

MASAKI FUJIHATA
The Conquest of Imperfection

Masaki Fujihata: The Conquest of Imperfection

22 August – 19 October 2008

Cornerhouse, Manchester

www.cornerhouse.org

“My image of reality is that of a machinery with quite a lot of gaps and loopholes, and my work is based on the idea that our goal with employing new forms of expression, media and tools is perhaps to locate and expose such concrete, imperfect parts.”

MASAKI FUJIHATA AND THE CONQUEST OF OUR IMPERFECTION

The challenge of presenting **The Conquest of Imperfection** was taken on by Cornerhouse in 2006. However, the seeds for the exhibition were planted long before this in 2003, when Masaki participated as a juror for the 'Web3D Art' competition. This online exhibition was paired with 'Lab3D', an exhibition of six interactive, 3D internet projects at Cornerhouse. Masaki presented his work at the symposium on 3D, and subsequently the discussion began about what kind of project or exhibition we could support, given our limited resources and considering the level and scale that Masaki Fujihata normally required for his work.

Shortly after the Lab3D project, Masaki Fujihata activated his project '*Mersea Circle*' 2003-2005 in Colchester, which was commissioned by Future Physical, a British agency that explored the changing boundaries between the virtual and the physical. Excited to experience '*Mersea Circle*' after hearing about it at our symposium, I travelled to Colchester to participate in this collective memory project, and walked with local people on Mersea Island. We were invited to walk around the edge of the island, guided by a nature specialist, taking a video camera and a special GPS unit for recording the position and interests of the walkers. Artists and curators came from around the UK to collaborate on the event and the final result was shown at firstsite gallery, Colchester in November 2003. The non-linear film that was created became part of Masaki's 'fieldworks' series, which is recognised as a major contribution to 'new cinema', and for which Masaki has received widespread acknowledgement.

During the years that followed, Cornerhouse increased its capacity and experience with artists using digital, interactive installations, and community engaged art in the gallery. Masaki and I met several times, and he also met other members of the Cornerhouse Visual Arts team, at festival events such as Ars Electronica, futuresonic, and ISEA. At each juncture we continued a positive search for the right solution for presenting Masaki Fujihata at Cornerhouse.

Initially we explored his ideas of GPS tracking until it became clear that Manchester **didn't** provide the right geographical circumstances for this type of urban mapping. **Undeterred**, we proceeded to discuss individual works, until 2006, when Masaki's solo exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Graphic Art and Tyler Graphics Archive Collection (24 June – 24 September 2006) presented the opportunity to re-think our exhibition commitment. A selection of installation work from 1995 – 2008 was agreed upon, and a new work was created specially for the exhibition at Cornerhouse, *Unformed Symbols: Another Side* (2008) continues Fujihata's enquiry into the mysteries of perception, and how it's seductive properties challenge physical reality.

Cornerhouse thanks Masaki Fujihata for bringing his ideas and energy to our galleries, and for the privilege of becoming part of his legacy.



THE CONQUEST OF IMPERFECTION

***The Conquest of Imperfection* is the first major UK exhibition of Japanese media artist Masaki Fujihata's acclaimed interactive work, featuring eight installations created by the artist between 1996 and 2008 and including a new work created specially for Cornerhouse.**

Fujihata's immersive and spectacular environments have extended the field of artistic practice to incorporate a number of new technologies and traditional visual techniques; computer graphics, the Internet, GPS, location based and distributed computing, interactivity, virtual reality and animation, video and sculpture. Requiring the participation of the gallery audience, the artist addresses questions of human perception and phenomenology. These works encourage the viewer to reflect on their own identity and experience, as well as the nature of existence itself. For Fujihata, "the conquest of imperfection" represents a mode of enquiry whereby physical reality is deemed inferior to the new, virtual reality of computers. His practice therefore seeks to transcend the 'real' through the incorporation of the spectator into the networks and environments of the artworks.

