Breathing Life into Fallen Moments: Healer of Life and Art,
Aono Fumiaki < Reincarnation: Memories from the Great Tsunami >

“There is nothing we humans can do at the moment.”
- Mar. 11, 2011, NHK Reporter

Arario Gallery Seoul introduces Aono Fumiaki (b. 1968)’s first solo exhibition in Korea, entitled <Reincarnation: Memories from the Great Tsunami > from Apr. 24 to Jun. 1 at its Sogyuk-dong gallery. Aono Fumiaki has been collecting and restoring objects that are discarded in various places over the past 20 years. This exhibition will focus on works that are made of objects gathered from Sendai, one of the places that suffered most heavily during the 2011 East Japan Great Earthquake and Tsunami.

Confronted with the shock of everything ordinary being annihilated in one instant, the artist restores life through the process of “reincarnation,” regenerating the traces left in ruins and highlighting the meaning found in the destroyed. Ordinary objects from the daily life routine have disappeared, but their vestiges are combined with new objects, and become an eternal holder of memory in the form of art, retaining the meanings they carried before their destruction. The etymology of the word “reincarnation,” used in the title, can be traced back to the Latin term Carneus, which means flesh or meat. This concept, in Aono Fumiaki’s works, can be understood as the act of breathing life back into discarded objects by adding flesh to debris. Unlike the general notion of “recreation” in art, the artist’s works on “reincarnation” rests on restoring discarded and broken objects that ceaselessly surround us in our lives.

This exhibition is the opportunity for the Korean viewers to explore the works of Aono Fumiaki, who was selected as the most significant artist at Aichi Triennale in 2013. The artist introduces us to yet another gaze from Japanese contemporary art in the form of “healing art and life,” showing how the traces of pain left behind the great earthquake and the Tsunami could be restored as embodied presence as well as meaning.

Exhibition Objective
Aono Fumiaki focuses more on the concept of “fixing” rather than “making,” as generally defined with works of art. For the artist, “fixing” goes beyond simple restoration of the past; it is a recovery and rebirth, oriented towards the future. Discarded or broken objects are reincarnated into works of art through the artist’s imagination, which reaches beyond mere formal regeneration and becomes a recovery of meaning and healing of life.

In our age of materialism, when not only works of art but almost everything around us is mass-produced, consumed and quickly discarded, Aono Fumiaki presents a new perspective on art through his artistic “reincarnations.”
About the Artist
Aono Fumiaki was born in Sendai, Miyagi Hyun in 1968. He graduated from Miyagi University of Education Graduate School, and currently works and lives in Sendai (a city in the northern region of Japan). His art work has consisted of collecting torn cloth, newspaper pages and broken sign boards and extending or restoring the damaged parts using compatible materials. The artist intends to “restore” the lost materiality of the objects in the process of reshaping them into new objects and combining the pieces with other substances. His work goes beyond simply transforming or restoring, and aims to heal, fix, and restore.
His works have been extending their range since 2011. Whereas his past productions were anesthetizing daily objects by formally restoring them, his recent works gain further meaning by aspiring to artistic healing, reflecting a desire to restore meaning as well as form. Having worked in a style that visibly differs from the mainstream trend in contemporary Japanese art, he is known as an artist who represents the daily lives and feelings of the Japanese, almost like a historian.
He held solo and group exhibitions at Japan’s Rias Ark Art Museum, Simane Art Museum, and Aichi Triennale. Numerous art museum and gallery collections, such as ones at Aichi Art Museum and Miyagi Art Museum, include his productions.
Photographs

Mending, Substitution, Consolidation, Incursion, “Low Tables Covered with Floor Materials from Houses Destroyed in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami”
2012

Mending, Extension 2007.5.18, “Restoration of a Bath Mat Collected in Torinoumi, Watari, Miyagi, Japan”

Mending, Restoration, “Restoration of a Green Cassette Tape Collected in Yuriage, Natori, Miyagi, Japan, after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami”
Production Process

Above: When found in March 2011
Middle: Fixing process in the workshop, 2011-2012
Below: After restoration in 2012

*Mending, Substitution, Consolidation, Incursion, "Low Tables Covered with Floor Materials from Houses Destroyed in the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami"*
Aono Fumiaki, restoring asphalt cracked in the earthquake 2012, Sendai City, Miyagi Hyun, Japan

The artist began restoring the road he used to commute on starting in 2008. The meager restorations he achieved were all washed away in the earthquake. He resumed the restoration work since.

References
The Earthquake, which hit Japan in March 2011, shook the northeastern and pacific coast with a seismic magnitude of 9.0 and generated a giant Tsunami of a height of 15m, leaving over 21,000 dead behind its wake. Over 90.6% of the dead drowned, and more than 400 thousand became evacuees; Japan suffered the worst ever economic damage induced by natural disaster in its history, losing over 337 trillion.