

# College of Charleston Features Works by Motoi Yamamoto for Spoleto Festival

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston School of the Arts has organized a major traveling exhibition of new work by contemporary Japanese artist Motoi Yamamoto. The exhibition will premiere in Charleston, SC, from May 25 through July 7, 2012, as a featured presentation of the Spoleto Festival USA. Entitled *Return to the Sea: Saltworks by Motoi Yamamoto*, the centerpiece of the exhibition will be a site-specific installation created entirely out of salt by the artist during his two-week residency at the Halsey Institute. The public is encouraged to visit the galleries May 14 - 24, 2012 during the residency to watch Motoi create his installation, as well as interact with him in the galleries. An opening reception will be held on May 24, from 5-7pm.



Curated by Mark Sloan, director and senior curator of the Halsey Institute, the exhibition will also feature a series of recent drawings, photography, sketchbooks, a video about the artist, and a 150-page color catalogue documenting fourteen years of the artist's saltworks around the world. The catalogue includes essays by Sloan and Mark Kurlansky, author of the *New York Times* best seller, *Salt: A World History*. The video, produced by Sloan and Emmy award-winning videographer John Reynolds, will include interviews with Yamamoto at his studio in Kanazawa, Japan, insight into his creative process, still images and time-lapse videos of many of his previous installations, and an overview of the fascinating history of salt in Japanese culture.

Yamamoto and the Halsey Institute are collaborating with the Clemson Architecture Center in Charleston's (CAC.C) Studio V Design and Build class to create two viewing platforms for the installation. This will be the fifth collaboration between the Halsey Institute and CAC.C's Studio V class. The students, led by Ray Huff and David Pastre, will design and build a large platform in the Halsey's main gallery to provide visitors with multiple vantage points of the large saltwork. Thus far, CAC.C students have done extensive research on viewing platforms around the world with the purpose of creating a structure that is a piece of art within itself.

The students will also build an outdoor viewing platform for the gallery window fronting Calhoun Street, providing curious passers-by with a glimpse of the installation 24 hours per day. These platforms will be in use during the run of the exhibition and also for Yamamoto's residency, May 10- 24. Studio V will be keeping a blog of their progress and the public can follow their progress by visiting (<http://cacstudiov.com/2012/01/>).

CBS News journalist Martha Teichner will interview Yamamoto as a part of Spoleto Festival USA's Conversations With series. This free event will take place in the Recital Hall of the Simon's Center for the Arts, 54 St. Philip Street, at 5pm on Saturday, May 26th. There will also be free audio tours, free guided exhibition tours and the opportunity for the public to participate in the ceremonial dismantling of the saltwork at 4pm on the final day of the exhibition, Saturday, July 7.

The Halsey Institute will also produce a free gallery guide that outlines the basic concepts behind Yamamoto's unique work along with a brief curatorial statement by Sloan and a biography of the artist. This project has received support from the Asian Cultural Council, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Motoi Yamamoto has had very little exposure in the United States with the exception of his participation in the Halsey Institute's group exhibition *Force of Nature* in 2006 and a group show at P.S. 1 in New York City in 2003. For *Return*

*to the Sea*, Yamamoto will travel to each venue on the exhibition tour to create a site-specific salt installation in tandem with the drawings, photography, sketchbooks, video, and catalogue. The Halsey Institute's goal is to introduce the work of this artist to a much broader audience, create a lasting document in the expansive catalogue, and provide an indelible vision of the artist's unique process through the video.

Yamamoto is an internationally renowned artist who calls his native Japan home. He was born in Onomichi, Hiroshima in 1966 and received his BA from Kanazawa College of Art in 1995. He has exhibited his award-winning creations around the globe in such cities as Athens, Cologne, Jerusalem, Mexico City, Seoul, Tokyo, and Toulouse. He was awarded the Philip Morris Art Award in 2002 as well as the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2003. Although he participated in a group exhibition that same year at New York's P.S. 1, his work has yet to be widely seen in the United States.

Yamamoto is known for working with salt, often in the form of temporary, intricate, large-scale installations. Salt, a traditional symbol for purification and mourning in Japanese culture is used in funeral rituals and by sumo wrestlers before matches. It is frequently placed in small piles at the entrance to restaurants and other businesses to ward off evil spirits and to attract benevolent ones. Yamamoto forged a connection to the element while mourning the death of his sister, at the age of twenty-four, from brain cancer and began to create art out of salt in an effort to preserve his memories of her. His art radiates an intense beauty and tranquility, but also conveys something ineffable, painful, and endless.

Yamamoto says, "Drawing a labyrinth with salt is like following a trace of my memory. Memories seem to change and vanish as time goes by; however, what I seek is to capture a frozen moment that cannot be attained through pictures or writings. What I look for at the end of the act of drawing could be a feeling of touching a precious memory."

Yamamoto views his installations as exercises that are at once futile, yet necessary to his healing. An important aspect of the installation is the dismantling of his work at the end of the show and delivering the salt back to water, usually in collaboration with the public; hence, the title *Return to the Sea*. During gallery hours, 11am to 4pm, on the last day of the exhibition, Saturday, July 7, the public can visit the installation and gather a small amount of the salt.

Yamamoto recognizes that salt is a vital part of many living things and that this mineral could conceivably enter and leave multiple organisms throughout the planet over the span of time. According to curator Sloan, "each grain of salt contains its own history and trajectory. Something so seemingly common becomes a metaphor for the evanescence and transience of human life".

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art is a non-collecting contemporary art museum located on the campus of the College of Charleston, on the corner of Calhoun and St. Philip Streets. HICA offers a comprehensive contemporary arts program that is committed to providing a direct experience with art works in various media, in an environment that fosters creativity, innovation, and learning. The Halsey Institute serves as an extension of the undergraduate curricula at the College of Charleston and as a cultural resource for the region by producing exhibitions, lectures and panel discussions, film series, publications, and a comprehensive website. In addition, the Halsey Institute seeks to foster meaningful partnerships with local organizations in order to further the reach of contemporary art within the Charleston community. Admission into the galleries and to most programs is free with the public encouraged to attend.

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