"My image of reality is that of a machinery with quite a lot of gaps and loopholes, and my work is based on the idea that our goal with employing new forms of expression, media and tools is perhaps to locate and expose such concrete, imperfect parts."

Fujihata's practice is highly collaborative, involving research and cooperation with engineers, technicians, academics and artists. However, it also displays a particularly individual (and intrinsically Japanese) aesthetic of elegance and simplicity, of wonder and conceptual rigour. In seamlessly merging cutting-edge technology and artistic tradition, Fujihata's work provides the viewer with a seductive entry point into the emergent digital landscape while, at the same time, instigating a critical investigation of the ongoing breakdown of boundaries between the physical and the virtual.

Chris Clarke

This text is an edited version of an interview that took place in Fujihata's Tokyo Lab on 23 July 2008. Also present were Anthony Lam and Ma Jung Yeon. The full unedited interview is available at <http://sitesofproduction.wordpress.com>

Part One: "Very rough, very rude"

E: I'm thinking that you've done quite a lot of writing about your work and other people have also written extensively about your work, but I thought my focus would be about process. I know you're making new work for the show.

M: So, maybe I think I can go back to high school age when I was amazed with animation techniques – not anime, I mean character animation. Technically, animation is amazing and incredible because it's just a picture, frame by frame, but after we project it, the motion is realised and, on the other hand, with for example Mickey Mouse, the animator should draw the exact same character for each frame – this is totally not for a human! So it's really difficult to make the same image into a movie, its crazy! So instantly it's easier to make a kind of metamorphosis. 'Metamorphosis' is a technical word coined by Norman McLaren, founder of the national film Board of Canada. After I knew about metamorphosis I really wanted to make animation, so the first animation was totally about metamorphosis, then. I am now working to make a piece here that quite strongly relates to the techniques of animation – so maybe this is why I started to talk about this topic! For me, animation is a kind of recording of improvisation, so at each point in time I have to decide where I will go next. This is an interesting aspect of animation, and as an artist I do not find it necessary to make any continuity before making the animation. Normally for the film industry they need to make a scenario, continuity... and divide the production into set design, motion design and so on. But in my case this is all very simple, I am just doing solo work and I can improvise in each frame.

E: You are animating objects, which is quite different to actually drawing them, because then maybe you do need to know where you're going so you can divide up the frames to create the movement you want.

M: Several of my early works (when I was in high school and university) had a strong effect on my later activity, and for this new piece. I am going to project onto the table, not on a screen. *Unformed Symbols* is about playing cards which move autonomously, but it is not interactive; it's just on a simple loop.

E: Oh! I was watching the DVD and it really looks interactive, because every time someone puts an Ace card on the table or into the frame of projection something happens...

M: No, no! [laughs]

E: OK, so that's clever filming then!

M: Yes, in the exhibition space there were several people who understood that this work should be interactive, because it's Masaki's exhibition. But, in the opposite position, I tried to make a non-interactive piece. But people start to interact with the piece anyway. This is an interesting aspect to it. Actually I am going to show 7 or 8 different pieces at Cornerhouse, but just two pieces are interactive, the others are not [laughs].

E: It will be interesting to see whether people realise this or not

M: Yes, yes, yes.



E: The audience is a very important part of your work and I wonder again whether they are also a 'site of production', and by interacting they produce the piece. But, when the work isn't interactive, do they still provide this function?

M: I am strongly trying to question what is interactivity, between the pieces and with the visitor (and maybe I can say 'participant' or 'user' in this case). In the last 10 years people have been over using the buzz word 'interactive art'. The term 'interactive' comes from computer technology. The computer was so slow in the 70's when engineers first tried to add interactivity. At that time, an interactive terminal meant that when you typed a word, characters would appear on the screen. This was an interactive terminal! [laughs] but I should say this is 'reactive', it's a reaction from the computer. Even today, most of the interactive art showing is 99% reactive. The term "interactive" has a deeper meaning and can be used to describe public space, social areas, and social interaction. How we communicate, how we talk, and how we meet each other is interactive and of course when we see a painting or read a novel we interact with it.

