



ABOVE:
Inner Water (paper cutouts; detail), 2012

COVER:
Inner Water (miniature artist book; details), 2012

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Notes: height precedes width precedes depth. All artworks have been made available courtesy of Noriko Ambe and Lora Reynolds Gallery (Austin, TX). All installation photographs are courtesy of David Broda.

Inner Water, 2012

Site-specific installation (video projection, 20 minutes; paper cutouts; and miniature artist book **People: Images from the World**)
Variable dimensions

MAIN GALLERY:

Video projection onto 3 Styrofoam screens (96 x 158", 96 x 145", circular screen 29" diameter)
8 tables with paper cutouts (variable dimensions)

VAULT:

Miniature artist book cast in resin (5 ¼ x 5 ¼ x 4 ½")
Paper cutouts (30 ½" diameter)

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

Syracuse University
350 West Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

The Warehouse Gallery is an international contemporary art venue of the SUArt Galleries at Syracuse University. The gallery's mission is to present exhibitions and programs by artists whose work engages the community in a dialogue regarding the role the arts can play in illuminating critical issues of our life and times.

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This spring The Warehouse Gallery presents New York City-based Japanese artist Noriko Ambe (b. 1967, Saitama). In her first US museum solo show, Ambe created a new site-specific installation in the main gallery reflecting the tragic 2011 events in Japan through the use of video projections and her signature large-scale paper cutouts that evoke waves. Nature plays an important role in Ambe's work, and it points to larger issues, such as the natural forces determining our global landscape, and the relationship between nature and humans throughout time. A recipient of prestigious awards such as the AICA Award and Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Ambe's work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Museum of Arts and Design, the Japan Society in New York, and the Kyoto University of Art and Design in Kyoto, Japan. Her work is also in the collection of the Whitney Museum of Art.



Noriko Ambe: Inner Water
1 MARCH—12 MAY 2012



A VOID: NORIKO AMBE'S "INNER WATER"

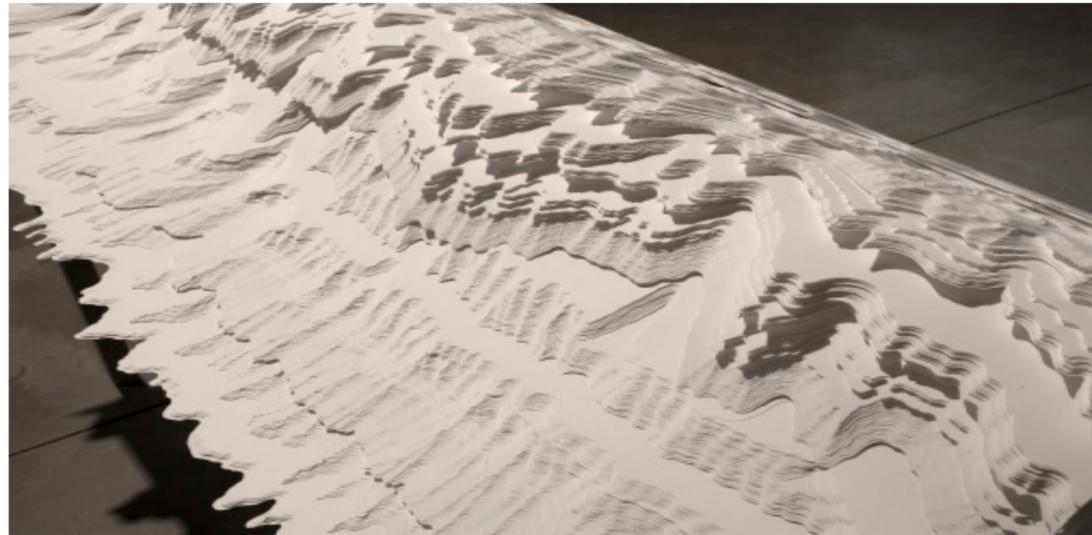
BY
ANJA CHÁVEZ

What is the creation, how could art survive? [...] I am trying to embody relationships between humans, time, and nature. For this show, I will try to make a large scale site-specific installation to express "Time."
Noriko Ambe (May 2011)¹

Up to the present, Noriko Ambe's vocabulary has consisted primarily of beautifully detailed hand-cut sheets of paper and artists books. In her first museum solo-show, the artist was asked to produce a new body of work that addresses The Warehouse Gallery's space (main gallery and the vault), and to experiment and venture out onto new terrains. In the year prior to her show, Ambe proposed at least three different installations, all of which, upon her return from Japan last spring, referred to the tragedy in Japan, the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami, and the subsequent nuclear catastrophe in March 2011.

