



Matter's Whisper

Immersive exhibition - Japan 2023

November 9th - December 3rd

Daigo-ji temple Kyoto

Nina Fradet and Xavier Prevot

In collaboration with Yuri Urano and Keiji Okushima

Project

*French-Japanese Immersive collective exhibition mixing
crafts and digital arts.*

Place . Daigo-ji Buddhist temple, Kyoto, Japan

Exhibition . from November 9th to December 3rd, 2023

Opening event . Saturday 11th of November

Performances . Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th of November

Project holders

Xavier Prevot _ Digital arts and illustration, VJing, video
performances in live shows

https://www.instagram.com/x_humungus/

Nina Fradet _ Visual arts and craftsmanship. Conception and
realization of works in woodworking and Takezaiku

https://www.instagram.com/hinn_studio

<https://hinnstudio.com/>

Artists in collaboration

Yuri Urano _ Osaka-based artist and composer of
electronic music and soundscapes

<http://yuri-urano.com/>

Keiji Okushima _ Glass artist from Biwa Lake

<https://www.facebook.com/jk094kilncast>

<https://www.instagram.com/jk094kilncast/>

Partners

Pivoto Workshop - Wood craftsmanship in Kyoto, attached to GENETO Tokyo-Kyoto architecture firm
<https://pivoto.info/>

With the support of

French-Japanese Sasakawa Foundation
<https://www.ffjs.org/>

The world cultural heritage Kyoto Daigo-ji Temple
<https://www.daigoji.or.jp/en/>

French Institute of Japan - Kansai/Kyoto
<https://www.institutfrancais.jp/kansai/>

Japan Legacy - Cultural mediation - international coordination
<https://www.japanlegacy.com/en>

Office of Design, Fashion and Crafts _ Paris
<https://www.bdmma.paris/>



Origin

Matter's whisper is an immersive exhibition project forming a dialogue between Japanese and French cultures through the valorization of ancestral know-how by the use of digital arts.

«The essence of beauty, its sensitive character, is the fineness, the repetition, the meticulousness, the texture of the material. It is thus possible to become fully aware of life, through matter as well as through the apparent technicality of things, reflecting the meticulousness of the human hand.»¹

The project has begun in 2020 during a two-month artistic residency at the Daigo-ji Buddhist temple in Kyoto, with the desire of the place to invite foreign artists to share the life of the monks within its walls. This experience was for us the opportunity to give birth to a common research project, based on a sensory approach of matter. This research rests on the desire to bring together two complementary artistic approaches. One, based on the exchange of the cabinet making with the takezaiku, led by Nina with Japanese craftsmen since 2015, and the other based on the materialization of the video image by contemporary mediums carried by Xavier.

This first residence was for us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the life of the temple by sharing the daily life of the monks and by taking part in the events which took place there. During this immersion, we got closer to Chiemi Ogura, master in Japanese basketry, who had transmitted to Nina a part of her know-how in takezaiku - Japanese bamboo basketry.

¹ ■ Richard Sennett _ *Ce que sait la main* 2010

We also met Keiji Okushima, a glass artist who worked with Xavier in a research on the diffraction of images projected by glass. Finally, our partnership with the woodcraft workshop Pivoto allowed us to carry out our research on materials and to build our prototypes throughout the residency.

Partially interrupted by the public health crisis, the process initiated during the residency was transformed into a research work based on the in-depth study of the themes and the mastery of the tools and materials carried by our project, which we conducted in France for two years.

Today, given this research and the enrichment of our links with our Japanese partners, we wish to make our project a reality in a collective immersive exhibition at the Daigo-ji temple by the meeting of our respective artistic fields, accessible to the inhabitants of Kyoto.

Project holders

Nina Fradet

Young craftswoman and visual artist, Nina focuses her work to raise awareness of the material. Heading for several years towards the building of a relationship between woodworking and takezaiku, her research has gradually been refined to find its essence in the exercise of the line and the consciousness of the gestures to give it life. Fascinated by the meeting of the arts, Nina naturally builds bridges between design, technique and visual arts in her work, sometimes drawn, sometimes sculpted in space. This curiosity for the creative energy generated by encounters leads her today to open her research towards other fields of application than the decorative arts, in the same will to expose this fragile beauty of the worked matter.

