

TOKYO

Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo

KISHIO SUGA

SITUATED LATENCY

Opposite page

HITO STEYERL

*How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*  
2013

Still from HD video: 14 min.

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Courtesy Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam.

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KISHIO SUGA

*Continuous Existence – M*

2015

Wood, rope and stone, dimensions variable.

Photo by Keizo Kioku.

Courtesy Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo.

Wood. Stone. Rope. Metal. Concrete. Vinyl. These are the working materials of Kishio Suga, who rose to prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a key member of the postwar Japanese art movement Mono-ha. At the start of 2015, his first major survey since 1999, "Kishio Suga: Situated Latency," was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT). A total of 38 works were presented, including ten large-scale installations, paintings, photographs, production notebooks and archival film footage.

*Continuous Existence – M* (2015) reached across two walls and one corner of the exhibition space. Four stripped tree branches of varying sizes, set roughly one meter apart, were each balanced upright by rocks on the floor, two of which were placed on a rectangular, gray sheet of vinyl. The tops of the branches rested on the walls in a precarious arrangement. A length of rope, anchored to a separate bundle of wood, lay loosely across the tops of the branches. This installation is visually similar to an earlier work, *Continuous Existence* (1977); yet the new piece is different when one takes into consideration the vital uniqueness of each object used in its creation, and the installation's individual approach to the MOT's modern setting and present-day audience.

"Mono-ha" means, roughly, "a school of things," and it is the situation, or interrelation, of things that interests Suga. In *Continuous Existence – M*, the branches and rope indicate three-dimensional mass and volume within a blank space, highlighting the margins between the contact points of the objects. Both materials and negative space were transformed through their association with one another.



Elsewhere, *Left-Behind Situation* (1972/2015) occupied an entire room. A single length of wire rope was strung across the space to form two levels of web-like structures, upon which random-sized pieces of wood and stone were balanced. The top layer was positioned approximately one meter above its more densely woven counterpart. It horizontally bisected the room, with the walls serving as the frame of the installation. The end of the wire was still attached to its reel, hinting at the possibility that the work could take on a different form if situated in another space.

In *Gap of the Entrance to the Space* (1979/2015), several stone blocks were placed on a large zinc sheet, yet some of the blocks extended beyond the base and were supported directly by the floor. Here, the ground served as both the boundary and the frame of the work.

In demonstrating that objects and site are at once subordinate to and at the center of a work, Suga, in his installations, prioritizes the perception of existence over the expression of meaning. His work also reduces the distance between objects, through physical and conceptual linkage. *Separating Dependence* (1973/2013), for example, is comprised of zinc plates laid on the floor in a large, rectangular formation. Some of the plates' extremities have been bent upward in right angles, creating an intermittent border around the piece. Atop the plates, concrete blocks, natural stones and additional zinc plates are placed in roughly even intervals. Long, metal pipes are balanced on the stones and blocks, connecting them together. Some pipes reached up to rest on the walls. The contrast between the organic and inorganic materials was stark, and the influence the objects exerted on each other was palpable. In viewing the work, one was immediately made aware of gravity, interdependence and one's surrounding space. Evoking a similar visceral response was *Law of Multitude* (1975/2015), comprising transparent vinyl sheets stretched over cement blocks and weighted down with stones—another juxtaposition of organic and inorganic objects.

In facilitating an intimate yet relatable connection between viewers and the objects in his works, Suga is suggesting that society and culture rely on collective consciousness in order to function and communicate. This unique experience of interconnectedness offers an opportunity to recalibrate our fundamental sensibilities at a time when we are becoming increasingly remote from physical interaction and reality.

JESSICA JANE HOWARD