

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Event Outline

- **Event Title:** Yosuke YAMASHITA “Burning Piano 2008”
Related Event of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
Third Anniversary Exhibition, *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*

- **Date:** March 8, 2008 (Sat) at around 5:00 p.m. (Following day if rain)
Note: Event may be canceled without notice, depending on weather conditions.

- **Place:** Noto Resort Area Masuhogaura
(Aikami, Shika-machi, Hakui-gun, Ishikawa, Japan)

- **Admission:** Free

- **Organized by:** 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
- **Co-organized by:** Shika Town
- **Planning:** JamRice, Inc.; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
- **Planning cooperation:** Awazu Design Room
- **In Cooperation with:** Piano-Koubou Kanazawa
- **Sponsored by:** Studio L, Inc.; Nissha Printing Co., Ltd.; NCP Co.;
Nishinosoraregeidan

Note:

Inquiries concerning press coverage and use of promotional video should be directed to the media contact below.

Press cards will be distributed at the site from 3:00 p.m. Yosuke Yamashita will hold a press conference after the performance. For safety during the event, the press seating and observation area will be limited to a distance of 25 meters away from the piano. Please refrain from the use of flashbulbs or lighting during the event. Thank you for your cooperation.

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21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Event Concept: Yosuke Yamashita “Burning Piano 2008”

Related Event of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Third Anniversary Exhibition, *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*

Kiyoshi AWAZU, a graphics designer of major importance in Japan, is the subject of a special exhibition being held at 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa: *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition* (11.23.07—3.20.08). Presenting the entire scope of Kiyoshi Awazu’s oeuvre through 1,750 works, the exhibition exudes a powerful creative energy stimulating to viewers of all ages, and has drawn a strong response from artists in all fields of endeavor.

Since appearing in the film, “Burning Piano,” in 1973, Jazz pianist Yosuke YAMASHITA has often been called “the man who performs on burning pianos.” In fact, however, Yamashita was asked to perform on the burning piano almost by coincidence, and Awazu too just happened to film it with a 16mm camera. However that may be, Yosuke Yamashita was captured forever on film as “a pianist playing a burning piano,” and the film is known today as a Kiyoshi Awazu art work. With each showing of the film through the years, the figure of Yamashita playing a burning piano is newly brought to life.

On the occasion of *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*, 35 years after the filming, Yosuke Yamashita came face to face with “Burning Piano” and other film works by Kiyoshi Awazu in a gallery of 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, “Workshop Room Project.” As images of him playing a burning piano filled a large screen, Yamashita performed live together with his past self for the event “Burning Piano Reburned—Together with the Film Works of Kiyoshi Awazu” (2.17.08). Clearly, this event transcended a mere retrospective of past works by these two artists, Yamashita and Awazu. The unearthly live performance enabled everyone present to feel how the “wilderness” walked by avant-garde artists such as Awazu is, in fact, contiguous with the ground under our feet today.

And now, Yosuke Yamashita is scheduled to confront a burning piano and invest his body and soul in an artistic experience of a new dimension. As the ideal of location for this performance, Ken Awazu (representative: Awazu Design Room) has proposed the Noto Peninsula coast, where Kiyoshi Awazu’s father was raised—a site enjoying views of the Japan Sea that Awazu loves dearly. From the outset, *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition* has embodied an attempt to glean new meaning and value for the 21st century from the creative territory that Awazu pioneered. The exhibition’s aim—to generate new creation from the exhibition venue itself. As an outcome of the creative process emerging from this background, Yosuke Yamashita will perform one evening beside the Japan Sea in a region closely associated with Kiyoshi Awazu. He is sure to place “Burning Piano 2008” in the annals of 21st-century history as a performance rich in meaning for our times.

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Message from Yosuke Yamashita

Something unknown and inexpressible in words makes itself felt when a thing having a form crumbles and falls into oblivion. (From *Zokei Shiko Nouto* (“Creative Thinking Notebook”), Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1995)

I recently reencountered the Kiyoshi Awazu experiment film, “*Burning Piano*.” This occurred at “Burning Piano Reburned,” a related event of *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition* being held at 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa. Doing so, I obtained the hard-to-get opportunity to perform with myself playing a burning piano 35 years ago. Seeing myself engaged in that extraordinary performance, I felt this wave of emotion that was like, “What *was* that?” In one sense, I had performed as an “object” in a Kiyoshi Awazu artwork. In another, however, I had perhaps experienced a form of artistic expression that no one before me had ever experienced before, as the result of a situation that could only have happened at that time. “What *was* that?” There was only one way I could reconfirm this for myself—by doing it one more time.

As the outcome of my expressing these thoughts to 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, “Burning Piano 2008” will be realized in Aikami on the coast of Shika Town as a related event of the Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition. Shika Town, a place closely associated with Kiyoshi Awazu, has embraced the event and is extending its cooperation.

This act of reconfirmation is simultaneously an experiment in performing under radical conditions. I have previously experienced performing under all kinds of unusual conditions, such as inside a barricade or at an outdoor concert during a raging typhoon, but to perform on a burning piano is truly to perform under the most extreme conditions imaginable. Placing yourself in a one-time situation for which there is no rehearsing, you can only play for all you are worth in a battle whose outcome is unforeseeable. What will come of performing with “fire”—something that speaks directly to our primal being and has a power to destabilize our emotions? Perhaps, that which Awazu calls “something unknown and inexpressible in words” will appear from behind as man and flames confront each other on opposite sides of the piano.

