

Polar Patterns

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23.03.2017

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Project Space

Spare Room Gallery

23–27 Cardigan St,

Carlton

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David Burrows

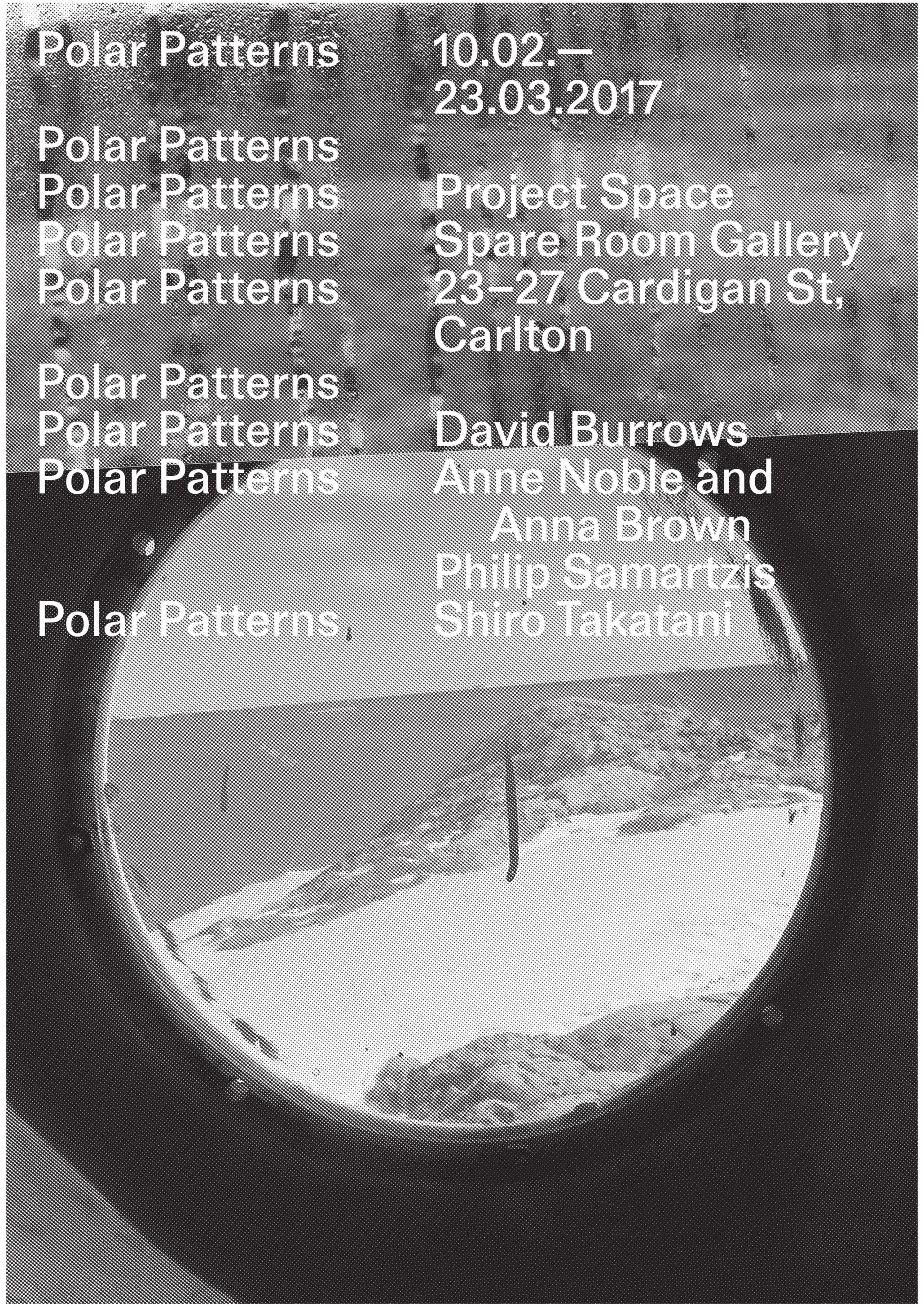
Anne Noble and

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Project Space
Spare Room Gallery
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Opening
09.02.2017
5–7pm

