

ARTxt.

Revista de Experimentación Artística

その夜、テクノロジーは自分は人間だと錯覚した
人間は自分がテクノロジーだと錯覚した

2024 3 Especial Japón

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Especial Japón

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その夜、テクノロジーは自分
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ARTxt es una revista digital científico-académica de periodicidad anual que tiene por objeto difundir la investigación generada en el ámbito de las Bellas Artes, así como la docencia y la práctica del arte actual. ARTxt nace con la vocación de crear una plataforma donde investigadores, profesores y profesionales de la teoría y práctica del arte puedan divulgar los resultados de sus investigaciones, así como encontrar un foro permanentemente abierto a cualquier temática vinculada al estudio, investigación, reflexión, debate, innovación y experiencia del arte contemporáneo y actual.

La revista incluye entre sus apartados varias secciones:

Sección 1: ArTtxt. Artículos de investigación. Todos los artículos de investigación publicados se habrán sometido a un proceso de revisión basado en un análisis previo de los editores y la revisión por pares ciegos.

Sección 2: LabTtxt. Proyectos del Laboratorio de Experimentación de la Facultad de Bellas Artes de Málaga.

Sección 3: MixTtxt. Comentarios y reseñas bibliográficas, de autores o de obras, críticas de exposiciones y entrevistas. Eventualmente se realizan números extraordinarios o monográficos que aglutinan textos sobre un tema concreto, actividades o eventos de carácter artístico o investigador en el ámbito que nos ocupa, y que están vinculados a la Facultad de Bellas Artes de Málaga. Partimos de la base de que la inclusión de monográficos es un incentivo para expandir nuestra visibilidad, ampliar el número de autores que participan en la revista y mejorar nuestro impacto, así como sirve para impulsar la investigación que se desarrolla en la Facultad de Bellas Artes de Málaga.

ESTADÍSTICAS EN EL NÚMERO 3 (2024):

Artículos recibidos sección ArTtxt: 3

Artículos recibidos sección LabTtxt: 0

Artículos recibidos sección MixTtxt: 0

Artículos aceptados: 3

Tasa de aceptación de originales: 100 %

Apertura institucional de los autores (entidad editora): 100 %

Apertura institucional de los autores (Consejo de Redacción): 100 %

Apertura institucional del Comité Científico: 100 %

Apertura institucional del Consejo de Redacción: 50 %

Arbitraje científico externo (revisores/as externos/as al Consejo de Redacción): 100 %

Arbitraje científico externo (revisores/as externos/as a la entidad editora): 100 %

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Aspectos generales

La revista ARTxt, editada por el Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Málaga, es una revista de periodicidad anual, publica trabajos originales, realizados con rigor metodológico y que supongan una contribución a la investigación en el campo del arte actual, sin perder de vista la multidisciplinariedad que caracteriza este ámbito del conocimiento. Se valorará con especial atención aquellos trabajos que sean producto de proyectos de investigación financiados.

Presentación de los trabajos

Los trabajos deben ser inéditos y no estar en proceso de revisión o publicación por ningún otro medio. Estarán escritos en español (ver punto 4 de estas directrices) o en inglés. Serán presentados en formato Word para Windows o Mac OS, sin datos que identifiquen al autor, en el formato de plantilla que se incluye en el punto 5 de estas directrices, y enviarlos a través de la aplicación OJS en la dirección: <https://revistas.uma.es/index.php/ARTXT>

El/la autor/a debe registrarse en el sistema y seguir los pasos que se le vayan indicando en el mismo. Es obligatoria la introducción de metadatos en español e inglés (título, resumen y palabras clave), y el código ORCID. Para todo ello dispone de un tutorial en la barra de navegación.

Junto con el artículo también se incluirá un archivo aparte donde figure el nombre completo del autor o autores, (con un solo apellido o, si prefieren, con los dos apellidos unidos por un guión), el código ORCID (si están registrados), un breve currículum —máximo 200 palabras— de cada uno y la dirección, correo electrónico, organismo y teléfono de contacto (del responsable, en caso de ser varios ([Descargar plantilla aquí](#))). Se incluirá la financiación del trabajo, si la hubiese, tanto en el apartado específico del formulario para el envío del artículo, como en el propio artículo en el apartado de agradecimientos, indicando la referencia completa del mismo (Nombre de la agencia y el código del proyecto).

Cómo asegurar una revisión ciega:

Para asegurar la integridad de la revisión ciega del envío es necesario evitar que la identidad de los autores y de los revisores sea conocida.

Esto involucra a los autores, editores y revisores (que cargan documentos como parte de su revisión) que revisan si los siguientes pasos fueron considerados para el texto y las propiedades del archivo:

- 1 Los autores del documento han eliminado sus nombres del texto, utilizando "Autor" y año en las referencias y en las notas al pie de página, en vez del nombre del autor, el título del artículo, etc.
- 2 Con los documentos de Microsoft Office, la identidad del autor debe ser eliminada también de la propiedades del archivo (ver bajo Archivo en Word), pulsando sobre lo siguiente, comenzando por Archivo en el menú principal de la aplicación Microsoft: Archivo > Guardar Como > Herramientas (o Opciones en una Mac) > Seguridad > Eliminar información personal de las propiedades del archivo al guardar > Guardar.
- 3 Con PDFs, el nombre del autor debe ser eliminado también de las Propiedades del Documento encontradas bajo Archivo en el menú principal de Adobe Acrobat.

Revisión

Todos los trabajos seleccionados son sometidos a un proceso de revisión por pares (sistema "peer review" o "doble ciego"). Previamente, cuando se envía un manuscrito, los editores harán una revisión de los manuscritos, atendiendo a los siguientes criterios:

- Originalidad, actualidad y novedad.
- Relevancia para los campos que abarca la revista.
- Calidad metodológica, buena presentación y redacción.
- Que el artículo sea resultado de un proyecto de investigación financiado será valorado positivamente.
- Que ningún archivo contiene información identificativa de los autores
- Que el artículo no haya sido publicado antes en otro lugar.

A continuación, en un **plazo de 90 días** como máximo desde la fecha de recepción del artículo, el editor de la revista asignará a dos evaluadores externos que llevarán a cabo una revisión ciega del artículo (doble evaluación anónima). Durante el período de revisión del artículo, tanto los nombres de los autores como de los evaluadores serán anónimos.

Los evaluadores serán identificados por los editores de la revista, y serán investigadores con experiencia en sus respectivos campos. Se seleccionarán los evaluadores más adecuados de acuerdo con la petición recibida y la experiencia.

Los editores se encargarán de analizar los informes de los evaluadores e intercambiar opiniones con algunos miembros del consejo de redacción con el fin de tomar una decisión adecuada sobre si un artículo pudiese ser publicable o no.

Los editores revisarán todas las evaluaciones realizadas y contrastarán las notas de los evaluadores con el contenido del artículo antes de enviar las decisiones y los comentarios de los evaluadores a los autores.

En los casos en que los editores tengan dudas después del proceso de evaluación, se comprobará de nuevo la evaluación con algunos miembros del consejo editorial, de acuerdo con su área de especialización, con el fin de llegar a un acuerdo y una decisión sobre el manuscrito. En el caso de que el artículo no sea publicable se argumentará tal decisión al autor y se darán las informaciones necesarias para una modificación del mismo.

Los resultados de la evaluación se enviarán a los autores en un **plazo máximo de 3-4 meses** después de su recepción.

Una vez maquetado el trabajo, se enviará a los autores un borrador para que subsanen posibles errores que no afecten al contenido.

(Durante los periodos académicos no lectivos la gestión de los artículos recibidos quedará en suspenso hasta concluir dichos periodos).

Aceptación de los trabajos

Los artículos aceptados deben adaptarse al formato de la revista y serán respetados completamente, salvo que se detecten errores, en cuyo caso serán corregidos por la Redacción de la revista. El plazo para que los autores hagan las modificaciones y correcciones recomendadas por los revisores se establece en 15 días desde la comunicación por los editores. Los contenidos y opiniones expresadas son de responsabilidad exclusiva de los autores, y no comprometen la opinión y política editorial de la revista. Igualmente, se deberán respetar los principios éticos de investigación y publicación por parte de los autores. Si anteriormente ha sido publicado un artículo del autor o autores en la revista, el nuevo artículo no podrá ser enviado hasta transcurrido, como mínimo, un año

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Formatos de aportaciones

5.1. Sección ARTxt: Artículos de investigación

Los textos de esta sección son evaluados por evaluación de pares ciegos.

Los artículos tendrán una extensión entre 5.000 y 7.500 palabras (sin incluir resumen, palabras claves y referencias) y mantendrán la siguiente estructura: Título (en español e inglés); Resumen en español, con una extensión máxima de 100 palabras, seguido de las palabras clave (no más de 5 palabras), la traducción al inglés de dicho resumen (abstract), del título del artículo y de las palabras clave (key words) y el sumario. Si el artículo está escrito en inglés, se añadirá el resumen en español. No se incluirá el nombre del autor o autores ni ninguna referencia a los mismos en el texto del artículo. ([Descargar plantilla aquí](#)).

5.2. Sección LabTtxt: Proyectos del Laboratorio de Experimentación de la Facultad de Bellas Artes

Los textos de esta sección son evaluados y seleccionados por un Comité de Selección de proyectos de creación y/o experimentación artística en la Convocatoria anual del Laboratorio de Experimentación de la Facultad de Bellas Artes de la Universidad de Málaga.

Los textos tendrán una extensión entre 5.000 y 7.500 palabras (sin incluir resumen, palabras claves y referencias) y mantendrán la siguiente estructura: Título del proyecto (en español e inglés); Resumen en español, con una extensión entre 150 y 200 palabras, seguido de las palabras clave (no más de 5 palabras), la traducción al inglés de dicho resumen (abstract), del título del proyecto y de las palabras clave (key words) y el sumario. Si el texto está escrito en inglés, se añadirá el resumen en español. ([Descargar plantilla aquí](#)).

5.3. Sección MixTtxt.

Los textos de esta sección son evaluados y seleccionados por el Consejo de Redacción; no pasan por evaluación por pares ciegos.

ARTxt recibe reseñas inéditas de exposiciones relevantes, ferias de arte, festivales, entrevistas a profesionales destacados en el panorama artístico actual y/o publicaciones recientes. Las exposiciones no deben tener más de un año de antigüedad. Las reseñas de publicaciones deben contener la información bibliográfica completa del libro reseñado así como una imagen de la portada (Ver criterios para el envío de imágenes en el apartado 6 de estas normas).

Máximo 2.000 palabras de texto y 3 imágenes. ([Descargar plantilla aquí](#)).

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Aproximando Japón, solo un poco

JOAQUÍN IVARS

Universidad de Málaga (España)

Aproximando Japón, solo un poco

Para iniciar esta presentación me voy a permitir, más allá del formato académico al uso, hacer tres consideraciones previas respecto a su forma y contenido: primero, que tiene inevitable sesgo logístico un tanto personal, pero apenas entrevisto en su gestación, después mi presencia desaparece de inmediato; segundo que proviene de un histórico de vida y trabajo desde hace muchos años de diversas personas y agentes del mundo del arte; y, tercero, que no pretende ser exhaustiva en ningún sentido, sino apenas un breve, simple y humilde apunte, principalmente de carácter narrativo, que ayude a comprender el contexto en el que se ha fraguado la publicación que tienen en sus pantallas.

Además de esas consideraciones previas, esta aventura de hacer un número especial sobre el arte contemporáneo hecho en Japón para la revista ARTxt surge del cruce de la voluntad y de la casualidad, como suele suceder en casi todas las empresas en las que resulta estimulante colaborar. Y fruto de esa combinación entre casualidad y voluntad obtuve una estancia de un año en Japón (2023-2024) gracias a la Universidad de Málaga a través principalmente de su Vicerrectorado de Personal Docente e Investigador que ha gestionado las Ayudas de Recualificación del Sistema Universitario Español. Es proceloso e innecesario comentar todas las vicisitudes que conducen hasta esta última y más larga estancia en aquel país cuya primera visita tuvo lugar en 1998. De modo que, yendo al asunto principal, soy acogido por un año gracias a la Universidad Meiji, en concreto por el catedrático director del Yamamoto Lab, Toshiya Yamamoto, al que llego a través de Soga Takaaki, galerista y buen conocedor del panorama artístico japonés desde hace más de 40 que empezó su trayectoria y que ha continuado con diversos proyectos artísticos, entre ellos el de la Contemporary Art Factory localizada primero en Mukojima, Tokio, y actualmente trasladada a Kioto. Con esta publicación de ARTxt, ninguno de ellos, ni el profesor Yamamoto ni el galerista Soga, tienen conexión directa, pero es justo reconocer que sin ellos esta publicación no hubiese podido tener lugar.

Una vez establecido el contexto más inmediato gracias a estas dos personas, debo decir que fui estimulado por los directores de ARTxt para realizar este número especial y que fue algo sobrevenido a mi estancia. Acepté el reto con interés porque además de darse las condiciones infrecuentes que se estaban dando para un investigador y que podían propi-

ciar el número, ejerzo como redactor jefe de la publicación y por tanto me encontraba en la nada desdeñable obligación de aprovechar mis circunstancias personales para reforzar el avance de la publicación una vez más. Para eso contaba no solo con el ánimo de los directores (Jesús Marín y Silvia López) sino con el trabajo silencioso, pero muy presente y eficaz, de todo el equipo de una revista que da sus primeros pasos y necesita de todas las energías disponibles para seguir adelante.

Ante el reto y las confesables dudas —la ignorancia reconocida que me acompañaban para tratar el tema de modo relevante— decidí recurrir a diversas consultas de conocedores del ámbito del arte contemporáneo del actual Japón, pero especialmente a otra persona de reconocida trayectoria como es la galerista Yumiko Chiba de Yumiko Chiba Associates, a quien tuve la fortuna de conocer durante mi segunda estancia en 2001. La señora Chiba captó de inmediato las necesidades que yo le ponía sobre la mesa y fue tan generosa y diligente que rápidamente me puso en contacto con diversos investigadores e investigadoras para que pudiésemos formar un pequeño equipo de escritores que tuviesen entre sus principales objetivos una aproximación crítica al arte contemporáneo hecho en Japón en los últimos decenios, tanto mediante el estudio riguroso de artistas de distinto tipo y condición como de enfoques absolutamente distintos. La idea a la que llegué, y que compartí con los directores, era la de que, dada la imposibilidad de hacer una panorámica de la producción artística actual en Japón, realizáramos una suerte de labor de cata entresacando solo algunos aspectos parciales, en realidad muy parciales pero significativos y perfectamente estudiados por sus autores. De este modo, intentaríamos que los lectores se pudiesen hacer una idea de algunos aspectos de esa producción al tiempo que tratábamos de estimular su interés en acometer una mayor profundización por sus propios medios. Nunca nos ha cabido duda de que la escena artística japonesa muestra unas peculiaridades que deben ser difundidas en la medida de lo posible y que nuestra publicación solo podría aportar un granito de arena en el inmenso océano de información que se produce no solo dentro de los propios límites geopolíticos del país nipón sino allende sus fronteras.

Con estos mimbres empezamos a trabajar en la selección de autores para invitarlos a participar intentando que hubiese una representación generacional, de contenidos, de género, etcétera, de la mayor variedad posible, teniendo en cuenta las limitaciones de la publicación, que se acota con cuatro aportaciones por número. Ni que decir tiene que las agendas de los autores o autoras en ocasiones no coincidían con nuestras pretensiones, pero siempre contaba con el asesoramiento de Yumiko Chiba para generar el equipo que necesitábamos con el fin de que el número tuviese las características generales que pretendíamos.

Sería pretencioso por mi parte, e inabarcable para la revista, hacerme cargo de una suerte de introducción o resumen de cada artículo (estoy convencido de que ya cada autor ha tenido que hacer un esfuerzo ímprobo de ajuste de sus conocimientos para que encaje en el formato de la revista), así que solo diré al final unas palabras de los enfoques temáticos que nos parecieron convenientes después de que hayan sido presentados los protagonistas del número, cuyos textos han pasado el correspondiente filtro de revisión por pares ciegos. Una vez apuntadas las líneas generales, remito a los *abstracts* y a las palabras clave de

los escritores para una primera aproximación a cada uno de los artículos y posteriormente a la profundización a través de una lectura no siempre fácil, pero estimamos que decididamente enriquecedora.

En este número especial sobre el arte contemporáneo japonés, insisto que sin pretensiones ni panorámicas ni de especialización de contenidos, contamos con **Hiroki Yamamoto**, nacido en Chiba en 1986, profesor en el Kanazawa College of Art de Japón. Yamamoto se licenció en Ciencias Sociales en la Universidad Hitotsubashi de Tokio en 2010 y completó su máster en Bellas Artes en el Chelsea College of Arts (UAL) de Londres en 2013. En 2018, se doctoró en la Universidad de las Artes de Londres. Desde 2013 hasta 2018, trabajó en el Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (TRAIN) como investigador de posgrado. Tras trabajar en el Asia Culture Center (ACC) de Gwangju (Corea del Sur) como becario de investigación y en The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the School of Design como becario posdoctoral, fue profesor asistente en la Tokyo University of the Arts hasta 2020. Entre sus publicaciones figuran “The History of Contemporary Art: Euro-America, Japan, and Transnational” (Chuo Koron Sha, 2019), “Media and Culture in Transnational Asia: Convergences and Divergences” (Rutgers University Press, 2020), y “Thinking about Racism” (Kyowakoku, 2021).

Su artículo ha sido titulado por el autor AMATSUCHI KOSAKU: RECONSIDERING POSTWAR JAPANESE ART HISTORY FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGY. Varios ejes como el trabajo colectivo, la distancia respecto a los centros de toma de decisiones del arte contemporáneo en Japón y los contenidos ecológicos vertebran su aproximación teórica al grupo Amatsuchi Kosaku.

Por su parte, **Katsumata Ryo**, 1990, se licenció en la Universidad de Arte de Musashino. Su principal campo de investigación es la escultura moderna y contemporánea. Entre sus escritos figuran “Sculpture and Melancholy: The Frozen Moment in the Works of Mark Manders” (Bulletin of Musashino Art University 2021-no.52, Musashino Art University, 2022), “How Could We Sense “Absence”?” (Catálogo de la exposición “ab-sence/ac-ceptance”, Museo de Bellas Artes de Gifu, 2022), “Contemporary Sculpture” (Comet-tsushin, Suiseisha, 2022 *Artículo seriado), “The Entangled Sculpture of Toya Shigeo: Contact-Based Frameworks of Body and Language” (Toya Shigeo: Sculpture, T&M Projects, 2022 *El catálogo de la exposición “Toya Shigeo: Sculpture” en el Museo de Arte de la Prefectura de Nagano y el Museo de Arte Moderno de Saitama).

Su artículo, titulado AGAINST THE AS-IT-IS: AN INQUIRY INTO SCULPTURAL BODIES IN RECENT JAPAN, aborda las prácticas escultóricas contemporáneas en un contexto de interpretación de lo humano que cuestiona el naturalismo y el humanismo como condiciones de contorno “canónicas” en las que producir el encuentro con diversas problemáticas tanto disciplinares como sociales y tecnológicas.

De su perfil obtenemos que la Profesora en la Universidad de Artes y Diseño Nagoya Zokei **Ayako Takahashi**, nació en la ciudad de Gifu. Se licenció en el Departamento de Ciencias del Comportamiento de la Escuela de Literatura de la Universidad de Hokkaido. Trabajó como conservadora temporal en el Museo de Bellas Artes de Gifu y como conservadora en el AICHI ARTS CENTER (Servicio de promoción artística de la prefectura de Aichi).

En 2001, se convirtió en profesora de la Universidad de las Artes de Nagoya. En 2019, pasó a ser profesora en la Universidad de Artes y Diseño de Nagoya Zokei. Además, participó en la edición de una revista de crítica de arte «REAR» y su interés por las artes de vanguardia de la posguerra la llevó a investigar el «Festival de Arte Indépendants» celebrado en Gifu en el verano de 1965, y esto desarrolló su trabajo de toda la vida. Continúa teniendo en cuenta el proyecto artístico y la comunidad local.

Mediante su artículo titulado AICHI ART MUSEUMS AND GENDER BALANCE AS REVEALED BY WHEN TWO COLLECTIONS MEET, Takahashi escribe un texto con un cierto formato de reseña, pero llegando más lejos de la recensión descriptiva abordando las cuestiones de género, en un sentido amplio respecto a derechos, estatus etc. en el contexto bastante peculiar del encuentro entre dos colecciones museísticas en la prefectura de Aichi.

