

The Power of Emerging People

Aoi Yamaguchi: Humanities Major at San Francisco State University

Daichi Kise, Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, July 18, 2008

“Just do it when you come up with ideas, and results comes after!”
She told us; full of vitality in her voice.

She began practicing Japanese Calligraphy at the age of six, and has been polishing her skills ever since. She organizes shows and hosts art exhibitions herself, at which she demonstrates live Japanese calligraphy several times in a year. The last show “Surreality in Reality,” which was organized by Japanese students who reside in San Francisco bay area, was really successful.

However, her real effort is in the back-end of the event.

As soon as she comes up with an idea for an event, she shows her strong leadership skills in the quick and through event planning, from booking a venue to putting a team together, and makes it happen productively.

“I want to support and represent emerging talents and artists with my self-produced events.”

Internship experiences at a major record label triggered her ambition to support artists. Although working for a record label was her longed-for job because she wanted to support musicians in need, she began to feel differently about the music business – treating the music as products was not what she wished to support.

“I want to support the artists’ real spirit.”

This feeling motivates her to produce a place where emerging artists can encounter and inspire each other.

“Life-long expressionist” – that’s the closest word that describes what she wants to be, she says. She continues to dedicate her passion to extend the artists’ network, and she runs the road in front of her to the future at the full speed.

On Saturday July 5th, she is hosting an art show “SAI” at Space Gallery (1141 Polk Street) in San Francisco. “SAI” can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. Thus, using this as a theme allows each artist to be able to exhibit his or her own interpretation of “sai” via each of their various media, blending and juxtaposing traditional and contemporary styles.

For more details, email freedombluebirds@gmail.com.

Gathering Unique Japanese Aesthetics
Up-and-Coming Young Artists Presents a Group Art Show
Through 4th in SF
Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, May 1, 2008

A group show titled “Surreality in Reality”, presented by young artists and Japanese students based in the Bay Area, is on view through Sunday May 4th at Space Gallery, San Francisco.

With the styles of sublime traditional Japanese and contemporary art, each artist will exhibit their expressive interpretation through various media including Japanese calligraphy, photography, illustration, and paintings. The exhibition will be a collection of artworks depicting surrealistic aspects lurking behind daily life, but through the scope of Japanese humor and aesthetics. The reception event will be on Friday May 2nd, featuring a live painting performance that combines Japanese calligraphy, a film screening, and painting, accompanied by live DJs. The show’s curator and organizer, Aoi Yamaguchi, a student at San Francisco State University majoring in Humanities and minoring in Visual Communication Design. She will exhibit her unique Japanese calligraphy works, and is responsible for planning and organizing this event.

Ms. Yamaguchi was born in Sapporo in 1984. Encouraged by her mother’s talent, she began to practice Japanese calligraphy at the age of six, and received the first prize from the Japanese Minister of Education and the first prize at the Japanese National Students Calligraphy Expo when she was in the third grade of junior high school. She was also selected as an Excellent Honor Student every year for six years throughout elementary school and junior high school, and received the title of Master Student Calligrapher in 2002. Currently, she works on her creative calligraphy as well as planning and organizing exhibitions enthusiastically. “I want more people in America to get in touch with the world of Japanese traditional art,” she says.

The show consists nine artists including Ms. Yamaguchi: Noa-, a painter who hosts a monthly live-painting session and his solo exhibition at the Adidas Concept Store in San Francisco; Chiaki Uchida, a painter; Akiko Terasawa, a photographer; Natsuki Tsukamoto, an illustrator, and Yoshinori Kataoka, a film maker are on board, and they are all art students at Universities around the Bay Area. They say, “We hope many people in the diverse and multicultural America to come and enjoy the show.”

The exhibition is free. The event is for ages of 21 and over and ID is required because the gallery has a wine bar. For more information, visit www.spacegallery.com or email Aoi Yamaguchi at FreedomBlueBirds@gmail.com.

Art Expresses Japanese Culture
Sports J, September 26, 2008

On third of the next month at Space Gallery in SF, a Japanese youth underground art group, "Surreality in Reality (SIR)" will exhibit various forms of art: painting, graphics, photos, films, calligraphy, and music, as well as a live painting performance. This will be their third show, entitled "Page." People in Japan commonly believe autumn to be the best season to enjoy reading. Thus, this diverse collective of artists and live performers have used Japanese poets and writers as the inspiration for their creative work. Through their art and live performance, SIR introduces their own unique Japanese culture and a style of arts, while building bridges between diverse worlds or influences. SIR's representative, Aoi Yamaguchi, says "Our arts have the natural virtues of Japanese culture like 'care' and 'kindness.' Such a spirit stirs the hearts of the audience." SIR will combine and collaborate different styles, mediums, and ideas, while continuously expanding their network and bases of activity.

“SIR” Art Event on the 29th

Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, May 28, 2009

On Friday 29th, a group of Japanese artists will show their individual styles and also perform a live painting based on the show's theme, “Water”, at Space Gallery in SF. In the near future, they will put on other elemental-inspired themed shows to be titled, “Fire,” “Earth,” and “Wind”, respectively. SIR has successfully organized three shows titled “Surreality in Reality”; “Sai (‘festival’ in Japanese)” and “Page” since last March. The founder of this art collective and a calligrapher, Aoi Yamaguchi, announces that they “have been putting our efforts together to make this show amusing through repeated trial and error. Please look forward to it.” Junko Maegawa, a graphic designer and an illustrator, says, “We are improving step by step, so I’d like everyone from all different backgrounds to visit the show.”

The collective increases the number of contributing artists as they host more exhibitions. A mixed-media artist Akira, who joined in the collective beginning with this show, energetically says “I’d like to share the unique Japanese characteristics, which only Japanese people themselves can express to wide ranging audiences.”

