

## **Japanese Pavilion, the 52nd Venice Biennale 2007**

### Artists to Represent Japan at the 2007 Venice Biennale Announced

The Japan Foundation, the organizer of the Japanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Art, has announced the commissioner for Japan and the artist to represent Japan at the fifty-second biennale to be held from June 10 to November 21, 2007 under the direction of Robert Storr, Dean, Yale University School of Art.

**Masao Okabe** is the artist who will represent Japan. Okabe has been depicting towns and architecture by frottage, a technique of capturing material images by laying sheets of paper on the material and then rubbing over it with a soft pencil. His works are often described as “rubbing of history,” and his exhibition at the Venice Biennale will be made into a temporary historical space by displaying his 1,400 frottages from the port of Ujina, Hiroshima City, and a 16-meter row of A-bombed stones of the Ujina station platform in Hiroshima. Okabe will also conduct a workshop with Venetian citizens to make frottages of Venetian historical buildings and structures. He has been carrying on similar workshops for years in diverse cities, including Amsterdam, Barcelona, Gwangju, Hiroshima, Nemuro, and Paris. Exchanges of frottage aerograms between Venice and other cities are expected to take place during the biennale.

Okabe, born in 1942 in Hokkaido, began frottage in 1977. He has exhibited at the third Gwangju Biennale (2000) and the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial (2000) and has held frottage workshops under the Synchronicity Project (2004) and the Masao Okabe+City 2005 Project (2005) in Japan.

**Chihiro Minato**, the commissioner for Japan, describes the exhibition concept in the following words: “The subject of the frottages is the port of Ujina. The Ujina train station was a hub through which tremendous volumes of cargo and people were transported to Asia from the time of the Sino-Japanese War until World War II, as well as an area affected by the atomic bomb. Okabe spent nine years making frottages of the platform stones. The station no longer exists, as it was taken down for the construction of an expressway, but Okabe has recorded the past by using the elemental tools of pencil and paper. With this lifework of Okabe as the centerpiece, the exhibition will attempt to consider, from the perspective of art, the possibilities and conditions for the human past being inherited into the future.”

Contact: (Mr.) Shuji Takatori, Japan Foundation Arts Department  
Phone: 03-5562-3529 / Fax: 03-5562-3500

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