La profesora **Rebecca Jennison** es la más veterana del grupo, y, además de ser profesora emérita de la Universidad Seika de Kioto, no es nativa de Japón, sino norteamericana de origen (algo que nos interesaba especialmente desde el principio era que colaborase con la revista ARTxt alguien versado/a en el asunto, pero sin tener origen étnico japonés). Su trabajo se avala no solo por su talento y enfoques críticos sino por sus numerosos años de experiencia en el estudio de diversos aspectos del arte y la cultura japonesas. Residente durante muchos años en Japón, la profesora Jennison ha tenido la oportunidad de vivir muy de cerca asuntos que nos interesan aquí, especialmente el arte japonés más actual y la historia sobre las mujeres artistas de la posguerra y las cuestiones álgidas y críticas okinawense o zainichi entre otras de carácter geopolítico, socioeconómico, ecocrítico o de feminismo transnacional. MA por la Universidad de Cornell, donde ya inició sus estudios sobre Japón, posteriormente ha publicado numerosos artículos, capítulos de libros en revistas especializadas y editoriales de prestigio. Por ejemplo, “Contact Zones and Liminal Spaces Okinawan and Zainichi Contemporary Art” (2020) o “Imagination Without bBorders: Feminist Artist Tomiyama Taeko and Social Responsibility” (2020) o “Reimaniging Islands: Notes on Selected Works ny Oh Haji, Soni Kum, and Yamashiro Chikako” (2017).

Su artículo para ARTxt, titulado THE TRAJECTORY OF TOMIYAMA TAEKO’S ART AND LIFE AS SEEN IN *WILD GRASS: OUR LIVES*, THE 8TH YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE insiste en sus trabajos sobre esta artista de 100 años de vida (1921-2021) que tomó la valiente decisión de ser una pionera en el arte crítico japonés. Este resultado que aquí presenta la profesora Jenisson es fruto del estudio sobre su trabajo mostrado en la 8ª Trienal de Yokohama que ha cerrado sus puertas recientemente el 9 de junio de 2024, más actualidad es difícil pedir.

Esperamos que este número de ARTxt que tienen frente a ustedes y en el que se abordan temas diversos: cuestiones ecológicas, centralismos y periferias, humanismos y post-humanismos, género y derechos sociales en contextos geopolíticos y museísticos de características singulares... y con enfoques diferentes, sea de su interés, nosotros hemos puesto el máximo de nuestra parte, un trabajo en equipo que persigue la excelencia y la mejora continua a medida que crezca esta publicación y se sumen los mejores artículos que podamos ofrecerles. En ese empeño seguiremos. Muchas gracias por su atención, deseamos que disfruten al máximo de las complicidades y de las complicaciones.

AMATSUCHI KOSAKU: RECONSIDERING POSTWAR JAPANESE ART HISTORY FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper discusses Amatsuchi Kosaku, an artist collective that formed in the late 1980s and continued its unique activities until the early 2000s. Because Amatsuchi Kosaku was based in Shizuoka, a short distance from major cities, it was excluded from the normative narrative of Japanese art history, which has been constructed around artists and artist collectives working in metropolises like Tokyo and Kyoto. This paper first critically examines the “metropolitan-centrism” in the canon of Japanese art history. It then discusses in detail the history, characteristics, and influential relations of Amatsuchi Kosaku. Next, it reconsiders the artistic practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku, which constitutes an integral part of Japanese art since the 1980s, from the perspective of “ecology,” a concept that has been the focus of much attention in recent contemporary art discourse.

KEY WORDS: Amatsuchi Kosaku, Postwar Japanese art, Ecology, Art history in Japan, *Anti-modernism of art*

Resumen

Este artículo analiza Amatsuchi Kosaku, un colectivo de artistas que se formó a finales de los años 1980 y continuó con sus actividades únicas hasta principios de los años 2000. Debido a que Amatsuchi Kosaku tenía su sede en Shizuoka, a poca distancia de las principales ciudades, fue excluido de la narrativa normativa de la historia del arte japonés, que se ha construido alrededor de artistas y colectivos de artistas que trabajan en metrópolis como

Tokio y Kioto. En primer lugar, este artículo examina críticamente el “centrismo metropolitano” en el canon de la historia del arte japonés. Luego analiza en detalle la historia, las características y las relaciones influyentes de Amatsuchi Kosaku. A continuación, reconsidera la práctica artística de Amatsuchi Kosaku, que constituye una parte integral del arte japonés desde la década de 1980, desde la perspectiva de la “ecología”, un concepto que ha sido foco de mucha atención en el discurso del arte contemporáneo reciente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Amatsuchi Kosaku, Arte Japonés de Postguerra, Ecología, Historia del Arte en Japón, Antimodernismo del Arte

AMATSUCHI KOSAKU: RECONSIDERING POSTWAR JAPANESE ART HISTORY FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGY

1. Introduction: Metropolitan Centrism in Art History

In 2019, I published my first monograph *Contemporary Art History: Euro-America, Japan, and the Transnational*. In the afterword of the book, I wrote with a note of caution, “The ‘metropolitan-centric’ perspective that I unconsciously assumed should also be taken up for further discussion” (Yamamoto, 2019, p. 308). Historical narratives of contemporary art have often been constructed in an exclusive manner around “big cities” such as Tokyo and Osaka (and sometimes Nagoya and Fukuoka as well), in the case of Japan. In the postscript, I intended to critically foreground such a closed structure of contemporary art history.

In 2016, US-based art historian Reiko Tomii published a book entitled *Radicalism in the Wilderness: International Contemporaneity and 1960s Art in Japan*, which sheds light on artists (and art collectives) who were active in the “wilderness” of the 1960s, “away from Tokyo, outside traditional norms, and with little institutional support” (Tomii, 2016, p. 293). A “local avant-garde” unit that developed its own practice in the “wilderness” of Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, from the end of the 1980s until the beginning of the 2000s is “Amatsuchi Kosaku,” the subject of this article. Its members were three artists: Makoto Murakami, born in 1954; Wataru Murakami (Makoto Murakami’s younger brother), born in 1958; and Yuji Yamamoto, born in 1960. The term “Amatsuchi Kosaku” is composed of four Chinese characters. They mean “heaven,” “earth,” “cultivate,” and “create,” respectively. Amatsuchi Kosaku is the name of the unit formed by the Murakami brothers and Yamamoto. At the same time, however, it was also the name of a series of art production projects that they continued intermittently until the early 2000s.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable interest in Japanese art of the 1980s, both domestically and internationally. An example of this is the exhibition “Starting Points: Japanese Art of the 80s” which traveled to the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Takamatsu City Museum of Art, and Shizuoka City Museum of Art from 2018 to 2019. The exhibition was an attempt to reexamine hidden aspects of Japanese art in the 1980s. The “1980s” is a period rarely referred to in the normative Japanese art

history. The period lies in-between the 1970s, when Japanese conceptual art – *the Nihon Gainen-ha* (Japanese Conceptual School) in art critic Chiba Shigeo’s conceptualization (See Chiba, 1986) – developed on its own, and the 1990s, when the influence of subcultures was significant in the domain of contemporary art – Takashi Murakami’s *Signboard TAMIYA*, which appropriated the logo of Tamiya Mokei (now Tamiya Co., Ltd.), Japan’s world-class plastic model manufacturer, was created in 1991. Being sandwiched between these two dichotomies of strong characteristics, Japanese art of the 1980s became a blind spot in history. Due to the space limitations and other reasons, I could not include a full description of Japanese art of the 1980s in my book *History of Contemporary Art*. In an article he contributed to the catalog of the “Starting Points” exhibition, poet and art critic Akira Tatehata defined the “80s as the starting point of today’s art scene [in Japan]” (Tatehata, 2018, 153) and pointed out the need to seriously reexamine this period.

When the “Starting Points” exhibition traveled to the Shizuoka City Museum of Art, “Shizubi Project 7: Archive/1980s-Shizuoka” was held at the same time. This small exhibition looked back on the art scene of the 1980s in Shizuoka, and was organized by the museum’s curator, Ayu Ito. Amatsuchi Kosaku’s works were featured prominently in the “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition. Other cases introduced there were the “Hamamatsu Open-Air Art Exhibition,” “A-Value,” and the “Fukuroi Station Project.” As will be explained later, all of these projects have had a significant relationship with Amatsuchi Kosaku. In his book detailing the historical transition of international art exhibitions in postwar Japan, titled *International Art Exhibitions in Japan and Postwar Art History: Interpreting its Transition and the “Art” System*, art historian Kohei Yamashita refers to the role of large-scale art exhibitions in the 1980s and their structural changes. Yamashita then locates Amatsuchi Kosaku’s activities in the “shift from ‘exhibition’ as an axis strongly conservative toward ‘art’ as an institution, to a two-layered structure that expresses ‘locality’ on the periphery, in other words, a temporal and spatial relationship with the place” (Yamashita, 2017, p. 202). Not only Amatsuchi Kosaku, but also “Hamamatsu Open-Air Art Exhibition,” “Fukuroi Station Project,” and “A-Value” emerged within this phase change. As Yamashita points out, all of them were accompanied by a peculiar “expression of regionality.”

Significantly, the “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition served to fill an invisible void in the “Starting Points” exhibition. This void was substantially generated by the metropolitan-centric structure of art history. The special exhibition had the important role of filling the geographical void of Shizuoka as well as the chronological void of the 1980s. However, it would be unproductive to simply dismiss Amatsuchi Kosaku as “Shizuoka’s avant-garde.” This is because Amatsuchi Kosaku itself is, of course, an indispensable part of “Japanese art of the 1980s.” Therefore, there is a limit in presenting Amatsuchi Kosaku separately from the entire complex tapestry of “Japanese art of the 1980s.” Such an approach is supported by the “metropolitan-centrism” that is deeply rooted in the standardized history of Japanese art, i.e., the dynamic and structure of placing major economic cities at a predetermined, putative center.

In this article, therefore, I also place Amatsuchi Kosaku’s creative activities within the intricate web of contemporary trends in Japanese art in the 1980s and afterwards. In doing

so, it brings to light a part of Amatsuchi Kosaku’s problematic consciousness that resonates with the group’s contemporaries. At the same time, by examining the subtle differences from the artistic practices of the same period, the uniqueness of Amatsuchi Kosaku will be further highlighted. I believe that such an attempt will lead to a significant reconsideration of Japanese art history from the perspective of “ecology,” as I will discuss in the concluding section. Ecology has become a buzzword for contemporary art in recent years. It is a relatively new term but by no means an idea that has emerged only recently.

The atmosphere of the “1980s revival” that prevailed in the Japanese art world was also reflected in one of Japan’s leading art magazines, *Bijutsu Techo*. The magazine’s June 2019 issue features a special section titled “Art of the 80s in Japan.” In the special feature “Art of the 80s in Japan,” Amatsuchi Kosaku is introduced with a photo of its work. In addition to many photo documentations of the works created in the 1980s Japan, the feature also includes substantial essays by important scholars and curators like Hiroki Tsutsui, Mika Yoshitake, Noi Sawaragi, and Ryo Sawayama. However, we cannot find any mention of Amatsuchi Kosaku among them. This suggests the difficulty of locating Amatsuchi Kosaku within a consistent art historical context. As this paper will show, the practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku was a movement fraught with contradictions from its inception. Such contradictions are what make the art project of Amatsuchi Kosaku unparalleled. The reason why Amatsuchi Kosaku has rarely been included in existing art historical narratives is not only related to metropolitan-centrism, but also to these contextualization difficulties. Amatsuchi Kosaku is thus an art movement that is difficult to grasp on multiple levels and cannot be understood in a straightforward manner.

2. The History of Amatsuchi Kosaku

As mentioned above, Amatsuchi Kosaku was an art production project initiated by Makoto Murakami, Wataru Murakami, and Yuji Yamamoto. However, Yamamoto, who had a legitimate art education, and the Murakami brothers, who had a non-art background, were in somewhat different positions, and although they were part of one shared community, the actual works were created separately. Indeed, the fact that the Murakami brothers did not receive “formal” art education is not unrelated to the fact that the artistic practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku has been substantially excluded from art history in Japan, where the hierarchical structure with Tokyo University of the Arts at the top remains strong even today. It is important to note, however, that Makoto Murakami studied for a short time at an art school in Tokyo, *Bigakko*, which opened in 1969. The school was the brainchild of Kyoji Ishii, the owner of the publishing company *Gendai Shichosha*. In addition to Katsuro Yoshida, who was a tutor of Makoto Murakami, other art-historically important artists such as Genpei Akasegawa, Natsuyuki Nakanishi, Hiroshi Nakamura, Yutaka Matsuzawa, and Mokuma Kikuhata taught at *Bigakko*. From their classrooms, many artists who would go on to develop activities that were not bound by conventional notions of “art” left the school. The Art School has survived through many “incidents” until the present day (2024), and in the 2000s, contemporary artists such as Tsuyoshi Ozawa, Makoto Aida, and Ryuta Ushiro

(Chim↑Pom) have taught at the school. Artist and scholar Yoshiko Shimada, who received her doctorate from Kingston University in England for her research on *Bigakko*, points out that “Ishii aimed to reach the radical through physical experience using the students’ hands and eyes,” rather than “studying ideas through lectures and books” (Shimada, 2019, pp. 151-152). As we will see, this emphasis on physical experience in nature is also evident in Amatsuchi Kosaku’s practice.

This unique amalgamation of “artistic” and “non-artistic” origins renders Amatsuchi Kosaku a unique dynamic force that “transforms the context of art by being within the context of art, and yet by being outside of that context” (Ishida, 2005, p. 234). And because Amatsuchi Kosaku was a project with the antinomy of “being within the context of art, and yet being outside of that context,” it was actually produced only about 10 times during its not-so-short 15 years of their activity. Despite this, or perhaps precisely because of this, each of Amatsuchi Kosaku’s works (referred to as *kosakubutsu*, meaning “productions of cultivation,” in the “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition catalog) is imbued with a strong singularity that is difficult to describe. Such singularity was made possible by contradictory actions within the realm of “art” to create something that transcended “art.” The first *kosakubutsu* appeared between August 1988 and March 1989 in Hosoe-cho and Hikisa-cho, Kita-ku, Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture. Both of these locations were on the members’ private property. As Makoto Murakami states, “The work is separate from his [Yamamoto] and ours [the Murakami brothers], and we are distinct from Yamamoto in all things” (Contemporary Artists Review, 1992, p. 4), Makoto and Wataru Murakami and Yuji Yamamoto “cultivated” the land in two separate hands. The Murakami brothers created *Tsuji*, *Yamagami*, *Yamada* (1), and *Yamada* (2) (all 1988-1989), while Yuji Yamamoto created *Takeyabu*, *Kubizuka*, and *Ujigami no Hokora* (all 1988-1989) in Hosoe and Hikisa, respectively. All works were created using locally available natural materials such as stones, soil, and woods. Each was a much larger structure than human scale.

The Murakami brothers’ *Tsuji* is based on two parallel, towering trees. 4 meters long, the lower part of the two trees is held in place by two crossed slender trees and two shorter trees to prevent them from easily falling over. At the top of the two upright trees, two very thin trees are fixed parallel to the ground, and in the middle of the two trees, a sphere like a *doro-dango* (mud dumpling) made from a mixture of soil and short driftwood is installed as if it were floating. Yamamoto’s works, on the other hand, are more varied than those of the Murakami brothers in terms of the materials used. *Kubizuka* is a huge structure made of natural wood of different lengths and shapes. *Takeyabu* is a spatial installation that includes clods of earth scattered in an actual bamboo thicket. Numerous holes have been drilled into the surface of these clods. Yamamoto’s most visually striking *kosakubutsu* is perhaps *Ujigami no Hokora*. At the core of this work is a web of ropes stretched like a spider’s web between two cliffs across a river. Trees growing on the cliffs are hung with a similarly woven rope creation in the shape of a straw weevil. A single folkloric mask is attached to the top of a supersized weave of inverted triangular netting that spans across the river. Yamamoto has said, for example, that he was inspired by the way the Wagenia people of the Congo district wood for building bridges, and here, too, we can detect direct influences from outside the so-called art world.

A three-day tour entitled “Touring Amatsuchi Kosaku” was held from March 3 to 5, 1989. On March 5, a symposium entitled “Walking in Heaven and Earth, Looking at the Beginning of the World” was held with three invited guests: art historian Katsumoto Ishizaki, social anthropologist Yoshihito Shimada, and poet Gozo Yoshimasu. On the same day as the symposium, part of a number of *kosakubutsu* created were dismantled by the Murakami brothers and Yamamoto. They left the rest of the pieces to decay through natural collapse. Some of the works have reverted to their former natural state and reintegrated into their respective sites. For example, the site where Yamamoto’s *Kubizuka* was located has been returned to its original ginger field, as can be seen from a small photograph that appeared as a frontispiece in *Amatsuchi Kosaku*, the first self-published journal of them. In this sense, it is possible to characterize Amatsuchi Kosaku’s practice as “art that does not leave behind.” At the same time, however, they also took numerous documentary photographs, and it should be noted that they (especially Makoto Murakami) were highly conscious of documenting the process of creating artworks and their artifacts.

In the “A-Value II” exhibition held from August 29 to September 3, 1989, Makoto Murakami and Wataru Murakami’s *Tsuji - Part 2* (1989) and Yuji Yamamoto’s *Funbo - Part 2* (1989) were displayed in the hill behind the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, the venue of the exhibition. Both works are large constructions made from driftwood and rope, and both show a continuation from the first *kosakubutsu*. The “A-Value” exhibition, which was also featured in the 2019 “Shizubi Project 7 Archive” exhibition, refers to an independent exhibition by Shizuoka-based artists. This exhibition was not a sudden attempt, but rather a trend of artists themselves trying to create opportunities to present their works in an alternative way, which has been common in Shizuoka since the late 1970s: the “JUJU PHOTO SESSION” (1977-1985), “art space” (1979-1986), and the “Contemporary Art Festival in Shimizu” (1987) are all part of this trend. The three “A-Value” exhibitions were all open to the public, but from this point on, Amatsuchi Kosaku’s work became more confined to the world in which it was created. In other words, their *kosakubutsu* were either shown to a very limited number of people during a very limited period of time or, in principle, were closed to the public. The practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku gradually became more like “art that is not shown,” rather than “art that is not left behind.” However, of course, they also maintained the aspect of “art that does not leave behind.” In this regard, Makoto Murakami states that he wanted to “once and for all return the modern framework of ‘art to be shown’ to a blank slate” (Murakami et al., 1990a, n.p.). When asked in an interview, “Do you dare to say that you do not need an audience?” Makoto Murakami replied clearly, “I don’t think so” (Contemporary Artists Review, 1992, p. 6).

The next “cultivation” was from April 1991 to September of the same year. From August 5 to September 7, the three artists exhibited their work at the site of a former quarry in the area of Yage. From the following day, August 8 to September 29, the works were “exhibited” under the name of *hochi* (neglect). Murakami brothers’ *Ubusuna - No. 2* was an outdoor installation made of various types of wood, straw, and limestone. The structure was more intricate and complex than the earlier *kosakubutsu*. During the period of February 1-25, 1992, the first overseas “cultivation” work was done in Perth, Australia, where children were

photographed busily running around inside the work when it was shown to a very small number of people. On the 23rd, a performance they called *shintai yugi* (body play) was held. In this designation, one might identify an influence from the education at the school of aesthetics, which exclusively emphasizes physicality, that I mentioned earlier.

From October 1997 to March 1999, Makoto Murakami and Wataru Murakami created *Ubusuna - Part 7* (1997-1999) and Yuji Yamamoto *Funbo - Part 9* (1997-1999), respectively. The location was the same private lands in Hosoe and Hikisa as for the first “cultivation.” The next day, the work was dismantled as before. The production activities of Amatsuchi Kosaku practically came to an end at this time. After that, the main focus will be on archival exhibitions at museums and galleries. However, there is another more essential reason that I would like to point out that this is a tentative end of their activity. Regarding the first “cultivation,” Katsumoto Ishizaki points out, “All four works by Makoto Murakami and Wataru Murakami in this project are based on the circle” (Murakami et al., 1990b, p. 10). In his article “Circles, Lost Emblems” (1993), reprinted in *Kosaku Dayori 12*, Amatsuchi Kosaku’s newsletter, folklorist Norio Akasaka in a similar vein focuses on the circle motif that appears in the Murakami brothers’ *Ubusuna - No. 2* (Murakami et al., 1993, n.p.). As mentioned above, Amatsuchi Kosaku was a project that aimed to break within the “closed internal power” of the modern art system while, paradoxically, remaining within it. As curator Motoi Masaki observes, the Murakami siblings and Yamamoto were “working from a suspicion of the general framework of art” (Masaki, 1992, p. 97). The choice to “cultivate” in the same place as the initial “cultivated land” seemed to express a clear will to close the circle and bring closure to the activity of Amatsuchi Kosaku.

