

A person with short dark hair, wearing a plaid scarf and a dark backpack, is seen from the side, looking down at a smartphone. They are in a dimly lit room with various objects hanging from the ceiling, including a teapot and some colorful rings. The background is blurred, showing other people and more hanging objects. The overall atmosphere is warm and artistic.

Social Art Lab

Faculty of Design
Kyushu University

What is Social Art Lab?

Social Art, often referred to as socially engaged art, is defined as art practice that engages with social issues and creates new relationships between people. Social Art Lab has engaged in research, education, practice and advocacy since 2015 at Kyushu University. The primary aim of this interdisciplinary laboratory is to find new directions for the potential of art in society today.

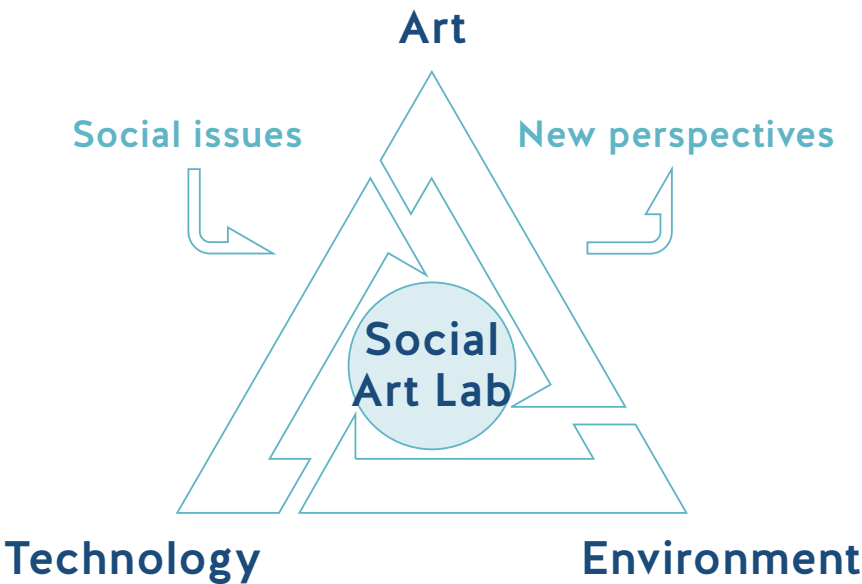
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Principles

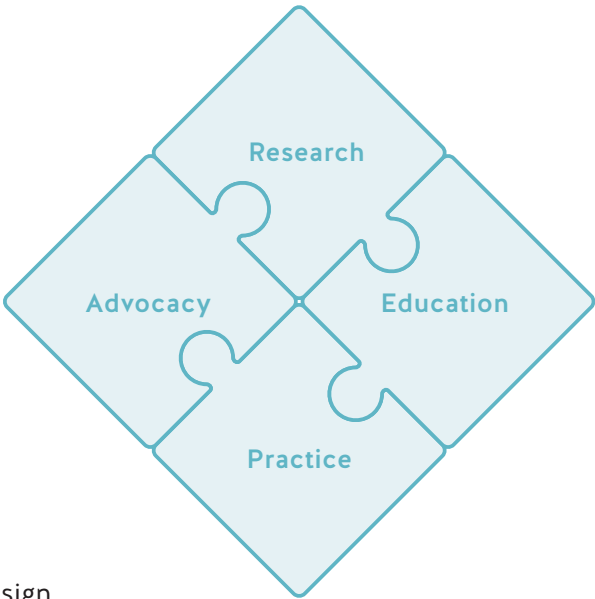
Art in the Modern Era was thought of as an autonomous expression of artists' inner world. However, today art is a form of mediation to reconnect our inner world with society, as well as facilitate diverse relationships. Social Art Lab draws upon interdisciplinary approaches of art, technology and environmental design to confront social issues while fostering interaction among diverse communities. The laboratory will continue to promote new perspectives on art and society.



Mission

Social Art Lab undertakes research, education, practice, and advocacy in an interrelated way.

