

KOKI TANAKA

VULNERABLE HISTORIES (AN ARCHIVE)



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CATEGORIES: [Books](#), [Monographs & Artists' Books](#)

SPECIFICATIONS:

English

Publication: July 2018

ISBN: 978-3-03764-530-7

Hardcover, 235 x 175 mm

Pages: 120

Pictures B&W / Color: 60

Price: CHF 38, EUR 32, GBP 26, USD 39.95

A CASE STUDY OF GLOBAL SOCIAL ISSUES

Fully documenting Koki Tanaka's latest project "Vulnerable Histories (A Road Movie)" (2018) conceived on the occasion of his exhibition at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, this publication focuses on a pressing issue from the artist's native country—the mutual incomprehension and mistrust between Zainichi Koreans and ethnic Japanese—to plead for vigilance when it comes to racism and discrimination. Reacting to the urgent problems facing global society such as immigration, xenophobia, and nationalism, the project centers on a series of conversations in various settings between two protagonists—the Zainichi Korean Woohi Chung and the Swiss of Japanese descent Christian Hofer—who have not met before. The artist's camera follows them traveling to several locations in Tokyo to grapple with questions about (their own cultural) identity and how to take a stand against the simplistic and selective worldviews of racist groups.

How do communities organize the way we live together? This is the question around which the work of the Japanese performance artist has revolved since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. He looks for answers by staging participatory actions that he documents in photographs and videos. His practice is based on the observation that humans exposed to exceptional situations and the associated disruption of everyday routines coalesce into short-lived micro-communities.

The book brings together different layers of the project, combining the postal conversation by Woohee and Christian in which they introduce themselves to each other, image material from Tanaka's film and documentation, as well as reflective texts by the artist on the project. This is accompanied by texts from Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst director Heike Munder, art historian Elsa Himmer, and Tong-Hyon Han, an associate professor of sociology at the Japan Institute of the Moving Image in Tokyo and expert in the field of the ethnicity of Zainichi Koreans in Japan.

Koki Tanaka (b. 1975) lives and works in Kyoto, Japan. His work has been presented around the world, with recent exhibitions at the Kunsthhaus Graz (2017), the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle, Berlin (2015), the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2014), the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto and Tokyo (2013), the Museum of Art, Seoul (2013), the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2012), and elsewhere. Tanaka represented Japan at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 and was Deutsche Bank's Artist of the Year in 2015. In 2017, he participated in Skulptur Projekte Münster and the 57th Venice Biennale.

Published on the occasion of the exhibition of the artist at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (August 25–November 11, 2018).