

Technology cultivated by each individual should not be used in part or trivialized for compromise. Art is a series of “technology of return” that is, the means by which to return from points such as “Art is a capitalist game and is meaningless” or “I’m gonna die someday, and there’s nothing left.” The wilderness of emptiness and relativity is never an ultimate objective, even if it is your current destination. While it indeed could be meaningless, there is still something that you want to do. That’s why you turn on your heels to return, instead of compromising in the wilderness and pretending that it is your destination.

## Yutaka Sone

Born 1965 in Japan. Lives and works in China, Mexico, Belgium and Japan. His major solo exhibitions include *Obsidian*, Sifang Art Museum (Nanjing, 2017), *Day and Night*, David Zwirner (New York, 2016), *Perfect Moment*, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (Tokyo, 2011), *Like Looking for Snow Leopard*, Kunsthalle Bern (Bern, 2006), *Travel to Double River Island / Yutaka Sone*, Toyota Municipal Museum of Art (Aichi, 2002). Major group exhibitions include *Tokyo Independent*, Exhibition Hall (Tokyo, 2019), *Sanguine: Luc Tuymans on Baroque*, Prada Foundation (Mirano, 2018), *Whitney Biennale* (New York, 2004), *Heterotopias*, Japan Pavilion (50th Venice Biennale, Venice, 2003), *7th Istanbul Biennial: Egofugal: Fugue from Ego for the Next Emergence* (Istanbul, 2001), *Cities on the Move* (Vienna, Bordeaux, New York, Humlebaek, London, Bangkok, Helsinki, 1997–1999), *Sculpture Projects Münster* (Munster, 1997).

Consider compromise as being “halfway happy.” What it potentially harbors is the time of future. This year, aM project presents exhibitions with five artists, who each through their individual approach, attempts to study and share technologies of return for believing in the future in this day and age in which they live and die.

aM Project 2020–2021

Halfway Happy

Vol. 1

Yutaka Sone

The Last Night of the Stone Age

2020.8.29 SAT — 11.14 SAT

13:00–20:00

Closed on Sunday, Monday, Holidays.

Entrance Free

Guest Curator Arata Hasegawa

**Artist Support:**

The Studio Quarter Century

Wufeng Guyi Stone Co. Ltd.

Kawasaki Works Co. Ltd.

Washinoyama Stone. Ltd.

Yoshiki Ura

Yuji Oku

Dai Toshio

Dai Hijikata

Tommy Simoens

1 **Double Log (Washinoyama tuff)**

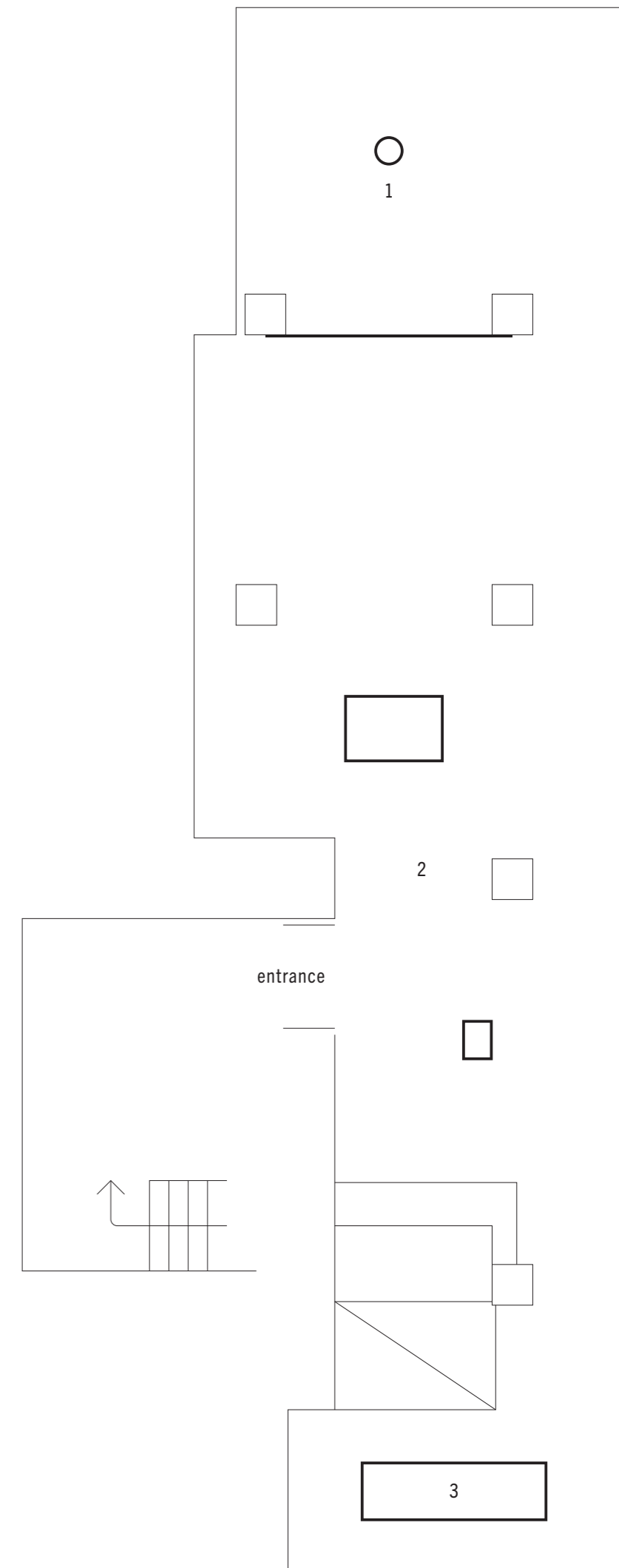
2020

2 **The Last Night of the Stone Age**

2020

3 **Birthday Party 1965–2020**

2020



*The Last Night of the Stone Age* is the first installment in a series of exhibitions at gallery aM titled *Halfway Happy* and is Yutaka Sone's solo exhibition. Here, I would like to introduce the works exhibited in the show and describe the principles behind Yutaka Sone's works.

This exhibition consists of three new installation works, *The Last Night of the Stone Age*, *Birthday Party 1965–2020*, *Double Log (Washinoyama tuff)*. It may seem surprising that this is an exhibition composed of video installations, as opposed to individual sculpture works. It should be even more surprising for those who are familiar with Sone's earlier works and how they transitioned from project-based video works to marble sculpture pieces<sup>1</sup>. However, the back-and-forth from sculpture to video is a mere consequence of Sone's principles of production<sup>2</sup>. What is more relevant to Sone is what he strives to achieve at an earlier juncture.

Through his works, Sone strives to give form to "events." These "events" are the fleeting, miraculous moments, the landscapes that are ordinarily mere backgrounds. They disappear quickly, writhe in one's sleep, are below the ground, rumble at high speed, and are forever in the future. And there exists the hope and the realization of giving them form and allowing them to be seen and touched.

To realize this seemingly impossible situation, Sone attempts to make multiples of antagonizing movements contend with each other. It is as if to say that paradoxes must be spinning at high speed to give form to "events," so opposing times, contrasting mechanics, and multiples of technologies are required to run at their maximum capacity.

## The Last Night of the Stone Age

An overwhelmingly long time ago, there were people who attempted to heat and melt native copper. Unable to heat high enough, perhaps due to the lack of technology back then, their smelted copper would cool and harden overnight. "In other words," Sone says.

"In other words, that was the last night of the Stone Age."

The fire, once burning, calms as if melting. The copper, swaying between solidifying and liquefying, settles down to be an amorphous but constant form. The last night of the Stone Age can be pictured clearly like so. Many people must have burned many minerals, and multiples of paths must have led to the beginnings of the next ages. (Here, I will not specify and break them down into eras such as the Chalcolithic Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age.) Each region, each civilization must have had a number of their own last nights of the Stone Age.

On the other hand, however, Sone—as do we—continues to use stones to survive. Since encountering marble in the mid-1990s, many of the works by Sone are made out of stone, and he works in the company of stonemasons. "90% of the process of production is the destruction of stone," Sone laughs, but the technique of these craftsmen including Sone's are exceptional. To this day, they work with the grinder in their hands to make a living. That is why the Stone Age continues to this day. The last night of the Stone Age will befall us only in the far distant future.

For this exhibition, Sone worked with another artist, Kosuke Nagata, who is younger than him by 25 years, as "Shihanseiki (Quarter Century)." Together, they made a computer out of marble (*PC: The Last Night of the Stone Age (Prototype v1)*). With a strong belief that we are still in the Stone Age, they aimed to create a water-cooled PC that is compatible with our

current ecological conditions. This is a collaborative production by these two artists. The video played out of the PC captures the labor, or production, of those who crush, sand, and are covered in dust, shouting in foreign tongues at each other to make the best work, and the passing of time of the Stone Age<sup>3</sup>.

## Birthday Party 1965–2020

For the Sculpture Projects Münster (1997) that takes place every ten years, Sone threw his own birthday party every day, which he documented and collated into a video, *Birthday Party*<sup>4</sup>. In this work, where Sone's birthday is celebrated continuously, contradicting elements—fiction and reality, the private and the public—are also celebrated. The monumentality conceived by sculpture (the permanent and rigid attribution of "celebration") is spontaneous, light, and can swiftly restructure itself into something repetitive, and radiate festiveness in multiple directions.

It is not widely known that Sone started this work before 1997 and has continued intermittently even after 1997<sup>5</sup>. (Sone's own child had begun to believe that birthday parties were meant to take place every day, so Sone stopped for some time.) *Birthday Party 1965–2020* was newly created with these later footages<sup>6</sup>.

*Birthday Party 1965–2020* and *The Last Night of the Stone Age* are being played from the same marble PC. There is a force that expands while traversing between the past and the future and a force that carves while reversing, that together, penetrate the space.