A group exhibition, “The Meaning of Being Hypothetical,” was subsequently organized from January 19 to May 6, 2001. The venue was the *Niji no Bijutsukan* (Rainbow Art Museum) in Shizuoka Prefecture. The exhibition “The Meaning of Being Hypothetical” featured photographs documenting Amatsuchi Kosaku’s activities from 1988 to 1991, and was followed on March 4-22, 2003 by the exhibition “Until Amatsuchi Kosaku” at the Shizuoka University of Art and Culture Gallery. On this occasion, Makoto Murakami and Wataru Murakami created *Hatake* (2003), and Yuji Yamamoto created *Michi* (2003) under the condition that the exhibition was completely closed to the public. From July 11 to 26, 2003, a photographic exhibition was held at the Seian University of Art and Design Gallery, documenting the history of Amatsuchi Kosaku’s cultivation. Since then, the community named Amatsuchi Kosaku will have to wait for the aforementioned “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition in 2019 to appear in art exhibitions.

3. The Features of Amatsuchi Kosaku

One of the salient features of Amatsuchi Kosaku is its lack of awareness of the need to “preserve” works of art. The “preservation” and “restoration” of works of art have been an important role played by modern art museums. According to conservation and restoration specialist Kaori Taguchi, “the attention to the ‘living’ time of works recommended by modern and contemporary conservation and restoration studies has been reread and conti-

nues to be practiced through new methods of ‘preservation of what remains,’ namely through diverse exhibition and archiving practices” (Taguchi, 2015, p. 232), and thus points out the diversification of genres and mediums has rapidly progressed. This indicates that even in the field of contemporary art, discussions on how to “preserve” artworks have been active in a different modality. As described above, modern and contemporary art is often associated with a strong awareness of the need to “preserve” works. Naturally, artists create their works with the expectation that they will remain for a certain period of time. They hope that their works will remain substantially permanently after their death.

There were artists who worked against or were free from the dominant consciousness of “leaving behind” in modern art. One well-known example is Gustav Metzger’s “self-destructive art.” From the 1960s onward, Metzger produced a series of paintings that self-destructed through the action of acid. He was born in Germany to Polish-Jewish parents and moved to England when he was still a small child. These childhood experiences shaped Metzger’s acute sense of social commentary in his artistic practice. The “Self-Destructive Paintings” were also a political response to the growing danger of the use of nuclear weapons in the Cold War bipolar structure between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In this sense, Metzger himself did not invent “self-destructive art” against the “preserve” orientation that characterizes modern art in particular.

As mentioned above, Amatsuchi Kosaku’s practice gradually shifted from “art that does not leave behind” to “art that does not show.” We have already pointed out that they were suspicious of the “modern framework of art to show” (Makoto Murakami). Noriaki Kitazawa’s *Temple of the Eye: Notes on the History of the Reception of “Art”* (1989) is a major work that questions the fundamental institutional and conceptual conditions for the establishment of “modern art” in Japan during the Meiji period. Kitazawa demonstrates that the establishment of the modern “art” system in Japan was supported by the “idea of enlightenment through the visual sense” (Kitazawa, 2020 [1989], p. 193) of the political leaders of the time. In other words, from its infancy, modern art in Japan has been based on the act of “showing.”

The situation is similar in Western modernity. In *The Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century*, published in 1990, Jonathan Crary, a specialist in visual culture theory, writes that “[t]he imperatives of capitalist modernization, while demolishing the field of classical vision, generated techniques for imposing visual attentiveness, reorienting sensation, and managing perception” (Crary, 1990, p. 24). “It gave rise to a variety of technologies to manage perception,” he analyzes. With advances in physiological optics in the 19th century, “knowledge was accumulated about the constitutive role of the body in the apprehension of a visible world, and it rapidly became obvious that efficiency and rationalization in many areas of human activity depended on information about the capacities of the human eye,” and, as a result, “one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities” or “one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations” (Crary, 1990, p. 16, p. 6) have emerged as the dominant presence in the field of art, according to Crary. Here, too, a fixed divergence between the “viewer” as the subject of “seeing” and the work of art as the object of “being seen” has emerged.

On the other hand, we should not overlook the increasing preoccupation with “modeling” in Amatsuchi Kosaku’s “art not to be shown.” The premise of modern art to “show” to an unspecified number of people was intended to “return to a blank slate,” but they were open about their *kosakubutsu* to those whom they trusted and who they believed understood them. In their 15 years of activity, Amatsuchi Kosaku have successively questioned the concepts of artworks, museums, and exhibitions, and have sought to expand them. On the other hand, it is worth emphasizing that they never gave up the idea of “art.” In relation to this, they have also left behind a strong archive of their own activities (productions, symposiums, etc.). Another characteristic of Amatsuchi Kosaku’s activities is its cross-disciplinary media strategy, mainly through publications. Masaharu Ono writes as follows:

Their activities are not limited to the production of artworks. In terms of printed matter, they have published 14 issues of an irregular mini-comic newspaper called *Kosaku Dayori*, three volumes of a collection of records Amatsuchi Kosaku focusing on their activities, two books by aestheticians, and two collections of writings and dialogues by Murakami (Makoto) himself. What is surprising is that the writers are not limited to the so-called field of art, but offer a variety of perspectives from such fields as philosophy, literature, archaeology, biology, and social anthropology (Ono, 2003, p. 67).

Kosaku Dayori began publication in October 1988, two months after the first *kosakubutsu*, and was published irregularly for seven years until the last issue, No. 14, was printed in 1995.

Reiko Tomii emphasizes the importance of “operation” in artistic activities. For artists, Tomii asserts, it is a necessary circuit for making their own expression visible in society.

Operations occur outside the studio. It forms an “interface” with society, establishes communication through expression = artwork, distributes artwork to society, and expands the circle of appreciation and understanding. Without operations, expression would be rootless in society (Tomii, 2018, p. 126).

Tomii sees the “robust DIY (Do It Yourself) spirit” that characterized the avant-garde art collectives of postwar Japan as being required to build an operation that would play such an important role. According to Tomii, this DIY spirit implemented the spirit of “if there is a deficiency in the existing system, we will supplement it ourselves.” Scrutinizing political avant-garde art in early postwar Japan, Justin Jesty also emphasizes the importance of the operation as an infrastructure for making art visible, not just the work itself.

Art has been central to every movement I have examined and has been central to his or her political interventions. At the same time, however, his or her aesthetic and political engagement was accompanied by forms of labor that operated in environments and media that they themselves did not call art at the time. For example, distributing leaflets, attending study groups, organizing classes, teaching, going

to meetings, transporting works of art, hand printing, mailing things, negotiating, researching unexpected subjects, setting up and taking down exhibitions, conducting interviews and so on (Jesty, 2018, p. 256).

Hence, in *Art and Engagement in Early Postwar Japan* (2018), Jesty also notes that he pays attention to “the actions they [the avant-garde artists] took to create conditions that would make their work visible and relevant” (Jesty, 2018, p. 5). Amatsuchi Kosaku’s *Kosaku Dayori* is also a strategy for visualization, and can be considered part of an operation supported by the DIY spirit.

4. Influence surrounding Amatsuchi Kosaku

In her previously published *Radicalism in the Wilderness*, Tomii uses “connection” and “resonance” as her original key concepts. She defines the former as something that encompasses actual connections, such as interpersonal and informational encounters with counterparts, while the latter as something that may be formulated more loosely among two or more similar works, where little such connection can be detected (Tomii, 2016, p. 16). Tomii’s methodology seems to be useful in examining the relationships of influence surrounding Amatsuchi Kosaku.

The artist Tadashi Kawamata can be cited as a person with “connections” that constituted Amatsuchi Kosaku. The catalyst that created this connection was the “Fukuroi Station Project,” which was also introduced in the “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition, which I mentioned in the introductory part of this article. This project was undertaken in 1988 when the Suruga Ginko (now Suruga Bank) in front of JR Fukuroi Station was demolished. Kawamata led the Fukuroi Ekimae Project as part of the “Red Brick Final: Society, Temporary Structures, Text, and Sound” (planned by musician Hiroko Osugi), which was developed to mark the end of the building that had been familiar to local residents as the red brick in front of the station. In the late 1970s, Kawamata emerged with projects that used art galleries and abandoned houses to create temporary structures in public spaces. In the 1980s, Kawamata moved to larger-scale installations. By that time, Kawamata had already become one of Japan’s leading contemporary artists. *Destroyed Church* (1987), presented at Documenta 8 in Germany, was his masterpiece of the 1980s. This project, in which he surrounded a church bombed during World War II with a plethora of woods, was also featured in the aforementioned “Starting Points” exhibition, which focuses on Japanese art in the 1980s.

For the “Fukuroi Station Project,” Kawamata stayed and worked in Fukuroi for about a month. During this time, he coordinated with bank officials and engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the public as he worked on the project. In the end, Kawamata created an installation like *Destroyed Church*, in which timbers were erected around red bricks. A large amount of wood was stretched from the interior of the building, through the back door, through the adjacent inn where the artist himself was staying, and across the street to the (already closed) movie theater. Naturally, an installation of this magnitude could not have been completed single-handedly. Kawamata recruited local staff to assist in the production, and the

local staff procured lumber and other materials. Among these local staff members were the Murakami brothers and Yamamoto, who had just formed Amatsuchi Kosaku. Makoto Murakami also testified that he feels that “being involved in Tadashi Kawamata’s work (the Fukuroi Project in 1988) was a major turning point” (Murakami et al., 1990a, n.p.). After the Fukuroi Station project, the three would begin experimenting with Amatsuchi Kosaku.

Certainly, the project-type method of using wood and other natural materials to create large-scale structures is common to both Amatsuchi Kosaku and Kawamata. However, the members of Amatsuchi Kosaku (although there are differences in production between the Murakami brothers and Yamamoto) used materials that could be prepared in the vicinity of the “cultivated land.” In addition, Kawamata basically used wood as a privileged material, while Amatsuchi Kosaku utilized a variety of natural materials such as stones, soil, and straw. In addition, the various “cultivated materials” were designed to decay in the process of nature and return to their original state as much as possible. In short, Amatsuchi Kosaku referenced Kawamata’s style, in which the entire process of preparation, installation, and dismantling becomes a work of art, while at the same time carving out their own unique style.

Next, I would like to focus on “resonance” (Tomii) related to Amatsuchi Kosaku. According to various records, there is no direct relationship between the sculptor Toshikatsu Endo and Amatsuchi Kosaku. However, Makoto Murakami testified in an interview with the author that he was aware of Endo’s work from that time, and that Endo, who was very active in the 1980s, was featured alongside Amatsuchi Kosaku (albeit on the same page) in the special feature “Art in Japan in the 1980s” in *Bijutsu Techo*. Endo participated in the “Hamamatsu Open-Air Art Exhibition,” which was also featured in the “Shizubi Project 7” exhibition and was set along the coast of the Sea of Enshu near Lake Hamana. The Hamamatsu Open-Air Art Exhibition was held six times between 1980 and 1987, and Endo exhibited a circular sculpture at the fourth exhibition in 1984. This was the only time Endo participated in the exhibition.

One of the resonances between Amatsuchi Kosaku and Endo is the materials employed in their works. Both Endo and Amatsuchi Kosaku often prefer to use very elemental natural materials (water, fire, wood, earth, etc.). In the “Allegory” series, which he began producing in the 1980s, he frequently uses motifs of coffins and ships, which remind us of death and the other shore. In *Fable III - Wooden Boat* (1988), Endo set fire to a wooden boat floating on a lake. In addition, he has set fire to many of his other works, causing them to vanish. As we have seen, some of the *kosakubutsu*, which were not self-evidently intended to be “left behind,” were also destroyed by arson. Nevertheless, the difference is that in the case of Amatsuchi Kosaku, many of the works decayed and disappeared in a natural process; Taku Shibuya, a curator who organized the exhibition “Toshikatsu Endo: Archaeology of Sanctity” at the Museum of Modern Art, Saitama in 2017, stated that at the core of Endo’s creations is a “fundamental intuition” that “the true artistic experience is the experience of holiness” (Shibuya, 2017, p. 72-73). Since the 2000s, Endo has developed his own theory, the “Hollow Theory.” Since then, his “center of experimentation” has been “the communal appearance of ‘void’ and ‘hollowness’ inside the ‘circle’” (Endo, 2017, p. 18). Endo finds the imagination to conceive of a different kind of community inside the circle separated by a boundary line:

“The ‘circle’ is an extremely primitive form, but at the same time, it is a representation of communality that is imbued with the accumulation of time since time immemorial” (Endo, 2017, p. 16). The circle, which was the origin of the “hollow theory,” has therefore become a major motif in Endo’s sculptures, along with coffins and ships.

The first *kosakubutsu* produced by the Murakami brothers between 1988 and 1989, *Yamagami*, *Yamada (1)*, and *Yamada (2)*, all used the circle as a figurative motif. In his essay “Multiple Mediums,” art critic Ryo Sawayama argues that Endo’s sculpture, which “embraces the boundary between inside and outside,” is characterized by “an interest in what cannot be seen, but does exist” (Sawayama, 2019, p. 43). At the same time, however, it should be underscored that Endo attempted to extinguish “the boundary between inside and outside” by setting fire to the circle, as in *Untitled (1987)* at the Shibukawa Contemporary Sculpture Triennial. As anthropologist Norio Akasaka discovered in the Murakami brothers’ *Ubusuna - No. 2* (“The circle was broken, whether intentionally or not, as if to nullify the power of the closed interior, and was broken beforehand”), the intention to nullify the “boundary between inside and outside” by breaking the circle from within was also evident in Amatsuchi Kosaku’s work. Philosopher Tadashi Ishida interpreted Amatsuchi Kosaku’s activities and characterized them as “art that cannot clearly distinguish between the act of creation and the work,” “art that cannot clearly distinguish between thought and creation,” “art that cannot clearly distinguish between life and art,” and “art that cannot clearly distinguish between artist and audience” (Ishida, 2005, 255). All in all, Amatsuchi Kosaku’s practice dissolved various tangible and intangible boundaries.

5. Amatsuchi Kosaku from an Ecological Perspective

At first glance, the practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku may seem to have great affinity with the idea of “ecology.” This is because it appears to be a practice of using natural materials and integrating into the natural environment. In fact, Makoto Murakami, together with Kiyoshi Honnami and Keiichi Sugiyama, published a small book entitled *Is Ecological Sculpture Possible? in 1997*. Therefore, Amatsuchi Kosaku’s activities are sometimes discussed in relation to land art, which is (seemingly) oriented toward communion with the natural environment. Masaharu Ono, who emphasizes the difference between land art and the practice of Amatsuchi Kosaku, states, “If it is the traditional cultivated land that was discovered during a journey in search of folk arts in various regions, including festivals, and if the harvest from this land is the work of Tenchi Kosaku, then it is art that ‘becomes’ (generates) and ‘makes’ If the work of Amatsuchi Kosaku was created on the land and harvested from it, then it is art that ‘becomes’ and is not similar to ‘land art,’ which is art that ‘creates’” (Ono, 2003, p. 66). In the trilogy *Is Ecological Sculpture Possible?*, Honnami and Sugiyama, however, try to place Amatsuchi Kosaku in the context of “ecological art,” which “focuses on the ideology of nature as a keyword, as an antithesis to the aggressive and anthropocentric art of the 20th century” (Honnami et al., 1997, p. 35).

It should be noted, however, that Makoto Murakami himself (and perhaps Wataru Murakami and Yamamoto as well) were skeptical about linking his activities to the idea of ecology. Murakami said, “If I may speak of the relationship between ecology and art, I am still not sure.” “To be honest, I don’t know where and how they are connected.” Murakami continued:

What we have been doing (in short) is an exploration of the internal world, and we have been doing the same kind of thing as drawing in an automatic way. That is to say, it has gradually become three-dimensional and larger. We have used natural materials, and we have also allowed the “work” to spontaneously decay so as not to affect the landscape and environment that existed before, or we have even been more aggressive in completely erasing our traces and restoring it to its original state. And when you do this for more than six months straight, you run into your fair share of problems. Sometimes we have to be socially conscious. But the motifs were still very personal, and we were still searching for our inner nature. And I believe that this inner nature is still unknown to us (Honnami et al., 1997, p. 38).

On another occasion, Makoto Murakami said even more clearly and straightforwardly, “Basically, art is anti-nature. I wonder if art can cooperate with nature. I don’t think that ecological issues and art should be easily connected” (Contemporary Artists Review, 1992, p. 2).

In light of this, it seems that Murakami and his colleagues were deeply aware of the incomprehensibility or uncontrollability of what we call “nature” in a single word (“And I think there are still many things about that inner nature that we don’t understand”). For them, nature is an abyss that contains life and death. Therefore, they may have been at odds with the idea of “ecological sculpture (art),” which seeks to protect and restore nature by human hands. There appears to be an implicit assumption that humans can control (design) “nature” through their own efforts. Heidegger describes the role of a work of art as something that inspires a sense of awe in man in the face of what cannot be planned, controlled, calculated, or manufactured (see Heidegger, 2008).

Amatsuchi Kosaku is an activity that foregrounds “nature” as something that cannot be planned, controlled, calculated, or manufactured. The “coming indigeneity” created by Amatsuchi Kosaku may illuminate “nature” that we assume we know “in a new way” and lead us to a deep “path of reflection” on life and death.

6. Conclusion: After Amatsuchi Kosaku

After the end of the “Amatsuchi Kosaku” project, Makoto Murakami resumed his artistic activities as an individual. Since the mid-2000s, he has regularly held solo exhibitions at photographers’ spaces such as the Nikon Salon in Shinjuku and Osaka. In 1996, while the Amatsuchi Kosaku project was still ongoing, Wataru Murakami returned to farming, taking over his family’s mandarin orange farming business. He continues to live his life as a citrus farmer. Yuji Yamamoto took early retirement from the school where he worked as an art teacher for many years. Now away from the world of education, he continues to farm and create art.

Wataru Murakami resumed his artistic production in 2009, and in 2014 he presented an installation work at Gallery CAVE in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture. The work was presented as part of an exhibition titled “Four Regions.” Makoto Murakami, together with Gallery CAVE organizer Keiji Yamauchi, was in charge of the planning and artist selection process for the “Four Regions” show. The exhibition culminated in a booklet titled *Four Regions, Three Conversations* (2014), which includes a conversation between Makoto Murakami and each of the three participating artists (Wataru Murakami, Tomoko Natsume, and Takushi Natsume). In the interview with his brother Makoto, Wataru Murakami stated, “Now, I sometimes feel afraid to be in nature,” and expressed his fear that those of us who have “pushed nature to suit our own convenience” (Murakami, 2014, p. 6) will one day be the ones to pay the ultimate price. As we have yet to recover from the coronal disaster that struck humanity at the beginning of 2020, we know that this fear hit the nail on the head. In the same conversation, Wataru Murakami recounted, “In Amatsuchi Kosaku, I have always created a world of darkness” (Murakami, 2014, p. 10). As we saw in the previous section, this “world of darkness” was probably a natural world that could not be completely controlled by human beings.

Makoto Murakami resumed photography and held his first solo exhibition at Shinjuku Nikon Salon in 2006. The title of the exhibition was *Ubusuna*, meaning “the land of one’s birth.” As we have seen, this word was attached to many of the works created by the Murakami brothers in the 1990s. The exhibition featured photographs taken inside the erosion control forests of the Sea of Enshu, which stretches about 100 km from the southern shore of Lake Hamana in the west to Omaezaki in the east. The photographs taken by the photographer, who spent two years walking through the erosion control forests, show the undergrowth deep within the forests, which were planted by humans for self-defense. It is as if the man-made forest has become a dense forest that refuses to be invaded by humans. It is not what one would call harmonious, but it can be seen as an unintentional collaboration between man and nature. This image also overlaps with that of Amatsuchi Kosaku’s works. Makoto Murakami seems to find countless *kosakubutsu* in these works in which his own hands did not intervene.