Nina began her studies in applied arts with a two-year degree in interior design and set design. She later turned to working with materials with a bachelor in cabinet making at Boulle school, then a training in takezaiku at TASK university in Kyoto. After graduating, she continued to enrich her technique alongside various craftsmen and designers, working in France as well as a year in Iceland and then a year in Japan, before launching her independent business through Arts and Crafts studio HINN in 2020.

For the Matter's Whisper project, Nina Fradet focuses on the creation of large sculptural volumes in solid wood, woven using traditional Japanese bamboo basketry techniques. The interweaving of the wood's lines is designed to create a dialogue with the immateriality of light and video through the projected shadows that emerge. She is also working with Xavier on the immersive set design for the exhibition.



Xavier Prevot

As a young video artist and VJ, Xavier has been working for several years on a polymorphous research around the image. Rooted in illustration as a means of condensing narrative elements into singular temporal fragments, this research later led him to the animated image and then to the 3D medium. In a growing interest for the video image as an infinitely alterable material, he is now doing research on the processes of digital and analog image generation. Because of the demands of its approach and its limitations, this medium represents for him a winding route to the symbolic languages of the unconscious, like the navigation routes in the imaginary underground that Chris Marker spoke of.

*With a background in Applied Arts and then a stay at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble, Xavier then turned to studies in directing at the FACTORY center and then to a training in video image professions at the Center for Professional Training in Performing Arts Techniques. His career has taken him to write and design scenography for several plays, including *Le sommeil des machines* during a residency at the collective space Lamartine, and to become an active member of the "Noir Vidéo" collective in Paris, focusing on Vjing and digital arts.*

Xavier Prevot, creator of the video media to be shown during the exhibition, works on capturing macroscopic images generated in real time at the very heart of the installation. He will engage in several performances to enable visitors to witness the image-creation process up close, blurring the scales of perception between the macroscopic and the infinitesimal. He is also working with Nina to create the immersive set design for the exhibition.



Artists in collaboration

Yuri Urano

Japanese electronic music artist and composer Yuri Urano hails from Osaka, Japan. As an interdisciplinary creator, her work circulates and extends across mediums, unable to be confined to a single form, but constantly retaining its forward-looking vision. Yuri's output includes electronic recordings and vocal arrangements, as well as audiovisual collaborations, installations and augmented reality experiences.

His early musical work revolved around a wide variety of techno, liberated from genre conventions. More recently, his production has also moved towards ambient arrangements. Seeking to exorcise the ghosts of the machine, all his productions harbor an emotional intensity that is deeply felt by the listener while floating in the air one breathes in the club.

The collaboration with Yuri Urano is designed to harmonize the entire installation by creating a soundscape in keeping with the positioning of Matter's whisper. The experience of ambient electronic music will guide visitors on their wanderings, bringing with it that emotional imagination that only music is capable of creating when it infiltrates us. As well as composing music, Yuri will be creating real-time performances at evening events, interacting with Xavier's video performances in an instinctive exchange around the abstraction of matter.