E: ...it has a changing affect. It's not just having a reaction with something...

M: ...no, no, the real interactivity will happen inside our brains, inside our thinking...

E: If I'm looking for a site of production, where something is produced... is it within us that your work takes place?

M: OK, in this case, and especially for the exhibition at Cornerhouse [Manchester] I'm trying to question the real concept of interactivity. My understanding is that interaction can only be done personally: human interaction is more important than technology. So I'm blurring the border between simple reactive art and the loop. But, it's really important to use space and develop installation technology. It's a kind of sculpture where people can experience a reality - this is where I am - what I am doing and what I am going to do. This is important; in this case the persons' understanding of this aspect should be controlled by the design of the space. So actually the Conquest of Imperfection (which is the title of the exhibition in Cornerhouse) is trying to question this type of human activity. It's not so much about technology. I try to make the technological side smaller and smaller, so people will start to think about 'what I'm seeing,' and discover 'how I can interact with this?' The oldest work in the exhibition is *Beyond Pages*. People say that it's a typical interactive art piece, but the reaction is pre-defined. Simply, you do one thing and the same thing will happen each time. One of the scholars in the field of semiotics told me, 'Masaki, this is an interesting example for the new situation between the word and the image. In semiotics they're discussing a lot about words.' But, I added interaction. For example, there is an apple, that when you touch it (this is a totally abnormal situation) the book pages flip and the apple is bitten by someone - actually me [big laugh], so people started to accept this bizarre situation and then they expanded on it. The apple, ie: this is a new apple.

E: I'm interested, like you just said, in the fact that the apple was eaten by you. There is something I noticed in a lot of your work is that you are there, munching away.

M: [laughs] Interesting!



E: Or, you make a structure that others have to follow, and this always leads back to you. This also takes me back to the physicality of the process – because the only way of having the apple appear like it is, is the act of physically biting it! So I'm just wondering how... how you sat, and where? In your studio (lab) here: you had the apple, and you had the camera, and you had that – there – and then you... bit it! In that process of biting, you also put it down... and you might have eaten it. That's also got to be considered a part of the work, but the invisible element. But then again, when you ate the apple, you also had time to think about what's coming next? [Masaki laughs]

So, I just wonder if it is possible to talk about where your ideas come from? Some of them come from when you were young. In a way its animation, which is a mystery to some people, and I think I feel that myself. So that's one thing, what compels you to do something, but other times, how did you decide, "OK, I'll eat the apple"?

M: Yes, that's really a core question. *Beyond Pages* has an introduction of nine pages, and each time I've shown it I have added new pages. The first *Beyond Pages* had just four pages. After that I added the lamp and lastly I added the door – so each time I expanded the piece – but, I have many ideas, you know.

E: So how do you edit your ideas? Are you driving to work and you think "yes!" or is it that you have to take a plane somewhere to do a show [Masaki laughs] and that's where you think, or when you're teaching your students – or when you are actually in the studio space?

M: hmm... I don't know when this type of deciding will come... most of the time I am thinking which direction I should take... so, this is the fun part. Every time I try to decide, I have more ideas, then I have to choose one.

E: Do you make the idea and then choose? Do you animate everything and then choose?

M: Yes, sometimes like that.

E: So you have had other things that you have 'eaten' or done... and then cut out?

M: Yes actually, before, when I have had many ideas, I try to choose one, then I attempt to produce it. Ultimately, something different from the original idea emerges; that's a fairly normal situation. Then, sometimes I need another idea to bring into line the former idea – or alternative idea. This is a kind of improvisational process, and this is really fun. I'm always talking with myself.

E: I'm wondering, you have drawings here (a white board with several drawings of camera positions), do you draw to remember? [He laughs] I mean do you keep all the ideas in your head or do you have them on your computer, in lots of files with ideas... or do you draw?