Polar Patterns has been conceived as a way of articulating the eco-acoustic characteristics and atmospheric effects that pervade the frozen continent and its surrounding ocean. A collaborative enterprise designed to advance unique insights into the way anthropogenic, natural and environmental forces dynamically converge to shape the Antarctic experience. David Burrows is an alumnus of the Australian Antarctic Division arts fellowship program, who spent considerable time photographing Casey Station and its environs. His photographs of icebergs, mosses and lichens, and ice fields are vivid, oftentimes hallucinogenic, confusing the perception of the natural world through the manipulation of space, light and scale. Shiro Takatani's installation *Ice Core* presents a sequence of luminous photographs of a 2503m ice-core drilled in 2005 at Dome Fuji. This forensic investigation painstakingly undertaken in refrigerated conditions at the Institute of Low Temperature Science at the University of Hokkaido, compresses 500,000 years into a succession of ice cores marked by fissures, air bubbles, and ruptures. Anne Noble is well known for her articulation of the prosaic nature of life on the ice, often juxtaposing majestic landscapes with elements derived from the built environment and its attendant byproducts. *White Out/White Noise* is a new collaboration with designer and typographer Anna Brown using suites of images and a parallel text comprising descriptions of Antarctic white extracted from Antarctic literature to draw attention to both the frailty of language and visual perception. Completing the exhibition is *Blizzard*, a compendium of sound recordings I made at Casey Station of a blizzard that measured 100 knots at its peak. The blizzard is the strongest experienced at Casey during summer, lasting 24 hours before disappearing as gradually and as gently as it appeared.

The works comprising *Polar Patterns* demonstrate the fragile nature of life in Antarctica, and the enormous challenges it presents for artists attempting to portray its salient and ephemeral qualities.

Philip Samartzis is the co-founder and Artistic Director of the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture, and is an Associate Professor in Sound at the School of Art – RMIT University.

The following extracts are taken from field notes written by him between 2010 and 2016.

Entry 1: Icebreaker
February 5, 2010
Aurora Australis, Southern Ocean

After twelve days we are finally closing in on our destination. The fierce weather that so doggedly shadowed us throughout the voyage now succeeded by temperate conditions. We soon find ourselves travelling through iceberg alley comprising tremendous white forms of various shapes and sizes. A strange calmness descends as we steadily traverse the glistening maze. Occasionally the silence is ruptured by a ricocheting sound indicating some tumultuous activity concealed underneath the turquoise surface. I am surprised by the quantity of water secreted from each berg often culminating in rows of long icicles forming at waters edge. The enormous cache of water extruded by the lustrous bergs provides ample evidence of how unstable these deceptive monoliths really are. After drifting dreamily for several hours the continent finally comes into view. The desolate appearance of the rock strewn landscape provides quite a shock after such an elegant and mesmerising prelude. Assembled across the bleak topography bordering Broad Peninsula and Heidemann Bay is an odd assortment of buildings and structures that comprise Davis Station. On initial appearance Davis could be mistaken for a mining town located deep in the foothills of Afghanistan. After peering at the alien landscape for some time I cast my gaze on a long band of white stretching across the horizon several kilometres behind the remote station. At first I presume it is a cloud formation until gradually I realise that I am staring at the Antarctic Plateau magically rising ever so gently into the sky.

Entry 2: A Phantom Topography
February 9, 2010
Platcha Hut, Eastern Antarctica

Today I was dispatched to Platcha Hut to undertake field recording at Breid Basin located at the ice shattered foot of the Antarctic Plateau. Nestled between Davis Station and the East Antarctic ice sheet are the magnificent Vestfold Hills - a series of ice-free coastal hills ranging in altitude from 30 to 160 metres and comprising up to 300 lakes and ponds. Most of the landscape is crystalline, brown or grey, lacerated by igneous dolerite forming black stripes across the bare hinterland. Platcha Hut is one of several field huts used for research and recreation purposes scattered throughout the region. It proves to be an ideal base for recording in and around the Antarctic Plateau where I focus on the hollow sound of various streams bubbling underneath the massive ice sheet. Occasionally a huge chunk of ice is expelled into the basin in response to the radiant heat generated by the sun, which rarely sets at this time of year. Inside the hut are a series of rustic bunks that can accommodate six people,

sleeping bags, small table, gas stove and heater. Stacked in neat piles are ample quantities of dehydrated food stocks in the event bad weather strands anyone for a protracted amount of time. Tucked underneath one of the bunks is a box of pornographic magazines dating between the 70s and the 90s. The series of voluptuous and contorted bodies faded by time, like the worn interior of the lugubrious hut and the decaying hills that surround it.

