

Sophia Symposium 2025

Exploring a Japanese Fishing Village through Art

November 16, 2025, 10:00 – 18:40

Room L-921, 9F, Library Building, Sophia University

No registration required / In Person only

This Symposium was organized by John Williams (Professor, DES, Sophia University) and funded by the Sophia Symposium Grant as well as the Institute of Comparative Culture Collaborative Research Unit Fund and the JSPS Scientific Research (C) Fund, 24K03565 “Art, Environment and Sustainable Futures.”

10:00 – 10:15

Opening Remarks – John Williams

This project involves multiple artists visiting Kitaushima and responding to the village through different art works and media. The project starts from the premise that measuring and quantifying can only give us certain kinds of information and that quantitative approaches might be usefully supplemented by forms of investigation that involve the body, senses and experience. This approach could give us a more complete and living picture of places that are often characterized as “problems” but which in fact may hold solutions to many of our contemporary dilemmas.



John Williams is a filmmaker, theater director and poet. He teaches film production practice in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Sophia University. He completed a documentary film, *North Cormorant Island*, about the village of Kitaushima in 2024. Also, in 2024 he completed *Tabi*, a fantasy feature film, which blends puppetry and live actors, based on the legends and stories of Kitaushima. Both films have won several awards at international film festivals.

10:20 – 10:40

A Month Making Art in Masaragawa (Artist Talk)

Ana Genioli (Online appearance from Brazil)





This presentation will center on my experience during an artist's residency for the Sado Galaxy Art Festival in the village of Masaragawa, near Kitaushima. During this period, I was led to engage with a different notion of time. At first glance, everything seemed to remain the same, but by immersing myself in the daily life of the place, other rhythms were revealed—imperceptible amidst the constant acceleration of large cities. I will share images of the welcoming community, the village, as well as the works produced in this context.



Ana Amelia Genioli was born and works in São Paulo, Brazil. An architect with a master's and a PhD in Communication and Semiotics (PUC-SP), she studied under artists such as Ana Maria Tavares and Carlos Fajardo. Her research explores cartographing situations — that is, imagining other ways of perceiving the world from a unique perspective. She creates maps through paintings, drawings, photographs, and installations. She has participated in several national and international exhibitions. Her most recent solo show was “A Way to Draw Lifelines” at the Sado Island Galaxy Art Festival in Japan. Lately, she has taken part in art residencies such as the Speculative Ecologies Residency Labverde Program – Amazon, Brazil; Sado Island Galaxy Art Festival – Japan; and Earthed Art Residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada.

10:45 – 12:00

A Laboratory to Co-imagine Experiences in the Amazon Forest **Dr. Christine Greiner (In person)**



This presentation will focus on an ongoing project on the banks of the Tupana River, located in the deep Amazon Forest. We are exploring different *fabulatory strategies* to deal with invisible narratives, metaphors and images. These strategies include storytelling, procedures of indigenous medicine, paths of communication among trees, fish metaphors, dream movements, and more. My presentation explores the power of fiction to deal with an ecology of different realities. I will present a historical background of this amazing place and share the documentation of

workshops I have been conducting with local partners Thiago Cavalli (House of the River) and João Paulo Barreto (Baserikhovi Indigenous Medicine Center).



Dr. Christine Greiner is a writer, curator and Chair of the Department of Art, at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Author of books and articles on Performing Arts, Japanese Culture and Philosophy of the Body, including *The Body, clues for interdisciplinary studies* (2005), *The Body in Crisis, new pathways and the short-circuit in representation* (2010 and 2021 English Translation), *Readings of the Body in Japan* (2015), *Fabulations of the Japanese Body* (2017), and *Crip Bodies, strangeness to continue living* (2023). Among exhibitions, the following stand out: *Tokyogaqui - Imaginary Japan; Revolt of the flesh and Bodies of Images: Eikoh Hosoe*; and about Gal Oppido work, *Poetic Intoxications of the flesh*. She is a CNPq fellow and traveled to this symposium with the CNPq support.

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch break

13:30 – 14:00

Kitaushima as a Classroom Takeshi Ito (In Person)

The Meaningful Life course is motivated by my repeated failures in the classroom—how can teachers encourage students to be attentive to urgent issues that are happening outside the classroom and university? To answer this, we brought a group of students to Kitaushima from 2023 to 2025. In this short presentation, I will talk about Kitaushima as our classroom, walking you through the community—past and present. I will also share some insights about how field-based or experiential learning changed students' learning outcomes.





