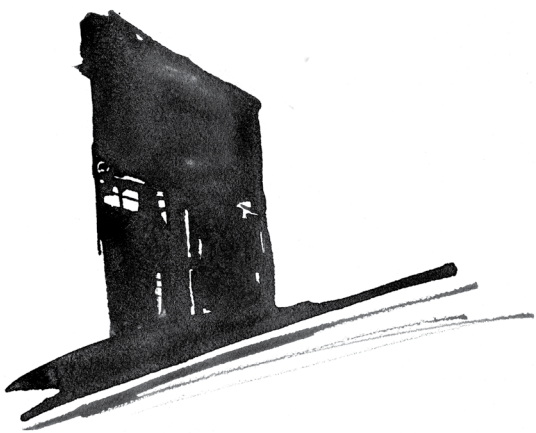
Art | Space | Tokyo

Art Space Tokyo

AN INTIMATE GUIDE
TO THE TOKYO ART WORLD



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Edited & co-authored by Ashley Rawlings
Designed & co-authored by Craig Mod
↑ (BTW: We really enjoy this ampersand)

Printed & bound in the very artsy city of TOKYO by YUSHIN, purveyors of fine bookly goods & professional tennis lessons.

This book was produced in Tokyo. Sometimes at CO-LAB in Sanbancho. Sometimes floating a few inches above *tatami* in Omotesando.

Everything Fedra:
Sans, Serif B and Serif Display

The cover is a silkscreen of an inked map of Tokyo with streets, buildings and landmarks removed. All that remain are bodies of water and dots representing the geographical center of each city block.

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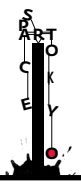

for all of those
who have sweated
through the streets
of this great city,
only to find
a disappointing
exhibition

Contents

Preface

The art spaces of Tokyo inhabit all manner of buildings. They are hidden down back alleys in private residences; they are tucked away in east-side blue-collar neighborhoods in dilapidated former warehouses; they occupy the upper floors of bland office complexes; or they may even spontaneously erupt for a single evening down a tiny backstreet in Shinjuku. People walk by them all the time without realizing they are there. Even determined art lovers, driven by word-of-mouth recommendations and armed with a map, can still find themselves standing right in front of their target and yet totally unable to see it.

With this book, we set out to introduce the reader to twelve of Tokyo's most distinctive galleries and museums. We are lovers of art, architecture and urban exploration, and having scoured the city for months and visited hundreds of venues, we have chosen what we feel are some of the most inspiring art spaces Tokyo has to offer.

Among them are a warehouse built in 1868 that has survived a major earthquake and firebombing, a beautifully maintained early 20th-century Japanese estate-turned-museum, a renovated public bathhouse from the 1950s, a couple of sleek examples of postmodern architecture and an anime-inspired castle in the woods. Some have longer histories than others, but each has a story worth reading about.

This book tries to bring these stories to life.

We believe that art is not just an end goal, but a process involving all manner of people. Aside from the artists themselves, the art world is made up of gallerists, collectors, curators, critics, architects, designers, businessmen, nonprofit organizations and the patrons—those of us who gain pleasure from simply viewing and interacting with art—all taking part in some way to foster the creation and consumption process.

With that in mind, we set out to bring all of these voices into one place, to allow the thoughts of figures with decades of experience to clash with the voices of those just entering the field. Why were these spaces established and what are their goals? What are collectors interested in? What role does art play in Japanese society today? Where does the Japanese art scene stand in relation to Asia and the rest of the world?

Through bringing all these voices together and introducing readers to spaces both new and old, well-known and not, we hope to provide at the very least a cross-section of the Tokyo art world. This book gives those who are curious the means to find a way in, and those who are already experienced a chance to look at themselves and the world they inhabit from a fresh perspective.

— ASHLEY RAWLINGS & CRAIG MOD
Tokyo, April 2008

Two Years Later

Two seasons of cherry blossoms have come and gone since we published the first edition of *Art Space Tokyo*. After spending the previous summer seeking out Tokyo's best art spaces, in early 2008 we locked ourselves away for eight weeks in a small but sunny *tatami*-mat room. Fueled by a diet of *mikan* oranges, Meiji chocolate and the excitement of the US presidential primaries, we begun the overwhelming task of piecing together this book.

By the end of the year it was clear that the world had changed—the election of Barack Obama was the breathtaking highlight of the decade, and yet the global economic crisis has tainted the world's perception of everything since. That said, the recession, which caused hundreds of galleries to shut down in other countries, has not affected Tokyo's art world to the same extent. There was no bubble in the Japanese art market in 2008, so nothing really burst.

Almost all the venues in this book remain open and flourishing in the same locations. The Hara Museum turned thirty in 2009; this year marks the Watari Museum's third decade, and Tokyo Gallery + BTAP is entering its sixth. The only featured gallery to have closed is Project Space Kandada. This was, however, not due to financial difficulties, but rather the opportunity to move to a larger venue in Akihabara and reestablish itself as an even more ambitious initiative, 3331 Arts Chiyoda, a mixed-use venue that houses a variety of commercial and nonprofit spaces.

Though Tokyo remains optimistic, the recession did leave some casualties. 101Tokyo Contemporary Art Fair, begun in April 2008, struggled to find sponsors in subsequent years, and at present its future is uncertain. Meanwhile, Shinwa Art Auction relocated its contemporary sales to the more international market in Hong Kong, *ART iT* magazine ceased its quarterly printed issues and now

operates entirely online, and several other printed and online publications such as *Studio Voice* and PingMag.jp folded.

Largely, though, Tokyo is still the fascinating metropolis we explored back then. The cafés we recommend continue to thrive, the food is still delicious and affordable, the backstreets are still mazes of architectural eccentricity, and you will still need this book to find your way to the city's most distinctive galleries and museums.