Entry 3: Alone Among Strangers
March 29, 2010
Macquarie Island Station, Southern Ocean

Today we awoke to the site of the rugged green hilltops of Macquarie Island extending as far as the eye could see. I am struck by the smell of damp earth, which is as powerful as the sight of the windswept plateau rising high above the Southern Ocean. Located between two steep coastal terraces sits the slender isthmus precariously positioned between Buckles and Halfmoon Bays. Lush tussock grass and cushion plants carpet most of the island all the way down to the coastal fringe. Between ship and shore are swarms of King Penguins swimming in the choppy water. As I scan the horizon I spot large white letters painted on fading black fuel tanks spelling out Macquarie Island as a searchlight pulses intermittently from shore. The island exudes a primal quality that I find deeply unsettling as we prepare to voyage across Buckles Bay by IRB. The swell is enormous as we scamper down a rope ladder to the waiting boat precariously bobbing up and down. I hold my breath and wait for it to rise on the swell before leaping off the ladder. Safely onboard we head for the island avoiding the large floating beds of Antarctic bull kelp that dominates the coastline. Without slowing the IRB ferociously crashes through the heavy surf, depositing my sodden equipment and me on the exposed shore before heading back out to sea to continue operations. On the horizon I can see the Aurora Australis struggling against the powerful swell. Stinging grains of basalt soon assault me as I navigate rutted sand dunes and boggy marshes and head towards station.

Entry 4: Deep Freeze
January 30, 2016
Casey Station, Eastern Antarctica

Located 3800 kilometers south of Perth overlooking the Windmill Islands is Casey Station, the biggest of three Australian Antarctic research stations situated in Eastern Antarctica. The sprawling station sited on a craggy outcrop accommodates up to 100 people during the busy summer season, which spans November to March. East of station is Law Dome rising ever so gently towards a peak of 1400 metres, while in the west is Shirley Island and its boisterous population of Adelie Penguins. Directly across from station is Newcomb Bay where the abandoned US station Wilkes is located, and just beyond it a horizon filled with icebergs of assorted shapes and sizes. Wilkins Runway is approximately 70 kilometers south east of station and serves as a desolate terminal for the intercontinental air service. It takes 4.5 hours to reach Wilkins from Hobart and a further 4 hours to reach Casey by Hägglund. The terrain between Wilkins and Casey is flat with only rutted caterpillar tracks and sparse waypoint markers disrupting the pristine vista of white striae set against a deep blue sky.

Entry 5: The Blizzard
February 15, 2016
Casey Station, Eastern Antarctica

Katabatic wind is a low gravity wind that gains force as it travels down elevated slopes. It is particularly prevalent at Casey Station due to its location at the base of Law Dome, which gently rises to an elevation of 1395 metres. When the cooler temperature of a katabatic mixes with the warmer temperature of the onshore wind, a very unstable weather system emerges. Katabatic wind is particularly notable for the way it shapes the manner in which sound is experienced within the built and natural environment. Its trajectory can push sound away from you or it can draw it closer to you. Its intensity can mask sound and its absence can heighten it. At its most ferocious it simply obliterates everything in its path. A collision with the built environment transforms katabatic wind into an intense series of ascending and descending pitches - a supercharged aeolian harp. Inside the braced steel framed and insulated panel buildings pervades a silence that imposes a profound sense of isolation from the immediate environment. Outside the volatility is expressed through a variety of resonances emitted by miscellaneous surfaces and materials undergoing tremendous stress. While sheltering in an ice encrusted cold porch I am informed that wind gusts are exceeding 185 KPH. The piercing shrieks of the anemometer emerging from the white abyss are testimony to its ferocity.

Artists
David Burrows
Anne Noble and Anna
Brown
Philip Samartzis
Shiro Takatani

Curated by
Philip Samartzis

Anna Brown
Anna Brown is a designer, researcher and educator who has worked with many New Zealand photographers and artists over multiple book projects, from traditional photobooks through to experimental book publishing performances. She has collaborated on book projects with Anne Noble, Ans Westra and Wayne Barrar, and explored narrative forms and visual scores with contemporary New Zealand composer Jack Body. She has worked with leading publishers and art galleries in New Zealand, Australia, New York and the U.K. She teaches Design and heads the Design for Public Good initiative at Pae Māhutonga School of Design, College of Creative Arts, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