Takeshi Ito's work is informed by broad interests in agrarian and environmental change. He explores these themes through a multi-disciplinary perspective that reveals the complexity and diversity of social-ecological interactions that shape human wellbeing and ecosystem integrity. He has conducted fieldwork in Southeast Asia and Japan and has a background in politics, political economy, political ecology, agrarian studies, development studies, and global studies. He draws mostly on qualitative methods and relational analysis of society and ecology.

14:00 – 14:30

Between the Mountains and the Sea: Making a large bamboo sculpture in the village of Kitaushima (Artist Talk)
Atsuko Nakamura (In person)



In 2024 I was invited by the Sado Galaxy Art Festival for a three-month residency, lived and worked in Masaragawa and Kitaushima and created a large bamboo sculpture, which still stands in the village, though the weather is slowly eroding it, which was part of the original concept. I will talk about my working process, in which I use Butoh to connect with the landscape, to create original concepts for the piece, then work with local materials and create work based on interviews with residents and their local knowledge. I will also talk about my current work in the Noto Peninsula, creating “art wells,” using a similar approach.



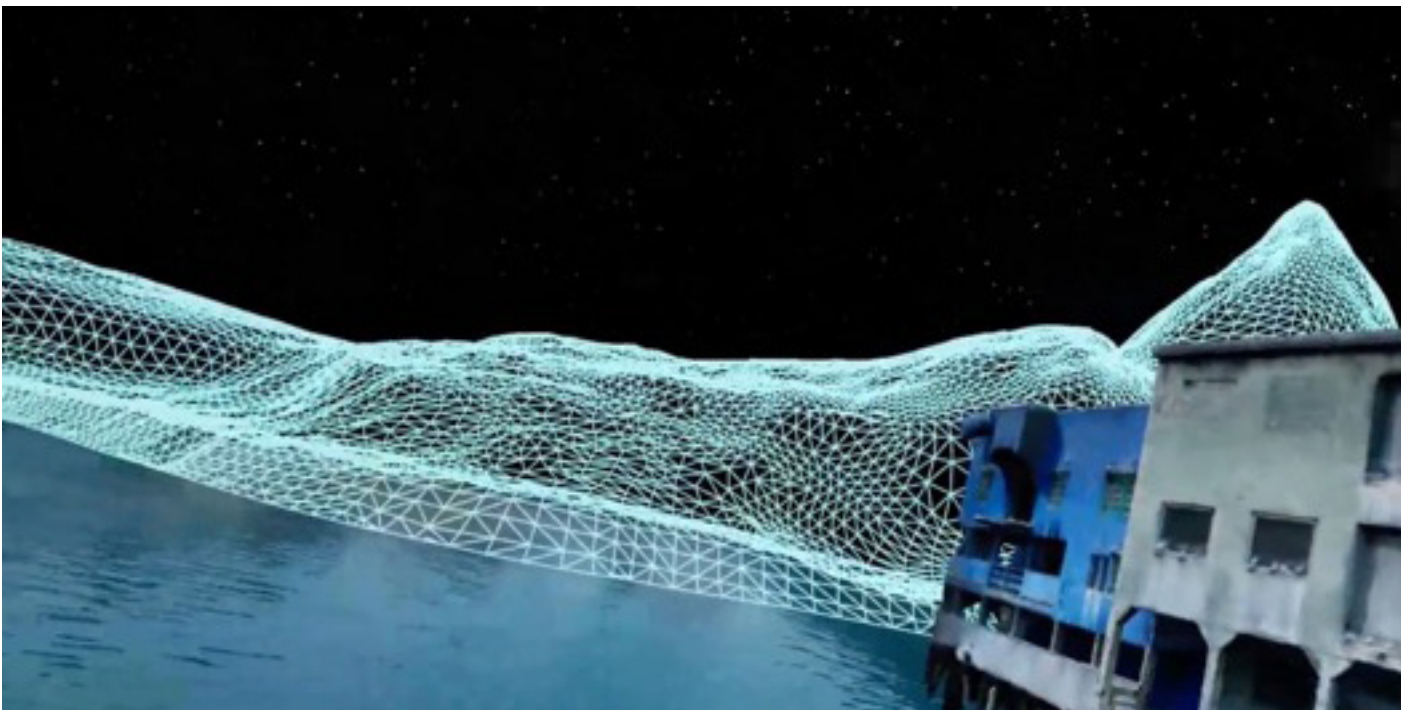
Atsuko Nakamura is a sculptor and visual artist. She first trained first as an architect and then at the Slade School of Art in London and has exhibited her large –scale sculptures in major Japanese art exhibitions, as well as overseas. She often works with driftwood and makes pieces that are affected by the elements and disintegrate with time. She has a particular interest in working with communities, listening to their stories, trying to understand their histories, and expressing locality and community in her work. Following the Noto Peninsula earthquake that struck her hometown on New Year's Day 2024, she has been working on several art projects there with the aim of reconnecting local communities through collaboration. Her projects include creating a teahouse using scrap materials from collapsed houses, digging wells by hand with the local community, and creating artistic wells that preserve the memories of places and individuals.

