

MADART
SUPPORTS
ARTISTS IN OUR
COMMUNITY,
BRINGS ART
INTO OUR LIVES
IN UNEXPECTED
WAYS, AND
CREATES
COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT IN
THE ARTS.





PREVIOUS:
STITCHED IMAGE OF **EARTHEN
LIGHT'S** INTERIOR LIGHT
CONDITION

ABOVE:
MS. INOHARA REFINING
THE FINISHING COAT ON
THE INTERIOR CEILING OF
EARTHEN LIGHT

TAIJI MIYASAKA

CIRCUM·AMBIENCE

JANUARY 9 - MARCH 23, 2019



ABOVE:
A COLLECTION OF TOOLS
UTILIZED BY JAPANESE
PLASTERERS IN EARTHEN
WALL CONSTRUCTION

RIGHT:
WILD FLOWER IN PROCESS AT
MADART STUDIO

Immediately following the 2019 new year, Taiji Miyasaka, an artist and professor in the School of Design and Construction at Washington State University (WSU), began the construction of his long-developing MadArt Studio exhibition, *Circum-ambience*. Miyasaka utilized this project as an opportunity to continue his academic research investigating design methodologies and building processes. Within the context of this exhibition, these research interests are identified through Miyasaka's production of three spherical sculptures that independently consider the light, scale, and atmosphere of MadArt's physical space.

Bound by form, each sphere uniquely relates to the studio's environment—and to one another—through distinctive material, and method of design and assembly. Miyasaka's long-standing interest in creating forms that alter one's perception and experience of natural light conditions are also seen through his collection of works in *Circum-ambience*.

Miyasaka intentionally employed the spherical shape for its objective orientation, eliminating directional hierarchy and allowing viewers to

move curiously around each sculpture and throughout the exhibition space. The largest of the three works, *Earthen Light*, is an inhabitable clay and wood structure inspired by Japanese tea houses and created through a traditional Japanese method of "earthen wall" construction. This type of construction has been used in Japan for over 1,300 years. As a native of Kyoto, Miyasaka is interested in this process because of its historical



significance, and his personal connection to the region known for this traditional building method. In order to learn and apply these techniques, Miyasaka worked in both Japan and Seattle with a group from Sakujigumi, an organization of professionals

whose focus is on renovating and preserving traditional wood and earthen townhouses in Kyoto. In early February, after the wooden frame was erected at MadArt, and a base layer of clay applied, master plasterer Mr. Hagino arrived from Kyoto with his two colleagues, architect Mr. Uchida and apprentice plasterer, Ms. Inohara. With over 50 years of experience with earthen wall construction and restoration, Mr. Hagino's skill and technique were integral to the completion of this project. Through this collaboration, Miyasaka was able

to apply a refined finish to the interior wall of the structure, generating the intended light condition for visitors.

The second largest sculpture, *Debris*, was constructed from salvaged parts of an early 1900s Seattle craftsman home. Contrary to the predetermined design of *Earthen Light*, the design of *Debris* evolved over the course of its formation. Though Miyasaka had general guidelines for assembling this piece, it was ultimately constructed incrementally, with each part building upon, and influenced by, the previously assembled part. The smallest of the three spheres, *Wild Flower*, is made entirely of brightly colored, layered and bound hexagonal wire. When applied in mass, these hexagonal grids lose their singularity and create a perceived visual vibration. By suspending *Wild Flower* from the building's skylight, Miyasaka presents this work at a relatable and human-scale, providing an opportunity for visitors to experience it from varied perspectives.

Miyasaka wholly embraced MadArt's objective to create unique opportunities for community involvement in the arts. His relationship to architecture and connection to the Seattle architecture community brought together individuals with varied interests and backgrounds at the clear intersection of art, architecture, and design. In order to install these works, he enlisted the help of many; providing an opportunity for students, artists, and others to learn specialized techniques first-hand. Through *Circum-ambience*, Miyasaka establishes a space to celebrate tradition and craft within a contemporary art setting. Δ

EMILY KELLY, MADART DIRECTOR



LEFT:
WSU
ARCHITECTURE
GRADUATE
STUDENTS
AND PROJECT
ASSISTANTS
WORKING TOGETHER
TO CONSTRUCT THE
MODULAR FRAME
FOR EARTHEN
LIGHT



ABOVE:
IN PROCESS EARTHEN LIGHT AT
MADART STUDIO



TOP:
DEBRIS IN PROCESS AT THE MILL

BOTTOM:
DEBRIS IN PROCESS AT MADART
STUDIO

IN CONVERSATION WITH TAJI MIYASAKA

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE, **CIRCUM·AMBIENCE**?

There are two types of light in the environment. One is radiant light such as sunrays, or light from a direct source. The other, is ambient light. Radiant light is the collision of sunrays with countless invisible air particles that combine and randomly scatter. They also reflect arbitrarily off of the the earth's surface and other objects. They repeat this myriad collision and reflection in the air at a speed of 186,000 miles per second and diffusely illuminate the atmosphere. The air is filled with this diffused illumination, which is defined as ambient light according to environmental psychologist, James J. Gibson. He states, "one could think of the rays as completely filling the air and think of each point in the air as a point of intersection of rays coming from all directions. The light is ambient at every point." While thinking about Gibson's idea on ambient light, I designed three different surfaces which reflect light differently. The title emerged from an imagined scene where visitors are surrounded by this ambient light from all directions including the reflected light from the three spheres.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE A SPHERE AS THE EXPLORATORY

SHAPE FOR THIS EXHIBITION?

