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– Exhibition Announcement –



YAGI ART MANAGEMENT, INC.
ARTCOURT Gallery

Norio Imai – Action on Film 今井祝雄 – 行為する映像



En (Circle) | 1967 | 4 min. | Monochrome with sound (originally recorded on 16 mm film)
Exhibition view of “Material Ecstasy”, 2018 © Norio Imai / Courtesy of Axel Vervoordt Gallery Antwerp

It is with great pleasure that ARTCOURT Gallery presents *Norio Imai – Action on Film*.

In the mid-’60s, the emergence of video expanded the expressive potential of many artists around the world. Imai Norio witnessed this turning point in visual media, and in 1967, he created his first moving-image work, *En (Circle)*. This exhibition focuses on approximately ten of the artist’s films and videos, beginning with this initial effort and continuing into the mid-’80s.

Recognized as one of Japan’s pioneering video artists, Imai has shown these works at various exhibitions and film festivals in Japan and abroad from the time that they were first made to the present.

After joining the Gutai Art Association in 1965 at the age of 19, Imai garnered attention for white reliefs in which he made protrusions and bored holes in the surface of the canvas. At the time, Imai was interested in lighting and animation¹, and he created works with industrial materials. These included *Tankuro*, a series of fiber-reinforced plastic globes, and *White Event*² (both from 1965), in which the surface of a rubber sheet, equipped with a motor, swells up repeatedly. In his works, Imai explored themes such as the inside and outside of a frame, and the relationship between the image and the screen.

Imai has described his first moving-image work, *En (Circle)* (1967) – made by punching a hole in each frame of a 16mm film – as animation designed to explore the relationship between seeing and hearing. At the rate of 24 frames per second, a circle vibrates on the screen due to the accidental errors created by the handmade punches. Accompanied by silence, white noise, and pop music, the work was described by the art critic Ming Tiampo in the following way: “It foregrounded the materiality of the film medium as constituted through light, shadow and the passage of time.”³

After the dissolution of Gutai in March 1972, Imai created a succession of works that incorporated visual media. Among these were *Jointed Film* (1972), made by randomly spliced together pieces of discarded footage from a TV station, and *Braun Tube* (1974), Imai’s first video work. The artist also developed a series of performances in which he combined photographs and video – a technique that Imai continued to use until the mid-’80s. *Video Performances 1978-1983*, a compilation of five such works was screened at a major retrospective of Japanese video art.⁴ These works, centering on common gestures performed in everyday spaces, are imprinted with traces of invisible time. In addition, by focusing on the simultaneity of video, which makes it possible to playback images that have been captured in real time, and intervening in his performances using visual media such as instant photographs, Imai attempted to make time lag and overlap, and expose the latent physicality of media.

In this exhibition, *En (Circle)* will be projected on an entire wall (roughly six meters wide) of the gallery to create an installation in which the room itself seems to sway back and forth. Along with this audio-visual experiment, viewers can enjoy Imai’s other film and video works, which elucidate certain aspects of his thinking. These were produced in the ’60s as TV was becoming prevalent, and in the ’70s and ’80s, a time when moving images inundated our lives in the form of information consumed on a daily basis.

1. “Faces: Norio Imai – Winner of the Shell Art Award” (interview with Sadao Yamane), *Nihon dokusho shimbun* (October 17, 1966).
2. For the *From Space to Environment* exhibition, held in 1966, *White Event* was buried inside a wall as part of an installation that included slide projections by Shomei Tomatsu and other photographers.
3. Ming Tiampo, *The Medium Is the Message: Norio Imai*, 2014, p. 27.
4. In addition to *Radical Communication: Japanese Video Art 1968-1988* (held at the Getty Center in Los Angeles in 2007), Imai’s work was shown in *Vital Signals: Japanese and American Video Art from the 1960s and ’70s* (held at the Japan Society in New York in 2009 before traveling to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the National Museum of Art, Osaka, etc., the following year)

[Exhibition]

Exhibition title : **Norio Imai – Action on Film** 今井祝雄 – 行為する映像

Duration : **April 12 (Fri) - June 15 (Sat), 2019** *Closed on Sundays, Mondays, and national holidays, Apr 28 - May 6

Venue : ARTCOURT Gallery OAP ARTCOURT 1F, 1-8-5 Tenmabashi, Kita-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka, 530-0042

Hours : 11:00am - 7:00pm (until 5:00pm on Saturdays)

◆ Related Events: April 12 (Fri)

Artist Talk : 6:00pm - 7:30pm [Kinichi Obinata (Researcher in photography and film / Lecturer, Faculty of Art and Design, Kyushu Sangyo University / Visiting researcher, Musashino Art University Research Center for Art and Design) and Norio Imai]

Reception : 7:30pm - 8:30pm *RSVP is required for the talk. Please email info@artcourtgallery.com or call +81-6-6354-5444. *Free admission.

