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Friday, Nov. 13, 2009

ART BRIEF

"Marcus Coates: Daiwa Foundation Art Prize Winner"

By DONALD EUBANK

Tomio Koyama Gallery
Closes Nov. 21

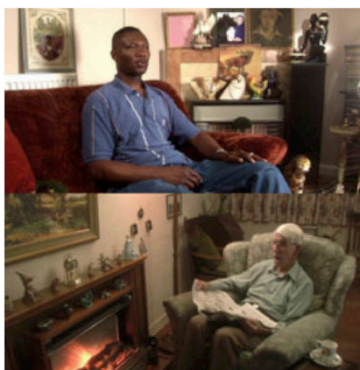
When asked why he considers his work "art," Marcus Coates says, "Because no one else would do this," pointing to his installation "Dawn Chorus" (2007) at Tomio Koyama Gallery.

It's a fair point — the video piece that took three years to complete presents individuals singing bird songs that Coates and wildlife sound recordist Geoff Sample collected one dawn in Northumberland. After slowing the songs down 16 to 20 times, people were asked to mimic them, then Coates sped the footage back up, making the singers appear to act like birds.

The artist's love of nature is the jumping of point for his work, and his dedication is unusual at times. Having taken a weekend course in shamanism, Coates often does performances in which he speaks with animal spirits to find answers to problems troubling communities. The shamanism, though, is really just a method to reach beyond the usual boundaries of artistic practice.

"I wanted to expand my role in society and challenge myself by answering something," says Coates, and on Nov. 9, he did just that, tackling the question "Why is swine flu spreading around the world?" in a performance at Roppongi Hills Academy.

The 38-year-old artist is in town as the winner of the first Daiwa Foundation Art Prize, for which he competed with 900 other British artists for the solo exhibition at the Tomio Koyama Gallery in Kiyosumi, Tokyo. Also showing at Koyama is "Intelligent Design" (2008), a video of two male Galapagos tortoises — their heads eerily similar to human skulls — emitting heartbreaking cries as they repeatedly try to mate but fail.



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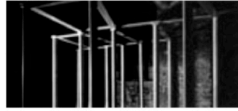
Humorous and unpretentious, Coates' works cuts through the layers of culture that have hidden our essential being: "In everything in modern society that we deem as artificial, we can find a natural parallel. . . . We always end up at the same points, doing the same things despite ourselves."

For more information, visit www.tomiokoyamagallery.com

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- ☐ Regime change (*seiken kōtai*)
- ☐ 25% reduction (25% *sakugen*) of greenhouse gasses
- ☐ Operations to screen government spending (*jigyō shiwake*)
- ☐ Pork-barrel spending (*baramaki*)
- ☐ "to Venus in a UFO" (*UFO de kinsei ni*)
- ☐ Donations from deceased donors (*kojin kenkin*)

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