For me, the main changes have been personal—a change in location and a change in perspective. In early 2009, I left Tokyo to join the editorial team at *ArtAsiaPacific* magazine in New York. Whereas I used to focus on the Japanese art scene as an insider, now I follow it mostly from the outside, observing it more objectively within a broader regional context. Though I have the advantage of knowing exactly where to find the latest information on the Tokyo art world, I recognize even more clearly the challenges faced by the first-time visitor—so many people want to experience the Japanese art scene for themselves, but there is relatively little information about how to find it. I've become more conscious of how *Art Space Tokyo* helps to bridge that divide.

So I couldn't be happier that Craig and I were able to make this second edition a reality, thanks to the astounding generosity of those who were inspired by the first edition. We've given the text an editorial polish, added footnotes with updates where needed, and are thinking about what kind of additional content we can offer through our website and the iPad version. We hope that in two years from now, *Art Space Tokyo* will offer you even more.

— ASHLEY RAWLINGS
New York, May 2010

Wayfinding & the Maps in this Book

Because of the city's extensive public transportation system, there are a dizzying number of ways to get from one point to another in Tokyo. Where possible, we've tried to choose what we feel are the most scenic or illuminating routes from train stations to art spaces. The spaces we've chosen for this book exist in a variety of different neighborhoods, and we encourage the reader to cast a thoughtful eye over the everyday life of the surrounding areas.

Wayfinding in Tokyo is done mostly by landmarks. We've tried to include the landmarks and structures most useful for finding one's bearings. Many streets in the city are nameless or unmarked. This, combined with the winding nature of its alleyways, makes Tokyo an excellent place to get lost in. And considering the peaceful nature of the city, getting lost is an activity we highly recommend.

There is, however, an underlying structure to this apparent chaos. The city is divided into **wards** (*ku*), which are further subdivided into **neighborhoods**. Each of these neighborhoods is subdivided into numbered **sections** (*chome*): Jingumae-1, Jingumae-2, Jingumae-3 and so on. These sections are then split into numbered **blocks**: Jingumae-3-7. Final pinpointing is achieved with a third number for individual **buildings**. The composition of the complete address is: **ward**, **neighborhood-section-block-building**. For example, the Watari Museum is: Shibuya-ku, Jingumae-3-7-6.

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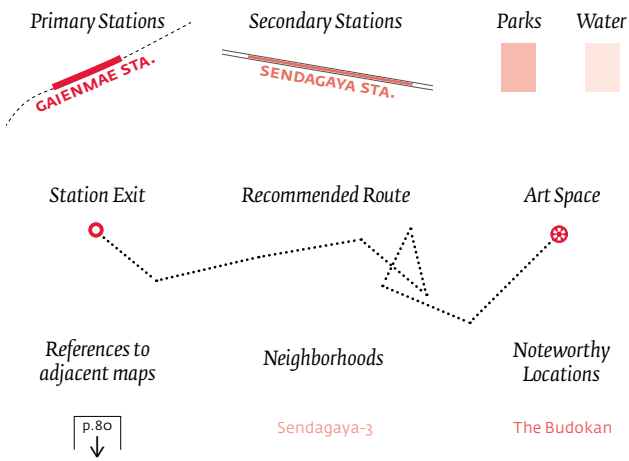
Buildings and lamp posts have small placards—usually blue with white digits—with two numbers (i.e., 7-6). These usually represent the block and building number for a neighborhood.

This system, however unnecessarily complex it may seem, allows millions of letters to be delivered to millions of destinations every day, so something must be right. Interestingly, if you were to mark the center of each block on a map and then zoom out a

mile or so, you would end up with a 'density map' of Tokyo. This is what the illustration on the cover of this book is. From this density map, the city's otherwise hidden patterns of growth become uniquely illuminated: the rigid and preplanned grid of neighborhoods like Ginza and Marunouchi contrast with the more organic and jumbled nature of the outer suburbs.

We've decided to keep these neighborhood and block numbers on our maps in this book. If you take the time to learn how to use them, they are invaluable for finding your way. Even if they serve you no immediate pragmatic function, with a simple glance you can quickly discern the density of the neighborhoods where these art spaces are located. Just looking at the map around Gallery éf, one can't help but feel the energy and bustling nature of the small Asakusa backstreets. By contrast, looking at the Project Space Kandada map, one can instantly sense the openness around the palace and Budokan.

READING THE MAPS



All maps are of the same scale. North is always up.

About this Edition

We're in the *pre-* era of publishing and media. Some consider it the era of *pre-* digital dominance or *pre-* death of printed matter. Others hear the talk of change, clutch their hardcovers and shrug it off as a bunch of hype: the *pre-* not worth worrying about it era.

Whatever we consider this *pre-* era to be, it's undeniably *post-* many things that defined publishing until about ten years ago. It's *post-* having to bend to big distributors. It's *post-* ignoring the screen as a viable reading space. And we're rapidly closing in on *post-* printing mass-market throwaway books (they'll work great digitally).

Our new edition of *Art Space Tokyo* embraces this nebulous reality of contemporary publishing. We strived to make the physical book a beautifully designed object. We built it to last, if you will. And we hope our deep respect for the printed book as a storytelling canvas is reflected in the finished product.

Simultaneously this project embraces digital. The online editions of this book are concerned not only with craftsmanship but also the advantages that networked connectivity, portability and increasingly high-resolution screens bring to the experience of reading.

There's one more special point about this edition: it was *entirely* crowd-funded by 270 backers using the online service Kickstarter. Without their generous support, none of this—neither the second printing of the hardcover nor the digital edition—would exist. For believing in our vision, allowing us to explore this new *pre-post-* era of publishing, and helping keep alive a project so dear to our hearts, we thank you.

— CRAIG MOD
Tokyo, May 2010
PRE/POST FOUNDER

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art

SHINAGAWA

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Shinagawa area is a business district with a port-town history. To truly experience this mix, head to the eastern side of the station. Meanwhile, on the Hara Museum side, if you're on a budget,

① Shintatsu Ramen provides cheap noodles and *donburi*. On the other

② end of the noodle spectrum is Matsuzake, located just a couple of blocks from Hara. Here you'll find not only first-rate soba, but also a chance to try *zako* (which are basically cheap, little fish). If you've

③ skipped the noodles, 7025 Franklin Avenue—the oddly named, highly regarded hamburger shop—will happily serve you some of the best burgers in Tokyo.

