

Japan's first aid towards Socially Engaged Art  
Kawamura Arts and Cultural Foundation Socially Engaged Art Support Grant  
Two projects selected as its grantee!

## “Cho-cho-mau Vernacular: Nishinari+Street+Nodate+Yatai ” “The Clothesline”



Kawamura Arts and Cultural Foundation (Chairman: Yoshihisa Kawamura) launched Japan's first support grant towards Socially Engaged Art in 2017. For the third edition, two projects, Cho-cho-mau Vernacular: Nishinari+Street+Nodate+Yatai and The Clothesline were selected as its grantee, among 40 international applicants (20 overseas and 20 domestic) following the open call and screening.

stage director Akira Takayama (PortB) was selected as its grantee with the project New Tokyo School Excursion Project. We are pleased to announce the grantee of the second edition, selected among 20 international applicants (9 overseas and 11 domestic) following the open call and screening.

### 【2020 Grantee Projects】

1: Project: Cho-cho-mau Vernacular: Nishinari+Street+Nodate+Yatai  
Applicant: Breaker Project Committee  
Grant Amount: up to 4,000,000 JPY

2: Project: The Clothesline  
Applicant: Our Clothesline with Mónica Mayer  
Grant Amount: up to 500,000 JPY

# 1: Cho-cho-mau Vernacular: Nishinari+Street+Nodate+Yatai



2007 Breaker Project

This project is the practice of consideration/reconsideration of varied issues regarding regulations and management of the street through their activities in public spaces conducted by Kimura Toshiro Jinjin, who has been practicing his artistic activity titled Nodate (open-air tea ceremony) in open spaces where people come and go such as the street and vacant sites over two decades, and Breaker Project, which has implemented art projects deeply rooted in the local community of Nishinari Ward, Osaka. Aiming to become a place where everyone can equally co-exist regardless of their age, gender, status, and nationality, the project Nodate, which Kimura has worked on over years, creates opportunities for varied people to happen encounter each other, including those who would have never had the chances to meet, and creating at times a place where miraculous “cross-border” may arise.

For this project, the artist will use the same method as its base, and will create an original stall that exemplifies the varied “hunches of attractiveness” of the participants from inside and outside of the community, aiming to trigger various emotions, thoughts, and dialogues on the sites and the community throughout the process. By using the street as the site of expression, the project will present new ways of utilizing public spaces, and aims to reconsider how the people of the community and the public sphere should exist, with the hope that it will retrieve it back as a public space. For the artist who has been invited to varied places to implement his practice, this is also a new challenge to continuously carry a project rooted in one specific community.

## Breaker Project

The project began in 2003 as a cultural program promoted by Osaka City. It started off in Shinsekai, Naniwa Ward, and is currently based in Nishinari Ward as an art project deeply rooted in its local community. With artists who explore new ways of expression, the project reconstructs “the harmonious relation between art and society” while providing sites of creativity and connections within the local community.

## 2: The Clothesline



The Clothesline is a work in which the viewers would write their answers to the question written on the small pieces of paper, to be hung on a clothesline (“El tendedero” in Spanish) in the venue. This work enables the “voiceless voices” that are buried in the society to be scooped and visualized, and shared among viewers. In Aichi Triennale 2019, the work revealed that it is not only few cases that sexual harassment, violence, and obvious criminal behaviors are hidden in everyday life.

While this artwork is very versatile in terms that it requires no special skills nor knowledge and can be showcased anywhere with only a paper, pen, and a clothesline, its artistic layers are diverse. Making the questions, reading the answers, thinking about them, and writing personal experiences—every part of it is The Clothesline. Thus, it becomes essential to collaborate with

local community groups, and discuss with them what issues are occurring in those communities, and among them which are crucial, and how they should be reflected into the work. Furthermore, it is Mónica Mayer's wish that The Clothesline will ongoingly continue in the location, and inspire other communities to conduct The Clothesline on their own as well. This project will be organized in Tokyo and Nagoya to commemorate the International Women's Day, 2020 (March 8th), theming on gender issues in which remain to be unsolved.

### Our Clothesline with Mónica Mayer

“Our Clothesline with Mónica Mayer” is a collective formed with voluntary members who participated in Mónica Mayer's workshop at Aichi Triennale 2019. The collective conducts The Clothesline in varied locations in Japan.