14:30 – 15:00

Short Film Screening and Discussion

Elisabeth Brun

Elisabeth is unable to attend the symposium due to other commitments, but we will screen a short film that she edited from footage of her workshop in the village of Kitaushima in April of 2025. Elisabeth worked with a group of artists to create a VR experience tour of an abandoned building in the village of Nyksund in Norway. She brought the VR goggles to Kitaushima, and the villagers were able to take a virtual tour through building in Norway. John Williams will talk briefly about his visit to Nyksund last year and the similarities and differences between the two fishing villages.





Elisabeth is a filmmaker, visual artist, and researcher working at the intersection of media theory, artistic research, and public space. She specializes in how technology, mediation, and form shape cultural and ecological imaginaries. She holds a PhD in Media Studies from the University of Oslo, 20 years of industry experience as a documentary filmmaker, and a post-master's in public art from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Currently a visiting scholar at The School of Arts, Design and Media at Kristiania University College, Oslo, Elisabeth's work spans film, installation, and 3D media. Her films and artworks have been shown at Oberhausen International Short Film Festival, Seattle Art Museum, and Lofoten International Art Festival, among others. She has received awards including the Ivan Juritz Prize for Creative Experiment and the Emerging Artist Award at Mimesis Doc Fest. Her forthcoming book is [Place and the Moving Image: Experimental Film Practice as Topography](#).

www.vaag.as

www.elisabethbrun.com

www.nyksundreloaded.org

15:10 – 15:40

Poetry Reading

Yasuhiro Yotsumoto (Online appearance from Taiwan)



I will read from my recent cycle of poems inspired by Sado Island and especially by the villages of Kitaushima and Masaragawa, which I have visited five times by bicycle.



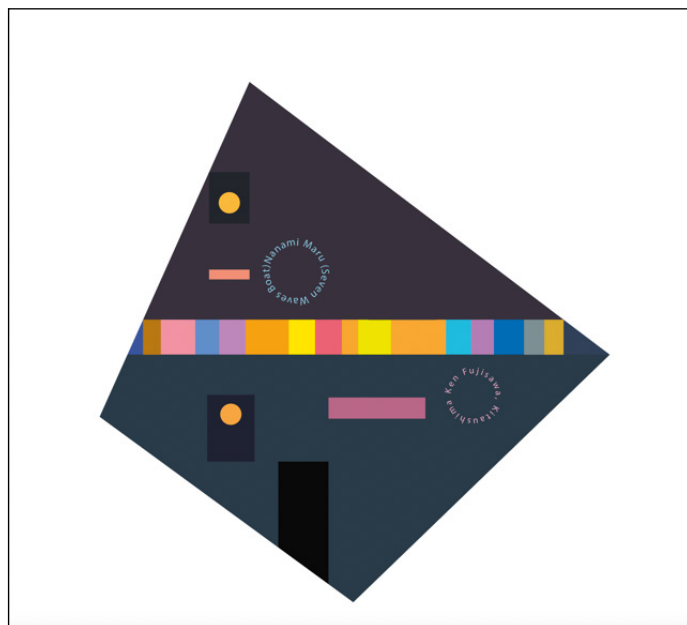
Yasuhiro Yotsumoto, a poet, essayist, and translator, was born in Osaka in 1959. He has spent much of his writing career outside Japan, living for 8 years in the United States and 26 years in Germany, all the while continuing to write in his native Japanese. His body of work includes 17 poetry collections, 2 novels, and several volumes of translations, essays, and literary criticism. In 2020, he relocated to Tokyo, where he taught poetry at universities and where he now regularly organizes live poetry events. In 2023, he participated in both the Iowa International Writing Program and the Hong Kong International Writers' Workshop.