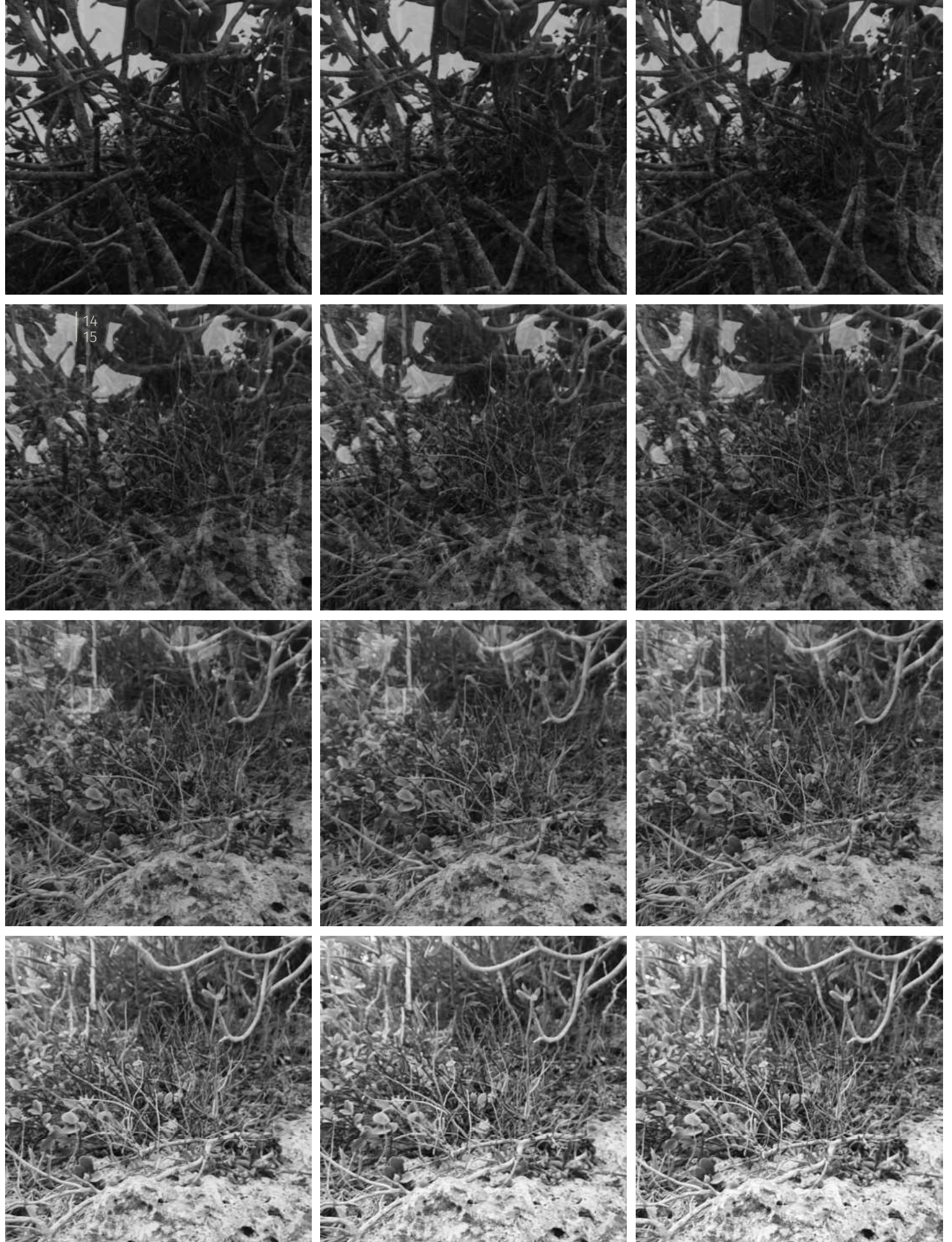
Keiji Okushima

Japanese glass artist Keiji Okushima lives and works between the mountains and Lake Biwa, near Kyoto in Japan's Shiga prefecture. His works are inspired by the richness of nature. He makes hand-blown glass pieces and cast molded glass artworks. Since establishing himself as an independent glass artist in 2010 after working for several glass workshops and Kimono dye workshop, Keiji Okushima has organized solo and group exhibitions throughout Japan, and has exhibited in Taiwan, Korea, China, Hong Kong and America.

"I create my works with an emphasis on glass material. There's the outer form of the object and its inner world, which speaks of the contrasts that constitute it: solidity and fluidity, refraction and reflection of light. I notice that some conflicting elements exist simultaneously in glass. There's such a magic of light in glass. I continue to challenge myself, to explore and exploit the charm of this material. I try to create works that exist beyond time."

The collaboration with Keiji Okushima was created with the aim of nourishing the installation with another form of traditional know-how, while at the same time finding a new way of working with materials. Blown, hand-formed or enamelled glass, his works are designed to enhance the woven sculptures and video projections through the diffraction of light rays that pass through them.





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1. *Robinson*. Experimental short film. Process of abstraction from superimposed images of slow-motion plant forms, Xavier Prevot, Ishigaki-Jima, Okinawa, 2019

Matter's Whisper

Presentation

« In all things that live are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life but source of beauty. »¹

Matter's whisper, or the murmur of matter, crystallizes in our eyes the essence of our approach. How could matter express itself? How to perceive the sensitive character of an inert subject? It is by naming this paradox that the project begins, in the way of an enigma to guide the visitor towards an encounter with the matter.

