

Artist Statement

Takako Oishi-Marks

I consider myself a "social" artist. My work examines human interaction with the surrounding world. I use video, photography and performance as vehicles for social critique. In particular, I am interested in exploring the public's "voice" through "documentary art."

To make videos beyond traditional documentary film, I made rules below:

1. **No script, No choreography, No acting**
Plan the unpredictable and spontaneous. Instead of writing a script, I used various devices to prompt unscripted and yet "controlled" responses.
2. **Borrowed subject, to avoid the video being subjective (What do you think this term "borrowed subject"? My other idea is "Found subject" but I am not sure which one is easier to understand.)**
I don't decide a topic by myself but borrow the topic from incidental events. To do this, I keep practicing video in public. Once I videotaped an interesting event, then I borrow a subject from it.
3. **Found footage, found people, appropriation, collage, remix**
Seek a way to bring authenticity into video.
4. **Organic growth of videos, with no conclusion**
Instead of having a concrete structure, each scene inspired the next without a plan. Because of this process, the scenes seem to interplay with each other and form loose and organic structure of narratives.

I am going to describe three videos that were applied those rules above.

"Mother and Gasoline" is an eighteen-minute, single-channel HD video, made in 2011. This video organically grew from the video-taping of a deaf boy at a center for the disabled in Japan. While he draws his mother's picture, people at the center spontaneously begin discussing "There is no gasoline." Later, I asked him to draw gasoline, and he drew a tanker truck. The coincident inspired me and I borrowed the subject "Mother and Gasoline" from this footage.

The key subjects I found from the footage were these; a male drawing artist, deaf, mother, a lack of gasoline, and tanker. First, I took and found footages that imply these key subjects. Then I let it grew the topic of the video organically

I combined different footages from interviews to male painters, a lawyer, Japanese researchers I conducted, iPhone movie of a video installation about Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010 at a gallery in New York City, YouTube videos and television news about Japan's shortage of gasoline after the great earthquake in 2011 and oil refineries in Japan and Iran and so on to demonstrate the relationship between humans and oil.

“**Moist and Tasty**” is an eleven-minute single-channel HD video, made in 2010. The video organically grew out of a scene with an American woman baking cookies, and discussing topics of a sexual nature. Inspired, I decided to ask my Japanese friends simple questions regarding those topics. Their answers show how culture and ideas about sex are interrelated.

In this video, multiple videos were often on the one scene. I used the multi-channel to correspond to the multiple screens on a computer desktop in the scene of Skype conversation. But, more importantly, I used multiple screens to connect time and distance.

“**Trendibility**” is a five-minute, single-channel HD video, made in 2010, within which are two parallel, unscripted videos; one video was taken at a disabled persons’ facility in my hometown in Japan, the other in a deli near my home in New York City. The two videos are tied together by the notion of disability and fashion.

The first video is a conversation between blind man and non-blind man. The blind person was only told by me to touch the man in front of him and say what he thinks about the person. Then he ends up talking about the person’s appearance and fashion. I was interested in this footage because I realized that I mistakenly believed that appearance and fashion only relate to the visual information. Then I borrowed the subject from this footage: fashion and disability to make the next video.

The “borrowed subjects” of fashion and disability reminds me of a history of women's fashion and disability and sexuality. In the next video, I dressed up a young woman and told her to buy something that she wants at the deli.

To the people at the deli, I told them to give her permission to take a video without giving them any description of work or script. The unscripted, non-professional "actors" take their positions based on their own interpretations of how to participate into the video. As a result, the video moves beyond "planned messages." This process creates a broken narrative by multiple tellers (the video participants and the artist), and makes the viewer question the relationship between reality and tales.

By following those rules above, I use a journalistic approach to my videos to discuss the daily politics that I experience in everyday life. An unscripted interview and improvised performance are two important elements to my videos. This triggers a subjective reaction in the video’s participants, thus turning them into “co-authors” of the narrative.

As a theme, my works often involve global issues in local contexts. I layer multiple unrelated issues within a video, so it doesn’t discuss one issue but shows a large net of complex relationships between each issue.

I am from Japan, and I received a B.F.A. from Kyoto University of Art and Design, in Kyoto, Japan, and an M.F.A. from Hunter College. Currently I live and work in New York City.