

# Yoshinori Niwa: Dictatorship of Possessions

9 July – 24 September 2022

Opening reception | Saturday 9 July 11am-6pm

Performance | 3-3:30pm



Edel Assanti presents Yoshinori Niwa: Dictatorship of Possessions, an installation comprising film, sculpture and works on paper that questions the voracious material consumption that characterises late capitalist society. On the occasion of the opening Niwa will stage a new live performance conceived especially for London's city-wide festival *Performance Exchange* (8-10 July).

Niwa's practice takes the form of social interventions, enacting nonsensical performances to expose, undermine and exploit the systems of exchange that drive contemporary society. Hypothesising that life is constrained by the 'dictatorship of private property', his practice attempts to disrupt the power of our possessions. His absurdist actions explore the relationships constituted through participation in economic systems and question the meanings derived from daily mass consumption.

The gallery turns itself inside out, taking on the appearance of a retail storage space. Towers of cardboard boxes form support structures for two interrelated films and in doing so become commodities in a new economic circuit. The scenography of the installation augments Niwa's seminal piece, *Purchasing My Own Belongings Again in the Downtown*, 2011, in which the artist places household items he has previously acquired –magazines, fruit and groceries– back into the marketplace, where they renew their value and become re-purchasable. The repetitive act of taking his belongings to the cash register to buy what is, through terms of purchase, already his, hones in on the volatility of ownership, value and circulation. Niwa's subtle disruption of the marketplace draws attention to changes in sales methods; where pre-1950s customers predominantly relied upon a shop owner fetching goods from behind a desk, self-service has become customary.

Within the absurd scenarios Niwa enacts and the hypothetical situation he describes in the neon, *Refund Items I Have Not Purchased*, 2022, the artist closes in on individual habits and explores the effects of our micro-personal economies. In *Pricing Own Belongings at the Market*, 2018, Niwa's extends his intervention to a flea market in Vienna. The camera follows Niwa as he peruses boxes of second hand objects and intervenes in the flow of exchange. Niwa shifts belongings through different spheres of ownership; he purchases a beer mug from one seller only to surreptitiously insert it into another stall and enquire about its price.

Niwa consistently plays the provocator and attempts to transcend conventional economic practice. Yet there is a simultaneous fatalism about the intensity of consumer customs and the artist's own reliance upon these modes of exchange. Within these limitations, Niwa's examinations, executed as farce, question the implications of a system reliant on production and consumption facilitated by individuals often distanced in both their location and resources.

Yoshinori Niwa (b.1982) graduated from Tama Art University's Department of Moving Images and Performing Arts in 2005. Recent exhibitions include Bucharest Biennale 10, Bucharest, Romania (2022); Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel (2022); COLOMBOSCOPE, Colombo, Sri Lanka (2022); Match Gallery/The Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana, Slovenia (2021); The House of Austrian History, Vienna, Austria (2021); Urbane Künste Ruhr and Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund, Germany (2021). Niwa's work features in international institutional collections including Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France; San Francisco, CA, US; Fukutake Foundation, Kagawa, Japan; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Wrocław, Poland. Niwa lives and works in Vienna, Austria.