

# Tomita Toshiaki

## *Spring in Desert*

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Toshiaki Tomita's work is an eye-opening opportunity to reconsider collaboration, a new direction in contemporary art, as a methodology and to consider the implication of his calling into question his identity as an "artist" in relation to others.

How does Tomita view collaboration and why does he question the role of the artist as privileged kind of actor? Tomita once happened to notice. In some graffiti that had caught his eye, the apparently meaningless letters "AMESme". The plane of the graffiti was the product of many different hands in a process of ceaseless change. In it he discerned a diachronic chain of collaboration by an unknown number of actor/artist and decided to intervene in that chain himself. Altering the puzzling word slightly, he produced the phrase "AFTER me", which could be read as "behind me," "subsequent to me" or "pursuing me". But who is "me" in that brief message (the word "me" having been in the graffiti before Tomita intervened)? The indeterminacy of subject is perhaps the key to reading Tomita's collaborative activities in the arts.

"There is a spring inside you". Through the conversation between Tomita and his artist friend Sawanobori kyoko, a water color was painted by Sawanobori. This drawing of a spring was shown at the entrance of his exhibition space. Tomita began his journey after encountering this work. But during his travels he had many new discoveries which led him back to the place which was depicted in the drawing. The many drawings Tomita executed after this journey depicted aspects to her drawing, and he realized that everything was actually already derived from this drawing by Sawanobori. "Evoke something from inside of dialogue, and let it overflow again". In this eternal recurring vision, the subjectivity of the artist is given away. The space of collaboration, which Tomita moves towards, is the space which can only emerge through dialogue with other. The position of the artist as an individual does not exist in the moment before the collaboration. And the more the artist, Toshiaki Tomita, tries to investigate his own identity, the more his attitude comes to describe an anonymous, or general personality of the "artist".