In *Kosaku Dayori 8*, Shoji Iida, an artist who was influenced by the members of Amatsuchi Kosaku, wrote an essay titled “*Genshoku* Postmortem.” Shoji Iida was a major member of the Group *Genshoku* along with Katsuji Niwa, Moriichi Maeda, Yoshinori Suzuki, and Issei Koike. That avant-garde art group was based in Shizuoka from 1966 to 1971. Honnami is also an art historian who has worked with various avant-garde art movements in Shizuoka, and in 2016 he published a book on the Group *Genshoku* (*The Origins of the “Mono-ha”: The Role Played by Junzo Ishiko, Lee Ufan, and the Group Genshoku*). Citing Iida’s work *Transmigration* (1969), Honnami describes the artists of the Group *Genshoku* as “expressing the relationship between nature and humans through art (museums)” (Honnami, 2016, p. 106). Iida, in his “*Genshoku* Postmortem,” wrote, “I make what I do not make. Such a paradoxical orientation was our methodological consciousness” (Murakami et al., 1990c, n.p.). As we have seen in this article, Amatsuchi Kosaku began as “art that does not leave behind,” and in the process transformed into “art that does not show.” The final destination may have been the “art of not making” ■

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AGAINST THE AS-IT-IS: AN INQUIRY INTO SCULPTURAL BODIES IN RECENT JAPAN

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Abstract

This article aims to propose the way of an interpretation on recent sculptural works in Japan, especially ones with bodily figuration. Although they would share some features with artistic production outside the country and the proposed approach is not comprehensive considering variegated contemporary sculptural practices, it is suggestive that there was a historical situation where artists criticized the human-based representation of the world and turn to a kind of naturalism, as led by Mono-ha in the context of postwar Japan. Some succeeding sculptors have struggled against the naturalism that demands to leave things as it is. They have explored to develop their sculptural bodies without simply returning to the humanistic notion of them.

KEY WORDS: Sculpture, Body, Surface, Cyborg, Character

Resumen

Resumen

Este artículo busca proponer una interpretación sobre las obras escultóricas recientes en Japón, especialmente aquellas con figuración corporal. Aunque comparten algunas características con la producción artística fuera del país y el enfoque propuesto no es exhaustivo, dado lo variado de las prácticas escultóricas contemporáneas, resulta sugerente considerar una situación histórica en la que los artistas criticaron la representación del mundo centrada en lo humano y se inclinaron hacia una especie de naturalismo, como lo promovió el movimiento Mono-ha en el contexto del Japón de posguerra. Algunos escultores posteriores han luchado contra el naturalismo que demanda dejar las cosas tal como son. Han explorado el desarrollo de sus cuerpos escultóricos sin regresar simplemente a una noción humanista de ellos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Escultura, Cuerpo, Superficie, Cyborg, Personaje

AGAINST THE AS-IT-IS: AN INQUIRY INTO SCULPTURAL BODIES IN RECENT JAPAN

1. From As-It-Is Condition to Emergent Surfaces

Today, it is likely to be considered that Mono-ha (school of things) is the representative avant-garde art movement in the late 1960s to early 1970s Japan. Lee Ufan (born 1936), the leading figure in both the making and discursive aspect of Mono-ha, criticized the human-based perspective to the world and explored to break through into the outside of the artificially constructed representation. This attitude aimed at a kind of an open world, that is, the world directly encountered in the state of “as-it-is,” the vividness of which cannot be experienced in the reified reality of the modern world (Lee, 1970).

However, this concept of the world “as-it-is” does not suggest that we should recognize something literally defined. Rather, Lee struggled to go beyond the generalized appearance of things. His critical discourse explores to strip things of their superficial look and open a lived relationship. It is considered this relationship that the modern, industrialized world has lost. In the standardized perspective, things would illusorily be abstracted into reified images. According to Lee, in the far past, humans, with existences like trees, birds and stones, acted as the behavior of the natural world as-it-is (Lee, 1970). He explains the lived encounter with other existence by referring to Zhuangzi.

Zhuangzi suggestively commented that seeing a tree or a stone is scarcely accomplished if we see them just as “tree” or “stone” in such a fixed view. A tree and a stone are a tree and a stone, but at the same time, they are not a tree and a stone. That is, while they are a tree and a stone, they are an immeasurable universe beyond definition, which can be compared with the sky. ... In the first place, in the natural world, have there ever been any existences corresponding to the name such as “tree” or “stone”? It would be only in the case where the viewer is an artistic “human being” who exerts the representative operation that a tree or a stone appears to be a defined object. (Lee, 1970, p. 16)

This denial of limiting things into nominal definition is one of the most prominent slogans of Mono-ha. Another representative artist of the school Sekine Nobuo (1942–2019) described that the condition of bringing a thing, for example, a glass, into liberation is to strip

it of a general status. In his explanation, we should wipe “the dust of conceptuality and nominality” off a thing, and this approach would enable us to see what otherwise could not have been seen (Koshimizu et al., 1970, p. 40)¹.

This severance of nominal definition of things is not addressed to isolate a thing from humans. Rather, as mentioned above, it is implemented to recover the unique and lived relationship with things where any concept or purpose does not intervene. Minemura Toshiaki proposed a notion “sculpturoid (rui chōkoku),” which means “something resembling sculpture,” to describe a kind of sculptural works that he thought deviate from conventional sculpture even though they shared the character of “the real things that exist in the real space” with sculpture (Minemura, 1978, p. 11). According to Minemura, Japanese “sculpturoid,” quite unlike an ontological quality of Donald Judd’s non-relational “specific objects,” has not assumed the autonomy of a thing. And he makes the point that Mono-ha activated the existential view inherent in the sensitivity of Japan or East Asia, which foregrounds the situation of a place where things reveal themselves rather than an object itself. But at the same time, the critic puts it that Mono-ha was innovative because in fact it exaggerated the self-sufficient existence of matter which had been developed by modern art (Minemura, 1979). This double aspect would, as it were, lead us to a rhetorical transposition between an ontological “a thing as-it-is” and a phenomenological “a world encountered as it is.” Despite Mono-ha’s attitude of phenomenological vision toward opening a new world, the complementary rhetoric of “as-it-is” in reality functioned as closing the door to actively “making” sculpture.

In the face of this repression, some artists sought to reinvent the notion of sculpture. One of the representative sculptors of this generation after Mono-ha is Toya Shigeo (born 1947). In struggling with the situation, he was drawn to the act of marking in space as the fundamental emergence of art making. The paradigmatic example of the act is found in the pre-historic image making in the caves such as the Lascaux and the Altamira (Toya, 1994/2014a).

It seems that this focus on what transcends history was significant for Toya in at least two points. First, it was derived from the process of tracing the root of representation before it began to be called “art”. This would be the way of restarting “making” in a different mode from that of the humanistic act which Mono-ha criticized. Second, it would keep sculpture intact from the nationality which the discourse of Mono-ha took on. He contests the tendency of exploiting the notion of “what is typically Japanese” as a cultural-political strategy since the Meiji period when American art historian and philosopher Ernest Fenollosa exerted a great influence on the formation of the national aesthetics in Japan. Toya describes this as a kind of alienation which establishes one’s value by being subject to others’ desire. He rebelled against this tendency in favor of emerging sensation without any essential basis (Toya, 2006/2014c).

In Toya’s sculptures, the dynamics of the “surface” is more important than the stable shape of a figure. Curved by a chainsaw, the surface of a wood is fractured into small parti-

1 However, it is necessary to keep in mind that the artists associated with Mono-ha were not so uniformly tied on the basis of a specific ideology, while they shared some speculation. For example, Minemura Toshiaki divides the school into three groups: (1) “Lee + Tamabi [Tama Art University] Connection,” (2) “The Geidai [Tokyo University of Art] Connection,” (3) “The Nichidai [Nihon University] Connection.” (Minemura, 1986)

cles or undulated to encroach a unified contour, which causes the effect of groping the way that complicatedly switches between inside and outside, hidden parts and revealed parts. While Baroque sculpture with complex foldings is one of the formal references of Toya’s sculpture, the dynamic ambivalence between the hidden and the revealed on the surface has its basis in his thought on the ontological issue of emergence. In terms of this issue, a surface consisting the boundary between the world and a human comes to be foregrounded. For Toya, “there works both the inclination to fuse with nature and the force of getting back to the self.” (Toya, 1989/2014b, pp. 166-167)

The emergent moment of human body ambiguously formed against natural background is suggested in the sculptor’s representative series *Woods* from 1984. Each unit constituting the series basically has the height of 220cm, which is derived from the artist’s bodily height with stretching his arms. That is, the unit with an undulated surface can be interpreted as a dual character as a tree in a woods and a human body with wrinkles. Although in Toya’s *Woods*, the naturalistic motif and material (wood) is superimposed with the human body, it is not accomplished by untreated materials like in Mono-ha but sculpturally inscribed furrows on the surface. Thus there is no room for reducing them into the potentially nationalistic representation of unalienated nature as-it-is.

This attitude of questioning about a naturalistic characterization of Japanese culture can also be seen in the transnationally organized exhibition *Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties* (1989-91). The exhibition aimed to focus on some aspects of contemporary Japanese art which departed from stereotypical features related to monochrome, raw material, and Zen. Instead of these naturalistic or non-subjective aspects, the curators focused on the expressions which foregrounded the profusion of colors, decoration, everyday life, figurative images, anti-naturality reflecting urban culture, and information society (Kohmoto & Nanjo, 1989).

2. Monstrous Figures to Resist an Assigned Character

The emergent surface would also collide with a norm of the bodily figure of sculpture that grew out of Western aesthetics. In *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion’s Creative Dream* (1778), Johann Gottfried Herder examines the relationship between body and clothing in sculpture. In favor of Greek sculpture, he considers that the form of a body is prior to clothing that covers it. This criterion is based on the notion of ideal figure, which is assumed to autonomously form its body by an inner force. Thus, as regards sculpture, the clothing which covers the already established body from outside is considered to be superfluous.

In Herder’s discussion, clothing is likened to “a shadow, a veil” which has affinity with “sight” as a painterly sense, which tends to destroy “the beautiful fullness, depth, and volume of sculpture.” (Herder, 1778/2002, pp. 41-47) For Herder, sculpture should be based on the sense of “touch” which enables us to grasp “beautiful form and beautiful shape,” not

colors on the surface, as the essence of the genre (Herder,1778/2002, p. 40). Therefore, Herder considers that the surface of the sculptural figure should be transparent and subject to the shape of the nude body. When Greek sculptors needed to put clothing on their sculptures, they developed the expression that depicts the drapery of clothing that clings to the skin. It is called “wet drapery” through which the sense of hand “touches both clothing and the body at once.” (Herder,1778/2002, p. 50)

Toya’s “Woods,” as mentioned, has an emerging surface which is not unified into a smooth contour like what Herder found in Greek sculpture. The surface, allowing us to see it as skin, seems to be under bodily transformation between different characters such as human and plant without resting in an easy contemplation of Mono-ha.

Some sculptures of Funakoshi Katsura (1951–2024), who was one of the artists included in *Against Nature*, are telling in terms of this point, for they seem to have an ambivalent status. On the one hand, the wooden figures in clothing and with paint fit the concept of the exhibition. However, on the other hand, each of them stands with a faraway look in their eyes which are the exceptional parts made of marble, as if they are facing with in mind another dimension of the world. From the early 1990s, this aspect of trans-dimension had been realized in chimeric assemblage, in which human bodies are often fused with the images of the sky or mountains. This might remind us of the contemplative encounter with nature in Mono-ha, but Funakoshi produced the effect through anti-natural features such as curved and painted surfaces, assembled body rather than untreated materials.

Herder’s vision of the autonomy of a sculpture is, in addition to the norm in formal level mentioned above, based on the naturalistic essentialism relying on “character” of individual statues considered to be “a likeness of one of God’s beautiful creatures.” (Herder,1778/2002, p. 52) Criticizing a sculpture that “does not correspond to its end,” for example “an Apollo without the pride and courage of youth,” Herder idealizes a statue unified its whole body by a representative character (Herder,1778/2002, p. 78).

How far we stand behind them [the Greeks] may be judged by a later age. What is rarer in our day than for someone to grasp a man’s *character* as it is, to capture it and to develop it in a way that is faithful and complete? Instead, he must always make recourse to reason and morality, as to light and color; the figure will not stand on its own two feet and like a phantom its appearance changes from one side to another. (Herder,1778/2002, p. 81)

Calling for the inner nature each figure particularly has, Herder excludes surplus elements, as with the clothing, for the character. In this criterion, a figure should be protected from the attributes which interfere with its completeness, and group statues should be avoided. According to Herder, Laocoön group was produced through a meticulous devising that, on the one hand, sought to avoid the fusion of elements into “a monstrous body of man and serpent,” and on the other hand, Laocoön and his children needed to be “unified by the struggle against their opponent.” (Herder,1778/2002, p. 61) Here, the serpent does not fully fuse with Laocoön’s body but is just gripped by Laocoön’s hands remaining free and unifies figures as their common enemy. This means for wholeness, which is perceived by kinaesthetic sense of touch, would be different from that of painterly composition. As Alex

Potts puts it, Herder considers that “with seeing, things exist simultaneously, ‘side by side’ (*nebeneinander*), with touch they exist ‘within one another’ (*ineinander*).” (Potts, 2000, p. 29) Individual figures should be separated from each other and at the same time unified as a group through the directly lived process of touch defined as “inner *sympathy*,” which, as it were, immediately mediates a viewer with a statue (Herder,1778/2002, p. 78).

Herder’s notion of sculptural body is led by a kind of Christian humanism where a sculptor is ideally considered to make a statue as a presence imbued with a character as God created Man from clay and infused it with soul. Let’s get back to the discussion on Funakoshi’s sculpture. Some Funakoshi’s figures have androgynous and therianthropic bodies which culminated in the *Sphinx* series from the mid-2000s. Because of their postures standing straight and exposing their genitalia with contemplative gazes looking faraway, they take on the appearance of divinity reminiscent of “Hermaphroditos *anasyromenos*,” a type of androgynous sculpture with apotropaic value derived from ancient Greece (Ajootian, 1997).

The androgyny, however, had already appeared in earlier figures, the upper half of the body of which have swollen breasts, and the whole shape of it resembles phallus as Funakoshi acknowledged (Funakoshi, 2015). It might remind us of Constantin Brancusi’s *Torso of a Young Man*, which looks like either a phallic monument or a body without external organs that indicates a particular sex. The divinity of the androgynous bodies of *Sphinx* suggests a complete existence which transcends our mortality or mundane status, though they are formed basically in the articulation of human body unlike Brancusi’s non-human bodies such as abstract “bird” which, as David Getsy points out, most successfully achieved to transcend binary gender assignment (Getsy, 2015).

While *Sphinx* registers the self-sufficient divinity, it is built through the assemblage of different parts each of which has its own materiality such as camphor wood, miscellaneous tree, marble, leather and steel. This inorganic or discontinuous synthesis of bodily parts is probably derived from the series’ mythical motif, sphinx. The chimeric combination of this body might deviate from the norm of the unity of character proposed by Herder, who excoriated “a monstrous body of man and serpent.” No matter how Funakoshi’s sculptures are resonant with Mono-ha’s vision of nature in which the encountering and the encountered fuse into one form, or with Herder’s vision of a united whole of a divine or heroic character, they to some extent deviate from some entity completed “as-it-is.” Rather, as we saw in “Sphinx,” they opened an unnatural reconstruction of bodies by introducing artificially processed skins and discontinuously combined parts.

3. From the Myth of Origin to Permeable Boundaries

It might be productive to depict this sort of body with partial status as a “cyborg,” as well as the monstrous characters such as chimera or sphinx. Suggestively, the cover illustration of Donna Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), *Cyborg* by Lynn Randolph, is depicted as an assemblage of a sphinx and a woman engaging in infor-

mation processing. As Haraway puts it in “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in terms of “cyborg feminism,” any “natural matrix of unity” is no longer wanted (Haraway, 1985/1991, p. 157).

While referring to the situation where “in the ‘Western’ sense, the end of man is at stake,” Haraway proposed the term “informatics of domination” to describe a world system developed in the late 20th century (Haraway, 1985/1991, p. 160). This recent system mediated by new technologies in fields such as communication science and biology is related to new forms of control and resistance, on which cyborg tries to reconstruct the boundaries encountered in daily experience. It is telling that Haraway introduces the model of “networking” as the mode of “both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy,” which suggests “the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic.” (Haraway, 1985/1991, p. 170)

It is necessary to note that, in the genealogy of sculptural bodies, there are precedential practices where the cyborg imagery is referred to, such as the works of South Korean artist Lee Bul (born 1964). For the discussion in the present essay, the most suggestive point in Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” is that the life of the cyborg does not presuppose any unified whole as an origin.

The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense — a ‘final’ irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the ‘West’s’ escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. An origin story in the ‘Western’, humanist sense depends on the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from whom all humans must separate, the task of individual development and of history, the twin potent myths inscribed most powerfully for us in psychoanalysis and Marxism. (Haraway, 1985/1991, pp. 150-151)

The definite dichotomy of unity and separation would generate the narratives of utopic emancipation from mundane relations, which aim at undifferentiated symbiosis or unalienated freedom and equilibrium. The cyborg imagery seems no longer to rely on this kind of utopia often expressed by the image of “innocent nature” which entails the gendered notion of motherhood, or by the image of what is autonomously free-floating above this mother earth. In the approaches around sculpture, these images are sometimes carried by the undifferentiated amorphousness of raw materials as matrices for shapes, or sometimes pursued by an autonomous form. In these cases, a sculpture tends to assume the definite origin or end of its formation. However, unlike the sculptural body infused with a soul by a superior creator which was presupposed in Herder’s discussion, “the cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust.” (Haraway, 1985/1991, p. 151)

In the context of sculpture in the second half of 20th century Japan, the mythic image of the figure created from mud was adopted by Kurokawa Hirotake (born 1952), but in an

inflected way due to the historical condition after Mono-ha. Alongside Toya, Kurokawa struggled to develop the updated way of “making” rather than just following Mono-ha’s norm of not-making or not-structuring. As his resolution, Kurokawa started to make bronze sculptures which have two-sided textures, including the *Golem* series inspired by Adam made of the mass of earth, which is mentioned in Genesis. On the one side, a part called “nude,” bronze is left in black and rough, the state of being poured in a mold. On the other side, called “tongue,” the surface of the bronze figure is ground, that is, carved to get lustrous (Yamaura, 2003). Here, we can see the formation of the emergent surface of the human body alongside Toya’s practice of inscription onto the wood’s “skin.”

However, as recognizable in the dichotomy of “nude” and “tongue,” which appears to correspond to that of nature and culture or body and soul, there remains a room for an innocent matrix of “origin” of a bodily figure. In Kurokawa’s *Golem*, it is carried by the materiality of bronze left intact as a metaphor of divine creation and primordial earth preceded to and protected against artificial-artistic operations. As long as this prior base to “carving” is presupposed as a metaphorical factor, the potential of the active surfaces would not sufficiently be opened. Judith Butler examines the notion of innocent base like “blank page” prior to inscription that is implicitly conserved in structuralist discourses. In keeping with Butler’s discussion, it would be required to recognize the bodies that structure their figures through the polyphonic dynamics without any exceptional foundation secured from juridical or discursive operations.

The culturally constructed body would be the result of a diffuse and active structuring of the social field with no magical or ontological origins, structuralist distinctions, or fictions of bodies, subversive or otherwise, ontologically intact before the law. (Butler, 1989, p. 607)

As a constructive or plastic procedure, sculptural approaches around bodies would no longer need such a metaphor of ontological space of origin. The sculptures by Aoki Noe (born 1958), which were exhibited alongside Kurokawa’s works in the recent collection exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, seem to be suggestive in this regard². In *Moya 2018-I*, contiguously connected rings of steel are structured into porous surfaces undulating as if they were swaying in a breeze. Each ring would be a metaphor of a microscopic particle of mist in the air, and at the same time, with the artist’s print works, it probably corresponds to the permeability of cellular texture of body. Moreover, it is important that the steel sculpture is realized in the weightless status where the gravity due to the materiality of metal is resolved into the skinny drapery of the mist. Here, the distinction between humans and the world is getting dissolved, but in a different way from Mono-ha. The particle imagery as a transitive factor also works in the sculptural conception of Nawa Kohei (b. 1975), who conceives “the interconnectedness of cells across all species.” (Nawa, 2022, n.p.) Aoki’s misty skins, which do not insist on the autonomous unity of wholeness, foreground the potential of bodies to intersect with others both physically and imaginarily. The permeability of boundaries is, as mentioned, a feature of the cyborg depicted by Haraway.

