

KEN + JULIA YONETANI

WHAT THE BIRDS KNEW

3 AUGUST - 3 NOVEMBER 2012

What the Birds Knew refers to the alternative title for Akira Kurosawa's 1955 post-war film *Ikimono no kiroku* (生き物の記録, *I Live in Fear*). In this film, overwhelmed by the threat of nuclear radiation in Japan, but unable to convince his family to move to Brazil, the protagonist Kiichi Nakajima follows a path of increasing frustration and anxiety and declares that the birds would flee if they knew of impending environmental threats.

What the Birds Knew by Ken and Julia Yonetani arises out of the artists' concerns regarding the history of nuclear power and its detrimental impact on the environment. As well as being provoked by the ongoing nuclear tragedy in Fukushima, Japan, the history of Uranium mining in Australia was another starting point. In 1970, a rich deposit of Uranium was discovered at Nabarlek in the Northern Territory. It was close to the Aboriginal site known as Gabo Djang (Green Ant Dreaming). The Kuwinjku people, on whose land the Uranium was found, had objected to the mining. According to Kunwinjku beliefs, misfortune follows disturbance of the site not only for the transgressors, but for all people. Despite this, Uranium mining began in 1978 and was subsequently sold to several countries including Japan.

Reflecting on the Kurosawa film, and other post-war Japanese works that deal with the threat of nuclear crisis, and the Aboriginal experience in the face of Uranium mining, the artists wonder about the uncanny similarity between stories and fiction as a record of the terror of the past, and their role as premonition of disaster in our present time.

Ken and Julia Yonetani have exhibited widely in Australia and internationally. Ken Yonetani represented Australia at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, and Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art (SA) in 2008. Together they have exhibited at GV Art (London), Kone Foundation (Finland), NKV (Germany), Arterial Gallery (NSW), Art Gallery of New South Wales (NSW), Campbelltown Arts Centre (NSW), La Trobe University Museum of Art (VIC), Object Gallery (NSW), Gold Coast City Gallery (QLD), Jan Manton Art (QLD), and Rio Vista, Mildura (VIC).

What the Birds Knew is supported by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.

The artists are supported by The NSW Artists' Grant. The NSW Artists' Grant is a NAVA initiative, made possible through the support of Arts NSW and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments

GROUND FLOOR

Ken + Julia Yonetani

USA from Crystal Palace: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nuclear Nations (2012)

Chandelier frames, UV lights, electric components and uranium glass beads

160 x 200 cm

Courtesy of the artists, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney and GV Art, London

FIRST FLOOR

Ken + Julia Yonetani

What the Birds Knew (2012)

Uranium glass beads, aluminium wire, UV lights

550 x 320 x 230 cm

Courtesy of the artists, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney and GV Art, London

Ken + Julia Yonetani

Radioactive from Electric Dreams (2012)

141 x 22.5 cm

Uranium glass and UV lights

Courtesy of the artists, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney and GV Art, London

Ken + Julia Yonetani

Meltdown from Electric Dreams (2012)

131 x 22.5 cm

Uranium glass and UV lights

Courtesy of the artists, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney and GV Art, London

Ken + Julia Yonetani

Electric Dreams from Electric Dreams (2012)

201 x 22.5 cm

Uranium glass and UV lights

Courtesy of the artists, Arterreal Gallery, Sydney and GV Art, London



181-187 Hay St Sydney NSW 2000

info@4a.com.au www.4a.com.au

Tel: 02 9212 0380

Open 11am - 6pm Tuesday - Saturday, closed public holidays



4A is an initiative of the Asian Australian Artists Association Inc. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its funding and advisory body; the NSW Government through Arts NSW and the City of Sydney. Principal Patrons: Geoff and Vicki Ainsworth, Daniel and Lyndell Droga; Kerr and Judith Neilson; Patrons: Grasshopper Bar, John Lam-Po-Tang, and Dr Gene Sherman AM and Brian Sherman AM; VisAsia and Adrian Williams; Benefactors: AMP Foundation, Andrew Cameron, ARNDT Fine Art, ARTCELL, Richard Funston and Kiong Lee, Jan Manton Gallery, Lucy Hughes Turnbull AO, Lisa Paulsen, Dr Dick Quon, Andrew Rothery and The Sky Foundation; Friends: Brooke and Steve Aitken, Australia China Art Foundation, Luisa Catanzaro, Ari and Lisa Droga, Choi Ropiha Figuera, Julian and Stephanie Grose, Tonee Holley Knowles and James Knowles, Annette Larkin, Susan Nathan, Becky Sparks and James Roland and Dr John Yu AC.