M: Normally I have a notebook. A very rough, very rude notebook for my ideas.

E: So if I asked you, 'do you really need a space to produce work' or 'what is the minimum you need to make work?' Is it just the notebook?

M: hmmm, I think I must say I have already earned a lot about the technical side of things, not only programming, but also carpentry work. So now, I can direct the professionals. So, actually my networked projects need very highly skilled programming. I believe I can do this programming, but maybe it takes me 10 or 20 times longer. I cannot afford such a long time for programming, so I have a very nice collaborator. He is my former student; Takeshi Kawashima. We always discuss the programming issues.

E: Do these collaborative dialogues alter the way you make work? Are they other 'sites' where production starts happening?

M: ... it's really like a band. So Takeshi is a kind of bassist, ok? [laughs]

E: We saw you really like music from your great stereo equipment. [points to valve amp]

M: umm err! That's another hobby of mine! Sound! Sound is mysterious, really really mysterious. Maybe because our 'ears' can be changed, according to acoustics. Most people just talk about the technology itself, but you know, room acoustics can be adjusted like a filter. For example, that speaker over there is measurement equipment... it's really hard to hear music with it.

E: So, when there's no one else here do you put music on? Do you play music loud... and listen?

M: Now, not so much. In the 3 years my hobby has been so deep, that now I'm trying to forget about that! It's a kind of exploration, a technical exploration! So at last I reached the point of making a vacuum amp and speakers.

E: So this hobby, that you call a hobby, is also something that is sort of an exploration, you are also being an inventor [he laughs] but a kind of scientific inventor.

M: umm, yes. Another improvisational aspect of my process of producing work is kind of a bricolage of technical equipment, trying to find out other useless possibilities.

E: Useless possibilities? Is it important to be useless?

M: Yes, because most of the equipment sold on the marketplace should be useful, but we don't need anything useless. I really have a curiosity about exploring other possibilities of the technology.

E: Do you have another space then? Because, when I look around I can't 'see' this process, because when you say 'exploring the technology' in my mind you have lots of cables and lots of gadgets... [laughs] and you're plugging lots of things into each other. Is there another place where there is this kind of 'mess'?

M: Yes, virtually! About 20 years ago I could answer you like you thought I would, but now I don't have that kind of studio. Takeshi is a programmer so he's not so good at cabling or other physical things! Most of the time I hire someone to do this work. So, I need less, how can I say... for just concepts. Then afterwards, I can order specific cables and specific equipment.

E: So you don't need to do the physical stuff of plugging... you know what you want?

M: I think I know everything about the engineering side... when I was younger I played a lot, kind of psychotic... [laughs]

E: So, now your ideas became much more conceptual and almost theoretical? I think your works are still exploring... but what are they exploring? They're no longer exploring the process (if you add this to that)... but its more about human perception and the idea of interactivity.

M: Yes, yes. The technology is quite simple, especially when compared with our mental structure.

E: So you've shifted your interest from technology to mental structure, or has it always been about mental structure in a way?

M: In a way you can say that I shifted, but also, maybe I can say that even if I am playing with gadgets, junk, electronics, that's also an aspect of humans' nature.





Part Two: tracking and tracing

Masaki takes us to the part of his studio where he is currently filming his new work *Unformed Symbols: Another Side*. A rostrum camera and lights are set up. Scattered around on the rostrum table and floor and several white cards with small black fingerprints at the edges of one side:

E: So, this is the improvisation?

M: I did this last night.

E: You're working with a stills camera to make your work?

M: Yes, its really animation. I can place a card over there, and another one and another... something like that so the content can be animated but also the position also animated

E: This is really going back to basics

M: Yes, very basic. Actually this kind of production can be made with a computer, like after-effects, but this process is more interesting for me. I can show you the example [takes us to his computer in another room and opens a programme].

E: Is that what you did last night?