In the upcoming event, I will encounter an old piano built decades ago, otherwise destined to be discarded. For this old piano, I would like to perform a funeral requiem with the deepest love from my heart. At the same time, I would like my performance to pay homage to the 1973’s performance (this film work “*Burning Piano*” by Kiyoshi Awazu was presented in 1974,) as well as to Kiyoshi Awazu, the artist of richly experimental spirit who created it, and to all experimental avant-garde art movements of the sixties.

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

● Artist Profile: Yosuke Yamashita

In 1969, Yamashita formed the Yosuke Yamashita Trio and sent shockwaves through the jazz world with free-form jazz of powerful energy. Known domestically and abroad as a pianist of the highest caliber, Yamashita also performs in collaborations with orchestras and Japanese *taiko* drums, and is continually expanding his amplitude as an artist. In 1988, he formed the Yosuke Yamashita New York Trio, an ensemble active throughout the world. In 1999, Yamashita received the Education Minister's Encouragement Award and, in 2003, the Japanese government's Medal with Purple Ribbon. Yamashita played his original concerto "Encounter for Improviser," composed in 2000, with the RAI Symphony Orchestra conducted by Yutaka Sado in Turin, Italy in 2004 and with the NHK Symphony Orchestra in 2005. In February 2006, he released a CD entitled "MYSTIC LAYERS" with his New York Trio. In March of the same year, he performed with Ornette Coleman. In July, he formed a big band for his "Yosuke Yamashita Plays New York" concerts. A live DVD recording of "Rhapsody in Blue" performed at this time was released in November. In February 2007, he performed a duo concert with Cecil Taylor, which was acclaimed as a great success. Visiting Professor, Kunitachi College of Music; visiting professor, Nagoya University of Arts. Yamashita is also known as an essayist who has published numerous books. (6.07)

(From the Yosuke Yamashita Official Website: <http://www.jamrice.co.jp/profile/profile.htm>)

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Message from Yoshio HOSOKAWA, Mayor of Shika Town

On the occasion of holding “Burning Piano 2008”

Not being versed in the fine arts, I frankly had complex feelings when first told about this event, and could not hide my surprise. But then, on seeing “*Burning Piano*,” a film created 35 years ago, I felt that I glimpsed something of the spirit of these two great artists, designer Kiyoshi Awazu and musician Yosuke Yamashita. Upon being asked by 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa to co-organize the holding of this event in Shika, a town enjoying a close association with Kiyoshi Awazu, I gladly accepted. I earnestly pray that “Burning Piano 2008,” held at dusk in a beautiful location in Masuhogaura, will be an outstanding art performance and a great success.

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Thoughts about “Burning Piano 2008”

In 1973, when I was 12 years old, I stood mesmerized, watching the actions of a young pianist with a fireman’s helmet confronting a fiercely burning piano. On seeing his courage, or else devil-possessed intensity, I was overcome by a positive elation of the kind felt when one is entering an unknown world.

For *Graphism in the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*, Yosuke Yamashita undertook a live performance along with the Kiyoshi Awazu work *Burning Piano*. It was a singular collaboration—an impromptu, play-for-keeps duet with himself, playing in 1973. A new work of art was born, and finally, the red letters END appeared on a white wall at the film’s end, and the performance ended.

The lines and dots Kiyoshi Awazu has produced in endless succession; the motifs flowing from his imagination in a chaotic profusion . . . Awazu knows well the meaning of repeated action; he knows well that the “END” is also the beginning of all that is yet to come.

“Burning Piano 2008”—it will not be a repeat performance. As Yamashita confronts the unknown amid great tension, virtually at the risk of his life, in what is a one-time performance that can never be repeated, a new artistic act will receive life.

Ken AWAZU, Representative, Awazu Design Room

The piano—an instrument that began to appear in Japanese homes in the era of high-level economic growth.

The fact is, today there are a great many pianos that are decades old, ownerless, and unusable. Some are restored and find new owners, while others simply disappear. Those others, it is also a fact, must be destroyed amid reluctant feelings, “It’s still usable” or “Such a waste.”

For “Burning Piano 2008,” Yosuke Yamashita will restore a decades-old piano to its original condition. As a “thing having a form falls into oblivion,” I will be watching closely from nearby with a prayer for its quiet repose.

Masahisa IWATA, Piano-Koubou Kanazawa

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

Images to be provided

*Please specify the following credit lines when you publish any of the images.



IMAGE1

Still from

Kiyoshi AWAZU

Burning Piano, 1974

Collection 21st Century Museum of
Contemporary Art, Kanazawa



IMAGE2

from *Burning Piano Reburned*,

Related event of the exhibition, *Graphism in
the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*

at Gallery 11, 21st Century Museum of
Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

February 17, 2008

photo/ Hiraku Ikeda



IMAGE3

from *Burning Piano Reburned*,

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the Wilderness: Kiyoshi Awazu Exhibition*

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photo/ Hiraku Ikeda

all images:

courtesy 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa