

The Mud Man and a Woman of the Butcher Shop:

Body and Materiality in Yamashiro Chikako's Video Art

Ayelet Zohar, Tel Aviv University

Thursday, July 13, 18:30-20:00

10-301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University

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Over the past decade, Yamashiro Chikako (b. 1976, Naha, Okinawa) created numerous videos that look into the position of Okinawa in (mainland) Japanese imagination, confronting these images with the people of Okinawa's struggle to define their identity within the context and texture of Japanese society. Most of Yamashiro's videos created thus far featured female protagonists as a metaphor for Okinawa. In *A Woman of the Butcher Shop* (2012), Yamashiro developed a complex and disturbing metaphoric narrative which refers to murder (including a suggested image of cannibalism and consumption of human flesh), presenting the women of Okinawa as the ultimate victims of Japanese militarism, as well as the American military occupation.

In her new video, *Mud man* (2016), Yamashiro, for the first time, uses a male protagonist and masculine images to convey her ideas through the heavy materiality of mud, earth, and jute fabric, all of which geared to portray death and decay in an alternative visual allure. This talk will discuss Yamashiro's use of "women" and "men" as metonyms for the state of Okinawa, while the materiality of flesh and mud as metonyms to Okinawa's political status, and its struggle on civil rights and independence in the contemporary state, vis-à-vis its complex relationship with the Japanese government.



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Ayelet Zohar is a Lecturer at the Art History Department at Tel Aviv University. She specializes in contemporary Japanese photography, and is also interested in the origins of photographic practices in the Meiji era. Prof. Zohar completed her PhD at the University of London, Slade School of Fine Art, followed by a postdoctoral appointment at Stanford University and a second postdoc at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. Among her publications are a collection of essays entitled *PostGender*, a volume that explores issues of gender,

sexuality and performativity in Japanese culture. Her recent book/exhibition catalogue, *Beyond Hiroshima: The Return of the Repressed*, considers multiple Japanese works in video and photography that confront questions concerning war memory (and its oblivion) in postwar and contemporary Japan. Prof. Zohar has recently received the prestigious Israel Science Foundation (ISF) grant to continue this research.

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