## ■ Comments from the juries



Yasuyo Kudo (Chairperson, Art & Society Research Center)

The screening of the third edition of the grant made us rethink what it fundamentally means to practice Socially Engaged Art. What are the most important factors upon implementing SEA? — To take actions that makes changes in the real world? To pursue the aesthetic qualities upon art practice? Tackling urgent social issues in the current society? — I must say the selected projects were penetrated with an attitude of engaging into not only the social issues in Japan but also those on a global scale, questioning our behavior of forgetting and disvaluing things, and making those issues become apparent in new ways. A strong trait found in domestic applicants was that more than 20% were projects under art festivals. On the other hand, applicants from overseas had a wide range of nationalities and proved a global interest in SEA, while they also showed barriers and difficulties in practicing the projects in Japan when building relationships with specific locations and people become critical in actualizing the projects. We felt the necessity in discussing how far the grant would locally support the projects in the future.



Kenji Kubota (Independent Curator)

It was a positive tendency that many of the applications for the Socially Engaged Art Support Grant this year handled issues the society is currently actually facing, including the aging society, environmental issues, discrimination, poverty, and the freedom of expression. However, many of the ideas lacked freshness and had elements of a breakthrough, and made the screening process to be challenging.

Among them, the Breaker Project was judged on factors that it copes with issues such as economic disparity and homeless issues, as well as the previous activities it had steadily achieved in the past, and also the high possibility of actualization of their new attempt proposed in their application, which made them be selected as the main project of this year's supported grant.

The juries also saw new possibilities in The Clothesline, a project based on one of the symbolic works associated with "the freedom of expression" argued during the Aichi Triennale last year. This application was also unique in that it was a voluntary project proposed by a coalition of non-artists.



Kenichi Kondo (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Photo: Mikuriya Shinichiro

It was the first time for me to participate in the screening process of this grant, and I was impressed by the strong passion and motivation of the applicants as many of the proposals were presented with concrete details upon presenting their concept and ideas. However, none of them were strong enough to be selected as worth the entire grant alone, and therefore, several projects were selected this year. It was difficult to decide whether the grant should be extended to either a project with a strong concept but could be weak in actualization, or a project that may lack in freshness but would seem to be surely actualized. Ultimately, The Breaker Project was selected to be extended a large part of this year's grant, assessed on how it would assuredly engage with the society while also maintaining its quality as an art project, and would surely be actualized.



Tadasu Takamine (Artist/Assistant Professor, Akita University of Art)

It was a positive tendency that there were double applications that came from overseas this year compared to last year, while however, many of them lacked in research as well as possibilities of actualization. Perhaps the requirement that the project needs to take place in Japan is the most difficult element for international artists, and maybe new ideas are necessary to overcome the geographic condition. On the contrary, the Breaker Project who won the main support grant this year is a project that knows everything about the Japanese local scene, as it has been ongoing already for more than a decade. The project's attitude of having the main focus on bringing "changes" to the concerned society more than seeking its own "expression" matches well with the essential concept of this grant, which is to support expressions that would make changes to the society. The main project was selected by the point of view of its activities "up to today" and "in the future."



Photo: Yurika Kawano

Chiaki Soma ( Representative Director, Arts Commons Tokyo / Art Producer)

Nowadays, social divisions could be found everywhere and even appear in violent ways at times. What would it mean for art to engage with society at such a time? Socially Engaged Art is not a specific genre or a category of art practice, but rather a query of connecting art and the society instead. If so, a SEA project would connote an artistic attitude that would bring changes to both the self and the object, which should lead to also creating varied and drastic new inventions in its methodologies. I participated in the screening process with such a point of view, however, many of the applications only repositioned an artist's existing work/project in the context of SEA, leaving weak impressions that new models of SEA projects could take place in Japan. I hope the practice of SEA projects would eventually connect to inventing new ways of bridging society and art in the future.



Mouri Yoshitaka (Professor, Graduate School of Global Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts)

The Breaker Project, the winner of this year's grant, is one of the pioneers of Socially Engaged Art (SEA) that have originated in Japan, renowned of their unique artistic practices heavily associated with the local scene of Osaka. Kimura toshiro jinjin, the main artist of the winning project, is also renowned for connecting the community with art practice through his unique approach of "Nodate (open-air tea ceremony)." The SEA support grant has stepped into its third edition this year. This year's project should be a precious case that indicates there has been a Japan-originated activity within the context of SEA, which emerged in the areas of Western culture. It would allow us to rethink how broad a SEA project could be and what possibilities it could connote. It is not a new form or genre of contemporary art, but instead, a "symptom" of our society and the environment surrounding art is facing.