² The exhibition was on view from January 23rd to April 7th, 2024 at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

4. The Critical Intensity of Growth

One of the recent sculptural practices which take on some affinities with cyborg imagery is ceramic figures by Fujiwara Ayato (born 1975). Fujiwara's statues standing contemplatively with their eyes closed might remind us of Funakoshi's ones. Also, their bodies sometimes fuse with the bulge of a jar, suggesting an inner space although it does not appear filled but evacuated to give the figure's face a melancholically immersive look. There seems to be a room for something as an invisible factor which inhabits and animates the body. In this point, Fujiwara's statues might be connected to the genealogy of ontological criteria about sculpture.

But at the same time, some figures by Fujiwara have excessive attributes or belongings and structural dynamics that dismantle the introverted impression. From earlier works, Fujiwara appears to have explored the quality of the surface as an interface between different figures or objects to structure a chimeric complex. Making the boundary of bodies ambiguous, poured glaze mediates human's hair and clothing, another body, objects or architectural elements. For example, hair slips into clothing, or articulations of a body are overwritten by architectural joints of plates. This would amplify the allegorical exchanges of meanings on the surface of the body, which encroach the fixed identity of the figure.

Therefore, we might be able to examine Fujiwara's sculpture through an entangled interpretive framework. In the recent *Images (Statue) / Images (Pedestal) -Axis and Surroundings-* series (fig. 1), a pedestal on which a ceramic figure is placed has a disk-shaped top similar to a potter's wheel. So, in a way, the sculpture emphasizes the central axle around which the shape comes to emerge. However, at the same time, the centrifugal force of the rotation of the potter's wheel suggests the outer surface of the figure and the surroundings of it. And in the series, the imagery of a jar, which lacks the inner substance, not only causes the vacuous vibe, but also seems to have transformed the body into a monstrous structure that has externalized viscera and tracts playing on the skin like planets in the universe. Such an entangled dynamics between the centripetal direction and the centrifugal extraction is described by Mori Keisuke as "likely to be part and whole, autonomous and heteronomous." (Mori, 2024, n.p.)

The bionic rearrangement of bodies is introduced in the practices of Saeborg (born 1981), whose name clearly suggests cyborg. The artist's occasionally wearable rubber figures exaggerate their sensuous bulge of balloons. The tension on the skin as the sign of lively fullness produced by internal air pressure goes critical and paradoxically warns the end of its life, that is, the explosion of organs. Regarding his sculptural works covered with leather, Ishihara Tomoaki (born 1959) also mentioned this surface tension as a factor which defines the shape of a human body, referring to the image of explosive bodies depicted in Otomo Katsuhiro's manga *AKIRA* (1982-1990) (Ishihara, 2012). As for Saeborg, this externalization is realized in the works where female pigs are slaughtered and hung, or a part of their bodies is sliced and removed then their ribs are made to expose. Obviously, these depictions are related to the issues of feminism or animal welfare. And such features as the "exaggerated" quality of sensuousness, prosthetic structures, and radical hybridization transcend the nor-



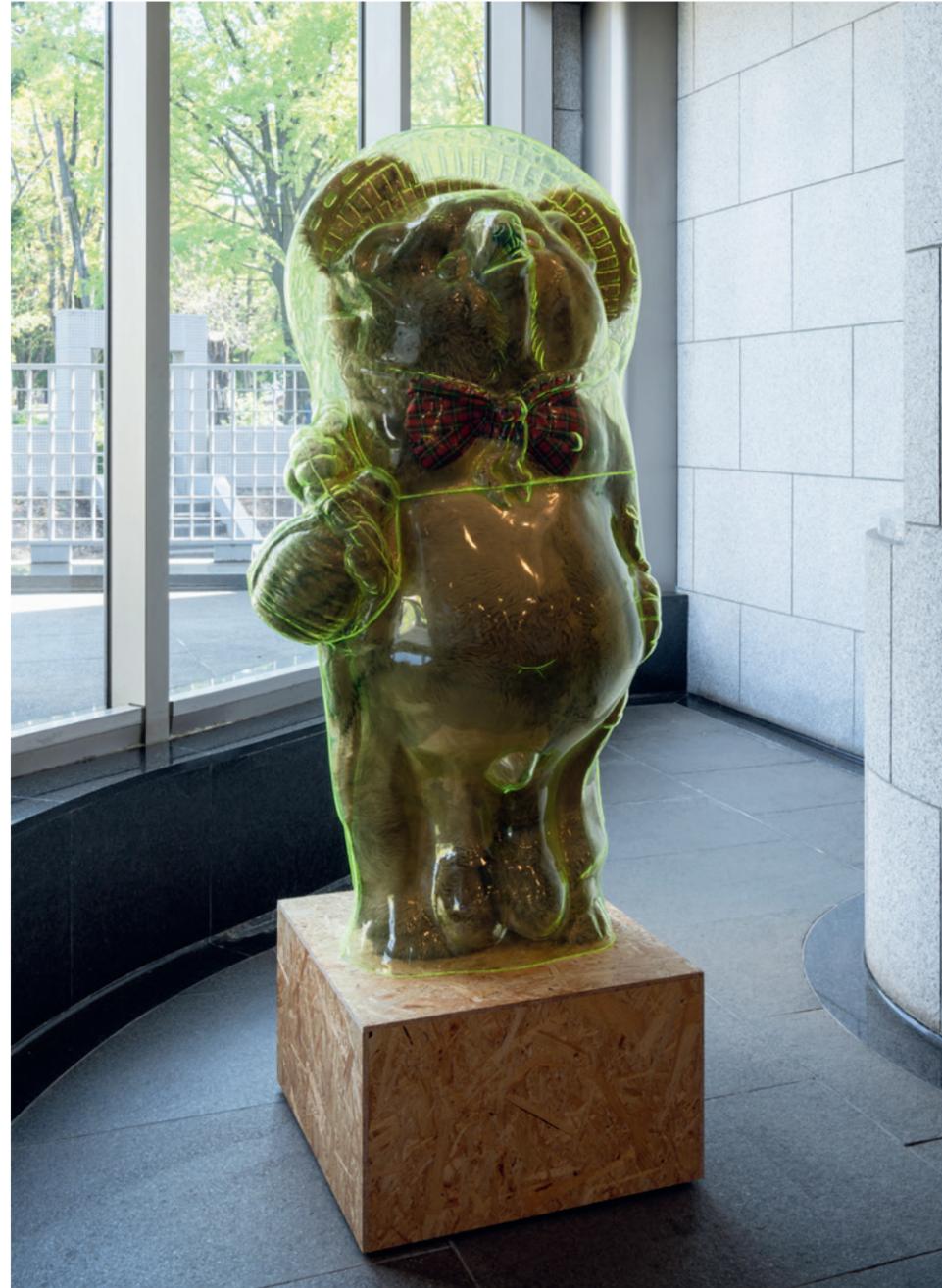
Fig. 1: Fujiwara Ayato, *Images(Statue) / Images(Pedestal) -Axis and Surroundings-06, 2022-23*. Glazed ceramic, 190 × 55 × 57 cm. Photo by Yanagiba Masaru.

mative representations of stereotypically gendered or classified bodies. Saeborg describes the body in a latex suit as comparable with toy dolls or drag queens (Saeborg, 2017).

The paradox that an excessive extension of the body indicates both intensive vitality and the crisis for the life or the rearrangement of the form of it might also be seen in the works of Nagai Solaya (born 1991). In the *metaraction* series, a ready-made object such as

a stuffed toy is stuffed in another shape of translucent acrylic layer. For example, in *metaraction #10* (fig. 2), a teddy bear is stuffed in a neon-colored acrylic container whose shape was cast from a raccoon dog of Shigaraki ceramics, well-known as a mascot in Japan. The original surface, that is, the bear's outer appearance, is distorted and internalized by the raccoon dog to dissolve into a hazy crust. In this incomplete amalgam, the bear's shape has become an ambivalent status between the stuffing and the stuffed or shape and matter. Here, two elements composing the sculpture are both ready-made shapes, so it is difficult

Fig. 2: Nagai Solaya, *metaraction #10*, 2014. Teddy bear, acrylic, 148 × 80 × 70 cm. Photo by Kato Ken.



to identify any “origin” of the definitive surface as idealized in Herder’s discussion on statues. Rather, the hybrid creature, the internal space of which is partially filled, but partially vacant, appears to be oscillating between life and death. The half-corrupted bear suggests it is dying, and the half-filled raccoon dog suggests it is in the embryonic phase toward birth or, in the parasitic relationship. It seems this in-between status that makes the sculptural figure fresh. The entanglement of life and death would have some relation to the charm of the stuffed duck Nagai purchased in the university days, which the artist describes as the dead creature standing as if it is living (Nagai, 2023).

This lack of wholeness and struggle over an imagery of figure would not be grasped sufficiently if we consider it from the perspective of the fixed dichotomy of inside and outside. In Nagai’s sculpture, physically, the two elements are inside and outside, respectively. But optically, they are both presented to and superimposed in our eyes through the translucent layer. Here, the term “inside” is not necessarily put as the clearly oppositional notion against “outside.” Both play on the ambiguous, hazy surface as if they entangle to get to another form of life. This actively entangling surface weaving inside and outside would not only be differentiated from the superficial imagery that was criticized by Mono-ha as an obstacle to the lived experience of the world, but also abolish the subservient status that Herder forced onto clothing.

5. The Rearrangement of Membranes

In favor of some figures who developed their mature works in the 1980s such as Toya, Kurokawa, Tawa Keizo (born 1952), Minemura proposed the term “Katamari sculpture,” which literally means solidified sculpture, as opposed to the recent three-dimensional works that were realized through constructive procedure or spatial articulation. The critic considers that in the works of “Katamari sculpture,” the presentation of materialistic facts which our sense of touch can grasp is not their aim. Rather, the physical intensity is considered to be pursued in order to finally heighten the shock due to the facing with the incompetence of the tactile ability to grasp a metaphysical entity. According to Minemura, it is this moment that enables us to transcend mundane experience and, in the negative manner, reach “haptic sense” which he defines as “unbodily sensations in the depth of the body.” (Minemura, 1993, p.12)

Some recent practices examined in the present essay, as seen in the cyborg imagery, explore trans-humanistic bodies which does not insist on the organic whole with self-sufficiency, but in the different way from the formulation that presupposes the negative, that is, untouchable basis which transcends the sensitivity of mortal presence. Rather, some suggestive works present bodies as a node of manifold parts or planes, not as a negative medium for an unbodied end.

The node as a bodily interface in *Maihime* (fig. 3) by Yamauchi Shota (born 1992), who has educational backgrounds both of sculpture and moving image and has addressed the theme of the relationship between technology and humans, is presented as sensual rub-



Fig. 3: Yamauchi Shota, *Maihime*, 2021. Photo by Tayama Tatsuyuki.

ber skins and a silicon tube which mediate human and nonhuman. On the screen, a gorilla-like 3DCG creature with double skin, which looks like either an organic membrane or an industrial rubber suit, presents mechanical gestures. The contact of the two layers seems to make the creature vigorous, for when it strips itself of the outer layer, it rapidly becomes aged and weakened. This contrast of vitality is also seen in the performance accompanied by the work. A performer in a rubber suit is connected to the creature on the screen through a silicon tube implying an umbilical cord and they dance in sync. This connection presents the sensual relationship between humans and nonhuman actors such as animals, technological apparatus or digitally processed imagery. In addition, the creature and the performer with rubber skin have no distinct external genitalia, so this interspecific relationship does not seem to be based on the binary gender assignment.

Maihime suggests three boundary breakdowns Haraway points out in relation to the cyborg imagery: the breakdown of the boundary between human and animal, animal-human (organism) and machine, physical and non-physical (Haraway, 1985/1991). The last one, in the discourse of sculpture, might conjure up a non-solid structuring of bodies. This would lead us to another telling example: *The Distant Body* (fig. 4) by Maeda Kasumi (born 1991). In the work, the non-solid element is represented by a double-layered screen. One of the layers is a screen or wall in the actual exhibition space on which an inclusive image is pro-



Fig. 4: Maeda Kasumi, *The Distant Body*, 2019. Video, 9 min 13 sec. Video shooting by comuramai.

jected. On the other, a fabric screen *within* the former image, Maeda's figure is projected. In the video, the body image caught up in the optical gap between the two screens conveys, as the title suggests, the farness of the body which evades from grasp.

But this non-physical body then starts to get restructured toward the assemblage with physical parts. The artist actually comes in the frame and sits behind the screen. Then incisions are made in the screen, from which four limbs protrude as superimposed on the projected image of the artist rubbing legs. In sync with this rubbing motion, actual hands attach clay on the actual legs as though they made the mold for casting. Finally, the projected body goes away, and the actual limbs are removed from the mold, leaving the hollow skin made of massive material but has lost its substance. The skin, left as the vestige of the interaction between the physical and nonphysical body, looks like a phantom as Shibukawa Maron points out (Shibukawa, 2022). The work deploys the surfaces each of which suggests the potential formation of the body and entangles each other to explore the haptical reality, though they are not mediated into an united whole. Thus a kind of unattained body image to pursue and lack to be filled might be suggested here. However, it would not be the limit

composing, as it were, the negative theology of “Katamari sculpture” but be an active process of structuring the body that feels real.

It is telling that this structuring process is based on several “surfaces,” for we might be able to see them as skins or clothing as the mutative—not subservient—extension of skin. The extensive surfaces mutated into a manifold structure is also explored by Saijo Aka-ne (born 1989), who has developed the concept called “Phantom Body.” Each of her ceramic sculptures based on the concept has a hollow structure. It reminds us of the creepy ceramic objects with bodily apertures by Yagi Kazuo (1918-79), one of the founders of the Sodeisha Group, which led the avant-garde ceramic movement in postwar Japan.

However, Saijo’s sculptures are sometimes realized in bodily scale or cast from the artist’s own body not unlike Maeda’s *The Distant Body*. *Orchard* has multiple orifices from which several people can blow into the inside simultaneously, reverberating manifold sounds. In such a performance, each performer’s lips contact with the orifice, which forms a continuum of a sculpture and bodies through their inner membranes. The infused breath and earth material suggests the myth of creation by God. But in *Orchard*, what is interactively organized is a chimeric complex of bodies, which appears to be converted into a series of tubular bypasses without being hidden inside any outer frame that unifies them into one, integrated whole. The porous continuum of surfaces has no clear boundary of inside and outside, as Saijo explains the influx of the breath through the inner tracts as an attempt to extend and expand visceral sensation (Saijo, 2022).

6. Physical Realities Explored Through Play

Saijo’s works would share the features with the works of some other figures discussed above in its disjunctive relationship between humans (performers) and objects, as well as in the imagery of externalized viscera. Here, bodies are not only the motif of sculpture, but also actors engaging or intersecting with objects. The behaviors of performers contacting their mouth with the orifices in *Orchard* suggest a ceramic bowl as a tool for daily meal. Such bodily engagement or expansion seems to be preceded by some figures in the 1980s or 1990s, even if their works did not foreground such excessive entanglement as the cyborg imagery. Some artists who exhibited at *Centrifugal Sculpture: An Aspect of Japanese Sculpture in the Last Decade* (1992) seem to have developed this notion of the intersection between body and thing. Ishihara was one of them, and in keeping with the expansive body image mentioned above, the adjective “centrifugal” in the title is suggestive. Speaking of some other figures, Imamura Hajime (born 1957) has subsequently yielded bodily figures to parasitic growth of fern fronds or mushrooms; Nakahara Kodai (born 1961) introduced the term “possessions” as a part of his works’ title in the 1980s, which compares the adjacency between cells composing one’s body and that between the body and personal belongings as though bringing the body’s limits into oscillation (Nakahara, 2014); Takayanagi Eri (born 1962) amplifies the interactive manners that things afford human behavior.

The exhibition also includes *Sculpture Costume (for three persons)* (1990) made in collaboration of three artists, Morimura Yasumasa (born 1951), Yamasaki Toru (born 1960), Kondo



Shigeru. This wearable device combines three persons into sculptural figures as though it simulated the statue group of caryatids. The attempt of presenting bodies as sculpture is preceded by figures like Gilbert & George, who elaborated the notion of “living sculpture.” But here, it would be productive to focus on the prosthetic device which partly replaces the former body. The works of Washimi Yusuke (born 1996) based on the composition of daily manufactured goods (fig. 5) are one of the recent sculptural practices of wearability, alongside other figures including Saeborg. In some of Washimi’s wearable sculptures, the exuberant growth of patterns is introduced through the reiterative arrangement of identical plastic parts. This structural condition seems compatible with a scalable virtual space, into which the invaded body might be transferred and in which it would be transformed. The senses of other dimensions which motivate bodily arrangement to mutate would, in the case of Washimi, be related to the interest in popular culture such as manga, anime, and live-action films or TV dramas with special effects called “tokusatsu” like *Kamen Rider (Masked Rider)* (Washimi, 2023).

The transformation parasitically developed through the relationships between bodies and fictional imagery does not necessarily alienate one’s body from a lively condition. Rather, there remains surplus parts which could not fully be effaced, not unlike the figure in insect-like mask in *Kamen Rider* which to some extent leaves the characteristics of the human body. The spectrum of figurative transition between human and nonhuman is also explored in the works of Takahashi Naohiro (born 1991), who used to make the sculptures referring to monsters or heroes of “tokusatsu” including *Kamen Rider. Pretend to Be a Pretender* (fig.6)

Fig. 5: Washimi Yusuke, *bind*, 2022. Two channel video, 55 sec (endless loop).



Fig.6: Takahashi Naohiro, *Pretend to Be a Pretender*, 2021-22. Painted on wood, hose, dimensions variable. Photo by Ueda Yoko.

suggests that a figure of a two-dimensional character and a three-dimensional human body imitate each other in the dismembered but loosely connected condition.

This double body might remind us of the difference between “Kyara” and “character” proposed by Ito Go. Regarding the expression of manga, Ito defines “Kyara” as what is drawn by simple lines and just hints at personality, which is not only independent of individual text, but also traverses multiple texts without losing its identical sense of presence. Thus “Kyara” is able to retain its identity if its form is variably altered between derivative works. But this “identity” as the intensity of the sense of presence would not correspond to what represents a personality, which we would rather find in “character” limitedly living in the depicted context of a work. “Character” confines a figure into individual narratives, in spite of the fact that it is preceded by and created on the basis of “Kyara” (Ito, 2005).

Pretend to Be a Pretender is a sculptural figure, which differs from manga in their structure and temporality, so it is not able to directly adapt Ito’s discussion to the work. However, it is telling that the double body, which can rearrange its bodily posture by activating the play of the tubular and pliable skeleton, suggest the potentially mutative behavior of one person like “Kyara.” It might be compared to our condition where we remain the same person identified by a specific name, while our body tends to be structured each time through relational and selective experience and deviate from a specific character.

As Narumi Hiroshi puts it regarding cosplay, the attempt to imitate another figure inhabiting a fictional world is not the act of repressing one’s sense of self to adapt to social reality. In cosplay, which is distinguished from disguise, identity is not what is passively assigned but something with which one “plays” to examine the differences between one and others. According to Narumi, “one of the aims of dressing up is to become oneself through becoming the other. The process of accepting the inscription (the Other) onto the body like a tattoo as one’s own possessions is of importance.” (Narumi, 2009, p. 16)

Conclusion

Especially when the object to imitate is a fictional character, it would be difficult for us to fully identify with it, for it does not exist in the ordinary sense. Probably, there is not any final end for structuring one’s body and, the proximity to an ideal image is only partially acquired. But the thing is, it is this ambiguous spectrum of proximity and distance that the sense of real inhabits.