ABOUT THE SPACE

The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art is a rare example of Japanese early modern architecture. Designed by Jin Watanabe and built in 1938, this former private residence of the Hara family was converted into a contemporary art museum in 1979.

With its broad staircase and elegant wooden floors, the interior of the museum still retains the air of a stylish family home. Tucked away throughout the building are intriguing, permanently installed works by artists such as Tatsuo Miyajima, Yasumasa Morimura, Nam June Paik and Yoshitomo Nara. The museum's collection consists of about 850 works and covers the entire range of post-1950 art movements across several continents. The Hara Museum's exhibition schedule is a litany of major artists, and yet it also holds annual exhibitions of work by young, up-and-coming artists.

A glass-walled, light-filled café faces onto the former residence's back garden. With its outdoor seating in summer, this is one of Tokyo's very few quiet spots of green where you can escape for an afternoon.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Shinagawa Station
Lines: Yamanote, Keikyu, Tokaido, Keihin-Tohoku, Yokosuka
Access: 15 minute walk from Takanawa exit

Entry: Adults ¥1000, university students ¥700, high school students and younger ¥500

Free for museum members and students through high school every Saturday during school terms.

Hours: 11AM – 5PM; 11AM – 8PM on Wednesdays (except when the Wednesday is a national holiday). Closed on Mondays. Open on national holidays but closed the following day.

Tel: +81-(0)3-3445-0651
Fax: +81-(0)3-3473-0104
URL: http://www.haramuseum.or.jp
Email: info@haramuseum.co.jp

Address: 4-7-25, Kita-Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo

Spontaneous Encounters & Permanent Installations

An interview with Toshio Hara and Yoko Uchida
— HARA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SHINAGAWA

TOSHIO HARA, *director and president*
Born in Tokyo in 1935, he graduated in political economics from Gakushuin University in 1958 and studied at Princeton University. He established the Foundation Arc-en-Ciel in 1977, the Hara Museum in 1979 and the Hara Museum ARC in 1988. He occupies senior positions in a variety of international committees, including MoMA in New York, Tate Gallery in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo and the 2008 Yokohama Triennale.

YOKO UCHIDA, *associate director*
Graduated from the Department of Life and Aesthetics at Showa Women's University. She has organized and curated exhibitions of work by Zhou Tiehai Project—Placebo Swiss, Yasumasa Morimura, Yoshitomo Nara, Olafur Eliasson, Jason Teraoka, Henry Darger and Adriana Varejão.

● *What led you to start a contemporary art museum?*

TH There were two reasons. First of all, the contemporary art world in Japan at the time was still small. It felt uncoordinated and there were no museums dedicated to contemporary art at all. Apart from the fact that my great-grandfather was a collector of antique art, at the time I had no real connection to art. But I was inspired to travel abroad, where I visited museums, met with artists and became friends with foreign collectors who gave their support to museums. Talking with them about all aspects of art, I began to understand and appreciate what they were doing. I wondered whether anything comparable was going on in Japan and figured that actually there wasn't at all. Unlike antique art, though, contemporary art is about communicating with living artists, promoting them and creating spaces for their work. This kind of exchange and dialogue takes place on an international level, and that's what I'm really interested in.

I also had a personal reason. I majored in economics, but after entering the business world and being fairly successful in it, I felt that there wasn't much of a future for me there. I felt there was something more exciting that could be done.

● *What is the history of the museum building?*

TH This used to be my grandfather's residence. It was designed by Jin Watanabe and completed in 1938. After the war, old buildings were constantly torn down and replaced with ugly new structures. This building escaped that fate, but it was taken over by the US occupying forces[1] and used as an officers' residence for six or seven years. By the end of that period it was in pretty bad shape, crumbling and unfit for use. When it was finally returned to my family, it was left empty, and nobody knew what to do with it for almost ten years. My family considered tearing it down and building afresh at the

1 Following its defeat in World War II, Japan was occupied by the United States from 1945 to 1952.

very time I was thinking of starting a museum. Japanese museums at the time all tended to just occupy rented corners of bland office buildings. I had been visiting all types of museums in Europe, and I had noticed that many had been converted from private residences and had a garden. As it happened, this residence also had a garden, and the building had a unique character, so even though it was fairly run down, it occurred to me that it might work out well to fix it up and turn it into a museum.

● *What year did the Hara Museum begin collecting artworks?*

TH That would have been about three years or so before the opening of the museum. I wasn't a collector at all at the time, so it was my decision to open the museum that made me start collecting.

YU But your great-grandfather and grandfather were collectors, weren't they? In one way or other, I think you must have grown up exposed to culture, surrounded by high-quality artwork. It probably gave you a familiarity with art as a form of cultural and social support.

TH I suppose that's true. Although I didn't actually consider doing that sort of thing myself, I was shown how one goes about preserving culture. For example, from a young age I learned to identify the artists who made the *kakejiku*[2] we had in our tea ceremony room. It never felt odd to live surrounded by works of art.

● *What are your criteria in selecting artworks for your collection?*

TH If you've studied art and have some experience with contemporary art, I think those criteria will already be quite well formed. But in my case, I pretty much began without knowing anything; I had no formalized criteria as such. It was a matter of what resonated with me and drew a response from me. It was fundamentally an extremely private, personal decision-making process. But to

2 Japanese hanging scroll.

establish a museum with a meaningful collections behind it means developing an identity for both the museum and the collection, and communicating that to visitors. Pop art in the United States and the work of European artists in the 1960s laid the foundations for contemporary art there, which in turn influenced Japan. So I tried my best to gather the work of those kinds of artists.

YU The first thing we did was to trace movements in the international contemporary art scene; we needed to understand the development of contemporary art from an historical perspective. At the very early stages of the collection, as you might expect, we were somewhat conscious that we were collecting the work of important artists from key periods in their careers, but also within larger, international and historical contexts.