M: I have put several pauses in here, so in this case this part is not finished. Like here, I have to make a stop, then start another motion... here I need to make a pause, then another...

E: And then they all need to move over...

M: I try to make a certain order [we all watch the animated cards].

E: And the thumb prints, are you keeping them? Are they there as part of the work or are they markers? Are the finger prints part of the work? Is that a technique or is it an image?

M: It's an image, yes.

E: Is it the other side of the card? [referring to the cards in *Unformed Symbols*]

M: The piece on the other side of the room *Unformed Symbols*, is about motion, the animated motion of playing cards. So this is a kind of view from 'another side'.

E: Are you also going to do sound effects?

M: Of course, of course!

E: Where do you do the sound effects? [laugh] Do you just sit at night when everyone has gone home and go 'urrrrrghhherrrrrrmmmmmm'? [Masaki laughs] Ok! I think if it were me I'd want nobody to be here! Is the work almost finished?

M: I have to alternate the ending part. I'm planning to record it tonight or tomorrow night. Then afterwards, I need to edit every tiny frame, you know frame by frame. Adjusting... then at the end I have to add something more, maybe. I need 3 or 4 days more.

E: It looks great! When I watched *Unformed Symbols* on DVD, I certainly didn't think it was real animation, I thought it must be computer generated.

M: But you know this kind of irregularity [shows video again], it looks smooth but this is not smooth, because the position was defined by myself, physically, so it is more interesting. The motion is more 'live'.

E: What would you say, because there is something that comes to mind with the fingerprints, something I remember from a long time ago. Somebody was saying something about Japanese pottery, ceramics, especially that the... is it Japanese or Chinese now...[Laughs embarrassedly] sorry!...

M: Asian!

E: ... it's the fingerprints that are left behind, so that whilst the ceramic has the sense of perfection, the imperfection of the fingerprint [he laughs] gives away the human touch.

M: Interesting. In this case, the finger print is one of the famous 'signs', so in the field of semiotics they did three different types of signs. The finger print can be categorised as an 'index', it's a recorded shape. But the fingerprint can also be used to identify the individual, so still now, I cannot say clearly [laughs], people will start thinking about someone's existence, ie: who made the motion. But it's fake, you know!?

E: Now you say it's fake! [All laugh]

M: It's impossible. If I made a finger print here I cannot make the card move.

E: It 'looks' like you've done this [acts out the motion of pushing a card across the table], but the reality is that you haven't. Actually, I wondered if you'd filmed it from underneath. I thought maybe somebody was pushing it around... [all laugh] because it also looks like each card has an identity by itself, the way it's standing.

M: This is interesting.

E: And this kind of action you can't get with a computer? Do you need to have some imperfections? [laugh]

M: I try to cut off the imperfections and make things perfect.

E: So, now I'm already learning a secret by coming to your studio [laugh] that's why it's very important to visit the artists studio.

E: How important is gallery space for you?

M: I don't know whether the gallery space is the best place for showing my work, but I am trying to design works that suit the typical gallery space.

E: Typical?

Part Three: mediating mirrors

Edited discussion about fieldworks, as the site of production.

E: In anthropology, you do 'fieldwork'; its supposedly just about gathering information and then afterwards you go home and you do the anthropology (but obviously whatever you recorded is already informed by your concept of anthropology). In anthropology it becomes very important in how you define your 'field', where is your focus. The word 'field' in English is a field that you plough. It has four corners, so I wondered what is that field for you? Is it sometimes maybe, not you defining it but rather the participants?

M: hmmm. Maybe I try to play the role of catalyst – if I would not go there, nothing would happen. [laughs] So I try to make some stimulation. [laughs]

E: It sounds very scientific! Well not scientific, but 'prodding' like at the zoo, poking the animals [all laugh] ... but you need to go there and you need to travel to go there and you also need to be an outsider to go there.

M: Yes. Because the panoramic camera makes me crazy, because: I am included! So, I knew such a function but I couldn't make a solution.