As regards sculptural imagination, some works examined in the present essay seem to foreground the ambiguity through mutative arrangement of bodies. They would have no truck with, or build ironical relationships with, the following: the attitude of repelling the structural operation in favor of the contemplative “as-it-is” mode of opened encounter, the figure fully identified with a specific “character”, the imagery of the amorphous matrix as a maternal origin from which forms should be differentiated, physicality demanded to be rewarded by relying on transcendent depth. The prominent practices have explored the real sense of bodies in facing their partial and porous status. This might accompany some anxiety, but they would not resort to reactionary wholism to resolve it. Rather, it would be the play with surfaces, in their ambiguous thickness, that brings potential behaviors of figures into activation ■

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AICHI ART MUSEUMS AND GENDER BALANCE As revealed by When Two Collections Meet

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Abstract

This is a review of the exhibition When Two Collections Meet organized jointly by the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, paying particular attention to Chapter 2 'Woman Made', devoted exclusively to work by female artists, and touching also on the distinguishing features of Aichi Prefecture in the Japanese context, and circumstances behind the establishment of prefectural art museums. The discussion covers local-authority-art-museum relationships, plus issues and recent developments with regard to the social status and evaluation of female artists.

KEY WORDS: Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum , Collection, Gender balance, Animus

Resumen

Esta es una revisión de la exposición Cuando Dos Colecciones se Encuentran, organizada conjuntamente por el Museo de Arte de la Prefectura de Aichi y el Museo de Cerámica de la Prefectura de Aichi, prestando especial atención al Capítulo 2 'Woman Made', dedicado exclusivamente al trabajo de artistas femeninas, y abordando también la características distintivas de la Prefectura de Aichi en el contexto japonés y circunstancias detrás del establecimiento de museos de arte en la prefectura. La discusión cubre las relaciones entre las autoridades locales, los museos de arte, además de cuestiones y desarrollos recientes con respecto al estatus social y la evaluación de las artistas femeninas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Museo de Arte de la Prefectura de Aichi, Museo de Cerámica de la Prefectura de Aichi, Colección, Equilibrio de género, Ánimo

AICHI ART MUSEUMS AND GENDER BALANCE

As revealed by *When
Two Collections Meet*

1. Introduction

Located approximately in Japan's geographic centre, Aichi Prefecture takes pride in its prowess and profile as a manufacturing powerhouse for transport equipment, chiefly cars. It is also home to the city of Seto, a major pottery production centre with a rich ceramics tradition that has evolved over centuries.

Yet despite ranking in Japan's top three cities by population alongside Tokyo and Osaka, and its convenience as midway point between these two other metropolises, it must be admitted that Aichi's prefectural capital Nagoya has never had much of a cultural profile, or scored highly for the availability of culture.

Contemporary art in Aichi after World War II was to an extent characterized by an outflow of lateral-thinking, idiosyncratic artists¹ to Tokyo and the rest of the world. With its business background, Aichi has also long been seen as a place with a lot of private collectors, and contemporary art galleries flourished here especially from the mid-1980s to early 1990s. Aside from this mobility of people and artworks, a vital element of art in the region has been the commitment of the prefectural art museums (the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum) to establishing and preserving the value of these people and artworks, and their worth as resources. Yet another major influence on the arts environment in Aichi has been the Aichi Triennale international exhibition, launched in 2010 in the wake of the prefecture's hosting of Expo 2005, and held ever since.

This essay deals with the exhibition *When Two Collections Meet*² jointly organized by the aforementioned museums, and of the four chapters in the exhibition, focuses particularly on Chapter 2 'Woman Made', a gathering of work by female artists. Discussion will cover the post-war relationship between art museums and local authorities, and issues around the social status and evaluation of female artists.

1 Well-known international artists of Aichi origin include Shusaku Arakawa (1936–2010), On Kawara (1932–2014), Tadaaki Kuwayama (1932–2023), and Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959) who was not born in Aichi but studied at the Aichi University of the Arts.

2 *When Two Collections Meet: Co-curated by the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum*, 16 January–14 April, 2024.
<https://www-art.aac.pref.aichi.jp/exhibition/000431.html>

2. Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art and Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum

The Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art that opened in 1992 in the Aichi Arts Center has as its forerunner the Aichi Art Gallery. A project to commemorate the San Francisco Treaty of 1951, the Aichi Art Gallery was constructed in 1955. A complex incorporating an art museum, art theatre and library, the gallery served as a tangible symbol of the post-war recovery of Japanese society, offering a diverse and democratic art-viewing experience. The construction of the Aichi Arts Center in 1988 was in part ‘revenge’ for the prefecture’s failure in 1981 to gain hosting rights for the 1988 summer Olympics, the governor of the time, eager to overcome Aichi’s sense of cultural inferiority, declaring that it would ‘build the best cultural facility in Japan’. This drive for cultural cachet was also a motivation for hosting the World Expo in 2005.

Plans for the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum meanwhile began in 1972 as an Aichi Prefecture centennial project, the museum opening in 1978 in the hills of Seto. Next-door in the town of Nagakute, the Aichi University of the Arts opened in 1966, its goal to help build ‘a unique cultural area located midway between Japan’s east and west, contributing to the advancement of culture in the region in response to the remarkable development of the industrial economy of Chubu, particularly in Aichi’.³ Thus the provision of an arts university and museums reflected a belief that the prefecture needed a level of culture befitting its industrial might.

In 2005 the World Expo was staged in the vicinity of both university and museums, with the site later being turned into a commemorative park. In recent years a Ghibli Park⁴ has been built there, its final stage opening in March 2024. The fifth Aichi Triennale, ‘Aichi 2025’⁵ will also be staged at the Aichi Arts Center, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, and locations in the city of Seto.

3. When Two Collections Meet

When Two Collections Meet arose from the temporary closure of the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum for renovations ahead of the Aichi Triennale in 2025. The combined collections of the two museums contain over 17,000 items, from which around 150 were selected. Volleying views back and forth in the manner of a tennis match (hence the Japanese title for the exhibition: ‘Collections Rally’), four curators from the museums⁶ together

³ From the Aichi University of the Arts website
<https://www.aichi-fam-u.ac.jp/guide/summary/08.html>

⁴ From the Ghibli Park website
<https://ghibli-park.jp>

⁵ See the official Aichi 2025 website
<https://aichitriennale.jp>

⁶ Curators were Chapter 1: Masako Sakuna (curator, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum), Chapter 2: Takashi Ishizaki



organized an exhibition in omnibus format, each curator nominating a theme from their own particular viewpoint.

Taking as its theme the eponymous era of Japanese prehistory that began 13,000 years ago and lasted for around 10,000 years, Chapter 1 ‘JOMON’ presented examples of plastic art evoking the diverse culture of this period. Ten pieces of Jomon earthenware were on display, placed alongside modern and contemporary artworks to offer a fresh setting for their appreciation. Presenting these pieces as artworks in moulded clay rather than archaeological artifacts encouraged viewers to make associations that transcended the intervening millennia. Larger-than-life *The Verbal Communication is Not Yet Born in the Island* (2020) by Yusuke Asai (b. 1981) for example, is painted using soil collected by the artist, and on close contemplation the concentrated renderings of flora and fauna may be found to echo the Jomon view of life and death.

Yusuke Asai, *The Verbal Communication is Not Yet Born in the Island*, 2020, soil, paint and India ink on canvas Jomon earthenware, cylindrical jar, early-middle Jomon period, ca 3000 BC, ceramic.

Photo courtesy of the author.

(chief curator, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art), Chapter 3: Haruka Nakano (curator, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art), and Chapter 4: Ryou Ohnishi (curator, Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum).

Chapter 2 ‘Woman Made’ will be discussed in due course. For the moment, note that its name comes from *What a Woman Made*,⁷ title of the memoir of filmmaker Mako Idemitsu (b. 1940), and it featured hitherto largely unexhibited works by female artists, plus new acquisitions also by female artists. Chapter 3 had the witty title ‘Hard rock/Heavy metal’, a direct description of its contents, and demonstrated the myriad delights of material, technique, and form.

The final chapter, ‘Prayer’, was a survey of Buddhist art and grave goods, plus works addressing questions of the afterlife.

A clever touch was posting pairs of *koma-inu* shrine guardian dogs, many Aichi-designated cultural properties, on either side of the entrance to each chapter, to act as guideposts. These were gifted by local businesspeople, such as Shizuo Honda (1988–1999). Honda was one of Japan’s top scholars and collectors of ceramics, with a special admiration for ceramic shrine dogs. He is also one of those who worked tirelessly to establish a ceramics museum in Aichi. The presence of the Teizou Kimura (1913–2003) collection in the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art is another important element of Chapter 4. Kimura, also known as a collector of works by Morikazu Kumagai (1880–1977), expanded the temporal scope of the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art collection through his donation of archaeological craft ephemera.

Decisions around what to choose from the collections of both museums, and where to position those choices, were of course the domain of curators and their curation, but the preconditions on which those decisions were inevitably based still need to be interrogated. That is, how the museums went about selecting works for acquisition in the past, and collecting those works.

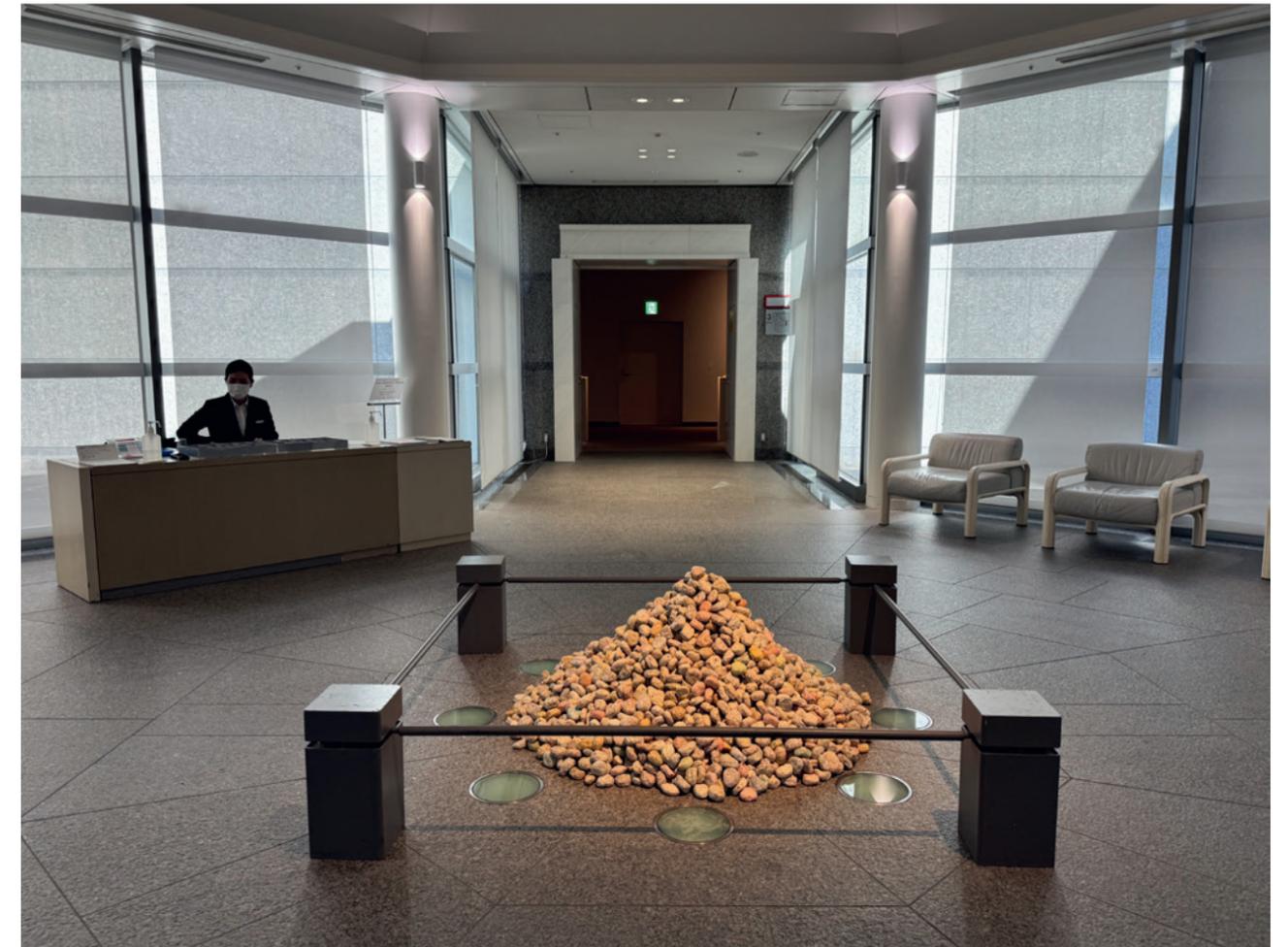
4. Gender balance

The term *gender balance* has begun to appear in various societal settings in recent years, with questions raised around the realities of that balance. In the arts domain, allow me to refer to a recent survey covering the ten years from 2011 to 2020.⁸ In the fine arts, figures are given for the proportions of male and female prize winners, jury members, solo exhibitions at art museums, and works in collections. A marked gender imbalance emerges, with a schema of male jury dominance leading to more recognition for males. When it came to solo exhibitions at art museums too, even at museums dealing mainly in contemporary art, male artists accounted for over 75 percent of shows, indicating male domination extending right up to the present. Over this ten-year period the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art staged 13 shows by males and one by a female,⁹ meaning that 90 percent of solo exhibitions were dedicated to male artists.

7 Mako Idemitsu, *What a Woman Made – Aru eizosakka no jiden [Memoirs of a filmmaker]*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003.

8 See ‘White Paper on Gender Balance 2022’, Hyogen no Genba Chosadan <https://www.hyogen-genba.com>

9 The only solo exhibition by a female artist ever staged at the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art is 2015’s *Kataoka*



However when it comes to artists in the collection of the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, a result very different to that of other museums was reported. The survey covered seven museums,¹⁰ with males accounting overall for 71.9 percent of artists, and 80.3 percent of works. The remainder are female artists, or collectives. At the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art however, males accounted for 64.8 percent of artists, and 54.9 percent of artworks, with the figures for 2020 a balanced 43.2 and 51.0 percent respectively, indicating a rapid increase in the purchase of works by female artists in the past few years.

The report mentions that the ‘gender equality’ championed by Aichi Triennale 2019 artistic director Daisuke Tsuda (b. 1973) may well have influenced subsequent collecting

Keiko Otake, *Stones of Information*, 1984, paper.
Photo courtesy of the author.

Tamako – The 110th Anniversary of Her Birth. Nihonga painter Tamako Kataoka (1905–2008) was a senior lecturer at the Aichi University of the Arts from its opening.

10 The survey covered the National Museum of Art, Osaka; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; Tokyo Photographic Art Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo; and Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, extracting data from official websites and museum activity reports.

policy. The trend toward gender equality gained further momentum in 2020 thanks to the ringfencing of 100 million yen of the prefecture's art acquisition fund to support emerging artists (ages 20s to 40s) who had lost opportunities to show their work and earn income due to COVID-19. The result was a concerted effort in the three years up to 2022 to purchase contemporary art works by younger artists, with gender balance becoming an increasingly important consideration.

In addition, annual donations of 15 million yen have been received since 2020 from a private individual residing in Aichi Prefecture, from a sum totalling 150 million yen to be spread over ten years, and in accordance with the donor's wishes, purchase specifically of works by women artists from postwar to the present day has commenced. In 2023 the wife of the founder of a local business also donated 18 works by nine artists, with a total valuation of over 100 million yen. Here too, the museum succeeded in acquiring the output of internationally recognized female artists, and promising younger female artists.

More recently the museum has celebrated yet another item of big news: private donation of the oil painting *Hunting at Ur* (ca 1946) by Leonora Carrington (1917–2011), valued at 500 million yen, from a resident of the prefecture. A local newspaper proclaimed 'Public art museum pays unprecedented 500 million yen for work by female artist.'¹¹ In the article a pundit points out that this is significant because 'art museums as a whole have tended to dismiss female artists due to the male domination of art through history, with acquisitions being confined mainly to smaller pieces of lower value'.

5. 'Woman Made' in Aichi

Since 2020 collecting at the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art has been sensitive to both internal and external demands for gender balance, with proactive efforts made to rectify imbalances. The flip side is that a previous absence of such awareness meant very little progress was made in surveying and researching female artists.

Chapter 2 of the exhibition, 'Woman Made', was also an opportunity to find out what it was about female artists that the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art was so dismissive of previously, and the kind of value it is now starting to identify in their work. The exhibition also included examples of contemporary ceramic art by female ceramicists from the Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum collection, but of particular note was the presence of female artists who took up the challenge of avant-garde art in the postwar years. This reflected a conscious effort by the curator to take the opportunity afforded by the exhibition to debut works by female artists acquired since 2021, with no bias in artist name recognition, and it was works sourced by conducting solid local research

The first work encountered at *When Two Collections Meet*, displayed at the entrance, was a pile of 'stones' made of paper. *Stones of Information* (1984) by Keiko Otake (b. 1944) was created by taking a pile of the large volume of advertising flyers delivered each day with

¹¹ From the Ghibli Park website
<https://ghibli-park.jp>



Nobuko Ueda,
Work, 1981, granite
Noe Aoki, *Untitled NA96-2*, 1996,
iron.
Photo courtesy of the author.

the newspaper, and recycling it as papier mache before moulding into the form of stones. Otake was consistent in her insistence on making expression arise from everyday living, and with this work lobbed a critical 'stone' or three at consumerism and environmental degradation. But acquired by an art museum, arranged in a pile, and enclosed in a force-field-like boundary, her stones take on a certain irony. The vast cache of them dug out of a closet by the artist at the curator's behest here saw the light of day for the first time in forty years. Incidentally Otake graduated with a major in oil painting from Tokyo University of the Arts in

1968, and has expressed her anger at the sexual discrimination she suffered in educational settings of that time, and taken a highly self-aware stance toward women's issues since the 1970s. During the 1980s she took part in several female-only exhibitions, as well as staging numerous exhibitions of her own. It could be said though that because her works were not in circulation, or connected in any way with competitions, she missed out on opportunities for recognition. So what is the point of having them in a museum collection now? One suspects.

This work was always destined to reappear before new public eyes, and observing this development, Otake herself no doubt sees the institutional embrace of her work as clothing it in new information.

One avant-garde art group from Aichi was Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension). Recent research¹² has finally accorded this idiosyncratic cast of characters centred on Shinichi Iwata (1935–2017) and Yoshihiro Kato (1936–2018) that undertook radical performances in the 1960s a place in Aichi art history, with material related to them and their work now also finding its way into museums. A female member of Zero Jigen who took part in their early 'ceremonies' (performances) was Kouko Takahashi (b. 1942). After studying at Aichi Educational University, having been influenced by avant-garde art as a student Takahashi began to explore different directions for her own practice, eventually settling on the study and production of fabric sculpture, and dye work. The works in her Interval series (1981), acquired in 2021 and exhibited for the first time at the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, use linen fabric dyed by the artist, and feature pleats that emerge when the material is left to change form of its own accord. Deeming dyeing an endeavour on a par with depicting, Takahashi engaged with fabric's amenability to transformation from two dimensions into three, an honest approach that spurns control of material or technique.

Otake and Takahashi are similar in age, but have nothing else especially in common. Being acquainted with both women, I would say what both do have are a fierce intellect, and a staunch refusal to curry favour with authority. Adding them to the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art collection means archiving their ideas and activities for posterity, hopefully to inspire a new generation of female artists.

6. Animus

In Mako Idemitsu's work-on-video *ANIMUS Part 1* (1982), a woman's 'inner male' makes an appearance during a conversation between two women, and that of a married couple. A small figure in a red bodysuit, or a disembodied head covered in black, intrudes on the frame as the figures converse. A concept in Jungian psychology, the 'animus' refers to the masculine aspects of the female unconscious. The video shows the kind of biases and die-hard attitudes found in everyday small talk. *ANIMUS Part 2* (1982) features avant-garde artist Sayako Kishimoto (1939–1988), a friend of Idemitsu. Declaiming in the manner of a character from a *taishu engeki* drama, Kishimoto denounces a society centred on men and elites, and declares she has come to put the world to right. On this performance, 'Hell's Messenger',

Idemitsu superimposes the figure of a man in tights (ie the animus). According to Idemitsu, the animus has both positive and negative aspects, the negative being shown in *ANIMUS Part 1* and the positive being 'planning ability, critical thinking, verbal expression, courage, and spiritual depth'.¹³ Idemitsu says she detected a positive animus in Kishimoto's fiery tone. Idemitsu is widely known as the fourth daughter of Sazou Idemitsu (1885–1981), founder of oil company Idemitsu Kosan, and in her memoirs and interviews¹⁴ notes that raised in a household almost feudal in its patriarchal nature she was always fearful of her father and his absolute authority. After university she moved to the United States, where she married painter Sam Francis (1923–1994), and with camera in hand made works on the theme of female oppression while juggling housework and childcare. The work here was made the year after her father died, and her divorce from Francis was finalized, the couple by this time already living apart. *ANIMUS* could also be described as an expression of liberation from the shackles of womanhood.