TH We did as much as we could to develop personal exchanges with the artists, and we visited many of them in their studios and homes. People with an art history background might have been able to make judgments based purely on the fame of the artist or by the look of their work. But with us that was plainly impossible. If we didn't actually go and meet the artists, we wouldn't have been able to get to know the people behind the work, understand their thoughts and then decide if their work was appealing to us. If it was, then we would try to select pieces that were somehow representative among all of those that we liked.

● *What are your thoughts on the current state of Japanese museums?*

TH We're in the middle of a museum-building boom at the moment. These days, being involved with contemporary art is about prestige. In terms of how collecting Japanese contemporary art is viewed within society, there has been a 180-degree turnaround from how it was when this museum started. Nevertheless, I think that Japanese collectors are under this persistent illusion that foreign art is the best.

● *What kind of role do you think Japanese museums need to play in the future?*

TH The role of contemporary museums is to discover young talent, groom it, promote it at the international level and create places for artistic exchange. Japanese museums have every opportunity for success on that front, but if the tendency to keep imitating foreign countries continues, then I think the Japanese museum world will end up being secondary and unable to assume any important role, no matter what people do.

● *How do you go about meeting artists? Do you make the rounds at events like art fairs and biennials?*

TH We go to these events sometimes on an individual basis, sometimes for specific work-related projects. It's surprising how important it is to show your face at these art fairs and biennials; you need to make sure that people know who you are and that you take the opportunity to see the works being produced everywhere.

YU These events lead to spontaneous encounters. You end up bumping into artists whose work you saw somewhere. Perhaps you drop by their studio the next day and from there on, it may lead to them visiting the Hara Museum and a project ends up being realized out of that initial encounter.

● *What approach do you take to organizing and curating an exhibition?*

YU I usually spend two or three years with artists planning the exhibition, and depending on the situation, I sometimes also get involved in the production process. Looking back now, it seems like the two years or so that I would spend with an artist could give me real insight into the previous fifteen years of their career. I worked in this way with Sophie Calle and Yasumasa Morimura. With Morimura-san, there were some works I was particularly attracted to. We spent a lot of time discussing the meaning of his practice in great detail. I organized two exhibitions of his work, and in both of those I was also involved in the production of the work itself.

● *What are the challenges of accommodating artworks in the Hara Museum's unique spaces?*

YU For solo exhibitions, the artists we decide on are not haphazard choices: they are all artists who specifically want to show here, who are interested in the building's space and history. The challenge is in achieving a correspondence between the interests and production methods outlined in the artist's plan with the meaning, history and layout of the space. The recent Pipilotti Rist exhibition[3] related her work with the history and character of this building, and I think something very special has emerged out of that exhibition. In that sense, this museum isn't just a simple container: we try to put together exhibitions that could only happen here.

TH Recently, almost all the exhibitions we have held have been site-specific. This is something that the artists we have shown aspire to. It's difficult for the Hara Museum to consider hosting traveling exhibitions because the contents have already been decided on and probably wouldn't fit with this space.

● *Speaking of site-specific works, several of the exhibition rooms have permanent displays built into them. What was the reason for installing them like this?*

TH We talked with the artists concerned and we thought the works were a perfect match for each location. For the artist, the site-specific location becomes part of the uniqueness of the work, and for us it neatly solves the problem of the museum being perceived as just a temporary display box.

YU When we set up Miyajima-san's piece *Time Link* in 1989, a lot of foreign curators and collectors showed interest in it. European and American galleries have long acted as representatives of their artists and provided paperwork that gives in-depth information on their work. However, in 1980s Japan, almost all galleries

3 *Pipilotti Rist—Karakara* was held from November 17, 2007 to February 11, 2008.

operated on a rental basis: artists could show their work if they paid money. With the exception of a few places, it wasn't until
34 the 1990s that commercial galleries like Gallery Koyanagi and Tomio Koyama Gallery established themselves and truly represented their artists' interests. So we realized that we were getting great results by supporting young artists in this way.

TH There are a lot of artists who would like to make work for the permanent collection, but of course we have reached the limits of the space we have. Some people suggest we consider enlarging the museum space, but I don't subscribe to this expansion mentality. I think museums each have an ideal, appropriate size. This building was a private house that was converted into a museum, and the current size is really the most appropriate for what it is.

● *How has contemporary art in Japan changed since you opened this museum?*

TH When I first got involved in contemporary art over thirty years ago, if any kind of trend appeared among foreign artists, people here would often hold Japanese artists up to that standard and say that this is how they should be. I wouldn't go so far as to say it was foreign imitation, but artists were definitely making work by taking note of what was happening abroad, and I didn't find that particularly interesting. That has gradually changed, and artists started to produce works that had real worth and could be appraised in their own terms.

Then, of course, there was the bubble period. From an artist's perspective, the thriving economy of the 1980s must have been a good thing for some, but overall I think the adverse effects of the bubble outweighed the advantages. I don't think it's a very positive situation when the worth of an artwork or an artist is determined solely by monetary values or trends. Equally of course, it's not good when nobody is buying art either, but I think that even if the economy isn't exactly buoyant, it is more conducive to allowing proper collectors to appreciate the worth of an artist's

work. In short, looking back at the past thirty years, I would say the Japanese art world has matured a lot.

● *What kind of direction does the Hara Museum plan to take from here?*

YU The first ten years of this museum's history were about establishing a presence within the Japanese art world and introducing young artists well enough to make people pay attention to our message. The next ten years were spent taking our exhibitions abroad and putting all our efforts into introducing Japanese contemporary art to the rest of the world. Our role probably shifted according to the circumstances. Now we have reached a stage where people around the world have more familiarity with contemporary Japan, but there is still more to do.