David Burrows
David Burrows is a Melbourne based visual artist whose practice is concentrated on photographic media. Principally concerned with exploring spatial perception, his interest extends to both the physiological means by which we sense volume as well as the psychological ways we read place. His work has involved extensive research into the phenomena of stereoscopic vision and techniques of stereo-photography. In 2010 David was awarded the Australian Antarctic Division's Arts Fellowship, which granted him a two-month residency at Casey Station principally to create a stereoscopic installation titled *The Mirage Project__ [iceberg]* for public/outdoor spaces. Originally commissioned by Melbourne's Federation Square in 2012 this work has also been shown on the dusty salt pans around Mildura (2013) as part of the biannual Palimpsest Festival. Various manifestations of The Mirage Project series have been commissioned and exhibited in around France and Australia beginning with the LUX de Valence commissioning *Nullarbor* (2006), Linden Gallery in St Kilda commissioning *Belleville* (2010), L'Ososphere in Strasbourg commissioning *Forest* (2012). David is the recipient of numerous grants and residencies including the the Cité International Paris through the French Ministry of Culture (2007-09), Bundanon Trust (2010) Nillumbik Shires' Laughing Waters (2010) La Trobe University VAC Bendigo (2010) and Bogong Center for Sound Culture (2014).

Anne Noble
Anne Noble is Distinguished Professor of Fine Arts at Massey University, a New Zealand Arts Laureate and one of New Zealand's most respected photographers. The subject of a major retrospective that toured New Zealand 2001–2003, her work has featured in exhibitions at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin, the Patio Herreriano in Spain, the Centre for Contemporary Photography in Melbourne, the Australian National Portrait Gallery, the Queensland Gallery of Contemporary Art and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. Over multiple projects her work is preoccupied with how we know or understand the places we see and inhabit. In 2001 she spent three weeks in Antarctica as a New Zealand Antarctic Arts Fellow and returned to the Antarctic in 2008 as a US National Science Foundation artist in residence to complete three photographic book and exhibition projects, *Ice Blink*, *Clouds 2011*, *The Last Road*, *Clouds 2013*, and *Whiteout/Whitenoise 2016*. In 2014 she was awarded a New Zealand Fulbright fellowship and an international residency at Columbia College, Chicago to develop new work concerned with the decline of the honeybee, the loss of our biodiversity and the fragility of natural biological systems. Anne Noble is the recipient of the 2015 Japanese Higashikawa Prize.

Philip Samartzis
Philip Samartzis is a sound artist and curator who has performed and exhibited widely including presentations at The Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris (2001); The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2002); San Francisco MOMA (2002); Mori Arts Centre, Tokyo (2003); The National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (2007); The National Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow (2009); The South African National Museum, Cape Town (2010); The National Gallery of Victoria (2013); and The Merz Foundation, Turin (2016). Philip is the recipient of two Australian Antarctic Division Arts Fellowships (2009/10 and 2015/16). Artworks produced from his fieldwork have been incorporated into the National Archives of Australia's Traversing Antarctica: the Australian experience (2011); *Polar South: Art in Antarctica*, Muntref Museum, the National University of Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires (2011); the 11th International Symposium on Antarctic Earth Sciences, Edinburgh (2011); and the Balance-Unbalance International Conference, Arizona (2015). In 2014 France Culture, INA-GRM and ABC Radio commissioned a one-hour radio work titled *Antarctica, An Absent Presence* based on the book he produced for Thames & Hudson (2016).

Shiro Takatani
Born in 1963, Takatani studied environmental design at Kyoto City University of Arts. He is one of the founding member of the artist collective Dumb Type, which was established in 1984. Besides Dumb Type, Takatani began a parallel solo career in 1998. In his solo activities, he has directed visuals for several theater productions, including Ryuichi Sakamoto's opera LIFE (Tokyo, Osaka, Japan 1999). He created his own performance *La*

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Chambre Claire (premiered at Theater der Welt, Germany in 2008), *CHROMA* (premiered at Biwako Hall Center for the Performing Arts Shiga, Japan in 2012) and *ST/LL* (premiered at Le Volcan – Scène Nationale du Havre, France in 2015). Takatani's works were presented, among others, Napoli Teatro Festival Italia, New National Theatre Tokyo, ZKM Karlsruhe Germany, Cité des sciences et de l'industrie Paris, Sharjah Biennial UAE. His first retrospective solo exhibition, *Camera Lucida*, was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in 2013. He also worked in collaboration with diverse artists such as Ryuichi Sakamoto, Fujiko Nakaya, Gisèle Vienne, among others. In 2015, Takatani received the 65th Prize of Fine Arts (Media Art) from the Ministry of Education of Japan.

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