

# ST PAUL St Gallery welcomes our 2014 Research Fellow Sakiko Sugawa

**Sakiko Sugawa: a town hall meeting**

**Thursday 10 April, 6pm**

**WE230, AUT University City Campus**



A cultural worker and thinker, Sakiko Sugawa comes to ST PAUL St Gallery from Kyoto, where she co-founded and continues to work for Social Kitchen, 21st Century Social & Cultural Center. Facilitated by a group called 'hanare', Social Kitchen has been in operation since 2010. Social Kitchen aims to serve as a public place where people with diverse backgrounds can gather, engage directly with pressing social issues, develop and practice the ideas and skills to transform society in more just, fair-minded ways. Sugawa has also initiated projects in New York (USA), Biella (Italy), Yaffa (Israel), and Perth (Australia).

Sugawa's praxis is underpinned by long-term projects with an emphasis on collaboration. These typically take shape around social relationships, forms, structures and places that correspond to specific political and social changes. Through these small-scale projects Sugawa's work aligns with resistance to the impact of local and global injustices, and to inequalities created by capitalism. Given that our way of living and thinking is to a great extent dictated by the same capitalist structure we are trying to escape from, the process of realising such projects is inevitably full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and relies on strategies of negotiation. It is in this area of everyday negotiations that Sugawa is interested in engaging, as a situation where a cultural worker is able to effect modest but significant change.

For her Fellowship project Sugawa will work with the concept of 'accompaniment', as outlined by Staughton Lynd in *Accompanying: Pathways to Social Change* (2012): 'There's an element of mystery, of openness, in accompaniment. I'll go with you and support you on our journey wherever it leads. I'll keep you company and share your fate for a while. And by "a while," I don't mean a little while. Accompaniment is much more about sticking with a task until it's deemed completed by the person or people being accompanied, rather by the accompanateur.'

Framing this event as a 'town hall meeting', Sugawa sees it as an integral first step of her research project. She is interested in using it not only as an opportunity to introduce her work, but as a forum to hear from her audience, to discuss pressing issues faced by people in Auckland, and how change might be enacted as a whole community.

ST PAUL St Gallery's inaugural Research Fellow, Sugawa will be in Auckland from 8 April until early July. The 2014 ST PAUL St Research Fellowship is the first in a series open dialogue based projects, and aims to investigate the role of the cultural worker as a contributing member in community groups working for social justice, environmental issues and equal urban development.