TH At a practical level, most of the work we have to do would be a question of deciding what exhibitions to hold, what kind of trends to pursue, searching for those trends, dispatching curators and negotiating with artists and collectors. In short, running a museum is really like a corporate activity. But this particular museum bases its activities more on 'encounters,' and when or where those encounters will happen and where they will take us are difficult to predict. ❁

Changes in Tokyo's Contemporary Art Scene Since the 1990s

by Fumihiko Sumitomo

How is Tokyo's contemporary art scene different from those in the rest of the region? We often hear that this city's real estate and economy are what make it unique, but what about its contemporary art world? To understand its current state, we need to go back nearly two decades to the end of the Cold War.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the subsequent end of the Cold War wrought significant changes worldwide, and its effects rippled out to the art scene in Tokyo. In the literary world, Noriaki Kitazawa released his book *Me no Shinden 'Bijutsu' Juyoshi Noto* (A Shrine to Vision). This book explained in detail how Japan's art system was imported from the West during the Meiji Era, consequently inviting a greater scrutiny and re-evaluation of the art system in this country. Despite a long-standing inferiority complex in regard to Western culture, the booming economy of the 1980s gave Japan renewed confidence, and this period saw artists taking a new look at traditional forms of art and considering the country's own modes of expression and systems. The year 1989 also saw the opening of P3 Art and Environment. This space showcased art that focused on society and the environment, and like the Sagacho Exhibit Space that had opened a few years earlier, it became well known for its alternative activities. In 1990, the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo opened the Osamu Tezuka exhibition, the first time the museum had held a solo show for an

artist working in manga. These events showed that the definition of 'art' was gradually starting to encompass elements not associated with the Fine Art forms of the West.

Another major development was the way in which media art, with its use of technology, came to be assimilated by private enterprises. Canon launched its ArtLab, and the telecommunications corporation NTT opened the InterCommunication Center. The idea of marrying art with technology was readily embraced not only within the art world, but across a wide spectrum of society, including the world of industry. Here, one saw a trend emerging: people began blurring the line between a company's profit-driven activities and art, and expected creativity from both; this is connected to the attention that nowadays the financial and political sectors are paying to the production of video and gaming contents. One can say that this was a result of some companies, unable to keep up with the cutting-edge art scene, turning toward their own marketing or business departments instead of seeking cultural support.

Since the 1980s, during which the term 'avant-garde' became virtually extinct, art left the confines of the individual and the personal, and was drawn into the realm of industry and politics. Large-scale public-works projects continued with the money left over from the bubble years, with key examples being the completion of Faret Tachikawa in 1994 and the Shinjuku I-Land Art Project in 1995. Fram Kitagawa, who led the Faret Tachikawa project, was also behind the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial in 2000, a large-scale art project and festival held in sparsely populated towns deep in the mountains of Niigata Prefecture with the aim of revitalizing their societies. Fumio Nanjo, who was in charge of the Shinjuku I-Land project, is now director of the Mori Art Museum, opened in 2003 in Roppongi Hills, an urban development in the center of the city made famous by its sheer scale. 132

On the other hand, this same period saw the emergence of young experimental artists who rejected the industry-led trend

in art. In 1992, Takashi Murakami participated in the *Anomaly* show at Roentgen Kunst Institut which would establish him as a well-known artist. The show had a major influence on key figures within the art industry. In 1993, Nobuo Nakamura, who had been educated at London's Royal College of Art and was fiercely critical of Japan's art world and art education published *Shonen Art — Boku no Taiatari Gendai Bijutsu* (Relax Contemporary Art), which stirred interest in the British art world and the work of the YBAs (Young British Artists), one of whom was Damien Hirst. Inspired by this book,
220 Masato Nakamura and a group of young artists put on *Shinjuku Shonen Art* in 1994, a guerilla-style art event in the Kabukicho area of Shinjuku. In the same year, there was a substantial trend of artists banding together to form groups. One such group, the Showa Yonjunenkai,[1] included Makoto Aida, Tsuyoshi Ozawa and Hiroyuki Matsukage, while another called Studio Shokudo, named after the abandoned factory cafeteria where the studio was located, included Isao Sato, Daisuke Nakayama and Yoshihiro Suda. In 1999, Masato Nakamura's artist collective commandN launched *Akihabara TV*, an art project that took over the use of TV monitors throughout Tokyo's electronic-goods district.

In general, these domestic artists needed a second job to support their livelihoods. When trying to sell their work, they would often find galleries to be extremely closed worlds that would only handle the works of well-known, veteran artists; struggling artists would end up repeatedly showing their works at rental galleries. However, these market conditions changed drastically in the
150 1990s. The NICAF (Nippon Contemporary Art Festival), held eight times between 1992 and 2003, never developed into an art fair of worldwide renown, but it made its mark on organizers around
140 the country as the place to show contemporary art. In 1993, SCAI The Bathhouse, a public bathhouse-turned-gallery opened, one of

1 The name means 'Showa 40,' the Japanese year for 1965. The group was made up of artists all born in that year.

a number of other galleries such as Taka Ishii Gallery and Wako Works of Art that catered to up-and-coming foreign and Japanese artists. NICAF has since changed its name to Art Fair Tokyo and 150
focuses more on selling artworks to the average consumer as opposed to business interests and the rich, which I believe cultivates a better environment for artists to achieve independence.

In the latter half of the 1990s, the Japanese economy took a nosedive. The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo opened in 1995, but after a while its budget for acquisitions was frozen and the once-popular corporate support of the arts either ground to a halt or faced budget cuts. In addition to this economic stagnation, Japanese society suffered two other major blows in 1995: the subway sarin gas attack perpetrated by the Aum Shinrikyo religious sect and the Hanshin earthquake that devastated Kobe revealed our vulnerabilities. There was also increasing popular discontent with the way social values had come to be measured by economic yardsticks, and many began to look inward and question their way of life. Against this backdrop, art shifted from exploring the larger social issues of the day to drawing on everyday life and immediate personal concerns. By becoming more of an expression of individual diversity, Japanese art came to explore rich and distinctive possibilities during this time. Key examples of this trend were the anime-inspired work of Takashi Murakami and his creation 242
of Kaikai Kiki Co. with a group of young artists whose works reflect childhood ruminations, as well as Kazuhiko Hachiya's works inspired by the film *Back to the Future* and the anime *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*.