15:40 to 16:05 Coffee Break

16:05 – 16:25

**Birds, beasts and botany on Sado Island.
An artist's first impressions. (Artist Talk)
Mike Collier (Online from the UK)**



In July this year I spent sixteen magical days on Sado Island, ten of them in the village of Kitaushima. Each evening, on the rocks off the coast of the village, hundreds of Pacific Swifts would swoop after dragonflies, chittering in their ariel pursuit of insects in the gloaming. Near Ryotsu port I was lucky to discover a Toki Roost. The Toki or Japanese Crested Ibis is extremely rare. It was hunted to virtual extinction in Japan but has been successfully reintroduced to Sado Island over the last twenty years. I spent three evenings at dusk watching over

twenty rose/pink winged Toki swing in, seemingly out of nowhere, to settle in the trees. As they glided overhead, they made eerie, melancholic, short and irregular ‘oww-owww-owwww’ calls as well as longer, higher-pitched calls. I also went on a fabulous trek up Mt. Donden, the highest peak on Sado, with the naturalist Hitoshi Saito looking for flowers. Even though the main season for wildflowers had passed (that is in April/May), there was still a rich variety of plants. It’s hard to describe the number of busy dragonflies and butterflies; the sound of Bush Warblers, Cicadas and Frogs singing above the mist and clouds. I will do my best in twenty minutes to share the sights and sounds of these two weeks through some of the work I have made after returning to the UK and my thoughts on this special place. With grateful thanks to the residents of Kitaushima, who were unfailingly helpful and courteous.



Mike Collier is Emeritus Professor of Ecology at the University of Sunderland and is a writer, curator and artist. He studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, London before being appointed Gallery Manager at the ICA in London. He subsequently became a freelance curator and arts organiser, working extensively in the UK and abroad. Throughout his working career, he has maintained his artistic practice. Much of his work is place-specific and explores our relationship to a ‘more than human’ world, paying close attention to specific environments he engages with. He has shown in the UK and abroad and his work is in a number of public and private collections. He first visited Japan in 2004 and has been back half a dozen times

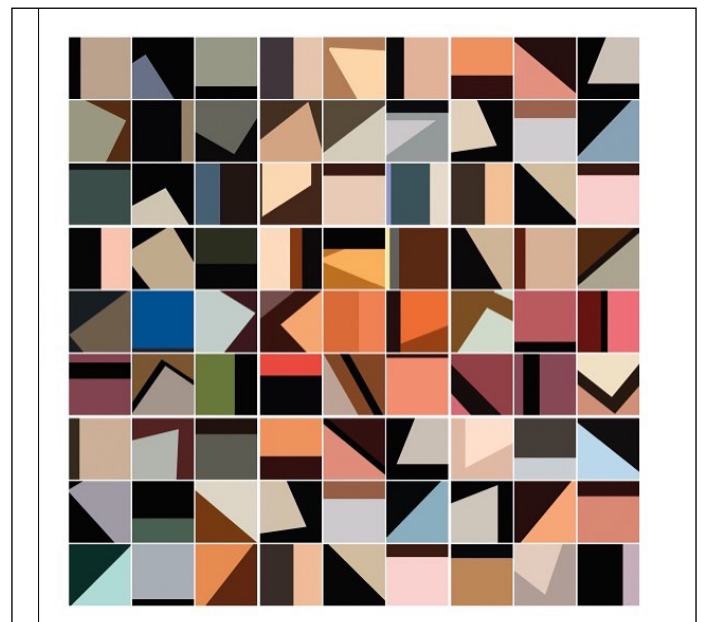
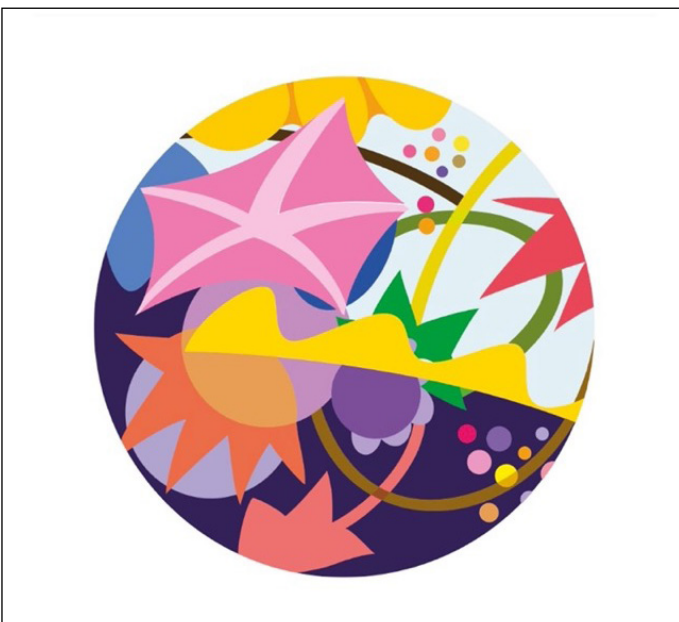
since then. In 2016 he brought the exhibition *Walking Poets: Wordsworth and Basho* to Itami in Japan. The exhibition included original manuscripts by Wordsworth and Basho shown alongside newly commissioned work by over 20 Japanese and UK artists which was inspired by Wordsworth and/or Basho. Mike’s studio is based in Cobalt Studios, Newcastle-upon-Tyne where he is a director.

