

# A show of faces for public causes

French street artist JR rallies volunteers in Japan to help turn the world 'Inside Out'

Verena Dauerer  
SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

When French photographer-turned-street artist JR visited Tokyo in May, he commented, "I love the vibe here but I don't see enough art in the street." His latest project, "Inside Out," may lead the way to help change this.

Earlier this year, JR received the TED Prize, a \$100,000 grant awarded annually to help fund its winner's work on a collaborative project that mobilizes people to take action for a common cause. As TED — the California-based conference to which inspiring thinkers are asked to present their ideas — explains it on their website, the prize was designed to bring to life its winner's "One Wish to Change the World." JR's wish is, "... for you to stand up for what you care about by participating in a global art project, and together we'll turn the world ... INSIDE OUT."

Recently, JR has received a lot of media coverage for his signature, large-scale portrait posters that he and his helpers have been pasting on walls in towns and cities all over the world — from Brazilian favelas to areas in Israel and Palestine. He posted his work in a crime-ridden area of a Brazilian favela even journalists and NGOs would think twice about going to. And he pasted his "Women are Heroes" portrait series on the Louis-Philippe bridge in Paris, which disgruntled some of the more conservative locals. He has even displayed work on the separation wall between Israel and Palestine. After years of posting illegally, his monochrome photographs finally made it into mainstream art, having just been unveiled as part of his "Photo Booth"

installation at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Still, JR prefers to remain anonymous due to the nature of his activities.

For "Inside Out," a collaborative project with the public that began this March, he is asking for worldwide participation. Over a period of one year, anyone wishing to join in can send JR and his team a portrait photo of themselves, a member of their family, a friend or even an acquaintance, to share something of the subject's personal identity and send a message to the world. For a contribution of \$20 per photo to help cover costs, the submitted images are printed as 90 x 120-cm black-and-white posters. This is done at the temporary Inside Out office in New York, from where the prints are sent to participants in their respective countries. It's then all up to the public to find a suitable — and legal — wall to put up their posters.

In order to promote this latest venture, JR visited Tokyo last month to talk about the inspiration behind "Inside Out." "It came from the logic of my precedent project ('The Wrinkles of the City'), which was to involve more and more people at each step. Now I'm letting them rule over the actions," he explained, referring to his belief in the importance of collaboration. "The main rule about 'Inside Out' is that people join voluntarily, and they mobilize together because they are excited about an idea that touches them."

As with his previous projects, JR puts the subjects and their issues in the limelight. "The ones who have something to say will be able to realize it, and they are the heroes of the project," he stressed. And for this particular project, for which the participants take the photos, he said,



"Don't forget that I am just the printer!"

"Inside Out" is a clever grassroots movement that allows people to express themselves publicly. It could be criticized for losing some of the rebellious nature that JR's previous illegal posting retained. But, as a public initiative on such a huge scale, inciting participants to break the law is of course an impracticality. Instead, "Inside Out" is dependent on volunteers who have resources, spare time or free walls.

In Tokyo, Genevieve Tran has become one such dedicated participant. The Canadian, who teaches at Waseda University, met JR last month and was immediately inspired.

"I just want something awesome for Tokyo. I want to work at something that will stir up funds and resources, and attract creative people to do something great," she said, explaining her involvement. "Tokyo needs more public expression of art and social messages."

Tran has been recruiting volunteers through Facebook and other social networks, compiling portrait photos and tirelessly searching for legal walls to display images for three social issues that she feels should be represented in Tokyo: volunteering in Japan; increasing the birthrate in Japan; and an initiative from schoolgirl Maya Reyes, who wants to address the bullying of "ha-fu," children of mixed racial descent.

She also persuaded the TEDxTokyo committee, TED talks' satellite event in Japan, to additionally fund the projects she is organizing to reduce printing costs to \$7 per photo, and she is now approaching companies in her search for spaces to accommodate the posters. Though this is proving tougher than hoped, she has aroused the interest of some architects,

including the renowned Edward Suzuki, who has expressed an interest in the project.

One difficulty is that the wall spaces need to be large. Patrick Purss, an Australian consumer researcher at the Nielsen Company, who is promoting the Japan birthrate project, is approaching companies for potential spaces by appealing to their social corporate responsibility. "This is a great opportunity for them to be involved in a special cause, ultimately benefiting their business in the long term," he said.

"Inside Out" may only be a one-year project, but its scope and impact could inspire participants, viewers and others to get more involved in social awareness issues in the future.

"Inside Out" is accepting participants until March 2012. For more information, visit [www.insideoutproject.net](http://www.insideoutproject.net). Photos from Japan are listed under the "future" tag. To participate or help, join the Facebook group at [www.facebook.com/pages/Inside-Out-Tokyo/12170297958464](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Inside-Out-Tokyo/12170297958464) or write to [insideouttokyo@gmail.com](mailto:insideouttokyo@gmail.com).



**Facing issues:** Emily (top) says she loves volunteering: "It combines all the things that are meaningful to me — good food, wonderful friends, and a community activity that I can share in with my sons. This work has brought a sense of purpose to my life." Above: Mr. Watanabe is a long-time volunteer who helps the homeless and less fortunate in Japan. His message is "Let's unite our efforts!"

