

Flash Art

PARIS

SHIMABUKU AIR DE PARIS

Shimabuku's work is the art of a hawker, always on the road, an inter-city hitch-hiker seeking new people — or chimeras — to regale with stories rich in mythical undertones. By adopting the willingly naive stance of a latter-day Candide, he sends minor shock waves running through the flow of everyday life, injecting the ordinary with a touch of wonder. His mini-performances in public spaces address the possibility of communicating with others by means of organized encounters as improbable and fortuitous as octopus-meets-pigeon.

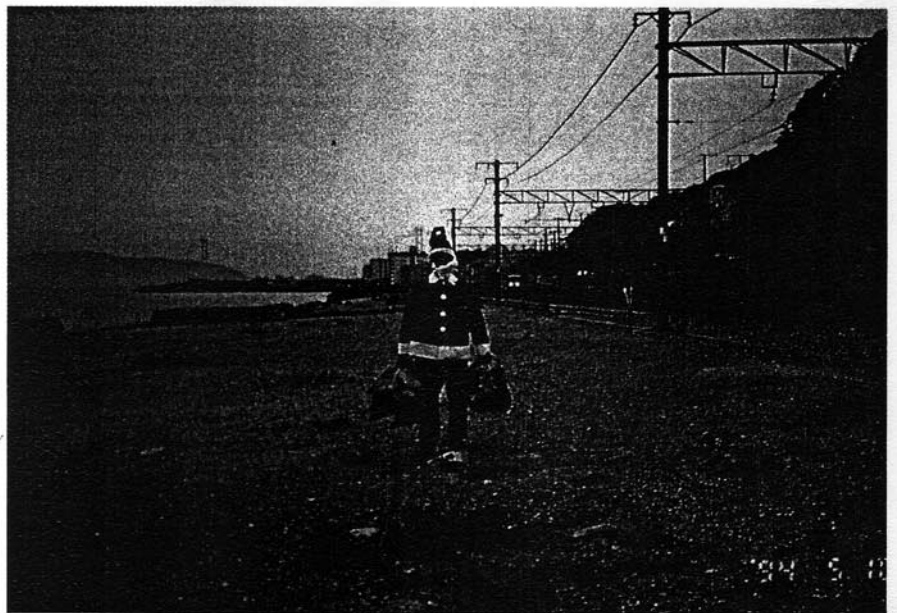
Shimabuku is convinced that we can never be sure that we are being understood by the Other and that the unexpected can happen at any time. And it is this very uncertain communication among beings which fascinates him, "Beautiful incomprehension interests me more than bad comprehension." Shimabuku is capable of wringing the most surprising propositions from a chance meeting with an interesting individual or some anecdote he has picked up along the way. So discrete, on occasion, are his performances that they risk going unnoticed, although they are supported by photographs, videos, drawings, and writings.

For this exhibition, the artist has installed a Christmas setting in midsummer under the title *Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere*. A fir in front of the gallery has been transformed into a Xmas tree. Inside the gallery, a huge poster depicts the artist disguised as Santa Claus complete with garbage bags in his hands, a still from a performance in Kobe (Japan) this past May, near the sea on a vacant lot crossed by a rail track. "I was the Santa Claus whom you could glimpse from the train window, but could not look back and glare at. The glimpse of me was the event that would linger in your mind, because of its momentary impression. I thought it would be wonderful if someone from Latin America or Australia were on the train and, catching a glimpse of me as Santa Claus, recalled Xmas at home in the warm season."

This absurd and humorous attempt at an unpredictable result sums up all Shimabuku's art. From the train window, someone, even more than one person, will have witnessed a scene that will have made their day... Shimabuku is like a Cartesian diver, enchanting the world again and again with a discrete but effective touch.

Pascal Beausse

(Translated from French by Christopher Martin)



SHIMABUKU, *Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere*, 1994. Performance. Photograph.