More and more museums, faced with the need to establish regional ties and appeal to the public, improved their outreach programs. By and large, they had become institutions that catered to a select group of museum lovers and could no longer garner the support of the government or the taxpayers. Furthermore, public museums throughout the country were being pulled into the wave of privatization that was sweeping the country. There was no

discussion of what role museums play in society. The questions of why so many large museums were built during the bubble period and what future they have remain unanswered. Improvements have been made, albeit in small steps: money spent on advertising and business operations has actually paid off, and museums have begun to attract a wider cross-section of society. With more people leading fulfilled lives, the greater their appreciation has grown for art. The booming Asian art market has led to an ever-growing number of people who show interest in buying artwork.

Aided by the increase in the number of museums and galleries, the Japanese art scene was gradually starting to discover its distinctive mode of expression, and yet at the same time its interest in the US and Europe began to wane; one can say Japan was going through a period of introspection. Then, in 2001 the Yokohama Triennale, a rather large-scale international exhibit, was held. Many overseas artists who were barely known in Japan participated in the event. Heavily advertised in the mass media, the event attracted people who did not typically visit museums and gave them the chance to view contemporary art up close. Also, art universities that were incredibly behind in their approach to art education were inspired by the international trends they witnessed at the event to improve their curriculums. At the same time, new information was pouring in from artists and curators returning from studying overseas during the 1990s. Returning to Japan in the early 2000s, these people did not simply occupy traditional jobs in museums and galleries but started activities of other kinds. Some began work for nonprofit organizations, putting their knowledge to use in the field of cultural arts for the greater good of the public: Arts Initiative Tokyo and Aomori Prefecture's Harappa are but two such examples. In some cases, NPOs such as Yokohama's BankART or Osaka's remo are starting to replace the government or its directly affiliated foundations in the management of cultural facilities. At the second Yokohama Triennale, held in 2005, many of the city's residents were able to experience contemporary art for

themselves, which eventually led to the opening of art facilities using a number of empty spaces around the city. Despite being a huge city, Tokyo was sorely lacking in English-language information on the art scene, but the appearance of bilingual publications like *ART iT* magazine and the website Tokyo Art Beat remedied that situation. With the development of media information, the contemporary art world is no longer the preserve of a relatively small number of specialists, but has become increasingly accessible and well known. 72, 64

Japan's postwar art scene progressed from a period during which it absorbed Western culture and dealt with the discrepancies and contradictions this posed against its own culture, to a honeymoon period with the economy and the government, subsequently resulting in a rebellion of sorts against that marriage. At present, art stands at a crossroads: having been the preserve of specialists for so long, can it coexist comfortably among the public? The answer to that question is unclear. The challenge we face is learning how to stop treating art as something on a pedestal and embrace it on our own terms. ❁

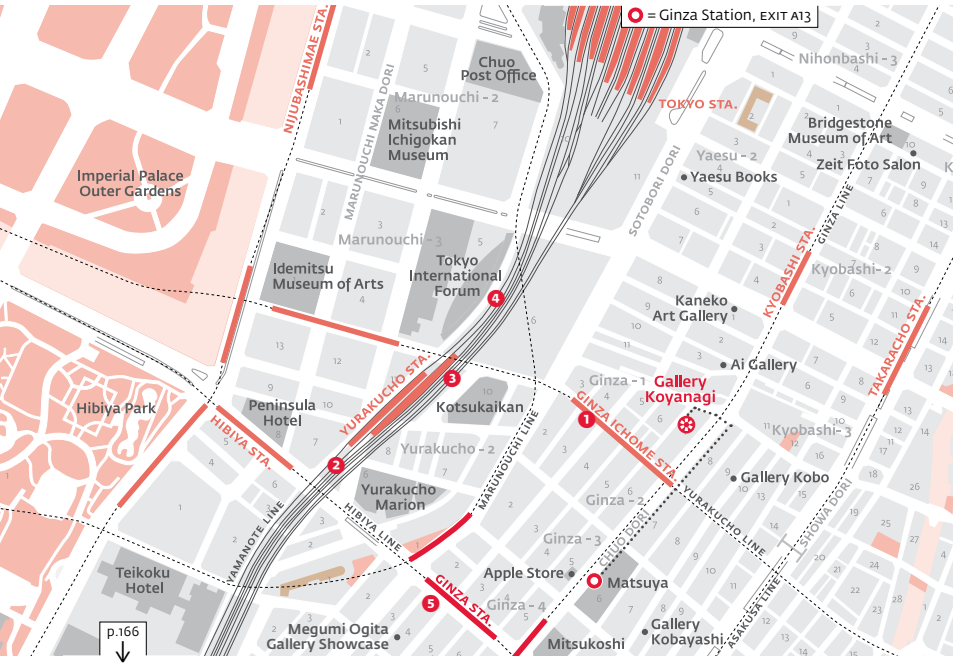
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1971. Received his MA in culture and representation from the University of Tokyo. Following curatorial posts at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa and NTT InterCommunication Center (ICC), he is currently senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT) and deputy director of Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT). Exhibitions he has organized include *Out the Window* at the Japan Foundation Forum (2004), *Reactivity* and *Possible Futures* at the ICC (2004, 2005), *Beautiful New World* at 798+Guandong Museum of Art (2007) and *Tadashi Kawamata—Walkway* at MOT (2008).

Gallery Koyanagi

Gallery Koyanagi

GINZA



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

For a trip back in time and a plate of delicious curry, be sure to stop ① ② by New Castle curry shop. Under the tracks of Yurakucho Station, you'll find an inexhaustible array of hole-in-the-wall *izakaya*, *yakitoriya* and other assorted shops of dubious nature. For something ③ different, try a quick shoe-shine on weekday afternoons. In the ④ evening we recommend Aroina Tabeta for an authentic back-alley Bangkok-style Thai fix. If you're in the mood for more art, then a ⑤ visit to the Le Forum Gallery is a must: located on the top floor of the glass-walled Maison Hermès building, this vast, naturally lit gallery space is frequently home to excellent exhibitions.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Ginza is well known as the original seat of Tokyo's elegance and exclusivity, where luxury designer brands flock to open flagship stores on some of the world's most expensive real estate.

