

I *ikigai*

Jacob Dwyer, Chris Evans, Xue Mu, Bert Scholten, and Ran Zhang
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Ikigai is a Japanese concept, meaning 'a reason for being', very similar to the French phrase *raison d'être*. It signifies what gives purpose and the lust for life. However, *ikigai* is in essence one of many possible interpretations on the search for meaning in life. Nowadays, the existentialistic quest manifests itself in popular culture by offering us simplified and commercialised versions of ancient philosophical theories, presented via glossy magazines, self-help books, television programs, and mindfulness courses. Platforms which offer so-called solutions for the overwhelming effect of the speed in which our society, economy, and technology seems to develop, our overabundance of choices, our endless possibilities, and our fixation on achievements. We are constantly confronted not only with the importance of being, but also with the importance of being in the 'now'. I *ikigai* shows five artists and their form of communicating this stressed importance of being and being in the 'now' as well as their reluctance towards it.

Jacob Dwyer's (1988, UK) sound piece *Keith's Arcadia* tells the story of a man who finds himself in the Arcadia shopping centre in the middle of the London riots of 2011. While standing there, he uses his own reflection in a shop window to look back at TK Maxx and an assortment of trainer shops and reimagines the shopping centre as a real Arcadian (utopian) landscape in a wider attempt to achieve Zen. The work by Dwyer will be portable during the exhibition.

In the entrance an audio work titled *Jingle (I ikigai, Juliette Jongma)* by Chris Evans (1967, UK) with Morten Norbye Halvorsen, cumulatively proclaims and broadcasts the arrival of each visitor. Evans' installation *CLODS, Diplomatic Letters*, includes the image of a drawing depicting an invasive plant species, solicited from a member of the international diplomatic community. As part of a series, these globally rampant and toxic plants are commissioned, photographed, inverted and then printed as silver bromides. The *Diplomatic Letters* have, as their counterpart, a series of sculptural forms titled *CLODS*, arranged around a raised white platform and PVC mat. Each *CLOD* varies in size, has at least one hole, and bears the traces of its facture: the chunk is first modelled in clay, then cast in concrete mixed with marble. Hollowly echoing urban planning, the *CLODS* mimic the concrete lump left by the forced removal of a post or a pipe.

The works by Ran Zhang (1981, CH) show microscopic taken photographs of three forms of image builders: the painting, the printer and the pencil drawing. Each work is carefully constructed out of the materialistic details using internationally standardised DIN-paper sizes A0, B0, and C0. By literally zooming in on the elements of colour, a print grid and a pencil line, Zhang focuses on the detailed essence of the visual language of traditional painting, print, drawing and paper sizes.

The photograph *Marble Balls* by Xue Mu (1979, CH) displays jeu de boules-balls precisely placed either within the square of a marble tile or exactly on the line in between two tiles. Being photographed directly from above, avoiding conventional perception, in our mind gravity will take hold any moment. Next to it is a series of bananas placed on the same marble floor as a grid, as a light humorous approach to gravity, composition and the order within.

Bert Scholten's (1988, NL) work arises from a fascination of language. The language we use and our imagination are inseparably connected. Scholten plays with this idea by abstracting symbols and images we all know and recognise in such a way it takes on a new meaning. While looking at his work one will immediately recognise the base of a road sign, but where road signs need to send a quick and clear message, Scholten's work is more open for interpretation and one's imagination within its message.

Biographies

Jacob Dwyer studied Fine Art at Newcastle University, UK, before completing a Masters in Experimental Film at Kingston University, UK, and a residency at De Ateliers in Amsterdam, NL (2012-2014). He currently lives and works in Amsterdam, NL. Together with Mike Pratt his work was featured at BALTIC 39 in Newcastle, UK (2017). Recent group exhibitions include *Over hang* at W139 in Amsterdam, NL (2017) and *Soloway* curated by Vanessa Disler in New York, USA (2016). His work was shown at International Film Festival Rotterdam, NL (2017) and several other film festivals. In 2015 he received the Kino Der Kunst Project Award in Munich, DE.

Chris Evans currently lives and works in London. He completed several residencies including Cove Park Residency in Scotland, UK (2011), Objectif Exhibitions Residency in Antwerp, BE (2009), Art Pace Residency in San Antonio, USA (2007) and Scottish Visual Arts Residency in Amsterdam, NL (2005). Recent solo exhibitions include *Hat, Hat, Hat, Uniform* at the PRAXES Center for Contemporary Art in Berlin, DE (2015) and *Untitled (Drippy Etiquette) / A Needle Walks Into a Haystack* at Markus Lüttgen Gallery in Cologne, DE (2015). Recent group exhibitions include *Spring* at Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, AT (2017) and *At Home* at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK (2016).

Xue Mu works and lives in Amsterdam, NL. She graduated from de Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, NL (2012) after graduating at Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, NL (2009), Dutch Art Institute/ArteZ, Enschede, NL (2006) and Nanjing University, CH (2002) and recently completed a residency at KKA Austrian Federal Chancellery in Vienna, AT (2016). Recent solo exhibitions include several shows at YeoWorkshop, Singapore, SG including *Liquid Truth* (2017). She participated in several group exhibitions including *CHINA HERE Confrontations*, as part of AAA Festival at Concert Gebouw and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL (2015).

Bert Scholten studied at Deltion, Zwolle, NL (2008), Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, Gent, BE (2011) and Minerva, Groningen, NL (2012). He currently lives and works in Groningen, NL. Recent performances took place at Paradiso Amsterdam, NL (2017) and Sounds Of Music Festival in Groningen, NL (2016). Recent solo exhibitions include *Niks was minder waar* at Incubate, Tilburg, NL (2016) and *Figuratieve popmuziek* at Billytown, Den Haag, NL (2016). Scholten participated in several group exhibitions including *Cafe Bel* at Rotterdam Contemporary, Rotterdam, NL (2016), *Platform, Platform* at Melkweg, Amsterdam, NL (2015) and *Ein tag und eine stunde in urbo kune* as part of the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, NL (2015).

Ran Zhang currently lives and works in Amsterdam. She graduated from the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, NL (2013) after graduating at Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, NL (2010) and Tianjin University (2003). Recent exhibitions include *The Phoenix Statement* at Galerie Pont & Plas in Ghent, BE (2012) and *Synesthesia, Apice for Artists*, Amsterdam, NL (2011).