

PRESS RELEASE 2021.7.15

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture are carrying out this exhibition as part of the Tokyo Tokyo FESTIVAL.



Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

Viva Video! :The Art and Life of Shigeko Kubota

November 13, 2021– February 23, 2022



Photo: Tom Harr Design: Akira Sasaki [Press image 1]

This exhibition will be the first major survey of the art of Shigeko Kubota (1937-2015) in Japan nearly in three decades. Born in Niigata and educated in Tokyo, Kubota moved to New York in 1964 to join the Fluxus movement. Kubota became internationally known as a pioneering artist for her “video sculpture,” which integrated video into three-dimensional structures. Her contribution to contemporary art, however, has yet to be adequately evaluated.

The goal of the exhibition is to provide an updated and contextualized survey of the Japanese American female artist Shigeko Kubota to international audiences. Shortly after the artist’s passing in 2015, the Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation was established in New York at the bequest of the artist to preserve and further the study of Kubota’s life and legacy, in addition to advancing the field of video art. Drawing significantly from a collection of recently restored sculptures, drawings, photographs, and ephemera of the Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation, and complementing them with additional works from Japanese museums and archival materials from the artist’s family, the exhibition will showcase a diverse array of materials for the first time.

What was Kubota thinking and seeking as a female artist who was developing her art on the world stage at the dawn of new media art? The exhibition will present multivalent views of Kubota’s life and work through drawings, photographs, archival documents, and video - including her *Duchampiana* video sculpture series.

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* All Programs are subject to change.



Highlights of the exhibition

The first posthumous exhibition and the first exhibition in Japan in nearly 30 years - exhibiting many never-before-seen works.

Skater (1991-92), modeled after figure skater, Midori Ito, who won the silver medal at the 1992 Winter Olympic games, and *Korean Grave* (1993), based on Kubota and Nam June Paik's visit to Paik's family grave, are the video sculptures to be shown in Japan for the first time. Photographs and letters which demonstrate her relationships with various artists are world premiere.



Skater, 1991-92,
Collection of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation,
Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021,
Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeko Kubota [Press image 2]



Korean Grave, 1993,
Collection of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation,
Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021,
Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeko Kubota [Press image 3]

Introducing Kubota's early activities before her video sculptures

The exhibition introduces Kubota's early artistic career, including her activities in Fluxus, and her involvement in the Sonic Arts Union, before she became known as a video artist.

Exhibiting her signature series, Duchampiana, in its entirety

The exhibition will display the whole series of her signature video sculpture, *Duchampiana*, which was inspired by the artist's meeting with the late Dada artist Marcel Duchamp. It will demonstrate Kubota's respect for Duchamp and her challenge to surpass his art.



Duchampiana: Bicycle Wheel One, Two, Three and Three Mountains
Installation view at Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992,
Photo by Yoshitaka Uchida,
Courtesy of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation;
© Estate of Shigeko Kubota [Press image 4]



Meta-Marcel: Window (Flowers) (detail), 1976-77/83,
Photo by Peter Moore, Courtesy of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation;
©Estate of Shigeko Kubota
[Press image 5]

Contents of the Exhibition:

1. Early Years: From Niigata to Tokyo

The first section, “Early Years: From Niigata to Tokyo,” will introduce Kubota’s upbringing in Niigata and artistic development in Tokyo through personal archival documents, photographs, and some early artworks. Born in 1937 and raised in a relatively liberal household, Kubota aspired to be a sculptor and studied at the Tokyo University of Education. Upon graduation in 1960, she became involved in Tokyo’s close-knit avant-garde art community. Along with the documentation of Kubota’s first solo exhibition at Naiqua Gallery (1963), some works by her contemporaries, such as Group Ongaku, Hi Red Center, and Yoko Ono will contextualize Kubota’s position within the Tokyo avant-garde. After realizing the limited opportunities for a female artist there, Kubota decided to move to New York.

2. To New York: Fluxus, Performance, and Sonic Arts Union

The second section, “To New York,” will trace Kubota’s activities in the avant-garde collective, Fluxus, and her activities with the international artists based in New York. While working closely with the impresario of Fluxus, George Maciunas, Kubota produced her witty Flux objects, such as, *Flux Napkin* (1965) and *Flux Medicine* (1966). Her performance, *Vagina Painting* (1965), presented as part of a Fluxus event, gained her notoriety, although its relevance is currently being evaluated in art and socio-cultural history. The last part of the section will shed light on her involvement with Sonic Arts Union, which included her first husband, composer David Behrman.

3. Encounter with Video

After 1970, Kubota started making video works while living with Nam June Paik, who would later become her life partner. This important transition to video is shown with early single-channel videos, such as, *Broken Diary: Europe in Half Inch a Day* (1972), which was created by traveling through Europe with a SONY portapak. Her multimedia collaboration with women artists such as Mary Lucier, will also be shown.



Shigeko Kubota Portrait ©Tom Haar, 1972.

Courtesy of Tom Haar and Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation

[Press image 6]

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Viva Video!: The Art and Life of Shigeko Kubota

4. *Duchampiana: The Birth of Video Sculpture*

Propelled by her chance encounter with Marcel Duchamp in 1968, Kubota took photographs of the chess concert, Reunion, between Duchamp and John Cage, and created a book with audio, *Marcel Duchamp and John Cage* (1970). The *Duchampiana* series, which she produced as an homage to Duchamp became Kubota's signature video sculptures. One of the series, *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1975-76/83), shows the repeated movement of a female nude model walking down a staircase on four monitors encased within a wooden staircase. For its witty reinterpretation of Duchamp's renowned painting in the time-based medium of video, it became the first video sculpture to have been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. After Kubota was invited to the international exhibition of contemporary sculpture, *Documenta VI* in Kassel, Germany in 1977, her visibility in Europe increased and she often exhibited her work there.



