

Yuya Suzuki

AND HIS METAMORPHIC MATERIALS

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Alice Finney in conversation with Yuya Suzuki

Japanese born multimedia artist Yuya Suzuki, who graduated from Nihon University collage of Art, uses his skills to narrate the singular way in which he visualises the world. Working with a variety of media, Suzuki meticulously composes buoyant, colourful symbols and shapes out of found images he collects on his travels around the world in a process of abstraction. Having undertaken residencies in locations as diverse as Iceland to China, he has accumulated a kaleidoscopic collection of images and has a distinct way of looking at space and place. Ever the flaneur, he is drawn to cities for their inherent variety and sources of imagination. Suzuki's artistic practice involves, in his own words, "another way of thinking through physical actions and a system of speaking my own language." Having said all this, his work is far from esoteric and invites viewers to look at and interpret the shapes in their own way.

After a trip to Taiwan, the globetrotter took some time to speak to us about his ongoing series *Archegraph Study* and let us in on the idiosyncratic ways he sees the world.



Nagoya, Japan



Beijing, China

Nagoya, Japan



Shanghai, China



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Taipei, Taiwan

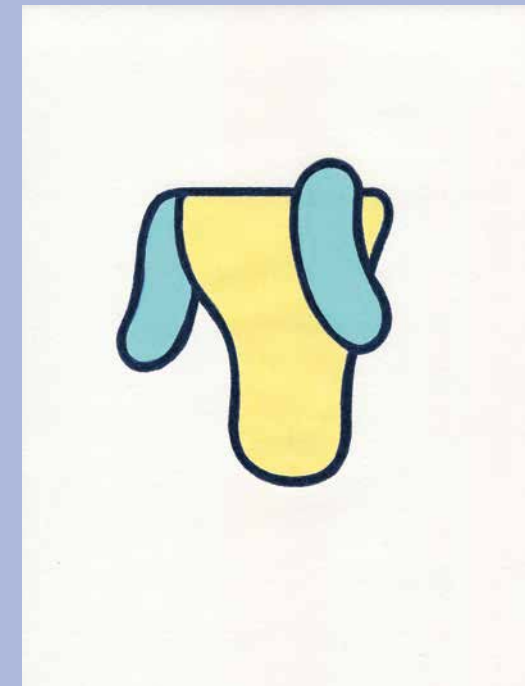
Hualien, Taiwan



Yuya Suzuki



Tainan, Taiwan



In Archegraph Study, you have built up an archive of urban shapes that have lost their original meaning or purpose in the transformation from photo to drawing. It's almost like you have invented a new system of symbols, a beautiful alphabet, which we cannot decipher but that feels strangely familiar. How did you start this project?

It started in the Autumn of 2015 – the basic idea at the beginning was to make artworks according to my routine customs. At that time, I had finished my three-year stay in Germany and had already decided the next exhibition schedule, but I got stuck in my making. I felt a fundamental difference in the method of art making between Europe and Japan, and also felt it difficult to apply a European method to my making. However, I had not yet grasped what kind of method was appropriate for me. Under such circumstances, I turned to doing what I know best: walking around the city and drawing are my natural customs which I have continued for a long time. I decided to re-start by basing my work on those two principle elements. So far, I've been working on this project for over four years. It's interesting how it all started from such a small and private motivation.

Is there something specific you look for when you take pictures of the city? Do you know it will translate well to various mediums?

When I walk around the city I try to record elements that stimulate my senses. It's mainly residential areas and alleys in the city that incite my curiosity the most. Cityscapes are full of both functional things and meaningful signs of everyday life as well as elements that have deviated from conventional functions and meanings. Those are the things that naturally excite me. For example, an accumulation of boxes stacked outside an office, a stain on the wall, a selection of household objects can all combine to signify something without words. To me, they are sculptural works created by the unconscious underbelly of the city. Such points are easy to abstract into drawings. When walking around the city, I can't judge whether these motifs will be suitable with forms of drawing or sculpture or other media works; it is only after returning to the studio, when I look back over the photos many times that I decide which to turn into drawings. After that process, I consider how to transform those drawings into other various media.

Your drawing abstractions present the real world as playful, colourful and fun. Was this part of your intention – to make reality more exciting?

I think drawing is a media that enables you to visualise unconsciousness – an image is a form of language that allows you to express unconscious elements. In my drawing process, I look for images that exist in my inner thoughts and are triggered by elements of reality. There is an overlapping point of inner images and visual elements of reality. So, through my making process, I don't have the clear intention to make artworks be more colourful or playful. These images are just the result of abstracting my unconscious and real elements throughout my making process. However, it is obvious that the artworks become colourful and playful in the end, so I guess there is such a desire in my own unconsciousness.

What does the word "archegraph" mean to you?

I coined the word while working on this project. When I started the project it actually had a different title – "City Language", however, I thought that this could limit the viewer's imagination about the work. As I thought of these images as a kind of character, I decided that I need a name that didn't have connotations with preconceived ideas.

So then I came up with the name *Archegraph*. The name itself has no significant meaning but it is a combination of the Greek word "arche" which means origin and the word "graph" which means symbol or image). "Arche" is a prefix also used for architecture, archaeology, archetype... the list goes on. So "archegraph" can translate as "original image". But for me, this project also means exploring the possibilities of primitive languages that are universally shared by humans. That is the main reason for creating this name.

How do you think your travels (residencies in places across the world) informed this project?

As I continue to move and go to new cities, I discover new images. It feels like collecting characters from the real world. Transforming collected images into various media and materials and then developing them into installations is similar to the process of editing. So, I'm editing characters collected from the real world and creating new art. I see it as making a statement about this world. This project and my journey are just my ways of interpreting the world where we live in.

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