7. Being crafty

Of the 21 female artists featured in the 'Woman Made' section, the especially striking Keiko Otake and Kouko Takahashi both studied painting and passed their younger years in the 1960s before exploring their own styles of production in the 1970s and '80s. In 1985, Japan passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law against the backdrop of the worldwide women's lib movement of the '70s that championed greater rights and freedoms for women, and higher expectations in the 1980s around female involvement in the workforce. Although systemic discrimination was now outlawed, women of Otake and Takahashi's generation would have been confronted by the gap between law and reality, and seen their fair share of absurdities. One could say that both, in their own ways, integrated animus and ego as they built up their creative practices.

Actually the idea that art made by women has a strong handcraft element is a bias of sorts probably arising from a discriminatory sensibility. However as long as it is men doing the appraising, it is not hard to imagine works governed by femininity being given a wide berth. For a thing to be craft-like in nature implies that it is not rational or logical, but emotional and sensual. The commentary for the 'Woman Made' chapter included the following:

Viewers will notice that 'handcraft', excluded from both fine art and ceramics (kogeï), and not treated as art, has historically been largely the domain of women.

This is probably another reason why art museums have so few female artists in their collections.

If we view handcraft as the product of materials and techniques grounded in daily living, the path from Chapter 2 to Chapter 3 'Hard rock/Heavy metal', and the exhibition space, take on a certain symbolism. Both the eerie Buddhist altar dedicated to fetuses of *The Memorial Altarpiece for Embryos* (1973) by Rin Noro (b. 1942), and Shoko Maemoto's (b. 1957) dress *Silent Explosion – Dashing Across the Night of an Alien Land* (1988) representing the

red flames of passion, and blood, are folk-like in rendering thanks to the use of handcraft techniques and materials. Beyond them the stone ribbon of the sculpture *Work* by Nobuko Ueda (b. 1942) crawls diagonally across the floor, serving as a bridge to Chapter 3. Noe Aoki (b. 1958), creator of *Untitled (NA96-2)* (1996) is a contemporary of Maemoto, however appears not in the 'Woman Made' category, but in Chapter 3, as a sculptor working in hard, heavy iron. Attracting attention early for her status a female iron sculptor, Aoki could be described as a successful artist, tireless in her making and presenting of art, and consistently well-reviewed. *Untitled (NA96-2)* is a large work exhibiting a skilled command of industrial iron materials and welding techniques, the very opposite of 'handcrafts'. Yet Aoki's success lies not in mimicking masculinity, but in the uniqueness of her soft lines and spaces showing vestiges of the artist's handiwork.

The exhibition of items from the collection staged alongside *When Two Collections Meet* featured numerous works by female artists gifted during the 2023 financial year. The commentary for the 'Collection of works by female artists' section stated:

Simply putting distance between ourselves and the male-dominated art history unconsciously perpetuated by previous museums will not change that history. It follows that perhaps what museums can best do now is consciously collect works made by female artists, or being made by them, in environments that disadvantage them compared to male artists, and put these works on display, where possible carefully identifying their intrinsic features. Turning our gaze thus to that hitherto overlooked by the art world; to aspects previously unappreciated, will surely enable the art world to emerge refreshed, as a new, richer domain.

One does wonder if the overlooking of works by female artists and the absence of appreciation for them has really been entirely unconscious. Still, for a museum to make a statement like the above, and actually start to address the issue, was in my view a revolutionary first step in the context of postwar Aichi. Vital to this shift was not only the presence of a new generation of curators, but also the parts played by artists, audiences, raised awareness in education settings, plus historians and critics.

One could say that the museum as local government infrastructure response to industry, had entered the next phase: functioning in a purely cultural manner ■

THE TRAJECTORY OF TOMIYAMA TAEKO'S ART AS SEEN IN *WILD GRASS: OUR LIVES*, THE 8TH YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE

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Abstract

For more than seven decades Tomiyama Taeko (1921-2021) produced powerful series of works in a range of media including lithography, painting, collage and multi-media slide/DVD works. Working on the margins of the art world, Tomiyama developed a unique practice that revisits histories obscured by nationalist rhetoric, re-imagining narratives of colonization and war from postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Often overlooked in normative narratives of postwar art in Japan, her work has nevertheless sparked transnational dialogues, remembrance, and reconciliation. This paper discusses the trajectory of selected works by the artist exhibited in "My Liberation," one chapter of the 8th Yokohama Triennale, *Wild Grass: Our Lives* (March 15-June 9, 2024), noting the relevance of the artist's works in the larger context of the Triennale.

KEY WORDS: Tomiyama Taeko, Postwar Japanese Art, Feminist/decolonial critique, 8th Yokohama Triennale, Art after 3/11

Resumen

Durante más de siete décadas, Tomiyama Taeko (1921-2021) produjo potentes series de obras en una variedad de medios, incluyendo litografía, pintura, collage y obras multimedia en formato de diapositivas/DVD. Trabajando en los márgenes del mundo del arte, Tomiyama desarrolló una práctica única que revisita historias ocultas por la retórica nacionalista, reimaginando narrativas de colonización y guerra desde perspectivas poscoloniales y feministas. A menudo pasada por alto en las narrativas normativas del arte japonés de posguerra, su obra ha logrado, no obstante, suscitar diálogos transnacionales, memoria y reconciliación. Este artículo analiza la trayectoria de obras seleccionadas de la artista exhi-

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bidas en “Mi Liberación”, uno de los capítulos de la 8ª Trienal de Yokohama, Hierba Silvestre: Nuestras Vidas (15 de marzo-9 de junio de 2024), destacando la relevancia de las obras de la artista en el contexto más amplio de la Trienal.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Tomiyama Taeko, Arte japonés de posguerra, Crítica feminista/ decolonial, 8ª Trienal de Yokohama, Arte después del 3/11

THE TRAJECTORY OF TOMIYAMA TAEKO’S ART AS SEEN IN *WILD GRASS: OUR LIVES*, THE 8TH YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE

1. Introduction

In the 8th Yokohama Triennale we wish to revisit a selection of historical moments, events, figures and trends of thought since the start of the 20th century. . . In this Triennale we prioritize the relationship between intellectual underpinnings and champion engagement of the art with reality. (Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu, 2024, p. 5)

Beijing-based art directors Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu began planning the 8th Yokohama Triennale at the end of 2021, a time when the world was still reeling from, but beginning to come out of the Covid-19 pandemic. They aimed to create something new amidst the already existing 250 or more biennales and triennales held around the world. Against a background of “a profound series of crises brought about by the pandemic, climate change and the widespread turn toward conservative nationalism and authoritarianism,” their aim was to bring the works of artists and artists’ collectives to this vibrant port city near Tokyo that would “speak of humble humanism, courage, resilience, faith and solidarity” (Liu, D., Lu C.Y., 2024, p. 5). Their bold and innovative curatorial project was spread across three venues and several outdoor public spaces in the city including an installation work in the Motomachi China Town accessway and works by present day art activists from Taiwan, Indonesia and Japan in a former bank. All of these works offered viewers a chance to experience and reflect on themes across boundaries of time and location as they explored diverse venues. The century-long time span adopted in the main venue at the Yokohama Museum of Art allowed the presentation of a wide range of works including those by artists engaged in Japanese and Chinese left-wing woodblock print movements of the 1930s, postwar cultural, avant-garde, activist and postmodernist movements of the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s, and works by a new generation of contemporary artists addressing climate change, anarchism, environmental disaster, migration, and war. Tomiyama Taeko (1921-2021) was one of 93 artists selected to include in the exhibition. Like the other artists of diverse generations and backgrounds working in a wide range of media, Tomiyama’s life and work must have resonated with the directors’ aim to present alternatives to a contemporary art world in which

the “intellectual capacity and critical agency of art” have been overshadowed by the logic of capital (Liu, D. Lu, C.Y. 2024, p. 7).

Wild Grass: Our Lives was inspired by the work of the modern Chinese writer, Lu Xun (1881-1936) who lived and studied in Japan early in the 20th century during a period of intense turmoil in China. His collections of essays, *Wild Grass* (1927) and *Morning Blossoms Gathered at Dusk* (1928) recently published in English translation (Cheng, E. J., 2022) are well known in China and both embrace the darkness and uncertainties of the tumultuous times in which the writer lived, and give expression to resistance and “a life force that’s unregulated, irrepressible, defiant, self-motivated, and prepared to fight alone at all times” (Liu, Lu, 2024, p. 4). With Lu Xun as their starting point—one that clearly shifts our perspective from what are often “western-centered” considerations of modern and contemporary art—they were able to revisit such pivotal moments as Lu Xun’s printmaking movement inspired in part by the works of Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945).¹ The innovative display of works by Tomiyama Taeko in this exhibit brought new insights into the work of this artist who has been difficult to situate in the evolving history of modern and contemporary Japanese art and has sometimes been viewed as too politically disruptive to include in existing canonical frameworks. At the same time, seeing Tomiyama’s works in the context of a large group show of contemporary art shed light on new and unexpected ways in which past and present mirror one another and help us consider new directions in the future.

Needless to say, it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss more than a few of the many works exhibited in *Wild Grass: Our Lives*. Nor is it possible to delve deeply into Tomiyama’s life and work. Rather, my aim here is to focus on how selected works by Tomiyama Taeko exhibited in Chapter 2, titled “My Liberation” on the third floor of the main venue at the Yokohama Museum of Art, present a view of the trajectory of the artist’s life and work.² I will ask how the artist’s work intersected with the writings of Lu Xun and the Korean dissident poet, Kim Chi Ha (1941-2022) at a formative moment early in her career and how this led to further exploration of themes of witness, mourning and remembrance. This trajectory continues as seen in Tomiyama’s concern with the question of Japan’s responsibility for colonialism and war in East Asia in works of the 80s and 90s (Hagiwara, H. 2003, Hein, L. 2010), and as she directly addressed present-day crises, environmental disasters and wars in her later years. Throughout her life and work, the many intersections between her practice as a visual artist and movements for social justice continued to spark innovative ways for the dissemination of her works. Finally, I hope to show that Tomiyama’s later works clearly reveal the striking present-day relevance of the artist’s trajectory in the larger context of *Wild Grass: Our Lives*.

Upon entering the large open Grand Hall of the main venue, I first felt overwhelmed by the array of sounds, sights and installation works before me. Viewers were invited to move in any direction in the large hall, or to go up stairways or escalators to the third

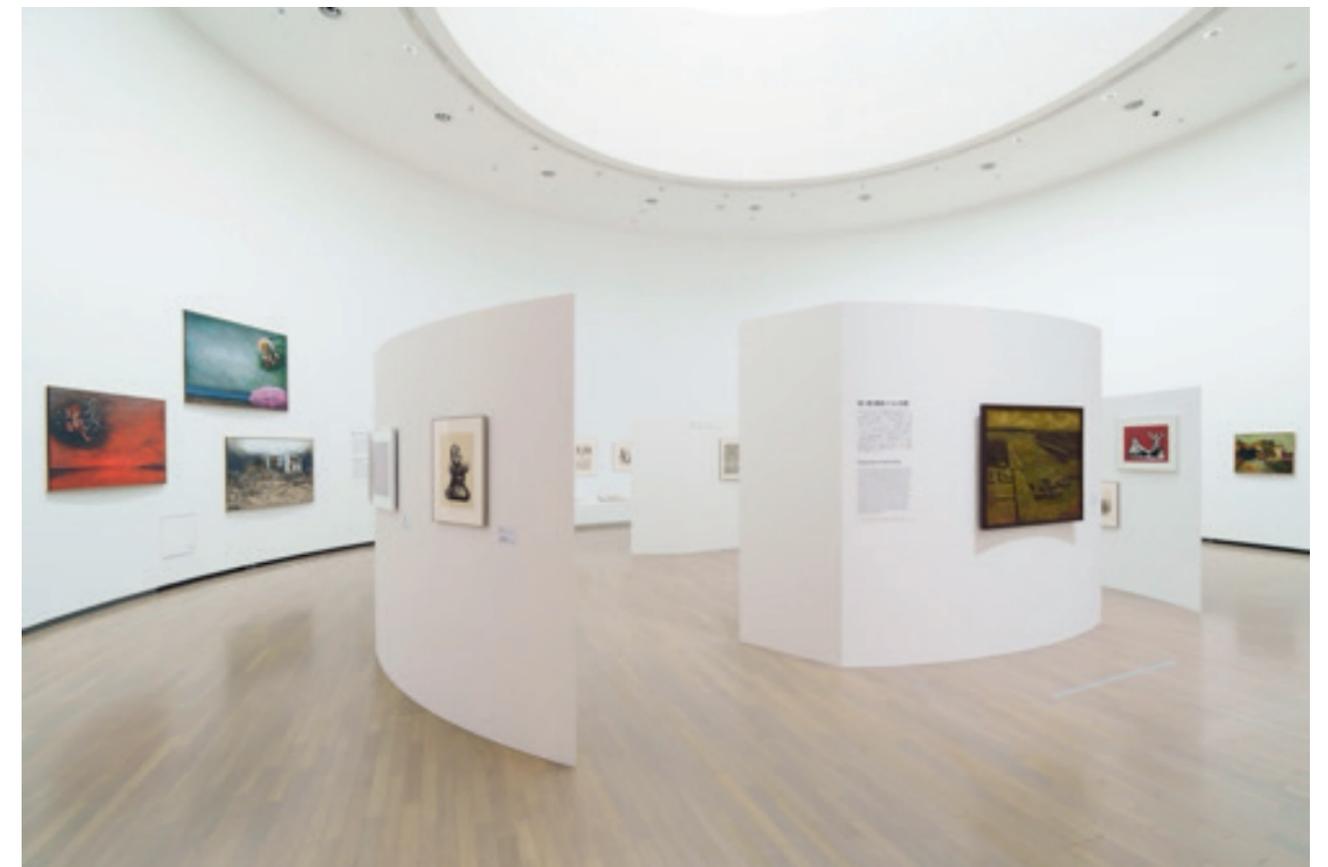
¹ Kollwitz’s *Memorial for Karl Liebknecht* (1920), dedicated to the anti-war politician who was assassinated in 1919 by right-wing paramilitary forces in Germany, was included exhibit.

² Other chapters include, “Our Lives,” “All the Rivers,” “Streams and Rocks,” “Dialogue with the Mirror,” “Fires in the Woods,” and “Symbol of Angst.” The exhibition catalog is forthcoming.

floor. Just ahead was Pippa Garner’s *Human Prototype*, a large and captivating sculpture of a gender and racially ambiguous figure. Beyond that was a table with a circular display of tablets, a collection of e-books titled the *Directory of Life*; behind that enormous monster-like objects woven in maroon fiber by Sandra Mujinga (b. 1989) hovered over the space. Both to the left and the right, stairways and escalators led to the 3rd floor, taking viewers past displays of objects and installations suggestive of refugee or nomads’ encampments. This chapter, *Our Lives*, was intended in part to help us imagine our own precarity, that “we might be in this situation any time.” Loud, bellowing sounds of voices were coming from a large screen on the left, a video work by Open Group, a collective of three Ukrainian artists who interviewed survivors of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and recorded their voice and video renditions of the sounds of missiles and artillery. They had been taught to recognize the weapons by sound to help them make quick decisions about how to survive an attack. (I could not help but think of the situation in Gaza where it would, I imagine, be impossible even to make such a video work.)

I made my way up the escalator to Gallery 5 where Tomiyama Taeko’s works were showing in Gallery 5, part of “My Liberation,” a chapter which aimed to “look at subjective agencies, attempts, imaginaries and actions to create horizons for individuals within confining systems” (Liu, L. Lu, C.Y. 2024, p. 7). The unique circular gallery designed by Tange Kenzo (1913-2005) was discreet, allowing viewers to focus on what they saw inside, but also

Fig.1: Gallery 5, Yokohama Museum of Art
Wild Grass; Our Lives, The 8th Yokohama Triennale
Courtesy of Organizing Committee for Yokohama Triennale.
Photo by TOMITA Ryohei



had two wide entrances open to the rest of the venue. I chose to move around to the right, along the outer wall where some of Tomiyama's earliest works, several large oil paintings of the mining regions in Chikuho, Kyushu and Hokkaido were displayed alongside drawings, lithographs and archival materials from the 1950s.

Tomiyama Taeko was born in Kobe, like Yokohama, a bustling port city with a long history of vital links to Asia. She spent a formative part of her girlhood in Dalian and Harbin, then under the control Japan's colonial and wartime "puppet state" Manchuria (Manchukuo; Jpn. Manshukoku, 1932-1945), where her father worked for the British tire company, Dunlop. As a young girl, she had traveled up and down the Korean peninsula (under Japanese colonial rule from 1910-1945), witnessing first-hand Japan's brutal oppression there. In 1937, while still in her teens, she returned to Tokyo to study art, entering what was then the Tokyo Women's Art Academy (Joshi Bijutsu Senmon Gakko); she soon left the school to study with the independent academy founded by Toyama Saburō (1903-1980) and became immersed in the study of European modernism and avant-garde art, Dada, the Bauhaus and surrealism. When the war escalated, she took refuge with her family in the countryside (Jennison, R., Bogel, C. J. 2022, p. 363). Like many of her generation, Tomiyama and her family suffered great hardship after the war.

The early postwar years under U.S. occupation were tumultuous; reestablishing the art world at that time was also fraught with challenges as Japan US-Japan security treaties required Japan's military alliance with the United States. In the midst of this, "the postwar Japanese art world reestablished a full complement of reactionary, mainstream, and avant-garde institutions" (Winther-Tamaki, B. 2012, p. 31). Tomiyama struggled to find her own way to continue her practice as an artist, and to somehow follow her earlier interest in and commitment to avant-garde movements. After returning to Tokyo she found ways to support herself and her two children illustrating books and later became a special correspondent for a news outlet for the Japan Coal Miner's Union; it was through this work that she continued to practice her art and travelled to Hokkaido and Kyushu in the early 1950s (Hagiwara, H., 2010, p. 133) and here that she began to develop her unique practice and trajectory as an artist.

2. Out of Darkness: Resistance and Resilience

Tomiyama's trajectory as an artist began with the paintings, drawings and prints seen along the outer wall of the gallery. She first grappled with the landscapes of the mining region with bold forms and constructions in oil paintings on canvas of the slag heaps in a style reminiscent of cubism. But Tomiyama soon become deeply engaged with the miners and their struggle as well as their strength and resilience. She was inspired by an emerging cultural movement that had opened her eyes to new possibilities for art and social change, but at the same time felt that she was an outsider (Tomiyama, T. 1997/2019, p. 4). She began making sketches and prints that depicted the mine workers underground and wrote frequently about how she discovered "beauty in the darkness." (Tomiyama,T., 2009a, pp. 88-101, Masaki M. 2009 pp. 166-174).



Fig.2: "Miner" 1950s.
Pencil on paper, watercolor, 17.8 x 11.5
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

She made sketches as she interviewed the miners and their families and also encountered other writers and artists involved in cultural circle movements. The sketch seen here is one of many that were only recently re-discovered in her studio, many of which convey the hardship and suffering of the workers in the mines. New research and exhibitions are helping us better understand the significance of this period of cultural activism in a region far removed from the metropolitan centers is now (Jesty, J. 2019, Motoi, M., 2009). For Tomiyama this would prove to be a critical moment in the trajectory of her career which has continued in different ways to embody what are now called "socially engaged art" practices (Jesty, J. 2017, n.p. Yamamoto, H. 2021a, pp 52-57). The subject and visual language she discovered in the mines would continue to engage her as she followed major transitions in energy from coal to oil, and to nuclear power in later works.

