

Wind from Sky

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text/ Andrew James Paterson

In the evening, I enter XPACE and observe Sakiko Yamaoka arranging eating and drinking utensils on a long table. She has rows of plastic glasses, Styrofoam cups, cheap wine or juice glasses, and coffee mugs. She is pouring coffee grains into the coffee cups and red wine into the juice glasses. More red wine, I remark to myself. She also poured water into the Styrofoam cups.

In the introduction to Sakiko Yamaoka's performance, Paul Couillard refers to this artist's previous site-specific performances during the festival, *Wind From Sky*. Sakiko not only co-ordinated sleep-ins in financial institutions, she "impersonated" a plant in three variety or convenience stores (I regret missing these performances, but my colleague Elaine Wong did witness at least some of them.) The artist held up a statement:

Human beings are alive

Plants are alive

Therefore human beings are plants

Despite wondering how perhaps animals fitted into this equation, I was intrigued by the nonsensically rational premise. I found a strategic viewing position as Sakiko began to move her dessert-sized plates into positions behind the glasses and cups and then press down on the plates. This pressure had the effect of moving the entire arrangement forward, until the plastic glasses began to fall onto the floor. It was quite fascinating to watch Sakiko's nobody positions as she arranged the plates into the most effective positions at the back of the table, while more and more plastic glasses were falling and water was beginning to drip from the Styrofoam cups. Soon Styrofoam cups began to fall to the ground. The first landed vertically, but that was only the first. I thought at first she might continue this process until all of the plastic glasses and Styrofoam cups were off the table, but it became apparent that the entire table has to be cleared. Then, since the initial juice glasses did not break upon landing, I thought her pressure might be so delicate as to avoid breakage. I thought that might be one

of her intentions. But the falling glasses and the subsequent coffee cups began shattering and shattering, and the water puddle on the floor was joined by wine and coffee beans.



As she approached the final clearance of the table, Sakiko had to lean further and further across that table to push the contents off. I did think of a plant that might be sprawling out of control, or might be dying and losing its shape and its elegance. But this impression was countered by the performer's need to clear that table, and to press harder in order to do so.

When the table was finally cleared, this was not the end of the performance but rather the end of an initial movement. Next, Sakiko used her body to push the empty table up through the gallery toward the front door, but stopping in front of the admissions desk. After wiping the table clean with paper leaflets, she stood up on the table, with a plastic bag from which she retrieved plastic bags, folded neatly and signed Sakiko Y. 2008. She handed them out to willing members of the audience, who were instructed to shake them and make noise. Sakiko conducted the audience like an orchestra, or perhaps she was playing around with the dynamics of crowd control. Or perhaps this was now the wind from the sky - the shaking sounds from the bags invoked wind and sometimes rain. The audience surrendered to her elements and obeyed her gentle commands - softer, louder, fortissimo, up, down, etcetera. Finally there was a denouement, and the performance was finished.

This was a superbly involving performance. It contained ritual, destruction, reconstruction, and rejuvenation. It may indeed have been analogous to a plant (or animal?) shedding leaves, shedding excess, changing habitats and seasons, and regenerating. Whether or not it can be read allegorically, it was a pleasure to observe, even though I resisted my own temptation to shake.