E: [laughs] You mean you didn't want to be there, you wanted to use the non-reflective mirror! [refers to a work of his] [laugh] So you have to include yourself, and the use of the panoramic camera for me makes the Conquest of Imperfection something of a border, like you're looking at the translator, but you can't have the translator working alone, the translator only functions when they have somebody else, the other self. So they only become the border.

M: Yes, yes

E: You're one side and the people you encounter are the other. But it's also interesting in anthropology, you often have the case when an anthropologist goes somewhere and they get an 'informer' – a different word – informer, not translator, who brings information. It's kind of similar, but maybe with slightly different roles and with different connotation...

M: Maybe I can say, I don't know if it's correct or not, but you know that the medium can be understood as a mirror. The medium can reflect you. So, even as you write or draw a picture, after you see the drawing you can understand your condition better. So, when you make a beautiful colour or good shape, you know, your conditions are nice. If your conditions are not so nice maybe you cannot chose a beautiful colour or shape. Like a singer, they have to take care of their condition for making a nice voice... yes!

E: Do you think it's important that you are an outsider in the work?

M: I don't know, but roughly there are three different types of curiosity, one is a body of work I made, called fieldwork, second is the installation!

E: Is that Conquest of Imperfection?

M: Yes maybe. Yes, it's a kind of struggle I have with the historical code of galleries, and the culture of gallery space. And the third curiosity is about networks. I almost concluded with a network piece Off- Sense, this is a work which started from a networked communication project, but I am now quite bored with that kind of avatar, and cyberspace.

E: It is quite interesting coming to the work from my own question, because it seems like some of the work in *Conquest of Imperfection* still has this outside influence, and when it gets to *Off Sense*, it becomes a world of its own, a really crazy world.

M: [laughs] So, so, so.

E: I was thinking of this term 'hermetically sealed' but not because there is stuff coming in, rather it's just a world that just seems to be in its own system, like looking at plants (orchids) which have their own bio system, but it's not part of my system... and it's not part of the world we live in. It felt to me like you were setting up a space for this network to happen, and then it was doing its own thing. Obviously, you've programmed it all to happen, but it really gave me a strong impression that it was another world that existed without our influence or input.

M: Yes, that's really a quality understanding. I can show you a very interesting aspect of cyberspace, it's really difficult to understand only using words – because it's very abstract. After I played a bit in cyberspace, we began to believe that this networked space is a new kind of reality, but this reality is made by our brain. So, the idea for *Off-Sense* came from playing with and realising a cyberspace. By programming it, I found difficult aspects about making cyberspace stable. It's very easy to corrupt. The most difficult part is timing. For example, two avatars, trying to share the same world: while one avatar spreads out information about where he is, the other avatar is also spreading, and distributing his position and data to other 'people'. So, each time each avatar looks at the information it tries to reconstruct the world each second (no, actually maybe each nano second) [laughs], but sometimes this information becomes corrupted by some reason, maybe it's the delay of the cable... then something happens! Each avatar should wait to collect certain information otherwise.

E: Is that an errata? Or is it life?

M: In my understanding, yes, its reality. It's a truth. I believe this world also has a similar problem. We don't know it, but our brain is very nicely programmed for erasing this kind of errata. So you know, sometimes it's usual for people to say 'oh such an occult'. And, an occultic situation is kind of errata.

E: Yes, everything that's problematic is an 'errata', but actually it's very much part and parcel of life. When you saw that corruption happening, did you understand what was taking place when you saw it? Could you spot the errata?

