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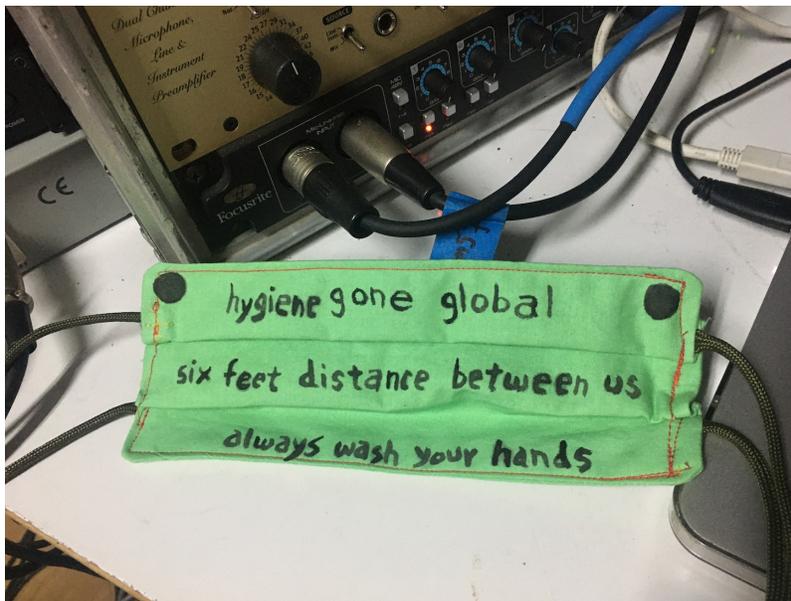
Send This Sound Artist Your Quarantine Haikus

Alan Nakagawa is currently accepting submissions for a sound collage titled “Social Distancing, Haiku and You.”



by Elisa Wouk Almino

April 6, 2020



Alan Nakagawa, “Social Distancing Haiku” image (2020) (image courtesy the artist (c) Alan Nakagawa)

LOS ANGELES — As museums **have closed their doors** due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they’ve had to figure out other ways to engage their audiences. In the past few weeks, there have been plenty of **virtual exhibitions** (**some more successful than others**) as well as various videos and online lectures to enjoy. Over at the Orange County Museum of Art (OCMA), senior curator Cassandra Coblenz had the exciting idea to develop a series of sound-based performances that audiences can experience from home.

On March 24, Coblentz emailed artist [Alan Nakagawa](#) to ask if he might want to contribute. They had a FaceTime meeting the next day. Nakagawa pitched the idea of “a participatory haiku project,” in which anyone can compose their own haiku, record it, and then send it to the artist. Coblentz “ran it up the flag pole and OCMA said ‘yes’ and ‘go,’” Nakagawa relayed in an email to Hyperallergic.

The artist is already at work and is accepting submissions through Thursday, April 16. The resulting sound collage, titled “Social Distancing, Haiku and You,” will be released on IGTV one week later, on April 23, and will be indefinitely accessible on OCMA’s website.

When I asked Nakagawa why he chose the haiku form, he said, “It’s a forgiving platform.” The 5-7-5 syllable format gives you structure while also allowing you to be “nonsensical” and “surreal” at the same time. “The power of the haiku is how it inherently is as much about what’s not said than from what’s said,” he elaborated.

Consider the haikus that Nakagawa has already received for his project, like this one from Elon Schoenholz:

Fragrance of citrus
Blossoming around the yard
We don’t venture out

Or this one from Malika Middlebrooks:

I am 6 feet from
insanity, but I still
have TP and wine

While these are expressions of individual circumstances, many of us will likely recognize ourselves in these haikus (though some have more TP than others).

“What we are all experiencing is a paradigm shift,” Nakagawa said. It’s a deeply “collective experience” that he hopes to convey by mixing all of our haikus into one soundscape.

This is not the first time that Nakagawa has used haikus in his work. In 2016, when he was an artist resident at the LA Department of Transportation, he did a participatory street sign project in which **36 haiku signs were installed** on bike lane signs along Venice Boulevard. Nakagawa’s projects are also often communal by nature, including the **six field trips** he organized with OCMA just last year, in which he invited the public to join him on tours of Little Saigon in Orange County.

“Social Distancing, Haiku and You” will be as much an outlet for our pent-up feelings as a record of this difficult time. In the meantime, I’ll leave you with the wise words of participant Celeste Reynoso’s haiku:

In this pandemic
we all are safer at home
We heal and we grow

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