## Double Log (Washinoyama tuff)

Washinoyama is a mountain located in Kagawa Prefecture with an elevation of 322 meters. The stones mined there are highly prized, and were being distributed in the Kinki region as early as the Kofun period (about 300–538AD). Less than a year ago, Sone set up a studio at Washinoyama in preparation for this exhibition. He has already spent significant time working with the local carpenter Ura-san and mason Dai-san, and the relationship is at the foundation of this exhibition / studio. *Double Log (Washinoyama tuff)* is a conceptual sculpture in which the motif and the material are the subjects of inversion; but more significantly, this is the first work that Sone made at Washinoyama.

In these confusing times, Sone holds fast to his principles of production and works to give form to events. He thinks to the best he can and works as much as he can. They mostly take place at the same time. Contrary to his dynamic practice, most of the production is done in solitude and, according to Sone, is boring. Despite this, Sone's practice targets society and involves others. There is hope in this practice<sup>7</sup>. Society may keep changing drastically, but in Washinoyama, the sun will keep rising and layers will be laid upon the strata<sup>8</sup>.

1 In the catalogue for the *Yutaka Sone: Perfect Moment* exhibition which took place in 2011, guest curator Mizuki Endo corrects the misconception that Sone's practice is "regressing." However, the same catalogue intentionally employs free translation. The following is the translation of the appropriate excerpt:

It would appear that Sone is making an art project out of the very tension that exists between these two forms of labor. By bringing production-labor which is external to relational art, to the center of his practice, and by clearly introducing into that the mediums of "encounter" and "relationship," and also the process of dialogue, his series of marble sculpture [sic] takes on the form of a single project. Accordingly, *the exhibition of marble sculptures can be seen as a presentation of a project.*

Mizuki Endo, "Marble Sculpture as Art Project: Yutaka Sone's Practices and Mediums under Post-modernism," trans. Edan Corkill, *Yutaka Sone: Perfect Moment* (Tokyo: Getsuyosha, 2011), 85.

2 Surveying the exhibition, one will notice that the mechanics and relationships found in so-called "video installations" cannot be applied. In this exhibition, the "image" and the "playback device" are at conflict with each other, neither allowing the other to be the main feature.

3 *The Last Night of the Stone Age*, 2020, 133 minutes. Editing: Yuji Oku. Director: Yutaka Sone.

4 In the catalogue for the Sculpture Projects Münster, he refers to this work as a "birthday cake." The following is the full text:

I try to have my *Birthday Parties* as often and in as many places as possible.

In Münster, I will celebrate my birthday with my lover. Just the two of us. Or another party with children singing for me. Or with my mother, father and other family members. Big parties with friends. Celebrations with people involved in my projects, anybody who happens to be there and strangers.

All kinds of music with violin, piano and other instruments. Songs. Flowers and wine. Lights. Decorations, candles and heartfelt presents (of course I manage it without them). Various words spoken in celebration.

I throw my *Birthday Parties* in my room, hotel rooms, friends' flats, local restaurants, trendy pubs and many other places. As for a birthday cake, I ask someone else to buy one for me, because I wouldn't feel that it was my birthday if I myself went to buy it.

A birthday tells the story of each [of] our lives, and it's the first proof that we have had a life in this world. Every Birthday Party is a chance for us to remember that all of us live with and among others. Any cities, any places, are built on the personal histories of the people living there. But we scarcely see any personal histories in public spaces.

Therefore, I record my very own personal history, my *Birthday Parties*, on video and edit the tapes. I will make an installation in the museum and the underground pass of Hauptbahnhof which is [the] most public space with countless people walking by.

I record smooth and sleek memoirs of visual images; intimate *Birthday Parties* with a tiny cake in a small room, a magnificent one in a grand decorated hall and many, many other *Birthday Parties* with people singing songs celebrating my birthday and blowing out candles on cakes.

"Happy Birthday dear Yutaka, Happy Birthday to you!"

Someday, after a long, long time, so many things in the world will have totally changed and nobody will be able to imagine what it is like today.

Then art might be a birthday cake.

I'm making this work, *Birthday Party*, based on my imagination of the visual images created in such times in the future.

Yutaka Sone, "Yutaka Sone: *Birthday Party*," in *Sculpture Projects in Münster 1997*, ed. Klaus Bußmann, Kasper König, Florian Matzner (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1997), 403-404.

5 In *Yutaka Sone: Building Romance* (Tokyo: Mitaka City Arts Foundation, 1996), the exhibition catalogue for *Scoop* (Mitaka City Arts Center, 1996, curated by Natsumi Araki), the Japanese title for this work translates into *Videoworks after Birthday Cake*.

6 Random playback program. 58 minutes. Data conversion: Yuji Oku, Shunsuke Takamizawa. Programming: Kosuke Nagata. Editing: Yuji Oku. Director: Yutaka Sone. The subtitle of the work is *The Cave of the Atheist*. As early as 1997, Sone has had the idea to have multiple of birthday parties take place over a non-chronological span of time. The table is made by Yoshiki Ura, a carpenter in Aji, Takamatsu.

7 Of course, Sone's practice is not the only hope. During our time, multitudes of attitudes and forms are possible, and numerous forms of art exist simultaneously. *Halfway Happy* has just only begun.