In the end, and for the first time in her career, Ambe produced a video installation as part of her exhibition entitled *Inner Water*. In creating this work she was assisted by The Warehouse Gallery's Syracuse University Engagement Fellow, Sarah Trad. The video itself involves hundreds of Ambe's photographs converted to a video loop. Each image is shown for two seconds, which produces a peculiar temporal flow over the twenty-minute projection, where the pauses between photographs are as important as the images themselves.

After having watched Ambe's video on its multi-dimensional maelstrom-like screen, it may come as some surprise to learn that none of the images were shot on the coast of Japan. Yet, the viewer almost inevitably



LEFT:
Installation views; main gallery

ABOVE:
Inner Water (paper cutouts; detail), 2012

assumes that he or she is seeing images from Japan, presumably near the site of the tsunami of March 2011. In fact, the photo shoot took place on Long Beach (NY), not far from where Ambe lives. This blurring of location is as thoroughly orchestrated as is the time-lapse in her video, and as are her painstakingly detailed paper cut-outs. In other words, her video is no simple reportage or the emotionally vacuous 'posting' of tragic images that has become such a twenty-first century commonplace (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

To return to the projection screen, as a sculptor, Ambe has moved away from a two-dimensional screen. Using a hot wire foam cutter, Ambe drew jagged holes into each of the three Styrofoam screens that are suspended, one behind the other, from the two beams that frame the main gallery's space. Viewed from afar, the screens are almost imperceptible. Yet, given the holes in each of the screens, the projected images seem to break away or slide from one surface to the next, which draws the viewer into the underlying events that prompted the piece as a whole.

Inner Water also consists of eight large paper cutouts arranged on tables (where only the legs are visible) that are laid out throughout the main gallery. They suggest water or perhaps tectonic plates shifting in different directions, while taking their cue from the video's images of water, waves, and foam. Another detail, Ambe measured up 25.5 inches from the gallery floor and had its walls painted grey up to this height so that they would match the color of the concrete floor and reinforce the "inner water" space.

In contrast, the adjacent vault is painted entirely black and consists of only two small objects, one of which is a miniature book on a shelf entitled *PEOPLE: Images from the World* that seems plunged into water and cast in a resin cube. Quite removed, and with no immediately apparent connection, Ambe has placed on the ground a cylindrical sculpture, like a mini, circular version of the maelstrom-like video-screen. This work is made from a water-resistant paper called yupo that is wrapped in seemingly infinite concentric circles and placed off-center on the vault's floor. The

lighting is almost non-existent, which only intensifies the void-like darkness.

The vault is meant to be the last room seen by the viewer, and the sense of emptiness is overwhelming; that is until one turns around and looks out toward the main gallery. From this darkened and nearly empty space, almost as if the viewer were in the small cube on the shelf, one again sees the video framed within the open doorway between the two spaces. And if the viewer lingers, he or she will see that images in the video refer directly to the floor piece in the vault, while the 'sunken' miniature book subtly recalls some of the images, spread by the media in the aftermath of March 2011, of so many personal objects and living beings dragged down into the waters of the ocean.

The vault thus offers a way to decipher the installation as a whole. Holed up in the vault, Ambe brings the viewer to a stop, to pause and to reflect on (or from within) this "Inner Water" as the remains of the aftermath of the events of March 2011. The viewer pauses and moves on, as do the images of the video projection, moving through rupture and continuity, in time.

Watching the silent video again, from the vault, the woman in the images walks into the water, touches it and the sand. She is surrounded by nothing but water, sky, and the horizon. For the most part, her

face is turned away from the camera. She is impersonal, or perhaps she could be everybody (*PEOPLE: Images from the World*), every viewer, but also distinctly herself. Walking through the gallery and then into the vault, the viewer shares in her walks through the shore waters. But she is also distinct, and the viewer cannot absolutely share in what her walk can mean to her or to the artist alone. Certain events can be shared but only to a point, the point of "Inner Water".

My sincere thanks to the artist and to all of the SU faculty and students who worked tirelessly on this exhibition, including Tim Brower, Design Works; Cas Holman and her fantastic students from Industrial and Interaction Design (Kathryn Kelly, Roseida Lo, and Sungho Youn); Yutaka Sho for introducing me to Yuriko Takahashi who kindly assisted the artist on site; and all of the Warehouse Gallery's dedicated work-study students (Thom Anderau; Emily Barre; Marika Cleto; Sarabeth Fera; Jeff Ippolito; Emma McAnaw; Shelby Zink; and particularly Ash Braunecker), interns (Sheyla Laviera and Charlette Caldwell), and my colleagues at Light Work, SUart Galleries, The Warehouse Gallery, and the Warehouse building for their continued support, especially our custodian Tamar Scott.

¹ Noriko Ambe in an e-mail correspondence with the author (May 11, 2011; May 16, 2011).

LEFT:
Installation view; main gallery

RIGHT:
Installation view; vault with view into main gallery

