

PROJECT 19

Tatzu Nishi

2009

War and peace and in between

2 October 2009 – 14 February 2010

Art Gallery Road, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

BIOGRAPHY

Since the late 1990's Tatzu Nishi has been decontextualising monuments and architectural landmarks across the globe. Nishi's artistic practice involves spatial and social interventions in which familiar, often unnoticed, public artworks are enclosed and displaced in foreign, temporary domestic settings, allowing visitors to experience them anew. For the first time, we find ourselves in intimate private settings with an overlooked public artwork; the surreal encounter altering our perceptions of public and private. Born Tazro Niscino, the Japanese artist works under a variety of names, including Tatzu Nishi, Tatzu Oozu, and Tatsurou Bashi.

FACTS

- After moving from Japan to Germany, Nishi was struck by the number of public monuments and statues in Europe.
- The artist decided to reimagine these monuments as spaces for social interventions.
- In Sydney, Nishi reinvented two sculptures positioned at the entrance of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, *The offerings of peace* and *The offerings of war*, created in 1923 by English sculptor Gilbert Bayes.
- *The offerings of peace* was enclosed within a domestic living room and *The offerings of war* within a bedroom.
- The constructions were wrapped in plastic sheeting and temporary building materials resembling the scaffolding that encases sculptures during restoration.
- *The main role of public sculpture is at the inauguration, but people forget the story and the reason for it very quickly... When the sculpture is surrounded by my project, people notice it again and they remember its story.*
– Tatzu Nishi

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Born Tazuo Niscino, and working under a variety of names including Tatzu Oozu and Tatsuro Bashi, Japanese artist Tatzu Nishi has created out-of-scale and out-of-place encounters in public spaces around the world since the late nineties. For his Kaldor project, *War and peace and in between*, Nishi reinvented two sculptures on Art Gallery Road outside the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney—English sculptor Gilbert Bayes's 1923 monuments *The offerings of peace* and *The offerings of war*—providing passers-by a detour from the everyday.

After moving from Japan to Germany in 1987, Nishi was struck by the number of public monuments populating European cities, often so familiar that they go unnoticed. He began to use them as the basis for spatial and social interventions, enclosing the monuments in box-like rooms in incongruous settings so that visitors could experience them anew. In a world where public space increasingly encroaches on private space, Nishi reverses the trend, making playful constructions of scaffolding, often perched mid-air, and reached by climbing temporary stairs and traversing walkways. Inside, giant sculptures crouch awkwardly under low ceilings in wallpapered, carpeted rooms, like Alice in Wonderland. Alongside domestic furnishings, these oversized figures appear unexpected and astonishing.

In Sydney, Nishi enclosed *The offerings of peace* within a living room and *The offerings of war* in a bedroom. The constructions, wrapped in plastic sheeting and temporary building materials, resembled the scaffolding that encases sculptures during restoration. In the first installation—in what appeared to be a modern apartment, with thick carpet and bland furnishings, including pot plants, fruit bowl and magazine—the olive branch-bearing bust of *The offerings of peace* seemed to stand like an ornamental “conversation piece” on a coffee-table, the nearby wardrobe revealing the horse's head, as if some kind of cruel, secret sacrifice. In the second installation, *The offerings of war*, triumphantly surmounting a pair of double beds pushed together, as if in a hotel, appeared massive and intimidating in such an ordinary context.

As symbols and monuments, each of the objects Nishi transforms reflects the social fabric of its setting. By altering their scale and context, he changes the way these objects are viewed and their function within public space. For Nishi, “When [a] sculpture is surrounded by my project, people notice it again and they also remember its story. The sculpture looks fresh and renewed... you see it from a new perspective”.

Kaldor Public Art
Project 19: Tatzu
Nishi, *War and
peace and in
between*, 2009, Art
Gallery of New
South Wales,
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Photo: Carley
Wright



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