

**PROJECT FOR A MASQUERADE (HIROSHIMA) –
FROM HARD GRAFT TO HAPPY ACCIDENT**

Statement by Simon Starling

Simon Starling, „Project for a
Masquerade (Hiroshima)“,
Filmstill / film still, 2010



The invitation to contribute some thoughts on the subject of artistic research comes on the back of a sudden spate of such requests from a variety of sources; a request to develop a “research profile” for a group of young Swiss art students, to speak to a group of doctoral students in Leeds, to attend a conference on “knowledge production” in London, etc. Research is clearly the topic of the moment and not just within the confines of education either – an indication perhaps of the primacy that education itself has within contemporary art production and discourse. In each case my response is to deal directly with my own work, to offer up a specific work that through its very structure is able to elaborate on my approach to the process of research. In this case I would propose to do this through a recently completed film that is in itself a proposition for a theatrical reworking of a 15th century Japanese Noh play, “Eboshi-ori”.

Shown for the first time at the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art in January this year, the film proposes the performance of a play that collapses Eboshi-ori, the ancient Japanese tale of a young noble boy disguising himself to escape his troubled past, onto the Cold War saga that evolved around Henry Moore’s 1965 sculpture “Nuclear Energy” – installed at Chicago University to mark the birthplace of both the nuclear age and the so called “Manhattan Project”, Enrico Fermi’s first self-sustained nuclear reaction – Pile No. 1. Each role in the Japanese original is taken by one of a new cast assembled through a web of connections that all lead back to Moore’s monument. While the film, “Project for a Masquerade (Hiroshima)” has emerged as part of an on-going interest in, and redeployment of, Moore’s work which began in Toronto with the making of “Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)”, 2006–08, (itself a Cold War drama involving rampant