

Hiraki Sawa

(Ishikawa, Japan, 1977)

After leaving Japan to train as a visual artist in London, Hiraki Sawa began his path in video in the early 2000s, focusing on the creation of little domestic and imaginary worlds, miniature cosmoses full of people, exotic animals and objects that come to life between one room of the house and the next. Sawa sets this production largely in his own flat, transforming the most banal details of the furnishing in the scenography of his representations: the kitchen table, the crumpled bedsheets, the sink, the keys of the piano and the fibres of the carpet may be turned into roads, dunes, lakes and forests to be crossed. His is an innocent and infantile imagery, a child's play of make-believe, pretending that something is in fact something else. And yet the videos by the Japanese artist, shot in black and white, slow and nostalgic, bring together a more mature reflection around the themes of migration, bewilderment and the relationship that may be established with objects by virtue of their emotional charge.

His fascination with aeroplanes, clear from a major group of works from his early period, is rooted for example in his childhood memories but also from his own personal biography as an expat in a faraway country and one culturally very different from his homeland, and as a contemporary artist whose work requires him to stay away from home for long periods on end. In *Dwelling* (2002) and in the video in the collection *Airliner* (2003), we see a group of small planes take off, fly and land in various parts of the home, perched on furniture which has been creatively transformed to serve as landing strips and airport terminals. The way in which the aircraft shift from the table to the radiator, from the living room to the bathroom or from the kitchen to the window evokes our everyday routes through the domestic space and invites us to rediscover the power of the imagination within the silence of the four walls. In Sawa's videos, the adventure of the journey takes place inside a home scenario, where *wanderlust* is forced to reckon with claustrophobia.

The other work in the collection, *Migration* (2003) is set in the same flat, but in the place of the planes, we may see a silent caravan made up people and animals wandering aimlessly along the surfaces of the empty house. It's interesting to note how Sawa borrowed these figures from the pioneering studies of Eadweard Muybridge on the photography of movement, ultimately managing to bring them back to life before our eyes, thanks to the use of digital software applied during the editing phase.

RA