- Research**
 - Relationship of art and society
 - Evaluative methods for the effects of art
 - Assessment of project management
 - Consideration of future communities
- Education**
 - Critical awareness of social issues
 - Understanding of diverse values
 - Integrated learning programs
 - Practical learning opportunities
- Practice**
 - Engagement with social issues
 - Making art projects
 - Collaboration among diverse people
 - Raising public awareness
- Advocacy**
 - Cultural policies in post-global society
 - Values for co-existence
 - Networking strategies for community design
 - Models for socially engaged art projects



How can socially engaged art affect a region?

Fukuoka × Yame Remix

Inner Yame is a rural area approximately sixty kilometers from Fukuoka recovering from a flood which occurred in 2012. The Social Art Lab made an art project linking these two regions based on the concept of “remix.” With the goal of encouraging social interaction, two art programs were implemented: a bus tour to Inner Yame and an exhibition in Fukuoka.

1 Art Bus Tour *Re-imagining Satoyama*

October 15-16, 2016

Satoyama is a place where people and nature coexist. These places are woven together with many memories of people and nature. *Re-imagining Satoyama* was a seven-hour bus journey from Fukuoka to Inner Yame, where visitors experienced art in the landscape.

In the gymnasium of former Kasahara elementary school, visitors encountered Koutarou Ushijima's work, *Un-illuminated Places*. Domestic objects collected from the school and the local community were installed to float in space along with a poem written on the floor of the gymnasium (see cover).



Koutarou Ushijima
Un-illuminated Places
2016
Objects from former Kasahara elementary school and the local community, and vinyl lettering (lower left and right photos)

While walking through a campground closed after the flood, James Jack's sound installation *Eight Layers of Dirt* can be heard. Through the open windows of four scenic cottages, the voices of a woman from Yame and a woman from Fukuoka fade in and out of the air. Inside of each cottage, life stories of these eight women unfold slowly from speakers above, to be appreciated while gazing at the landscape near and far.

Through diverse encounters along the journey, visitors re-imagined the region together with local inhabitants.



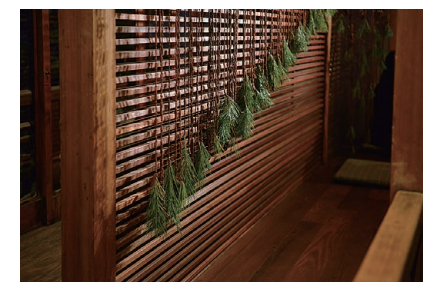
James Jack
Eight Layers of Dirt
2016
Kasahara River, four cottages, four local soil samples, and four channel stereo sound installation (upper four photos)



2 Art Festival *Re-creating Tea Gathering*

February 4-12, 2017

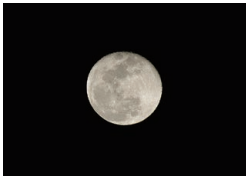
Yame is famous for tea. Utilizing artistic approaches to the "tea gathering," Social Art Lab experimented with juxtaposing the two localities of Yame and Fukuoka.



Mamoru Fujieda

Tea Gathering at Shonankyo

Tea gathering unfolded on the stage of the historical building Shonankyo over the course of three lively days. Entertainment included a series of conversations, the playful event “Tea Tasting Battle,” a live performance “Strumming Tea” with a rare Japanese lute, as well as an artistic tea ceremony performance newly composed and produced by artist Mamoru Fujieda.



James Jack

From Stone to Sand

Waterways flowing between Yame and Fukuoka were created in this historical building with stones and space. The footsteps of visitors took the shape of rivers, seaside, moats and surrounding islands as the stones were shifted by hand each day of the exhibit. Amidst these changes, participants wrote a reflection on the stone of their choice. After the exhibit, the stones were returned to Yame for local revival projects to insert positive energy into the future of the region.