In 1960, massive protests by Japanese citizens erupted, aiming to halt the ratification of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (ANPO). But in spite of this historic movement the treaty was ratified. At the same time, the massive Miike Struggle in which miners and unions organized to protest layoffs in the midst of the shift from coal to oil in the late 1950s was also finally crushed. Tomiyama decided to continue her reportage work and travelled with some of the

miners from Kyushu who went to Latin America in search of work. She began the long journey by ship along the reverse route of European colonialism via South Africa to Brazil. There, she continued her reportage work, and also met artists and activists in exile from Nazi Germany. (Tomiyaama, T. 2009, pp. 103-138) Through them, she was introduced to Cuban poets and printmakers and travelled there just at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1963. On her return to Japan via Mexico, she saw works by the Mexican artists, Diego Riviera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Siqueiros. (Tomiyaama, 1983, pp. 221-224; Takagiwa, 2021, pp. 51-76). Later in the 1960s she travelled to central Asia and Afghanistan. When she returned to Tokyo in the late 60s, she was uncertain about how to pursue the path of art.

It was around that time that she became involved with the international movement in support of Kim Chi Ha, the dissident Korean poet who had been arrested and was imprisoned for his writings in protest against the U.S. backed military regime in South Korea. She began producing lithographs that both linked to her earlier works in the mines to her renewed practice as an artist. This would help define her trajectory for the next five or more decades. Out of the beauty and “revolutionary” cultural movement she had found in darkness in the mines, she discovered new ways to collaborate with other artists and writers and to explore the entangled histories of colonialism, war and struggles for resistance in East Asia

As I moved along the outer wall toward the rear of the gallery, I came to a digitalized version of Tomiyama’s first slide work *Chained Hands in Prayer* (1976) projected on the wall. It was being shown for the first time in decades alongside lithographs and archival materials related to the collection of prints and poems titled *Shinya* [Deep night] (Kim, C. H., Tomiyama T. 1976) produced in collaboration with other like-minded artists, actors and musicians.³ After a short documentary about Kim’s imprisonment that included some of Tomiyama’s prints was censored by NHK, Tomiyama launched Hidane Production, and produced the multi-media slide work *Chained Hands in Prayers* (1977) which would become the first of nine slide (later DVD) works produced during her careers. (Hagiwara, H. 1993, p. 61; Hagiwara H., 2010, p. 135).

I stood in the gallery and watched Tomiyama’s prints flash and disappear in rapid succession on the wall as the narrators read Kim’s poetry against a background of music performed by Kuronuma Yuriko, Takahashi Yuji and others. As I listened to the narrators read the passionate and sharply satirical work, an excerpt from Kim’s prison notebooks, *Kugy* [Mortification] there was one phrase that stood out. Expressing remorse and grief at the unjust imprisonment and coming execution of his followers, Kim writes of a moment when he discovered the “political power of imagination,” a moment when he was able to overcome the “maddening and unmanageable gap between my stance as one of the people, my political activity and artistic expression.” (Hagiwara.H. 1993,p. 63).

A closer look at the archival materials reveals that in the afterword to the volume, “*Waga shinya no ki*” [My thoughts in the deep night] Tomiyama writes that the title

3 For details of the arrest and imprisonment of Kim Chi Ha, see Kim Chi Ha, 1980, pp. vii-viii.

of the collection of poems and prints comes from an essay by Lu Xun, “*Shinya ni shisu*” [Notes in the deep night] (Tomiyaama, T. 1977, n.p.). Lu Xun had written the essay, a lament giving expression to his grief for Rōshii (1902-1931) and others active in the print making movement in China who were executed for alleged “anti-imperialist” activities. In his essay, Lu Xun also writes of the introduction of Käthe Kollwitz’s prints in China.⁴ Here we see the connection between Lu Xun, Kim Chi Ha and Tomiyama who also wanted to give expression to grief and mourning, and to ongoing resistance through her art.

While Tomiyama’s connection to Kim Chi Ha would fade over the years, this moment of discovery of a way that might bring politics and art together, and a visual language through which she might bear witness or give expression to those who had been silenced or forgotten would continue to take many forms in later series of works. Through Hidane Production (later Hidane Kōbō) she had also found a way to disseminate her work beyond the walls of galleries and museums, a practice that she would continue for the rest of her life.

I turned to look behind me at lithographs from the early 70s. Tomiyama’s journey to Chile, Bolivia and Brazil in the 60s had also inspired her to make prints based on the poetry of Pablo Neruda and Gabrielle Mistral, the first Chilean/Latin American poet to win the Noble prize in 1945, and Victor Jara (1932-1973) who had been tortured and murdered by the Chilean military after the coup of 1973 (Tomiyaama, 1983, pp) As seen in the delicate lines and forms of non-human living things, the plants, grasses, flowers and butterflies growing out of rifles in *For Pablo Neruda 4* (1973), Tomiyama also pays homage to the seeds and small buds of hope their works conveyed as a legacy to later generations. This element of Tomiyama’s visual vocabulary is seen again and again in the artist’s later works.

Along the outer wall of the inner circle of the display, I next came to a small digital reproduction of *Prayer in Memory* (1980) projected on a small screen, the slide work produced shortly after the peoples’ uprising in Gwangju.

4 Read in Japanese translation, *Shinya ni shisu* [Notes in the deep night]. *Rojin-Bokyaku no tame no kinen* [In commemoration of forgetting], translated by Okamoto Ryuzo, Tokyo: Aoki Bunko, 1963/1974, pp. 165-168). Also see Cheng, E. 2022, pp. 1-4.)

Fig.3: For Pablo Neruda 4, 1973
Lithograph, 46 x 27.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.





Fig.4: Kwangju Requiem 1, 1980.
Lithograph, 55 x 37.5.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

South Korea on May 18, 1980. Following the assassination of Park Chung Hee in 1979, people all over South Korea demonstrated in protest against martial law. In Kwangju, the citizen's protest at first seemed to succeed in resisting the military. But soon, the uprising was violently suppressed by the military. Tomiyama and Takahashi Yuji worked together quickly to produce prints, music and the slide work *Prayer in Memory* (1980) that was circulated widely in and outside of Japan. Again, they produced a print pamphlet with slides and a 78 RPM record; the prints in the series give testimony to the uprising and to its violent suppression. Tomiyama's bold, black and white images, show crowds of people rising up in the face an army of martial law troops, bearing witness to thousands of innocent civilians who were killed. The text printed alongside the images tells the story of Kwangju; the 78 rpm record included with the text was played with slides at live events.

These images of the people's uprising that was violently suppressed by a military dictatorship sparked new energy in the Korean Democracy movement that was beginning to grow. The text accompanying the images ends with a call for hope.

A great deal of young blood was shed on the streets. Birds and barley wept. [But] the spirit of the dead in Kwangju seemed to become raindrops [that will] wet dry minds, and eventually bring up new seeds to put forth buds someday...these raindrops will also eventually crush solid stone. (Tomiyama, T. 1980, n.p.)

3. Toward the Sea as a Stage, Gods and Puppets

Just outside the inner wall at the center of Gallery 5 between the two entrances was a very different more, colorful series of paintings from the series *Hiruko and the Puppeteers: A Tale of Sea Wanderers* (2001-2008). The artist's trajectory led her to a new visual poetry that takes viewers on a journey across time and space, but at the same time presents us with riveting images of disastrous events in the early 20th century. Some viewers familiar with Tomiyama's work wondered why works from series series produced in the 1980s and 1990s, *A Memory of the Sea*, *Harbin Station; Requiem for the 20th Century*, and *The Fox Story* were not on view.

In the early 1980s, Tomiyama produced *Bitter Resentment Deep in the Soil* (1984), the only other work from the 80s on exhibit in Gallery 5. This dark and haunting painting contains both traces of her sketches and prints of the mines and clues to her direction in the mid-late 1980s and 1990s. Bleached white skeletal forms of animals or birds stretch from the top to the bottom of the canvas and in stratified underground layers.⁵ While continuing

⁵ This painting also became the focus of a documentary film titled *Hajike Hosenka, (Pop Out Balsam Seeds!)* about Tomiyama's work by Tsuchimoto Noriaki.

to explore the history of the coal mines in the late 70s and early 80s, Tomiyama had also learned of the hidden history of Korean women conscripted to work as "military comfort women" before and during the war. At around the same time, she began to work on a new series of paintings, prints and collages that would become the series, *A Memory of the Sea* (1988). Here, the sea becomes a stage where the story of a Korean "military comfort woman," conscripted to work in a Japanese military brothel unfolds. The tale is narrated by a shaman, or Korean *mudang* who travels through the seas of East and Southeast Asia. In this powerful work, Tomiyama aimed to make visible a part of history that had been hidden from view; the slide work, prints, collages and paintings in this series circulated in Japan, Korea and Europe. (Hagiwara, H. 2010, p. 135; Yamamoto, H. 2019, p. 260).

In the early 1990s, Tomiyama made a journey to Harbin to revisit the landscape and memories of her youth in former Manchuria. She produced two more series of works, *Harbin Station: Requiem for the 20th Century* and *The Fox Story*, both of which also became slide/dvd works. (Hagiwara, H. 2021). All of these works reveal important aspects of the artists material practice and conceptual evolution and as many have written, these works give expression to Tomiyama's deep commitment to feminist activism and her increasingly complex investigation into the intersections between colonialism, sexism and racism. Whether due to limitations of exhibition space (a proper showing of works from these series would require another exhibition hall in itself), the thematic focus of the exhibition, or concerns about the unfortunate situation in Japan that still makes it difficult to show works considered to be controversial in public institutions, works from these series were not shown in "My Liberation," something no doubt disconcerting to some viewers familiar with the artist's work. In this discussion of works seen in *Wild Grass: Our Lives*, I will focus on Tomiyama's use of an increasingly imaginary, visual language where the sea is a passageway, the sea floor becomes a stage, and the plains of Manchuria are a theater where the artist's alternative tales of history are re-imagined and told. The curators' choice to focus on Tomiyama's early and later works offers a very effective presentation of Tomiyama's trajectory in line with the wider aims of the exhibition.

In the new millennium, after two decades exploring a new visual vocabulary using images of the shaman and the fox, Tomiyama began a new series of works aiming to trace the trajectory of a longer timeframe and a much wider geopolitical spectrum that reaches far back in time. Launched just days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the WTC in New York, the series was completed in 2008 and shown for the first time at the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in 2009. The new visual language in these images interweaves myth and history, asking viewers to look "not only at what exists within the limits of what we can see in a short span of time and space...so that we might perceive our world and people in it in a more multi-layered way" (Hanazaki, K. 2009, p. 7). The central vehicle of the work "puppets and puppeteers," also enables exploration of themes that encompass ecocritical perspectives, postcolonialism and disaster. No less "politically imaginative," Tomiyama and her collaborator Takahashi drew on pre-modern modes of performance and tale-telling common in Japan and other parts of Asia. They called themselves *ginyu shijin* (bards or traveling troubadours), *tabigeinen* itinerant performers and *kugutsushi* (troupes of puppeteers) as they



Fig. 5: *Long Ago in Southern Seas II*, 2008.
Oil on canvas, 80.3 x 100.0.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

continued to tell tales of the times, showing their slide/DVD works outside the walls of galleries and museums.⁶

In paintings from the series, *Hiruko and the Puppeteers: A Tale of Sea Wanderers* seen in Gallery 5, the sea is a stage, “a place with no master, free of attachments, owned by no one” (Hanazaki, K. 2009, p. 6) The journey begins in a time long ago when the artist imagines land and sea routes linked all of Asia, and the popular Japanese folk god who protects fishermen, Ebisu, and the goddess Maju intermingle with other gods and puppets and the delicate sea grasses and jelly fish. (Hagiwara, 2010, 143).

In the text that accompanies the visual works, Tomiyama writes that the Age of Exploration brings “a tidal wave of colonization and industrialization” and Japan “joins the ‘Great Powers’ in the race for colonies,” and an era of “blood red seas and plains, burned by the fires of war” begins. With the turn of the century and with “movies and television,” comes the demise of the puppeteers and the puppets can only perform at a “splendid banquet for

⁶ The Chinese characters for the word *kugutsu* can also be read as *kairai*, the term used in *kairai seiken* to refer to puppet governments and puppet regimes.



Fig. 6: *Theater Beneath the Sea Splendid Banquet for the Empire*, 2008.
Oil on canvas, 162 x 132cm.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

the goblins and demons of empire” deep in the sea. Later the puppets are washed away in a tidal wave when icebergs melt and floods come. (Tomiyama, T. 2009b).

As the series evolved, present-day crises and events continued to unfold, and the artist found ways to weave new images into the series. In Tomiyama’s theater beneath the sea, “we see a satire of the collapse of our 21st century world in which puppets now manipulate humans” (Hanazaki, 2009, 6). Tomiyama’s new visual language combined with the collage of sounds by Takahashi Yuji in the dvd production of the work is a response through art to a moment of uncertainty and crisis; the work shows us that if we only look more carefully we will notice fragments of past histories that help us make sense of our own time. In the last

painting in the series, *In Toxic Seas*, the sea is again a stage where we see surreal, burning towers. Beneath them skeletons of sea birds smothered in oil tap out the message, “Let us have light!” on computer keyboards. We also see oddly ashen jelly fish and other sea creatures, ghosts of earlier times, floating in the dark waters.

By the time Tomiyama produced the *Hiruko* series, she had developed her practice of “taking apart and reconstructing paintings—already a complete system of representation—to create a different system of representation” (Kobayashi, H. 2009, p. 10). Her experimentation in collaboration with Takahashi Yuji allowed her to incorporate images from paintings, collages and installation works in innovative ways that challenge established systems of artistic production (Kobayashi, H. 2009, p. 11, Takahashi Y. (2001) n.p.)

4. Emergency Landscapes, Letters to the Future

After completing *Hiruko and the Puppeteers* which Tomiyama thought would be her last series, she hoped to return to paintings she had begun on the skies of Eurasia. But less than two years later, the artist turned her attention to the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March, 2011. She was living and working in Tokyo when the 9.0 earthquake that was followed by a tsunami killing 20,000 people struck, and the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, several hours north of Tokyo occurred. For a little over three and a half years she worked on a new series of paintings, collages and a new dvd work in collaboration with Takahashi Yuji that would become the series, *Revelation from the Sea* (2011-2014).

After looking at the *Hiruko* series I turned and saw one of the first paintings Tomiyama produced, *Ruins* (1946), a bleak depiction in oils of early postwar Tokyo, hanging on the outside of the inner wall of Gallery 5. I was surprised to see this early work, on view for the first time in over 60 years, now facing Tomiyama’s last works in the section titled *End of the Beginning, Beginning of the End* on the outer wall. I had come almost all the way around the circle where paintings from the series *Revelation from the Sea* (2011-2014) were hanging, just across from *Ruins*. From there I could also see Tomiyama’s early works from *Chained hands in Prayer* and the lithographs dedicated to Neruda and Mistral on the wall facing them. I had come full circle, to the end, but also back to the beginning. On the wall before me was *Revelation from the Sea—Tsunami* (2011), the first painting in the series.

Again, the sea is a stage. On the surface of the dark, angry sea, guardian deities from the Asian continent hold broken computer parts and seem to skim the surface of the black waves alongside flaming debris. In other works in the series we see images of the collapsed structure—the skeletal ruins—of Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power plant. In 2012, Tomiyama had tried to visit the site to see it for herself, but as entry into the radiation zone was not allowed, she worked from media images that could be accessed online. Her works in this series appeared on the covers of *Shukan Kinyobi*, a progressive weekly journal that continued to follow the aftermath of the nuclear disaster, as well as an anti-nuclear activists’ websites in the U.S. Tomiyama wrote of her aim to show that both our “relentless pursuit of wealth and convenience” and failure to acknowledge responsibilities for past wars are what led to



Fig.7: *Revelation from the Sea—Tsunami*, 2011.
Oil, mixed media on canvas, 112 x 162 cm.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

the nuclear disaster (Tomiyama, T. 2012, March 2, 9, 16). When she learned of the harmful effects of radiation she added a postscript to the series, a set of collages on a background of deep green with the fragile forms of butterflies and fish balanced precariously alongside broken computer parts. In these collages we see the artist’s gesture towards resilience and renewal.

In 2014, after collaborating with Takahashi Yuji to complete a DVD of the same title, Tomiyama again thought these would be her final works. But when Okamura Yasunori, curator of the Maruki Museum for the Hiroshima Panels asked her to contribute works to special exhibition as part of the annual, “Today’s Anti-nuclear, Anti-war Exhibition,” the artist decided to show selected works from *Revelation from the Sea* along with two new large works in oil titled, *End of the Beginning, Beginning of the End* (2016). Alongside the earlier works, were collages of fish and butterflies and two new paintings in oil, *The First Landscape*, and *The Ending Landscape*.

The burnt red plains seen in the two new works, while referencing the puppet-state of Manchuria in the artist’s memory, are also inner or imaginary landscapes not limited to particular times and locations. They might also be seen as “emergency landscapes” like those seen in the works of other contemporary artists concerned with disasters, the impact of nuclear tests and climate change. Although the artist’s last painting, *The Ending Landscape: Collapse* was exhibited at the Maruki Gallery in 2016, Tomiyama later painted over the work and now only a photograph of it remains.

In the extant photo of the painting, we see a billowing red cloud depicting a large explosion, while in the lower left corner there is a collapsed nuclear power plant. At the bottom of the canvas, a dragon-like creature like that seen in *The First Landscape* crawls toward an



Fig.8: *The First Landscape*, 2016
Oil on Canvas, 132 x 162 cm.
Courtesy of Sakata Natsume.
Photo by Kobayashi Hiromichi.

exploding mushroom cloud. Perhaps this and other works in this series are the artist's letter to the future, admonishing us to look directly at the reality we may face and heed warning signs around us.

At the Maruki Gallery, Takahashi Yuji and poet Fujii Sadakazu collaborated with Tomiyama in what was their last joint public appearance. Takahashi performed the piano composition by 14th century composer Guillaume du Mauchaut, "Ma fin est mon commencement" [My end is my beginning], adapted by the artists as the title of the series and this section of the exhibition. Fujii read poems from a collection he had written in response to the triple-disaster, and Tomiyama commented that while the Hiroshima A-bomb murals by Maruki Iri and Akamatsu Toshi marked the "end of the war," that "ending" also marked the beginning of the nuclear era. (Jennison, R., 2017, p. 5) Takahashi's choice of this musical composition, an example of du Mauchaut's innovative use of cyclical, isophonic musical forms that move from beginning to end and return from end to beginning, seemed perfect in this circular gallery, perhaps also a personal message from the artist who, near the end of her life, had witnessed cyclical repetitions of history, but also seeds of hope, resilience and change. The curators and art directors made excellent use of the unique space in Gallery 5 to display Tomiyama's work, giving viewers the opportunity to see her trajectory while alerting them to links and resonances between past, present, and future.

As I left Gallery 5, I again heard the voices of Ukrainian refugees making sounds of mis-

siles and artillery fire in Ukraine. To my right, I could see contemporary photographer Shiga Lieko's deep red, wall-sized sized images nearby Shiga is widely recognized both in Japan and abroad for her powerful works on the triple-disaster of March 11, 2011 (Shiga, L. 2012); the works shown here were based on interviews with a hunter in the Fukushima area who had told her about the impact of the 3/11 disaster on animals and wildlife in the region. In the gallery to the right, I caught a quick glimpse of video works by Tomas Rafa, Slovenian film and video artist whose works explore new nationalisms and extremist protests and demonstrations. On the level below, I could see Shiga's *Emergency Library* with dozens of books including Orwell's *1984* and Oka Mari's *On Palestine*. I rushed through the 3rd floor gallery to the left to look one more time at woodblock prints by Pi Ling and others involved with the woodblock print movement that linked Lu Xun, Kollwitz, Tomiyama as well as the Asian port cities Shanghai, Kobe, and Yokohama. Before heading down to the exit, I walked along the corridor outside of the gallery, again passing the alcove where Lu Xun's and Kollwitz's works were displayed. On the first floor, just in front of the exit. I glanced at *The Directory of Life*, with books by authors including Karatani Kojin, Saito Kohei, and Judith Butler (Wang, Q. 2024). It was already 5 O'clock and museum attendants were nudging me out the door. I left the museum thinking about this timely exhibition, *Wild Grass, Our Lives*. Now, on the 79th anniversary of the end of WWII and in the midst of ongoing certainties and conflicts, the artworks and ideas generated by *Wild Grass, Our Lives* seem more relevant than ever. I left hoping that there will be more opportunities to reflect on and discuss this innovative curatorial project ■

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DE MÁLAGA

ARTxt. Revista de Experimentación Artística

ISSN: 2990-1650

Dep. Legal: MA-1623-2023

<http://www.revistas.uma.es/indexphp/artxt>