Ginza's intellectual history is rich too, and it was here that Tokyo's contemporary art scene began. Although once avant-garde, Ginza largely caters to more conservative tastes these days. Nevertheless, the area is still home to a few forward-looking art spaces. Internationally renowned, Gallery Koyanagi is one of the leading lights of the Tokyo contemporary art world; during the 1990s, Director Atsuko Koyanagi was instrumental in bringing together young gallery owners to kick-start the gallery scene. Here, you will find exhibitions by some of the world's top artists: Sophie Calle, Marlene Dumas, Olafur Eliasson, Kengo Kito, Mariko Mori, Rika Noguchi, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Tabaimo and Koichi Tabata, to name but a few.

Like most of its peers in Ginza, Gallery Koyanagi is located in a typical, nondescript office building. However, as the elevator doors open on the eighth floor, a sleek, discreetly lit cavern of contemporary art stretches out before you. You are about to step into one of the largest commercial gallery spaces in Tokyo. This is the consummate white cube, and Gallery Koyanagi wears this look better than any other art space in the city.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Ginza
Lines: Ginza, Marunouchi, Hibiya
Access: 5 minute walk from exit A13

Entry: Free

Address: Koyanagi Bldg. 8F,
1-7-5, Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 11AM - 7PM
Closed on Sundays, Mondays, national holidays

Tel: +81-(0)3-3561-1896
Fax: +81-(0)3-3563-3236
URL: http://gallerykoyanagi.com
Email: mail@gallerykoyanagi.com

Open to Something New

An interview with Atsuko Koyanagi
— GALLERY KOYANAGI, GINZA

ATSUKO KOYANAGI, *director*
After graduating from the Department of English Literature at Jissen Women's University in 1975, and studying Communication Design and Editorial Design at Los Angeles Art Center from 1976 to 1979, she worked at Kazuko Koike's 'Kitchen' office in Tokyo. In 1983 she opened the Sagacho Exhibit Space. After establishing Gallery Koyanagi as a contemporary ceramics gallery in 1988, she reopened it as a contemporary art gallery in 1995.

● *What kind of work were you involved in before you opened Gallery Koyanagi?*

AK In the 1980s, I was working with Kazuko Koike, whose office handled advertising and cultural affairs for companies like Muji and the Seibu Museum of Art. However, we both started to crave more creative freedom and in 1983 we opened the Sagacho Exhibit Space in an old food warehouse in the Sagacho area, near the Sumida river.

At the same time, my family was running a ceramics shop. My father handled pottery, and I wanted to show the work of ceramics artists, particularly those who worked in contemporary styles. So in 1988, I opened Gallery Koyanagi as a ceramics gallery here in Ginza and ran that for about eight years. That was the precursor to Gallery Koyanagi as it is now.

● *What led you to reopen your gallery as a contemporary art gallery in 1995?*

AK The mid-1980s was when photography was starting to be appreciated as an artistic medium in its own right. Back then, with the exception of Zeit Photo Salon, Tokyo didn't have any museums or galleries dedicated to photography. At that time I also met Hiroshi Sugimoto. He was looking for a gallery that would represent him, but had been met with a lot of rejection. I was inspired to show his work and make the shift into contemporary art.

The advertising work I had done at Kazuko Koike's office until then was in some respects close to photography. I felt I had an eye for this medium and that it would offer me the easiest way to enter the contemporary art world. I hadn't studied art and I had never worked in another gallery before, so opening my own contemporary gallery was incredibly difficult at the beginning. But it was for that very reason that I felt I was open to involving myself with something new.

● *From the mid-1990s you became closely associated with other young gallery owners who drove the Tokyo art scene toward recovery. What was the reason for you all grouping together?*

AK Until then there had been no real talk of bringing Tokyo's galleries together in the same space. There were, of course, a couple of old gallery associations like the Bijutsu Club and so on, but nothing equivalent for contemporary galleries. People working in the contemporary art world tend to be quite individualistic. It wasn't like we all had to be best friends, but given how small the market was back then, we were stronger and stood out more as a group. It allowed us to introduce each other to each other's clients. I started to talk to the various galleries about it, and we held a group show at Spiral Garden called *G9: New Direction*.[1]

1 Held at Spiral Garden from July 22 to 26, 1998, this exhibition went under the subtitle of *Tokyo's art scene as seen by 9 gallerists* and featured the work of artists represented by Atsuko Koyanagi, Tomio Koyama, Taka Ishii, Shugo Satani, Hidenori Ota, Tsutomu Ikeuchi and Taro Nasu.

- *Ever since then the contemporary art world in Tokyo has been characterized by various combinations of galleries grouping together in buildings around the city. What led to the Shinkawa building opening?*

AK Tomio Koyama was already occupying one of the spaces within the Sagacho Exhibit Space, as were Shugo Satani and Taro Nasu. The Sagacho Exhibit Space was doing very well and in 2001 Shugo Satani and I opened the Rice Gallery by G2 within it, but by then the building had been slated for demolition the next year. Everyone had been working really well together, so we wanted to keep the collaboration going. Koyama-san happened to find the building in Shinkawa, and we moved there in 2003. The Shinkawa building was able to house four of us: Taka Ishii Gallery, Tomio Koyama Gallery, Shugoarts and a showroom extension of Gallery Koyanagi.

- *At this time the Mori Art Museum was about to open. How did that impact the gallery scene?*

AK I was working with Mariko Mori, and at her wedding party I had the opportunity to talk with Minoru Mori. I mentioned to him that abroad, the opening of a major museum tends to attract the opening of commercial galleries around it. The Mori Building Corporation was buying up old buildings in the Roppongi area for future redevelopment, so I suggested to him that it might be interesting to rent out those buildings at reduced rates to galleries that wouldn't mind their condition. He was interested and straight away he introduced me to the planning division, which suggested a building on nearby Imoaraizaka. It was in a pretty run-down state, so the rent was very cheap. The galleries that couldn't fit into the Shinkawa building opened up there.

