

Exploring a Japanese Fishing Village Through Art



Lead Investigator: John Williams (Ext. 4155 / h-willia@sophia.ac.jp)

ICC Members:

- **John Williams** (DES/ICC) – Arts Practice, Theater, Film
- **Takeshi Ito** (FLA/ICC) – Farming, Ecology
- **James Farrer** (FLA/ICC) – Food, Sustainability

External Participants:

- **Hazel Barron-Cooper** – Artist, Newcastle University
- **Yasuhiro Yotsumoto** – Poet
- **Yu Iwasaki** – Filmmaker
- **Atsuko Nakamura** – Visual Artist
- **Dr. Elisabeth Brun** – Researcher / Artist, Kristiania University, Oslo
- **Mike Collier** – Artist, Sunderland University.

Theoretical Framework and Research Objectives:

Within the social sciences rural depopulation, remote villages, aging communities, and regional economic decline are often seen as problems to be solved through gathering data, formulating theory, or policy. Artists don't necessarily see things in the same way. Instead of seeing problems they may see beauty, mystery, and the potential for new forms of existence. They may also see things in a "more than human way." Working with the findings of hard science (neuroscience and sciences of the soil and the sea, cognition and even physics), and the methodologies of artists, we aim to map and explore this unique community and place in a more multi-faceted way. As artists and researchers, we aim to work with the local community to explore different forms of knowing the world.



Inspirations:

Regenesis, Ways of Being, Entangled Life, The Dawn of Everything, Otherlands, Rewilding the Sea

External Funding:



We were awarded funding from the UK-Sasakawa Foundation towards the visit of UK artist, Hazel Barron-Cooper to Kitaushima and for John Williams to travel to the UK to screen his documentary about the village, in Belfast, Newcastle and Oxford. We were also awarded funding from the Globus Nordisk Fund for John Williams to visit Nyksund in Norway in 2024 and for our research partner, Elisabeth Brun to visit Kitaushima in 2024. We officially partnered with the Sado Galaxy Art Festival to set up an artist-in-residence program in Kitaushima in the future.



Activities in Kitaushima in 2023:

We visited the village six times in 2023. The visits were mostly to meet local people, to explore the area and to understand the agriculture, fishing, food traditions, craft traditions and other traditions in the area. Artist Atsuko Nakamura, who often works with driftwood, began to explore different ideas for installa-



tions in the village, and we also looked at what we could do artistically with the large amounts of plastic garbage that are washed up on the shores. Using plastic garbage and driftwood we created several small installations and Atsuko also created small work using the Serpentine stone (蛇紋石) that is found only in this area of Sado. With Hazel Barron-Cooper we held a watercolor painting workshop with local people, exploring the landscape and people's memories of Kitaushima through art. We were accompanied by Atsuhiko Yamaguchi, from Todai, who works with digital mapping techniques to create works on the borderline between art objects and scientific tools.

With colleagues from the FLA and ICC (James Farrer and Takeshi Ito) we began to look at the food and agriculture in the area, to think about how traditional farming and fishing practices are changing. We also drew inspiration from a field trip to Kameoka near Kyoto, a center of Organic Farming, to look at how farming is being linked there to artistic or cultural activity to create networks and communities that are engaged with sustainable living.

Academic and Other Presentations:

In early August we (John Williams, Tak Watanabe (ICC) and Atsuko Nakamura, presented a panel at EAJS in Ghent and John Williams screened his documentary film, *The Squid and the Pine* at the conference.

In November, during the Sophia Open Research Weeks, John Williams presented his research conducted in Sado Island, talked about the documentary and a fictional film *Tabi* (2022) he shot. The project "[Adaptation and Regional Revitalization: A Case Study in a Small Fishing Village on Sado Island](#)" was supported by the Sophia University Special Grant for Academic Research (Adopted Research Projects of Research in Priority Area 2020-2022).



In December, thanks to funding from the UK-Sasakawa Foundation, we held [a hybrid Symposium in Sophia University](#), with participants from Norway and the UK.

In December we held a watercolor workshop in Kitaushima with Hazel Barron-Cooper, in which residents, drew the landscape.

In January, John Williams gave a talk about the film, *Tabi*, and the research project at the Humanities Café in Tokyo.

In Feb, John Williams talked with Yasuhiro Yotsumoto at a regular poetry event at Hikari no Uma in Okubo



In Feb/March of 2024, John Williams screened his documentary film at Saint Anthony's College, Oxford (March 7th), Queen Mary University, Belfast (Feb 21st), and at the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle (Feb 26th)