<https://mikecollier.co.uk>

<https://www.facebook.com/mike.collier.338>

<https://www.instagram.com/mikecollierart/>

<https://cobaltstudios.co.uk>



16:30 – 16:50

Landscapes in the Mist and Rain (Artist Talk)

Hazel Barron-Cooper (Online from the UK)



I will focus on the work I created during and after two visits to Kitaushima, the first in December 2023 and the second in July 2025, as well as some of my recent work in Northumberland. I create my own responses to the landscape by painting and drawing, mindful of areas that are of significance to those who live and work in these landscapes. In both Kitaushima and in Bardon Mill we held community events which directly involved residents own creative responses to the places they live. These events provided an opportunity for social interaction but were also ways to unearth direct and lived perspectives on landscapes and places, from people who know the land, the sea and the sky intimately.



Hazel Barron-Cooper is an artist based in Sunderland, who has exhibited her work widely and taken part in numerous art projects, festivals and community art activities in the Northeast of England. She is currently completing a PhD in Fine Art at Newcastle University. In her PhD she examines how artists can act as instigators and catalysts to encourage people in rural communities to use creative practice to reveal a sense of place and local distinctiveness. In the UK she has worked with local people, using painting, poetry, prose, collection of objects and audio recordings to document disappearing dialect, climate change, place names, traditions and folklore. Currently she is focusing on the small village of Bardon Mill in Northumberland and Kitaushima on Sado Island. She has taught art at colleges in the North-East of England and is also an art educator at Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery.



17:00 – 18:00

LAND CINEMA - Book Reading

Dr. Becca Voelcker, (Online from the UK)



What can we learn from rural land and lifeways to nurture planetary justice? What can artists and filmmakers of yesteryear teach us about collaborating with rural communities and ecologies today?

In this book reading, Becca Voelcker will introduce key insights and ideas from *Land Cinema in an Age of Extraction* (University of California Press, available to pre-order [here](#)). The reading will be followed by an informal Q&A. For audience members in London in November, Land Cinema is also screening as a month-long film series at The Barbican Centre, more information [here](#).



Land Cinema in an Age of Extraction considers nonfiction filmmakers and film collectives whose work advances an understanding of land as a locus of social and environmental responsibility. Diving into little-known archives to explore films that resonate across geographies, Becca Voelcker unearths key examples of eco-political counterculture, from farmer-filmmakers in Japan and Mali to a gardener-filmmaker in Massachusetts, and from filmed landscape portraits of women in Los Angeles, Orkney, and the Navajo Nation to Indigenous documentaries about land dispossession in Colombia. Proposing ‘land cinema’ as an urgent genre for our time, this book reveals how images and ideas produced half a century ago sowed the seeds for climate justice movements today.

18:30 – 18:40

Closing Remarks – John Williams

Acknowledgement

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- Sado Galaxy Arts Festival



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Especially to Saichi Kitamura, Miyuki Yamagishi, Taseko, Ryo and Ken Fujisawa, Gen Doi, Yukie Tsuchiga, Mr. and Mrs. Hayashi

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