To speak of the murmur of matter is for us to speak of what becomes of the material worked outside its finality as a functional object or symbolic work. This listening of the murmur can occur by considering the material, raw or worked, in its intimate forms beyond its simple external aspect, reasoned and conceptualized. It is the simplicity of this approach that makes listening complex, in that it consists of an attempt to strip away our usual ways of observing, in order to try to question the visitor on what an object or a fragment of matter says about the world. To speak about the whisper of the matter is to try to show the subtle relation which links this fragment to the hand which worked it, to the culture from which it comes as well as to the rest of the world by the traces which it carries in itself.

Composed with a Japanese aesthetic in mind, Matter's whisper calls for a full appreciation of the irregularities of matter, of the infinitesimal and of detail. The project is an invitation for the visitor to meditate on his ordinary environment by diverting its forms in a sensory approach, outside of any figuration or intellectualization.

¹ ■ John Ruskin _ The nature of gothic, 1853

This murmur of the matter is drafted under the shape of an immersive ephemeral installation, in which the public will be able to wander in direct contact with the matter. Our approach is based on ancestral craft techniques in dialogue with the language of the digital image, in order to achieve a mutual enrichment through the use of culturally different techniques, in the spirit of *Mingei* as defined by Soetsu Yanagi.

With a view to imbuing the exhibition with resonances between French and Japanese cultures, *Matter's Whisper* aims to be nourished by the work of several Japanese artistic collaborators. The participation of other artists in the project enriches the fields of the sensory universe we wish to establish. Moreover, in our view, this exchange, with all its unknowns and surprises, enriches the whole creative process, giving it a new dimension through the opportunity for dialogue between different inspirations and techniques, beyond our respective cultures. This grouping of distinct creative fields is part of a desire to move towards a synthesis of the arts, as supported by Charlotte Perriand at her group exhibition in Tokyo in 1955.

As an adjunct to this collective installation, *Matter's whisper* will promote the transmission of the artisanal techniques of cabinetmaking and *takezaiku* on which the project is built. This sharing of know-how will take concrete form in the transfer of the *Awaseru* seat's manufacturing techniques to partner company *Pivoto*. This work, a constructed and functional object, will be seen as the birth of a technique at the crossroads of two cultural heritages. It will be presented in advance of the exhibition to mark this transition towards an abstract application of the technique, which will be reflected in the installation. Built in *Hinoki* by the *Pivoto* workshop, *Awaseru* will be stamped *Hors Commerce* and donated to the *Daigo-ji* temple as a token of artistic cultural dialogue.



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1 . *Awaseru* low seat, Nina Fradet, 2021



Immersive installation and performances

Matter's Whisper is designed to take visitors on a journey through a living, immersive installation, punctuated by a host of live performances. This approach involves blurring the boundary between the work and the walking space, which becomes its continuation. The aim is to encourage visitors to approach the installation through their senses, with a heightened sensitivity to the unknown.

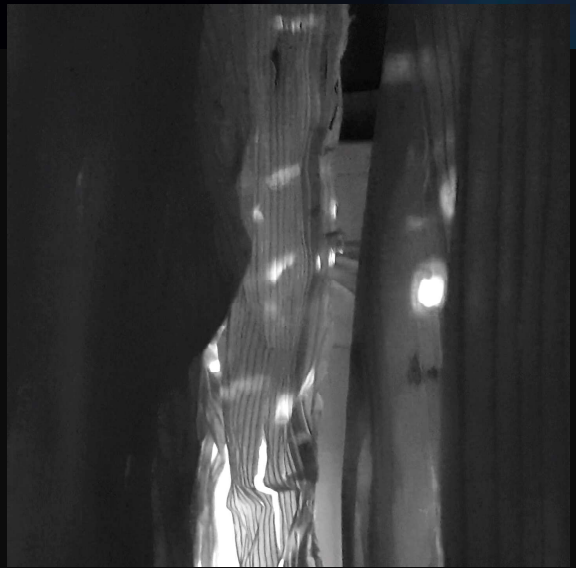
The installation will be divided into several zones, each of which will be revealed and concealed as the visitor progresses. A language in its own right at the heart of the installation, light will guide the viewer as he moves through it, revealing or suggesting shapes and materials. The use of light will be minimal, starting with a totally black space, with the successive addition of light sources on the elements destined to be revealed.

