

ARTFORUM

“Roppongi Crossing 2010: Can There Be Art?”

MORI ART MUSEUM

Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-Ku

March 20–July 4

In this third incarnation of the once-every-three-years exhibition of the best in Japanese contemporary art, the curators emphasize an inward focus on the national experience of decline and doubt since the early 1990s. The exhibition contains a well-coordinated selection of work by twenty artists and collectives. It flows from quiet to noise and from inner worlds to populous street life, centering on contemporary trends within Japan that bear the influence of the Kyoto-based performance art collective Dumb Type. Their dance/theater performances from the late '80s and early '90s, which focused on sexuality, death, prejudice, and the struggle for life, are imprinted on the memory of most artists working in Japan today.

Pop art legend UJINO dominates the central room with his sound sculptures of discarded domestic machines. Elsewhere the influence of Dumb Type is seen in the video antics of Chim ↑ Pom leading a group of black crows around Tokyo; the hermetic room in which Yosuke Amemiya lives out a private vocabulary of actions with apples, water, flowers, and obsessive dressing/undressing; and Tadasu Takamine's narrative photo-story of a Japanese-Korean wedding, which reflects on ethnic stereotypes and exclusion among close neighbors. It climaxes in a thrillingly schizophrenic video performance by Yasumasa Morimura as Charlie Chaplin/Hitler, and a showing of the publicly unavailable video of Dumb Type's masterpiece *S/N*, 1995.

Arguably, the most striking works are those more conventionally exhibited. Okinawa's Yuken Teruya conveys a powerful political and environmental message with his microscopically cut paper trees sitting inside discarded McDonald's and Louis Vuitton bags. Global documentary photographer Tomoko Yoneda excels with her almost empty images of an abandoned South Korean defense building. And although no conventional painters are on display here, Satoru Aoyama's poised dark room of meticulous silver thread embroideries raises questions about the nature of art as labor and the significance of the modern media images he reproduces.

— Adrian Favell



Teruya Yuken, *Notice-Forest*, 2005, paper bag, glue, 7 x 3 x 11”.