MadArt Studio is one large open space, but simultaneously, it has complex conditions. There are numerous ways that natural light enters into the space, including through the studio's street facing windows, and from various skylights on the first and second floor. Structure styles are mixed, wall materials are diverse, and ceiling heights are different. Each sculpture's location was decided based on the natural light conditions and how visitors may walk around to see the works. Seamless surfaces promote a continuous circulation as visitors walk around the pieces. A simple sphere seemed ideal as a shape.

DESCRIBE YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND HOW IT HAS INFORMED **CIRCUM·AMBIENCE**, AND THE WORK THAT YOU CREATE.

I have been interested in exploring the relationship between light and materials through installation projects such as *Light Hole Shed* and *Night Blooming*. Especially, when *Black Shed* in Genesee was completed, I was fascinated with how the light coming from outside the shed reflected the color of the surrounding environment in an abstract way. I am fascinated by the characteristics of light as a material. *Circum-ambience* is partly an extension of my work, *Black Shed*, especially in the case of the largest sphere, *Earthen Light*.

DESCRIBE HOW THIS EXHIBITION HAS CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH IN DESIGN METHODOLOGIES.

“Making” has been one of my long term research interests. I wrote a book entitled *Seeing and Making in Architecture* and in this book, I define “making” as a technique to generate design ideas by experimenting with and transforming materials and information. For *Circum-ambience*, I wanted to focus on exploring different techniques and processes to make spheres. For example, *Earthen Light* required a long process to make a mixture of soil, straw, and water for the wall. Many people participated to create this sphere. For the second largest sphere, *Debris*, the holistic design emerged by discovering systems of putting parts together. The third sphere, *Wild Flower*, is a result of a repetitive almost meditative operation. For me, the exploration of “making” for this exhibition is analogous to the architecture design process.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JAPANESE PLASTERING TECHNIQUES AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO INCORPORATE THIS TRADITIONAL METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION INTO YOUR MADART PROJECT?

When visiting temples, tea houses, and traditional townhouses in Kyoto, Japan, I realized that each

earthen wall was distinctively different. The textures and colors of the earthen walls and length of straw gave unique character to each wall. I also found that the Japanese plastering techniques, which have existed at least over 1,300 years, have been maintained and developed by hard working craftsmen. Earth as a material seems ubiquitous, and earthen walls are often overlooked because of their ordinariness. However, it is impressive to see how the ordinary earth material turns into a part of architecture and has the potential to create a serene atmosphere. When I heard stories about how plasterers understand soil types; prepare mixtures of soil, straw and water; and apply several coats of the mixture to the walls, I started to understand the richness, diversity, and complexity of the earthen walls. I wanted to integrate these techniques with my interests in ambient light.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE VISITORS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM THE EXHIBITION?

The current culture of instant gratification deprives us of time to contemplate art works. If my projects and the atmosphere of MadArt Studio could promote visitors to spend time in the space, enjoying the projects, I would be happy. Δ



TOP:
WSU ARCHITECTURE STUDENT INSTALLING WIRE SUPPORT LATTICE TO EARTHEN LIGHT

BOTTOM:
MR. HAGINO APPLYING FINISHING LAYER TO EARTHEN LIGHT'S INTERIOR WALL



ORIGINALLY FROM KYOTO, JAPAN, TAJI MIYASAKA IS A PROFESSOR IN THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY. HE EXPLORES THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS THROUGH INSTALLATIONS AND VARIOUS MEDIA. MIYASAKA'S WORKS ARE INSPIRED BY THE MATERIALS AND SPACE OF EXISTING VERNACULAR STRUCTURES, AS WELL AS THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LANDSCAPE IN EASTERN WASHINGTON AND THE TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS OF KYOTO. HIS INSTALLATIONS ENCOURAGE VIEWERS TO BE DIRECTLY ENGAGED, SPENDING TIME IN THEIR OCCUPIED SPACE. HIS NIGHT BLOOMING PROJECT, A 13-FOOT-HIGH CATENARY DOME MADE COLLABORATIVELY WITH DAVID DRAKE, WAS ORIGINALLY INSTALLED AT BELLEVUE ARTS MUSEUM AND IS NOW PERMANENTLY ON VIEW AT THE BELLEVUE BOTANICAL GARDEN. IN 2018, HE WAS A RECIPIENT OF THE ARTIST TRUST FELLOWSHIP.

ABOVE:
MIYASAKA (RIGHT) AND MR. HAGINO
(LEFT) WORKING TOGETHER IN THE
INTERIOR OF **EARTHEN LIGHT**

RIGHT:
MIYASAKA (RIGHT) AND MS. INOHARA
(LEFT) LOADING A WORKING PALETTE
WITH SOIL AND BARLEY MIXTURE



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**MR. HAGINO, MASTER PLASTERER
MS. INOHARA, APPRENTICE PLASTERER
MR. UCHIDA, ARCHITECT**

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