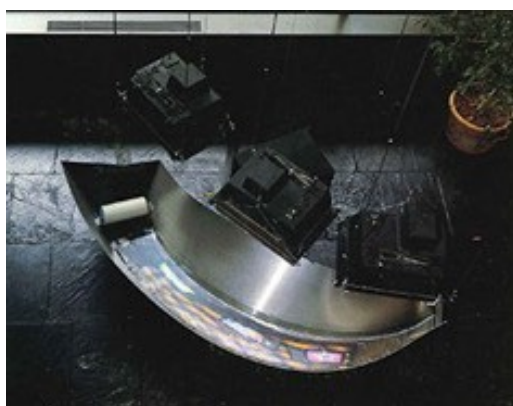
Duchampiana: Nude Descending a Staircase, 1975-76/83,
Collection of Toyama Prefectural Museum of Art and Design,
Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021.
Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeko Kubota
[Press image 7]



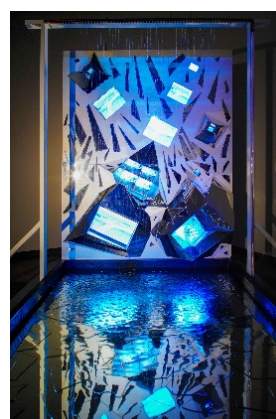
Three Mountains, 1976-79,
Photo by Peter Moore, Courtesy of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation;
© Estate of Shigeko Kubota **[Press image 8]**

5. Expanding Video Sculptures

The fifth section, “Expanding Video Sculptures,” will showcase Kubota’s works created in the 1980s and 1990s, to demonstrate the spatial and temporal expansion of her video work into large-scale installations, using elements such as water and kinetic motion. Signature works from the period include: *River* (1979-81) which consists of three monitors hung face down from the ceiling and a stainless-steel basin filled with the moving water. These works exist in the viewer’s space and invite interaction and contemplation from multiple vantage points.



River, 1979-81
Photo by Peter Moore, Courtesy of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation; © Estate of Shigeko Kubota **[Press image 9]**



Niagara Falls, 1985/2021
Collection of Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation, Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021, Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeko Kubota **[Press image 10]**

Viva Video!: The Art and Life of Shigeko Kubota

6. The Art and Life

In 1991, the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York organized Kubota's first museum-scale solo exhibition, and a slightly different version which traveled to the Hara Museum in Tokyo, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, and Fondazione Mudima in Milan. Kubota's success was abruptly interrupted by her husband Paik's stroke in 1996. Henceforth, Kubota focused on assisting him with his physical disabilities and logistically with his exhibition practice, until his death in 2006. While fighting her own illnesses in the last decades of her life, she produced her last body of work which reflects on her life with Paik and her love for him.



Sexual Healing, 1998

Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), NY [Press image 11]

Viva Video!: The Art and Life of Shigeko Kubota

Information

Exhibition Period	Sat. 13 November. 2021 – Wed. National Holiday. 23 February 2022
Closed	Mondays (except 10 Jan., 21 Feb. 2022), 28 Dec. 2021– 1 Jan., 11 Jan. 2022
Opening Hours	10:00-18:00 (Tickets available until 30 minutes before closing.)
Admission	Adults – 1,400 yen / University & College Students, Over 65 – 1,000yen / High School & Junior High School Students – 600 yen / Elementary School Students & Younger – Free
Venue	Exhibition Gallery 3F, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo
Curators	Mayumi Hamada, The Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art Azusa Hashimoto, The National Museum of Art, Osaka Mihoko Nishikawa, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo Midori Yoshimoto, New Jersey City University, U.S.A.
Organizers	Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo operated by Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture, The Yomiuri Shimbun, The Japan Association of Art Museums
Sponsors	Lion Corporation, Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd., Sompo Japan Insurance Inc., Nippon Television Network Corporation
Grant support	Terra Foundation for American Art, The Agency for Cultural Affairs Government of Japan in the fiscal 2020, The Pola Art Foundation

The organizers would like to express their special thanks to the Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation, New York.

“The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.”

For further inquiry about the artist, please contact to Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation [info@videoartfoundation.org].

All works © 2021, Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation

Concurrent Exhibitions

“EUGENE STUDIO: After the rainbow“
“Christian Marclay”
“MOT Collection”

IMAGE REQUEST FORM

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- 1 Main Visual Photo: Tom Harr, Design: Akira Sasaki
- 2 *Skater*, 1991-92, Collection of Shigeo Kubota Video Art Foundation, Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021, Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeo Kubota
- 3 *Korean Grave*, 1993, Collection of Shigeo Kubota Video Art Foundation, Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021, Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeo Kubota
- 4 *Duchampiana: Bicycle Wheel One, Two, Three and Three Mountains* Installation view at Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992, Photo by Yoshitaka Uchida, Courtesy of Shigeo Kubota Video Art Foundation; © Estate of Shigeo Kubota
- 5 *Meta-Marcel: Window (Flowers)* (detail), 1976-77/83, Photo by Peter Moore, Courtesy of Shigeo Kubota Video Art Foundation; © Estate of Shigeo Kubota
- 6 Shigeo Kubota Portrait © Tom Haar, 1972. Courtesy of Tom Haar and Shigeo Kubota Video Art Foundation.
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- 7 *Duchampiana: Nude Descending a Staircase*, 1975-76/83, Collection of Toyama Prefectural Museum of Art and Design, Installation view at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 2021, Photo: Yukihiro Yoshihara, © Estate of Shigeo Kubota
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