made by a 16-year-old boy, rescued nine days after the earthquake. Asked what he wanted to be in the future, he answered: “I want to be an artist.”

On 11 June, exactly three months after the 3/11 Great East Japan Earthquake, the exhibition “Remembrance of the Future to Come” opens to face this disaster from the viewpoint of five artists. We aspire to understand the present from what the future holds for us, through art which inspires our imagination. Future always carries “hope” for all of us.

By seeing the present from the future viewpoint, we can face the current situation more positively. By engaging in the act of remembrance, we will triumph over the enormous and indescribable loss.

Even after the catastrophic event, one of the fundamental goals of art — to express the ideals — remains the same. Through our imagination towards the future, we can see the present as our “past,” and by doing so, art can illuminate “hope.” Art has a power to stir our imagination and inspire hope for our future.

Naoya Hatakeyama: “Zeche Westfalen I/II Ahlen”

Born in Rikuzentakata, which was entirely devastated by the tsunami, Hatakeyama will exhibit his photographic series, “Zeche Westfalen I/II Ahlen,” which captured the moments of blasting of German coalmines.

When Hatakeyama was asked to photograph a building which was to be torn down, he felt as though he was asked to make a portrait of a person who would die soon. Just as the portrait of a deceased person is

ART AID Committee: Basel Project for Japan

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necessary for people to remember that person, an architectural photograph is needed for the sake of memory. Hatakeyama thus believes that “record” is always based on the premise of a vision that comes from the future.

After the tsunami, which took the life of one of his family members, the meaning of these photographs has changed entirely. The aftermaths of the catastrophe has brought back photography to its original role—to serve as a source of remembrance for all of us. All the more so, the meaning of these records will change again in the future to come.

Shinji Ohmaki: “Line” (Working Title)

Ohmaki is known for his work “Echoes,” in which brightly pigmented flowers on a carpet are distorted by the viewer’s interactions and are transformed into colorful yet blurred images. In Ohmaki’s new work “Line,” a long line of fully stretched red rubber bands divides the exhibition space into two.

Stretched under high tension to its limit, the rubber band seem as though it might break in a second. The fragile border that divides “here” and “the other side” reminds us of the existence of the absolute “others”—the earthquake victims who lost their lives. What is happening to us right now? What exists “over there”? Ohmaki brings into question our ideas and choices of expression.

Yoko Ono: “Wish Tree”

Widely exhibited all over the world since the 1990s, “Wish Tree” is an interactive art work in which people can share their hopes and wishes for world peace by writing them on strips of paper and attach them to a tree. Ono’s inspiration comes from her childhood experience in Japan of writing messages and tying them to the tree at shrines and on the occasions of Start Festival.

“A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.” says Ono. This work provides a space for reflection in Basel and conveys the participants’ wishes which will communicate profound sympathy to the place where it is most needed—on the other side of the world.

Ingo Günther: “Thanks a Million”

Experiencing the 3/11 earthquake in Tokyo, Günther proposed a project called “Thanks a Million” to aid in the recovery of Tohoku coastlines.

In the Edo period, pine trees were planted to protect crops from strong sea winds. Once touted as “White Sand Blue Pines” by Japanese poets, the pine tree has become a symbol of the Japanese coast. The giant tsunami left the pine forests in the Tohoku region completely destroyed. Yet, in Rikuzentakata, a single pine tree survived. It is now called the “Miracle Pine” and serves as a symbol of the area’s recovery.

In this project, Günther proposes to distribute one million pine tree seeds to visitors for re-planting and the revival of the beautiful Tohoku coastline. The trees are to be testament to a long-term relationship between the stricken area and people all over the world.



Joseph Beuys: “Discussion Forum at Tokyo University of the Arts, Sat, 2 June 1984”

A documentary video of Beuys’s only visit to Japan which captured a dialogue he had at Tokyo University of the Arts will be screened. Beuys visited Japan in order to raise funds for his project “7000 Oak Trees,” and Japan became one of the biggest sponsors. In exchange for the sponsorship by Seibu Group, he accepted its proposition for a solo exhibition, and proposed to have a dialogue meeting.

His search for sponsorship in Japan was met with harsh criticism from Japanese art students, to which he countered that the issue was a classic dilemma in art, reiterating his belief of “social sculpture.”

Naoya Hatakeyama directed this 90-minutes video taken at the Tokyo University of the Arts where Ingo Günther previously taught. Beuys’ comments and student reactions are translated into Japanese and German respectively.

The mission of **ART-AID: Basel Project for Japan** is to raise funds for the victims of the Tohoku disaster. Supporting galleries which participate in Art 42 Basel will donate 1 % of their sales to their local Red Cross chapters. All donations from exhibition visitors will go to the Ashinaga Ikueikai (<http://www.ashinaga.org/en/>), a Japanese NGO which provides mental and educational support for the orphans affected by the disaster. All of the participating artists as well as committee members are volunteers. They are dedicated to making ART-AID: Basel Project for Japan a positive contribution for the people who need support in the devastated area.

We acknowledge the sponsorship of:

iaab, Christoph Merian Foundation, TWEAKLAB, Selmoni, Uta und Ulrich Müller-Gierok, Temple University Japan, Josy Kraft E.L.S., McCaffrey Fine Art, Gallery Cocon affiliated with Senzokuike Hospital, Hubnet Express, sushianmoore, Druckerei Dietrich AG, proha-tec werbetechnik, Swiss Air Cargo, sea

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For media enquiries please contact: pr@artaid.jp or visit www.artaid.jp.

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