M: Umm, Yes. For realising cyberspace, we tried to erase the errors, so it's really easy to find it out, each time. We face the errata, we try to understand the happenings behind, then we try to erase it. So, mostly the errata is more interesting than the normal situation. It's a bit difficult for me to explain in English but the most interesting aspect we found is when we made a special function. When two avatars meet, then a new space emerges. Inside this space, only two avatars are inside and instantly they start a discussion. This is my idea, a kind of function of my special cyberspace. It's a kind of 'happening', and because of my programmers' 'easiness' to programme, even inside this sphere when two avatars meet together, the next sphere can emerge. He didn't think about too much about such a situation, because he just made a function to create a sphere, and this function was copied into the same sphere, then we can make a small world and inside this another small world and so on. To infinity.



E: Oh Masaki, that's very complicated to visualise!

M: Actually, this kind of situation can be made by programming, but it will face the end because of the memory of the system. Each time the program emerges a new space, the program needs additional memory.

E: There is a limit, which is why you need to get rid of the errata otherwise the whole thing the structure, collapses.

M: It's like a matrix.

E: It becomes a metaphor for life... and organisational dystopia and fears... I mean Off-Sense - if you want to read it this way - is pessimistic... that's what its all going to become...!

M: Yes, it's really a metaphor. If I had a kind of background in filmmaking maybe I could maybe have made a movie like Matrix [laugh]. It's really a very strange abstract world behind this work.

E: It makes your mind vibrate! [laugh] I should probably let you get back to work... after you've taken me to the edge of the universe! It feels a little like that!

M: That's why I told you we have a similar attitude for the field of art because my curiosity is bigger than the art field in general, especially the art made for the art market. It's a very small world. So there are more and more interesting and strange aspects to the technological field, but most of the people just use technology as a rational tool, as a communication device or a kind of production tool. But behind these new technologies there are many interesting philosophical aspects.



E: Definitely, and also people made this technology, so is there not something about the fact that it is created by 'us' that means it should be actually quite complicated, too?

M: Yes, I've been thinking about this over the last twenty years, why humans invented computers. They were actually invented in the middle of the twentieth century. So it's already 50 or 60 years past. And, people are spending a lot of energy, money and so on. Each company spends a lot of money that they eventually lose.

E: There's a lot of waste and loss involved in this whole thing.

M: They want to know what the computer is, what is this information technology that they are using, that they are in fact making. So, maybe the artist's role is to explore and to physically and practically realise something which is point out interesting aspects of these technologies, mediums, media-technologies. Normally technology is used for rational purposes, but maybe some of the curious engineers also found some interesting aspects, but in that case, it would just be a hobby for them.

E: Do you have much contact with the engineering side of the world? You seem to collaborate with people and sometimes you collaborate with scientists, and also must open your eyes...

M: Yes, that's true. Interesting scientists make my eyes open, so they also want to know why humans, why 'we' are living. It's a very fundamental question. For example, one of my friends is a scientist and he has been making robots, and his purpose for developing robots is to know how humans grow. So, he is trying to mimic the same growth process. But he left robotics and is now researching cells and DNA biology.

E: Maybe the robot was limited?! It's easier to start tampering with cells...

M: Yes, easier than to make a robot!

E: All right! Masaki thank you! Really thank you it's been great to hear more, and it feels like the right time to end.

Part Four:

The conversation continues, with discussions around anthropology, filming, and the work of other artists.

Text © Erika Tan 2008

Edited by Kathy Rae Huffman 2008-09-30

BIOGRAPHIES

Masaki Fujihata

Masaki Fujihata was born in Tokyo, and graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Toyko University of the Arts. He currently teaches at Toyko University, in the department of Inter Media Art.

Masaki Fujihata has exhibited in galleries and museums around the world, including Centre for Image Contemporary, Geneva, Switzerland; Art Space Kimura, Tokyo, Japan; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; PS1, Long Island, New York, USA; firstsite gallery, Colchester, UK; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, Portugal; KIASMA, Helsinki, Finland; and ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany. In addition, his series of 'Field-Works' projects have been included in a number of international art exhibitions including Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria; Transmediale, Berlin, Germany; Future-Cinema, Karlsruhe, Lille, Helsinki and Tokyo; and Yokohama 2001: International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, Japan. Fujihata also participated in Web3DART and the exhibition symposium for Lab3D at Cornerhouse in 2003.