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## ART BRIEF

'Takashi Hinoda – Alternative Muscles'

imura art gallery, kyoto  
Closes July 23

Ceramics artist Takashi Hinoda (b. 1968) creates freakish figures whose limbs are stretched and mashed, and re-coagulated in weird and fantastical ways. The legs of Hinoda's "To Consume the World" (2011), for example, support not a torso but a giant gaping mouth full of nasty-looking teeth. As his ceramics are inspired by manga, anime and American comics, it's not surprising that he was coupled with fellow artist Takashi Murakami in the two-man show "Takashi+2: East Meets East" at the Casa Nova Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2006. Despite appearances, though, Hinoda is an altogether different species.



"Alternative Muscles" (2011) by Takashi Hinoda  
KAZUO FUKUNAGA

"Alternative Muscles," a show of his recent work at Kyoto's imura art gallery, is his first solo exhibition in two years. The title refers to the evolutionary process of organisms' adaptation to the environment to become humans. If that process had been disturbed, however, skin, bones and muscles might have taken very different forms in subsequent metamorphoses. Hinoda's current works offer a drastic reformulation of bodies akin to when fish sprouted legs and went ashore for the first time.

Bringing together ceramic works that are conjoined sculpturally, Hinoda works in what he calls "2.5 dimensions." His largest piece, "Master Cells" (2011), which stands over 1.5 meters high, is a figure reminiscent of Eugene Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" (1830), as it stands, legs astride, with an arm thrust outward. That arm, however, has morphed into a cross-bow form, and several other limbs are appended.

Representational decoration conspires to embellish three-dimensional forms, though at other times it is largely unrelated to the ceramic body and instead becomes merely a surface for two-dimensional depiction. Hinoda further oscillates between two and three dimensions in the overall installation by adding line-work on adhesive sheets that are stuck on the gallery floors and walls.

His chimerical works rank among the best ceramic-based contemporary art currently being produced in Japan. (Matthew Larking)

imura art gallery, kyoto is open 11 a.m.-7 p.m., admission free, closed Sun. and Mon. For more information, visit [www.imuraart.com](http://www.imuraart.com).

'Remembrance of the Future to Come'

Art Basel, Switzerland  
Closes June 29

After the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake on March 11, artists asked themselves, "What is the role of art in the face of such disaster?" Though it became clear that it can be used to raise funds, there is one fundamental goal of art that I believe will always remain the same — to express ideals.

As a response to Japan's recent catastrophe, I formed ART-AID a committee of artists, curators, editors, architects and students who have voluntarily given their time and resources, and whose collective aim is to raise not just money but also hopes and aspirations for Japan's new future. On June 11, exactly three months after the earthquake, ART-AID opened "Remembrance of the Future to Come," a special exhibition that is running alongside Art 42 Basel, the largest art fair in the world, in Basel, Switzerland.

The exhibition, featuring the work of five well-known Japan-related artists, aspires to help us understand the present and consider what the future holds for us by engaging viewers in acts of remembrance.

Naoya Hatakeyama, who was born in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture, looks to memories of the past with his photographic series, "Zeche Westfalen III Ahlen." These images — frozen explosions of the destruction of German coalmines — now evoke a new meaning for the artist who lost a member of his family in the tsunami.

Shinji Ohmaki has created a new installation, "Echo – Eclipse of Life," for which he uses natural sunlight to highlight images of flowers. By capturing daylight as it shines through a window and falls on the floor, Ohmaki projects an eclipse caused by the window frame's shadow over his images — a visual metaphor of the disaster and the cycle of life and death.

"Thanks a Million," Ingo Günther's project, is a pine-planting initiative, for which he is distributing pine seeds to visitors who he hopes will find a way to plant them to help revive parts of the beautiful Tohoku coastline that were destroyed by the tsunami. The trees also will also signify the long-term relationship between those in stricken areas and people all over the world.

Yoko Ono's "Wish Tree," which attracted a lot of attention on the exhibition's opening day, invites visitors to attach wishes to it, and social-political artist Joseph Beuys' only existing lecture-video in Japan is also on show.

For those who are able to visit Art Basel in Switzerland, please take this opportunity to also think about Japan. Donations from visitors to "Remembrance of a Future to Come" will go to Ashinaga Ikuikai, a Japanese NGO that provides mental and educational support for orphans affected by the disaster. Galleries supporting ART-AID that are participating in Art 42 Basel are also donating 1 percent of their sales to their local Red Cross organizations.

I sincerely hope that we can continue to expand the network of support for Tohoku overseas through the power of art to stir our imagination and inspire hope for our future. (Shinya Watanabe)

Shinya Watanabe is an independent curator based in Tokyo and New York, and a contributor to The Japan Times. To find out more about ART-AID, visit <http://www.artaid.jp>.



Poster women: Aya Suzuki puts up a poster of Naho Iguchi on a wall in a Meguro-ku children's playground. Both women are volunteers, organizing free public lecture events through TEDxTokyo.