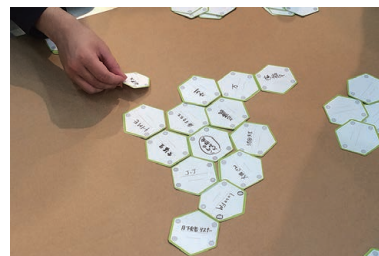
James Jack
From Stone to Sand
2017
River stones, digital inkjet print,
and walnut ink on paper

What is the role of curating in regional art projects?



Adult Education Program

Social Art Lab conducted an adult education programs for art management on the topic of "Curating Perspectives on the Region." In the basic course eight lectures were held along with corresponding workshops. In the practical course, management of the Fukuoka x Yame Remix project was taught.



How are art projects linked with recovery movements?



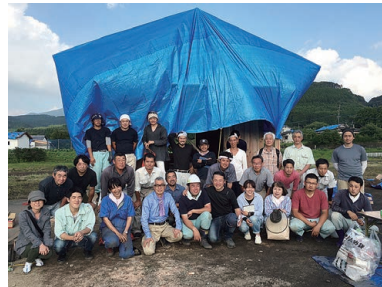
Kumamoto Earthquake Recovery

Mikako Tomotari

Survivors of the Kumamoto Earthquake in April 2016 were forced to live in shelters and sleep in their cars amid repeated aftershocks. *Tiny House Project* was launched to build *itakura* cabins on the survivors' residential land after evacuation occurred in the village. *Itakura*, a traditional Japanese method for building a cedar wood cabin which provides fragrance of the wood and has a superior earthquake resistance, both of which comfort survivors. It can be built at a low cost, using forest resources (timber) from Aso district.

In June, an *itakura* community house was completed in collaboration with local carpenters and volunteers, using donated cedar wood. A workshop was also conducted for children on building wood furniture and accessories using the remnants of lumber and wood waste from damaged homes. Finished products were then sent to the survivors as presents. In this project, we have learned that people can be empowered by recreating cabins from the remnants of the earthquake.

It is our hope that these houses built using Kumamoto cedar and art works made of the wooden remnants will serve to reinvigorate the life of the region.



How can technology assist in the reconsideration of local culture?



Spiritual Culture Revival

Mikako Tomotari

After the Edo Period, many cultural traditions were persecuted by the Meiji Reformation across Japan. At Mount Hiko (*Hikosan*) in Northern Kyushu, religious objects were destroyed and Shugendō rituals were halted for over a century.

Historically, Shugendō was an ascetic practice that combines Shintō, Buddhism and mountain beliefs. Today society does not fully appreciate the spiritual significance of customs from this local area. Mikako Tomotari's sculptures utilize digital technology to recreate religious objects, thereby restoring historically marginalized religious culture. This work revives philosophies based on the coexistence of people and nature today.



Core Members

Akira Omoto, *Director* (Professor, Applied Acoustic Engineering)

Mia Nakamura, *Deputy Director* (Associate Professor, Sociology of Music and Arts)

Kazuo Asahiro (Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture and Conservation)

Mikako Tomotari (Associate Professor, Sculpture)

Yuichiro Nagatsu (Assistant Professor, Arts Management)

Hazuki Kosaka (Research Fellow, Arts Management)

Project Members

Mamoru Fujieda (Professor, Music Composition)

Minako Ikeda (Associate Professor, Information Design)

James Jack (Postdoctoral Fellow, Socially Engaged Art)

Haruka Inomata (Shunshundō, Arts Management)

Advisors

Torao Osawa (NLI Research Institute, Center for Arts and Culture, Associate Senior Researcher)

Kan Ito (Part-time Lecturer, Community Planning)

Staff

Yomei Ishigami (Technical Staff)

Yumi Sasakura (Technical Staff)



Social Art Lab

Faculty of Design, Kyushu University
4-9-1 Shiobaru, Minami-ku, Fukuoka,
815-8540 JAPAN

email: sal@design.kyushu-u.ac.jp

web: www.sal.design.kyushu-u.ac.jp/english/

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Koutarou Ushijima
Un-illuminated Places (detail)
2016