Organized by ARTCOURT Gallery / Sponsored by Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, Mitsubishi Jisho Property Management Co., Ltd.

* Please contact Ami Fukuda or Yuki Hamada at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

OAP ARTCOURT 1F, 1-8-5 Tenmabashi, Kita-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka, 530-0042 | info@artcourtgallery.com | T: (+81) 6-6354-5444 | F: (+81) 6-6354-5449 | artcourtgallery.com

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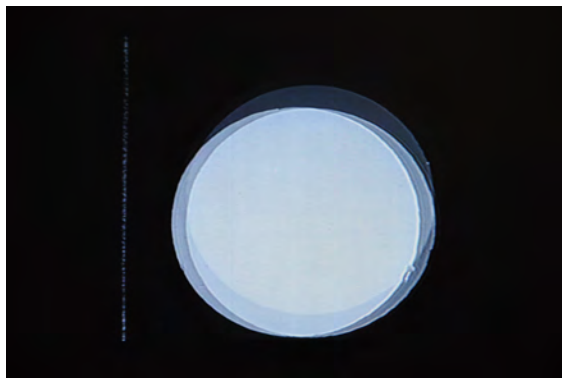
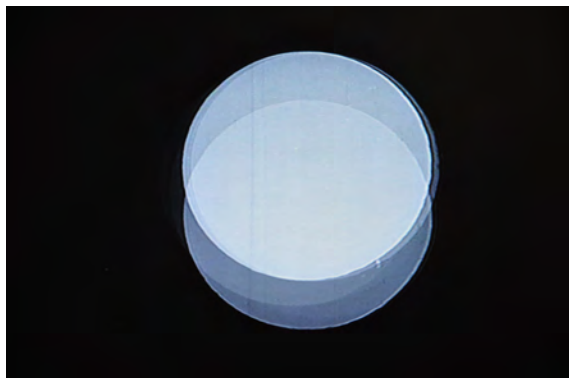
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■ About the works to be shown



En (Circle) 1967 | 4 min.

Monochrome with sound (originally recorded on 16 mm film) *To be presented digitally in this exhibition

□ Selected Exhibitions

- 1967 *1st Sōgetsu Experimental Film Festival*, Sōgetsu Hall, Tokyo, and other locations
Film '67, Kyoto Workers' Hall
- 1968 *Fluorescent chrysanthemum*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK
- 1970 *16th International Short Film Festival*, Oberhausen, Germany
- 1978 *From Underground Cinema to Private Films*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
- 1992 *Aesthetics of Frames—Animation Theory and Practice*, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Urawa
- 1995 *40 Years of Japanese Experimental Films*, Kirin Plaza Osaka, then Tokyo and other locations
- 2013 *Gutai: Splendid Playground*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- 2017 Norio Imai: *Film and Video Works—Time Severed, Jointed and Stretched*, BOZAR, Center for Fine Arts, Brussels
* Related event for *A Feverish Era in Japanese Art—Expressionism in the 1950's and 1960's*
46th International Film Festival Rotterdam, Gallery Joey Ramone, Rotterdam
31st Image Forum Festival - "Severed Time, Connected Time: IMAI Norio Special Program", Image Forum, Tokyo, and other locations
- 2018 Norio Imai: *Material Ecstasy*, Axel Vervoordt Gallery Antwerp, Wijnegem, Belgium

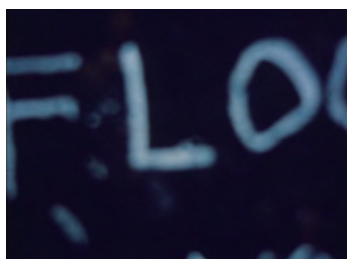
Floor

1972 | 3 min.

Color, silent (originally recorded on 16 mm film)

*To be presented digitally in this exhibition

Imai produced and broadcast this work in 1972 as part of a TV station project. This is the only film in which he used a camera to actually shoot 16mm film. The work is a three-minute document of an action in which Imai walks around the room while staring at the floor through the viewfinder.



Video Performance

1973 - 1983 | 15 min. 35 sec.

