



DELICATE CYCLE: AKI SASAMOTO

By Louis Soulard — November 21, 2017



Installation view of “Aki Sasamoto: Delicate Cycle” at SculptureCenter, New York, 2016. Photo by Kyle Knodell.
All Pictures Courtesy SculptureCenter.

It was a rainy September afternoon in Queens, New York. A crowd of about 30 had gathered at the SculptureCenter to attend a performance by New York-based, Japanese artist Aki Sasamoto.

Sasamoto is best known for working across a variety of media, incorporating performance and dance with sculpture installations. Born in 1980 in Kanagawa, Japan, she received a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University’s School of the Arts in 2007, and has since exhibited internationally at major art galleries and museums.

Her performance at SculptureCenter coincided with the opening of the artist’s first solo institutional exhibition in the United States, at the said location, entitled “Aki Sasamoto: Delicate Cycle.” The audience followed the artist in what began as an ordinary laundry routine. She gathered a couple of shirts hanging on a wire in the outside courtyard, wet from the rain, and took them to the basement level of the museum in a cart. “I’m not sure we can all fit in here,” she said, amused, to the quiet audience, as we prepared to enter the elevator.

Once downstairs, Sasamoto re-entered her routine with startling seriousness, and started to interact with a series of sculpture installations placed throughout the narrow, cave-like space, which included a washing machine, a giant ball of bed sheets and two open, human-size wooden boxes. She continued to talk to the audience, telling us seemingly unrelated and discontinued stories about her childhood and her time in school. All of them shared a common sense of shame and fear.

The stories, told in an angry, anguished voice, complemented a process of physical activation of the installation pieces by the artist. Sasamoto set each of them in motion as she spoke—locking herself up in one of the washing machines and pushing the giant ball of white, clean laundry down an obscure corridor



Left: Installation view of “Aki Sasamoto: Delicate Cycle” at SculptureCenter, New York, 2016. Photo by Kyle Knodell.
 Center: AKI SASAMOTO, D-Washroom, 2016, wood, ceramic tiles, cement board, aluminum edges, vent, rope, double pulley, carabiner, headlamp, copper pipe and slippers, 228.6 × 121.9 × 91.4 cm. Installation view of “Aki Sasamoto: Delicate Cycle” at SculptureCenter, New York, 2016. Courtesy the artist. Photo by Kyle Knodell.
 Right: Installation view of “Aki Sasamoto: Delicate Cycle” at SculptureCenter, New York, 2016. Photo by Kyle Knodell.



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like a dung beetle, with her head down, feet up on the sphere and walking on her hands. She also forcefully drew, in permanent marker, characters from one of her stories onto the surfaces of the wooden boxes, which she flipped upside down using a complex system of ropes and hooks.

Sasamoto’s stories hinted at the possible meaning behind such actions. It seemed apparent, as the performance unfolded, that they functioned as acts of liberation from the hurtful and traumatic personal experiences that she shared. The literal task of doing laundry suddenly became a metaphor for healing and an attempt at self-reinvention.

In that regard, Aki Sasamoto’s series of performances is essential in understanding the function of the objects on view in the exhibition. By activating the works, she brings symbolic value to these familiar objects of the everyday life and gives them deeply personal and psychological meaning. It would be difficult, indeed, to understand the relationship between these objects outside of the performance.

An uncanny and psychological experience that is surprising at times, Sasamoto’s “Delicate Cycle” is an intense reflection on the way trauma creeps into everyday life.

Aki Sasamoto’s “Delicate Cycle” is on view at SculptureCenter, New York, until January 2, 2017. To read more articles on Sasamoto’s work, visit our digital library at <https://library.artasiapacific.com>.