The exhibition at Daigo-ji temple will be punctuated by several sound and visual performances. As an extension of the installation, these will enable visitors, on specific evenings, to witness in real time the composition of video images by Xavier Prevot in an exchange with Yuri Urano's musical performance.

This dreamlike journey invites us to appreciate the unexpectedness of improvising with music and video, and to discover the sensitive gestures that develop in the relationship between artist and medium. The Matter's Whisper installation becomes a living object in its own right, evolving in resonance with its own universe under the gaze of the visitor.



1. Performance de Yuri Urano en collaboration avec Manami Sakamoto lors du festival Mutek, Tokyo, 2020
2. Hinoki copal experiments and light projections, Xavier Prevot and Nina Fradet, Daigo-ji Temple, 2020

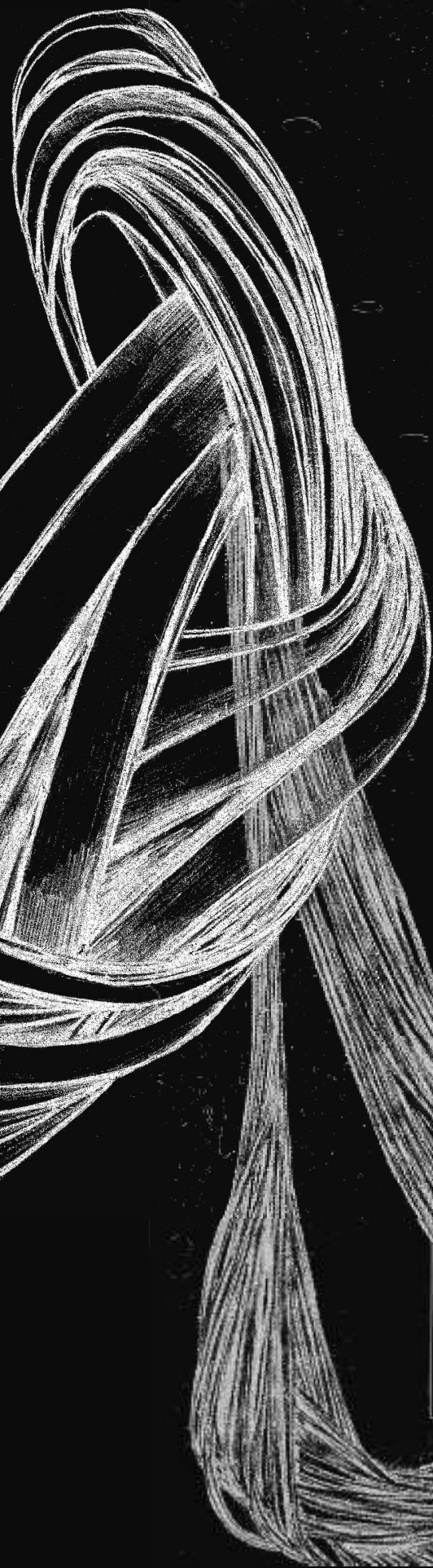


Sculptural volumes

The installation's central works belong to the sculptural field, and will transform the stroll into a journey into the heart of an organic, protean structure. These sculptures will consist of large volumes with organic lines, giving rhythm to the organization of the room. They appear as abstract forms, yet are built on organized rhythms derived from takezaiku motifs. Floating above the floor, rooted to the ceiling or anchored to the ground, these sculptures will be arranged in such a way as to obliterate all spatial reference points, impregnating the space with their undulations.

Wood, made light by the intertwining of its lines, will harmonize with the immateriality of light, giving rise to shadows with regular, abstract patterns. These volumes blend with the space in a way that erases tools and techniques in favor of the material itself.