COURTESY OF "INSIDE OUT," TOKYO

# You're not alone in feeling lonely

Nobuko Tanaka  
SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

For playwright and director Ryuta Horai, the last two years have been a nonstop whirl of activity since "Mahoroba" ("A splendid location") — his drama about four generations of women in a traditional rural family meeting up and feuding — won the highly prestigious Kishida Kunio Award for best play in 2009.

At that time, Horai, now 35, was already one of the country's most sought-after stage writers and directors, but since then offers of work — for the stage, television and movies — have been flooding in. And that's all on top of his writing and directing for Modern Swimmers, the company he co-founded with fellow student Yoshimasa Nishijo when they graduated from the Butai Geijutsu Gakuin (Performing Arts Academy) in Ikebukuro, Tokyo, in 1999.

To date, that's a pretty good resume for the Hyogo Prefecture native who says he only joined his high school's theater club because it seemed an easier way to get a few credits than joining a sports club — but he was then bitten by the stage bug.

However, it's a resume about to be further enhanced by "Sabishii no wa omae dake ja nai" ("It's not only you who's feeling lonely"), Horai's latest work that opens this week in Tokyo and then goes on tour. Based on an award-winning 1982 TBS TV drama of the same name, and with 51-year-old veteran dramatist Nozomi Makino directing, the play tells the story of hard-boiled debt-collector Kaoru Numata (leading kabuki actor Shido Nakamura) who becomes the guarantor with a loan shark for a hard-up family he has a soft spot for — and then has to start a traveling vaudeville troupe to pay off their debt.

How does it feel to be one of the most in-demand young playwrights in Japan today? Lucky. I've had some great chances and

some valuable human encounters. Now, I think my supply and the demand from the theater are balanced. However, I predict that one day my artistic sense about a piece may not be what producers want — in which case I have to be ready to stand on my own feet as an artist, not a commercial writer, and even do side jobs, if need be, to present my vision.

Since your collaboration with the New National Theatre Tokyo (NNTT) on "Mahoroba" in 2008, more and more of your work has been outside of your own company, Modern Swimming. How was it that you first embarked on this outside production?

I was excited to get unexpected ideas from the production side. I wouldn't have even considered writing "Mahoroba" — an all-female cast play about women's familial duties and responsibilities — if the NNTT's then artistic director, Tamiya Kuriyama, had not suggested that I write about women's topics.

Obviously, I don't know much about the specifics of women's experiences, like pregnancy, morning sickness or periods, but I think (the play's) core themes such as sarcasm, bullying, heartbreak, irritation, anger, disappointment and pleasure at being praised are the same for everyone.

Your current project, "Sabishii no wa omae dake ja nai," is based on a famous 1982 TV series. How did you approach that challenge?

Well, first I had to create a two-hour play from a series of 13 episodes.

Then, though the TV series is normally remembered as a heart-warming tale, I was in fact really impressed by the way it kept a delicate balance between cold-heartedness and tenderness. That kind of balance is pretty rare in today's Japanese TV dramas, which mostly have a simple structure, whether it's serious or melodramatic. I aimed to keep that fine balance, even though my creation is not a summary of the former TV drama, but a

new play for today's audiences.

What do you want your play to say to today's audiences?

The title suggests that everybody is lonely and everybody has a hard time — at least sometimes. It's a simple message, but one that points out something a lot of people don't seem to realize, or have maybe forgotten.

Also, even though emails, text-messages and tweets make some people feel as though they are very "connected," I think there are many others that feel much more lonely these days because they are communicating more through digital tools rather than making real human contact.

What I want to say is that today, even the loan-shark business has largely gone online and become impersonal — in the same way we now use ATMs instead of talking to bank staff — and I think that we have lost something important in our digital lives, and that that loss even includes human conflict, arguing and cheating, as is shown in this play.

What are your thoughts following the events of March 11?

I think Japanese people are starting to think about the way they now live, and are realizing that we have to make decisions for our future by ourselves.

Also, I am so surprised at how much those of us outside the Tohoku region are receiving something from the people there who are suffering. You'd think it would be the other way around, but I believe they are an inspiration to us all and are having a huge influence throughout the country. I want my works to reflect that.

How do you see the future of contemporary theater in Japan?

With these ongoing disasters and changes in society, now is a good time for Japanese theater people to rethink the meaning of what they do. Although some may lose interest in their work, others may become even more committed.



Playwright and director Ryuta Horai. NOBUKO TANAKA

Myself, I think dramatists should have faith in theater and not try to blend it into the digital media. We should stick to the theater's unique principle of live performance, and in doing so, I'm sure the stage world will become much stronger for the long term.

"Sabishii no wa omae dake ja nai" runs from June 17-26 at Akasaka Act Theater, a 3-minute walk from Akasaka Station on the Chiyoda Subway Line. It then tours to Aichi, Hyogo and Niigata. For more details, call Sunrise Promotion at (0570) 00-3337 or visit [www.sabioma.jp](http://www.sabioma.jp) (Japanese only).

Next week

Jae Lee and Mike Hamilton talk to architect Jun Igarashi



Signed: Chikubosai I

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