

## Press Release

**Alison Bradley Projects** is pleased to present *FLOATING MONUMENTS*, the first solo exhibition of **Motoyuki Shitamichi** (b. Okayama, 1978) in the United States, curated by **Eimi Tagore-Erwin**.

**Motoyuki Shitamichi** has been incorporating intensive historical research and fieldwork into his art practice since graduating from Musashino University in 2001. The artist has traveled extensively throughout the Asia Pacific, investigating fragmented and forgotten aspects of Japanese history and nationhood. Working across a wide range of mediums, Shitamichi's artistic approach can be described as a form of *archeological assemblage*, in which he avidly collects, photographs, and films material traces of the past that embody new resonances in the present.

*FLOATING MONUMENTS* presents work from three of Shitamichi's ongoing series: *Tsunami Boulder* 津波石, *Okinawan Glass* 沖縄硝子, and *torii* 鳥居. The exhibition's title is translated from *hyōbaku no bi* 漂泊之碑, a concept that Shitamichi harnesses to reveal the malleability of historical significance itself. The artist focuses upon material objects that have drifted through time, as if floating in the sea that surrounds the many islands of the Japanese archipelago.

*Tsunami Boulder* (2015-Present) ruminates on the fragile ecology of human and non-human life in a locale where national boundaries have fluctuated for centuries. Affected deeply by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, Shitamichi depicts massive boulders that tsunamis from different eras carried up from the bottom of the sea throughout the Okinawan island chains of Yaeyama and Miyako, located to the south of mainland Japan. In the four black and white videos, Shitamichi's lens charts the present relationships between these transplanted natural monuments and the inhabitants of their new environments. *Okinawan Glass* (2014-Present) engages with the history of Ryukyuan glassware, a practice that originated with local craftsmen repurposing the glass from Coca Cola and beer bottles littered near military bases during the US occupation of Okinawa and selling them back to Americans as souvenirs. By enacting this recycling process with glass littered by present-day tourists, Shitamichi reconsiders the conditions of a craft that is now considered "traditional." On view are three cycles of his annual project—each set of four glassworks are made up of unique compounds of glass, with varying material constitutions.

In his photographic series *torii* (2006-2012; 2017-Present), Shitamichi explores the instability of national borders by documenting *torii*, or Shinto gates, that were inserted throughout the Pacific by the Japanese Empire in the first half of the 20th century. He has spent years tracing the remains of *torii* in the Northern Mariana Islands, Taiwan, Saipan, Sakhalin, South Korea, and Northeastern China. Haunting yet beautiful, his photographs capture the echoes of the past still encased in the familiar shapes of these *torii* today. Now overgrown, disguised, and abandoned many of these symbolic structures have gained afterlives that contest their original function as monuments of imperial expansion.

The archeological approach presented by the artist in the gallery space is dialogic and open to interpretation. Rather than offering one particular stance or critique, Shitamichi manages to image history in our present moment, exposing the fragility of fixed values like national borders, canonized narratives, and even the division between art and viewer.

**Alison Bradley Projects** is honored to bring Shitamichi's works to a wider audience in New York. *FLOATING MONUMENTS* is accompanied by an online catalog authored by Eimi Tagore-Erwin.

## Artist Biography

Shitamichi Motoyuki (b. Okayama, 1978) is a contemporary artist, curator, and researcher. Shitamichi graduated from Musashino University in 2001 with a BFA in painting, followed by postgraduate studies at the Tokyo College of Photography until 2003. He has been actively publishing photo books since 2005, and was a visiting researcher at the National Museum of Ethnology from 2016-19. Shitamichi presented *Tsunami Boulder* as a representative of Japan at the 2019 Venice Biennale and exhibited at the 2018 and 2012 Gwangju Biennales. In 2020, he received the 21st Okayama Arts and Culture Award Grand Prize, as well the Tokyo Contemporary Art Award in 2019. Shitamichi has been based in the village of Honmura on the art island of Naoshima in the Seto Inland Sea since 2019, when he started the Setouchi “ ” Archive at Miyanoura Gallery 6—the quotes are filled to match each new project’s theme.

Shitamichi has exhibited extensively throughout Japan and abroad, including solo exhibitions at Kunsthall Aarhus (2022), Ohara Museum of Art (2019), and Kurobe City Art Museum (2016). His works are included in the collections of the Kadist Art Foundation, California; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; the National Museum of Art, Osaka; Takamatsu Art Museum, Kagawa; Ishikawa Foundation, Okayama; and the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, amongst others.

**Eimi Tagore-Erwin** (b. USA, 1991) is a doctoral candidate of East Asian Studies at New York University and an emerging curator. Her research focus is contemporary Transpacific art engaging with colonial history, memory, and politics. She is a curator at Alison Bradley Projects and a 2023 Curatorial Fellow at the Shigeko Kubota Video Art Foundation. Tagore-Erwin’s winning exhibition proposal from apexart’s New York City Open Call will open in Tribeca at the end of March 2023. She was also a 2021 Wikipedia Fellow for PoNJA-Genkon and Asia Art Archive in America, where she focused on Japanese artists who have faced censorship.