Color with sound (originally recorded on U-matic)

Time Clothing, On Air, Time in Rectangle, Self-Portrait, Pizza Time
- A digest of 5 video works

“My performances are modest ‘events’ that I carry out as acts of recognition regarding the real world or an extremely personal interest. By means of photography or video, my works function as ‘manifestations’ of these ‘events.’ The video work (or tape) is produced or remains as a document of a given action – or more to the point, a byproduct of it.”

—Norio Imai, “Video as a Byproduct: Conclusions Reached through Performance,” *Video Journal* (September 1, 1980, p. 3)



Self-Portrait (1982)

* Please contact Ami Fukuda or Yuki Hamada at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

Norio Imai 今井祝雄

■ Selected Chronology—Focusing on exhibitions of photo & video works

- 1946 Born in Osaka.
- 1964 *Solo exhibition, 17-sai no Shōgen* (Testimony of a 17-Year-Old), Noonu Gallery, Osaka
14th Gutai Art Exhibition, Takashimaya Department Store, Osaka
- 1965 Graduates from Osaka Municipal High School of Art and Industry, department of fine art, *yōga* (Western-style painting) program.
15th Gutai Art Exhibition, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka
Joins Gutai Art Association (participates in all Gutai exhibitions until breakup in 1972).
- 1966 *Zero on the Sea*, Internationale Galerie OREZ, The Hague, The Netherlands
10th Shell Art Award Exhibition, Shirokiya Department Store, Tokyo, followed by Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art. Receives first prize.
Trends in Contemporary Art, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto Annex
Solo exhibition, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka
From Space to Environment, Ginza Matsuya Department Store, Tokyo
- 1967 Gutai group exhibition, Galerie Heide Hildebrand, Klagenfurt, Austria
5th Biennale de Paris, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, France
1st Sōgetsu Experimental Film Festival, Sōgetsu Hall, Tokyo, followed by Yasaka Hall, Kyoto
- 1968 *8th Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, followed by Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art
Contemporary Japanese Art – Fluorescent Chrysanthemum, ICA, London, UK
- 1970 *Gutai Group Display*, Midorikan Pavilion Entrance, Expo'70 World's Fair, Suita, Osaka
16th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany
- 1971 *10th Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition – Man and Nature*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, followed by Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art
Solo exhibition, Walker Gallery, Tokyo
- 1972 *Street Event with Heart Sounds of Three Artists*, Midōsuji Street, Osaka
7th Japan Art Festival, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, Mexico, followed by Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1973 *8th Japan Art Festival*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, followed by Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany
- 1974 *Impact Art / Video Art '74*, Galerie Impact, Lausanne, Switzerland
11th Japan International Art Exhibition – Realism in the Age of Reproduced Images, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
- 1975 *10th Japan Art Festival*, National Art Gallery (Wellington), followed by Museum Victoria (Melbourne) and Queensland Museum (Brisbane).
International Open Encounter on Video, Espace Pierre Cardin (Paris), Galleria Civica D'arte Moderna (Ferrara) and Centro de Arte y Comunicación (Buenos Aires).
- 1976 *11th Japan Art Festival Exhibition – Trends in Today's Japanese Art '76*, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, followed by The Broadway, Los Angeles; Henry Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, USA
- 1977 *7th International Open Encounter on Video*, Fundació Miró, Barcelona, Spain
03 23 03 Premières Rencontres Internationales D'art Contemporain, Montreal, followed by National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Networks of Images, Image Forum, Tokyo
- 1978 *From Underground Cinema to Private Films*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum
Japan Video Art Festival, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires, Argentina
X International Open Encounter on Video Tokyo '78, Sōgetsu Hall, Tokyo
- 1979 Starts *Daily Portrait* series.
Solo exhibition of self-portraits, Ban Garow, Osaka
- 1980 *Video Roma '80*, Museo del Folklore Romano, Rome, Italy
Solo exhibition, *Rectangular Time*, Galerie Kitano Circus, Kōbe
- 1981 Solo exhibition with video works, The Bank, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Norio Imai – Videotape Performance, Video Gallery SCAN, Tokyo
- 1982 *4th Biennale of Sydney*, New South Wales Institute of Technology, Sydney, Australia
Norio Imai 'Self-Portrait', Nakamura Gallery, Osaka
- 1983 *Photography in Contemporary Art – The Works from the 1970s*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, followed by The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.
12th Montreal International Festival of New Cinema, Montreal and two other cities, Canada
- 1984 *AFI International Film Festival*, American Film Institute, Los Angeles, USA
- 1985 *Japan – Avant-garde of the Future*, Palazzo Tursi, Genoa, Italy
Self-Portrait Today, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Urawa
- 1986 *Video Cocktail III*, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo



- 1988 *Japan High Technology Art Exhibition*, Taiwan Museum of Art, Taichung, Taiwan
- 1989 *On Kawara – Again and Against 1966-1989*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Nagoya
- 1990 *A Genealogy of Optical Movies*, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Urawa
European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, Germany
Private Visions – Japanese Video Art in the 1980s, touring exhibition: Instituto Giapponese di Cultura, Rome, Italy, and elsewhere in Europe and the USA
Japanese Media – Art Now, Hannover, Germany
- 1992 *Japanese Video Art Special –1980s Edition*, Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo
Aesthetics of Frames – Animation Theory and Practice, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Urawa
Photography Art in Contemporary Japan, Walker Hill Art Center, Seoul, Korea
- 1994 *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky*, Yokohama Museum of Art, followed by Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, continuing into 1995.
Time/Art – Expressions of Time in Twentieth Century Art, The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga, Ōtsu
- 1997 *Recommendations for an 'I' Art – Why I Was Painted*, Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo
 Solo exhibition, *Daily Portraits of a Quarter Century*, Mssohkan, Kōbe
- 2006 *Video Art – SCAN Collection Special Screening*, Kawasaki City Museum
- 2007 *Radical Communication: Japanese Video Art 1968-1988*, The Getty Center, Los Angeles, USA
- 2009 *Vital Signals – Early Japanese and American Video Art*, touring exhibition to Japan Society, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Yokohama Museum of Art; The National Museum of Art, Osaka and other locations, continuing into 2010.
- 2011 *Nul=0: The Dutch Nul Group in an International Context*, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, The Netherlands
Masked Portrait – When Vibrations Become Forms, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, USA, continuing into 2012.
- 2012 *Gutai: The Spirit of an Era*, The National Art Center, Tokyo
Norio Imai Retrospective – From 17 to 22 Years Old, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka
- 2013 *Gutai: Splendid Playground*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
Norio Imai – White Event, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2014 *Norio Imai – Perspective in White*, Galerie Richard, New York, USA
Image and Matter in Japanese Photography from the 1970s, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, USA
Norio Imai – It Begins with White, Yumiko Chiba Associates viewing room Shinjuku, Tokyo
Norio Imai Retrospective – Reflection and Projection, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka
- 2015 *Norio Imai – Time Collection*, Yumiko Chiba Associates viewing room Shinjuku, Tokyo
PROPORTIO, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy
Norio IMAI, (Part I) Shadow of Memory / (Part II) White Event, Galerie Richard, Paris, France
Re: play 1972/2015—Restaging “Expression in Film '72”, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
- 2016 *Performing for the Camera*, Tate Modern, London
 Solo exhibition, *White Event × Moving Images 1966-2016*, Yumiko Chiba Associates viewing room Shinjuku, Tokyo
Moving Image as Live Performance, Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum
Norio Imai Retrospective—TIME IN SQUARE, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka
Fluorescent Chrysanthemum, ICA, London
- 2017 *1st Collection Gallery Exhibition 2017-18*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
Film and Video Works—Time Severed, Jointed and Stretched, BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium
46th International Film Festival Rotterdam, Gallery Joey Ramone, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
31st Image Forum Festival “Severed Time, Connected Time: Imai Norio Special Program”, Image Forum, Tokyo, and other locations
Intuition, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy
Becoming & Dissolving: ‘The Art of Appreciating Simple Beauty in a Naturally Imperfect World’, Alice Black, London, UK
- 2018 *Exposition Gutai, l'espace et le temps*, Musée Soulages à Rodez, France
Norio Imai: Material Ecstasy, Axel Vervoordt Gallery Antwerp, Wijnegem, Belgium
Fluorescent Chrysanthemum Remembered, Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk, Poland
- 2019 Solo exhibition, *Japanese Art Sound Archive: Norio Imai, TWO HEARTBEATS OF MINE, 1976, +1 art*, Osaka

Major Public Collections

Ashiya City Museum of Art and History / Osaka City Museum of Modern Art / The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto /
 The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga / Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art / The Miyagi Museum of Art / Axel and May Vervoordt Foundation, Wijnegem / The Getty Center, Los Angeles / Pharmascience Collection, Canada / Rachofsky Collection, Dallas