1. Sketches of braided patterns,, Nina Fradet, 2022
2. Sketches of sculptural volumes in an exhibition space, Nina Fradet, 2022

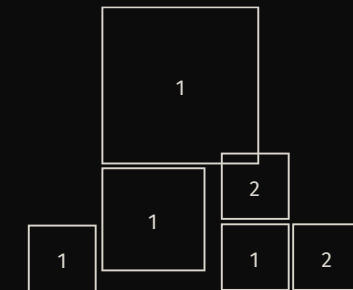
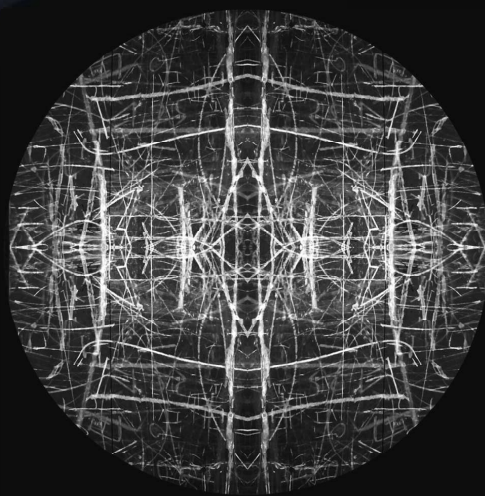


Digital creation

Through the tools employed, the video medium will materialize abstract organic forms in constant evolution, echoing the materials and weaving processes used in the installation's sculptures. These forms will be programmed to evolve in relation to takezaiku gestures and motifs. At the heart of the Matter's Whisper installation, the projected image-language will be designed to resonate in the space as a source of light itself, whether it extends over a projection surface or beyond in the form of reflections to spark the visitor's imagination.

The images broadcast by the video medium will be generated in real time using two complementary processes. A space will be created to capture live macroscopic images via a camera filming a series of materials, objects and light reflections on water or glass. A program for generating synthetic images in real time will be added in parallel to the camera images, playing with superimpositions and overlaps. Without ever repeating itself, this evolutionary process will allow the video to appear as a constantly fluctuating composition, influenced by the image coming from the camera, the music or the movements of the visitors.





1. Video fragments from filmed water reflections and rotoscoped animations of weaving gestures, Xavier Prevot, Kyoto, 2020
2. *The language of dreams*, filmed images of engravings on temple Toris, Xavier Prevot, Daigo-ji, 2020



Matter's Whisper is part of a long-term collaborative project combining our respective skills, with a view to applying them in a variety of contexts. An exhibition at Daigo-ji will mark the first step in this process, as we experiment with our creations for the Japanese public. For both of us, this country represents the starting point for our collaboration, as well as an aesthetic influence at the heart of our artistic practices.

« The great question of substance and form is this: does matter come first, already made, on its way to discovering a form into which it can be incorporated afterwards? Or does the artist's entire creative effort consist of an endeavor to inform the material in such a way that it actually becomes the authentic substance of a work of art ? »¹

If Matter's Whisper is the culmination of our current creative process, positive feedback from both the public and the host venue would confirm our desire to continue the project, with installations in Tokyo, Okinawa, France and elsewhere, should the opportunity arise. The diversification of the locations in which the installation could be set up would then represent as many possibilities for collaboration with local artists, allowing the project to live on in the logic of a constantly evolving cultural dialogue.

In addition, Matter's whisper represents a rare and singular opportunity to bring together fine crafts and the digital arts in a French-Japanese cultural exchange within a Buddhist temple listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This encounter is in line with the Daigo-ji temple's desire to diversify the events taking place within its walls,

1 ■ John Dewey, *L'art comme expérience*, p.189

with a view to enhancing its national and international cultural influence. The opening up of this place of worship to artistic practices marks an opportunity to experiment with new forms of dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity, through mutual enrichment and an emphasis on the shared values of art and spirituality. The immersion we were fortunate enough to experience, like the one we wish to share with the public, thus characterizes the value of the attention it is possible to pay to one's immediate environment.

In this respect, the joint action of the various stakeholders and institutions involved in the project supports the long-term establishment of an artistic residency program at the heart of Daigo-ji temple. Through this exhibition, we hope to perpetuate a Franco-Japanese artistic exchange in an immersive setting.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all our partners and collaborators for their trust and support in making this artistic exchange a reality.

Matter's whisper

Nina Fradet and Xavier Prévot
In collaboration with Yuri Urano and Keiji Okushima



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