Kathy Rae Huffman

A curator, networker and media art specialist, Kathy Rae Huffman was Visual Arts Director at Cornerhouse from 2002-2008, and director of Hull Time Based Arts from 2000-2002. She was Associate Professor of Electronic Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute from 1998-2000. She has produced and commissioned numerous video and media art projects for television, the gallery, and for online environments. She is co-founder of FACES (an international online community for women). Her current research involves women artists working with communication technology, and the intertwined histories of video, television and digital media art.

Erika Tan

Born in 1967 in Singapore, Tan is an artist based in London. She has a particular interest in anthropology and images of people at work. She freely uses different medias in her creations, within specific cultural, geographical and physical contexts. Her work has featured in a number of exhibition including, *Thermokline of Art* (ZKM Germany), *Singapore Biennale 2006*, *Around the world in 80 days* (South London Gallery/ICA London), *East International* (Norwich Gallery), *Cities on the Move* (Hayward Gallery, London), *Incommunicado* (Hayward Travelling Exhibition).

Chris Clarke

Chris Clarke is an artist and writer based in Cork, Ireland. He has written a number of essays on media artists and photographers including James Coleman, Sarah Jones, Yasumasa Morimura and Mark Lewis and is the author of *Un Identity and Other Essays* (Free Press, 2006).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This catalogue is published on the occasion of Masaki Fujihata's exhibition *The Conquest of Imperfection* 22 August – 19 October 2008

Thanks to Cornerhouse staff:
Dave Moutrey, Chief Executive Officer / Director

Management Team

Paul Daniels, Publications Director
Sarah Perks, Programme and Engagement Director
Pat Raikes, Operations Director
Richard Allison, Finance Director

Visual Arts Team

Kathy Rae Huffman, Visual Arts Director
Tereza Kotyk, Visual Arts Organiser
Kate Jesson, Gallery Manager
Dale Copley, Visual Arts Assistant
Gary Leddington, Technical Assistant

Gallery Supervisors

Jamie Macdonald
Kelly Burgess
Cherry Tenneson

Gallery Invigilators

Rob Bailey	Adam Leak
Alice Clarke	Richard Shields
Ben Gwilliam	Marshall Trower
Sarah Hardacre	Hannah Wiles
Ebony Jones	

Visual Arts Technicians

Tom Antell, Carpenter	Richard Kendrick
Mark Haig, AV specialist	Lucy Ridges
James Bartlett	Richard Shields
Kelly Burgess	Cherry Tenneson
Duncan Hay	Marshall Trower
Ebony Jones	

Cornerhouse Staff Contributors

Bill Lam, Technical Manager
Alison Avery, Tom Jeffers, Tom Summers, Andy Murray, Front of House Managers
Chris Clarke, Engagement Programme Manager
Parveen Grewal, Engagement Coordinator
Charlotte Pedley, Communications Manager
James Brady, Publications Officer
Jo Williams, Development and Fundraising Officer (interim)

All Photographs © Gavin McQuarrie,
and Cornerhouse

Except p.4 © Eiji Ina and p.7, 12 & 17 © Anthony Lam

Published by Cornerhouse in a limited edition of 500 copies

Edited by Kathy Rae Huffman

Designed by Epigram

Printed by Shanleys Limited

Distributed by Cornerhouse Publications
publications@cornerhouse.org
www.cornerhouse.org/publications

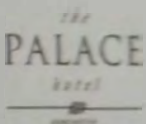
70 Oxford Street
Manchester, UK M1 5NH
ISBN 978-0-9559478-2—4

©2008 Cornerhouse, Masaki Fujihata and the authors.

Exhibition funders



The Daiwa
Anglo-Japanese
Foundation



The Conquest of Imperfection was part of Japan –
UK 2008 www.japanuk150.org

Cornerhouse funders



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