On 29th, resident artists including Aoi Yamaguchi, painter Noa-, and Yasuharu Fujiya, a special guest artist from Japan, will present a live art performance accompanied by music from five DJs.

Ms. Yamaguchi says “I aim to connect not only with local artists, the local community, and Japan, but also with people from other countries. I encourage young artists, who are craving a place to share their artistic expression, to express themselves freely and grow up as a professional artist through experiences with the S.I.R. collective as we present more interesting shows at new locations.”

The exhibition's admission is free. ID is required to prove you are over 21 because the gallery has a bar that serves alcohol. For more details, visit sir-sf.com/ or www.spacegallery.com.

*Collaboration of Brushes and Motion Picture Projection
Challenges of Japanese Students*
Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, May 2008

Nine young Japanese art students and artists residing in the Bay Area produced an art exhibition titled “Surreality in Reality” from April 28th through May 4th, 2008 at Space Gallery in San Francisco. With the theme of “Surreal events lurk in our daily life”, artists created various works including Japanese calligraphy, paintings, and photographs; exhibiting a total of 53 pieces. On the reception night of May 2nd, a live performance combining painting, music and film projection entertained audiences. (Haruka Sato)

It was the first attempt for the artists to do a collaboration live painting. The venue was packed with visitors who heard about the show via word of mouth. As soon as Aoi Yamaguchi, a Japanese calligrapher, Noa, a painter, and Natsuki Tsukamoto, an illustrator, drew strokes without hesitation on a large canvas on which a film produced by Yoshinori Kataoka was projected, audiences clicked the shutters of their cameras. Accompanied by live DJs in the excited atmosphere, the live painting went on for two hours. When the piece was finished, the venue was filled with applause. After film projection was stopped, a whole image of the painting became clearly visible on the canvas, and people saw this completed painting with a different feeling.

The event was organized and run by Yamaguchi, who studies Humanities and Visual Communication Design at San Francisco State University. Her encounter with Kataoka, who studies Film at the same University triggered the idea of this collaborative live painting performance. In her excitement about the success of the show, prepared since February, she says, “I’m really glad, this success was more than I expected. I didn’t know what would come out when the piece is finished. But the energy of three of us fused into the finalized painting made the final painting different from what I envisioned before we started.” She also reflects back and discloses: “the entire show took longer than planned,” and says that she wishes to have second series of the show with more thorough time management within this year.

Encounter with "SAI"

KINARI, *Live Paint Tour of Gravity Free* p.80 – 85, November 2008

Members of the American Live Paint Tour are Djow, 8g (Eiji) and Me, and Masa, a friend of Gravity Free in San Francisco who joined our team as a photographer and translator. The tour starts from San Francisco and ends in Portland. First, we participated in an art show called "SAI", which was presented by Japanese art collective based in San Francisco, and after sightseeing for a several days, we headed up North to Portland. We stayed one night in Eugene, and then meet up with Dachambo in Portland in order to participate in a festival hosted by KEEN. I was able to travel with them for ten days out of the whole trip of 13 days. Experiencing live painting in foreign country like America brought the two from Gravity Free and me new discoveries and encounters. The most precious encounter of the whole trip was meeting with the members of "SAI" in San Francisco. Masa connected us with Japanese artists based in the United States and made this collaboration happen. In a gallery space that exhibited paintings, calligraphy, photographs and various other art works, live painting started along with music by DJs. The large painting by Djow, 8g (Eiji), a Japanese calligrapher Aoi, and a painter Noa- began to merge in a painting that unified four different characteristics, juxtaposing Japanese aesthetics. Throughout the performance, the four artists were relaxed in the center of attention by Japanese and American audiences. They seemed to enjoy the collaboration that came true this time. Their performance brought a record of visitors that filled two floors of the venue.

I have been to San Francisco several times to see live concerts. However, I have never seen a team of Japanese artists who are actively involved in the local art scene for their exposure in this city. People in San Francisco have strong interest in art and are willing to support local artists. Here in the city, with a backbone to foster them, these Japanese artists, who are all in the same generation, are thriving and dedicated to art. I was glad to meet with them, and at the same time, I felt encouraged. Members of SAI welcomed us and treated us so nicely from the beginning to the end. We were surprised at their passion towards art and strong teamwork, and heartened by their active spirit, which made us think "we should work harder!" Thank you all the members of SAI, we look forward to see you at another collaboration opportunity!

*Japanese Calligrapher • Aoi Yamaguchi • Solo Exhibition
Various Visualizations of the Letter Shapes*

Waki Hamatsu, Hokubei Mainichi Newspaper, July 14, 2009

- Solo Exhibition by Bay Area-based Japanese Calligrapher, Aoi Yamaguchi, has Opened at Guerilla Café in Berkeley through August 23rd.

Ms. Yamaguchi has had many solo exhibitions and group exhibitions in her career. For this exhibition, she intended to design her calligraphy works to be visually amusing especially for non-Japanese speakers by utilizing colored Japanese hand-made paper and straw strings, not only by using regular paper and calligraphy brushes. Many of her works emphasize the shape of the letters: for example, ancient letters similar to hieroglyphics and seal scripts called Rei-sho, and the names of animals.

Also, her collaboration work with a photographer, also from her hometown Hokkaido, featured layers of her poetry and his photographs which was eye-catching.

Ms. Yamaguchi says, “this show is at a cafe, not in a gallery. So I tried to create a variety of works with colors that can relax people. I would love a lot of people come to eat and see these works.” With her enthusiasm, she said that she’s planning to challenge herself with new styles of work that uses the hand-copying of sutras or Nihonga (traditional Japanese painting).