- *With the map of Tokyo's contemporary art galleries having diversified so much beyond the Ginza area, are you still happy to have your space in this neighborhood?*

AK I was born and raised in this neighborhood and my family

business has always been here. I guess if I were starting from scratch now, I probably wouldn't choose to run a contemporary art gallery in Ginza. But then this building belongs to my family, so there are financial incentives to be here too.

● *What do you think the future is for Ginza?*

AK In recent years there have been more and more buildings by foreign companies going up and it's a little sad to see Ginza losing some of its original character. Ginza is one of the most representative, internationally known parts of Japan, and so I have quite strong views on how it should be and a strong desire to protect its status as one of Japan's most significant areas. Areas like Daikanyama, Aoyama and Roppongi are becoming these very stylish places, so I think Ginza has to keep up. On the other hand, the people running old shops here are working really hard too, so I hope we can achieve a neighborhood with the right balance of new and old.

● *What do you look for in an artist's work before deciding to take them on?*

AK It's not so much what I look for in the artist's work as what I look for in the artist as a person. Of course, when I encounter a work, I want it to have an impact on me, but it's who the person behind it is that's more important. I want to know what they see, what they think, what it is they are trying to convey. The quality of each work that an artist produces may vary, but overall it is a constant process of trial and error that they are engaged with. If I can look at the fundamentals of what they do and feel good about what I see, then I know I can work with them.

I also have to bear my clients in mind. I know what kind of tastes they have and what they are searching for in contemporary art, so when looking at an artist's work, it's incredibly important to consider how it fits in with our stable of artists. In general if I like the artist and their work, then my clients will like them too.

- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese contemporary art market?*

AK One of the main reasons the art market doesn't really grow here is due to taxation laws. In the United States, you get tax breaks if you buy an artwork and eventually donate it to a museum. This is a fantastic system that allows people with money to buy art, enjoy it and then give it to a museum for the benefit of others, and it helps museums enrich their collections. However, there is no such system in Japan: if you buy an artwork here it becomes an asset and you have to pay tax on it.

Another problem is that there are very few big collectors of contemporary art. Perhaps that's because the market hasn't fully matured. There are of course serious collectors like Toshio Hara, Minoru Mori and Soichiro Fukutake, but overall there are very few compared to how many you would find abroad.

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- *Compared to other large cities in the world, does Tokyo receive enough funding from the government to support the art world?*

AK Not really. The Japanese government has absolutely no cultural strategy when it comes to contemporary art. Of course, when manga suddenly became popular, everybody in the government started to pay attention to Takashi Murakami, and government officials started to use manga as a buzzword, but that's not the same as having a strategy.

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In other countries, like Switzerland, the government pays for the insurance of artworks. Tohaku Hasegawa's *Pine Trees* screen is a national treasure, and it was shown in Switzerland last year. The insurance costs for having that work shipped over there must be astronomical and too much for a museum to bear, but it was all covered by the Swiss government. It would be so helpful if there were a system like that in Japan, but there isn't.

If Japan could give tax breaks for donating to museums and cover the insurance costs of shipping artworks, I think the market here would be able to grow much more healthily.

● *Broadly speaking, are there any identifiable differences in taste between Japanese and foreign collectors?*

AK A lot of artists in Europe and the US make work that really engages with the serious social issues of their time, be it war, economic inequality or racism. Those kinds of problems are more immediate in Europe and the US, and the people who live there deal with them in real time. Correspondingly, there are collectors who truly comprehend their work and buy it. Japan, on the other hand, is not an ethnically diverse society; it has not been at war at all for the past sixty years and in general has had much less social instability to deal with. As Takashi Murakami put it, the Japanese suffer from 'peace lag'[2] or have been infantilized; they don't feel themselves to be very connected to the problems that affect the world.

For example, the wars going on in the Middle East are thought of as America's problem, and the Japanese don't feel the same anger toward President Bush as everyone else does. If an artist conveys that anger in a work, then there will certainly be American collectors who will identify with it and buy it, whereas Japanese collectors probably wouldn't. Of course, some work speaks to everyone through technique alone, but contemporary art is about more than just that; collectors have their conceptual preferences as well.

In Japan there is also a tendency for people to rush toward easily comprehensible art. Gallery owners like Tomio Koyama and artists like Motohiko Odani and Takashi Murakami have been instrumental in making art more accessible to a greater number of people, and I think that's really good, but it's equally important not to go too far. I think contemporary art should relate to social issues, and I hope that Japanese collectors will also make the effort to understand the nuances that artists are trying to convey.

2 *Heiwa-boke* in Japanese, a play on the word *jisa-boke*, meaning 'jet lag.'

● *How has Japanese contemporary art changed over the past fifteen years?*

AK Looking back at how appalling a state the economy was in when I opened my gallery thirteen years ago, I'd have to say the state of the Tokyo art world has changed a lot since then. To talk about these changes simply in terms of prices, fifteen years ago, a small work by Hiroshi Sugimoto would sell for 350,000 yen, whereas now its primary market price at this gallery would be 1.5 million yen. It would then fetch about 5 million yen at auction. A work by Marlene Dumas was worth 350,000 yen back then but now on the primary market her paintings will sell for 3 to 5 million yen; at auction her work would fetch close to 10 million yen. So just looking at the prices you see how much the market has grown. I think the market will grow just as much over the next fifteen years as well.

242 But whether it's Murakami, Nara or Sugimoto, these price rises have largely been due to the growth of the international market, so in a sense it's like they are being imported back into Japan. These works didn't increase in value through Japanese auctions, but European and American ones. Nevertheless, their sales abroad caught people's attention here and have encouraged Japanese people to buy.

Another thing that has changed has been the opening of a new generation of galleries here in Tokyo. I'm very happy about this, as it helps encourage young people to get involved in the art world. Before, collecting habits used to be very divided, with only young people buying work by young artists and only established collectors buying work by big name artists, but that has changed. The market has matured a lot.

● *What about upcoming trends?*

AK In the past Western artists used to dominate everything and both female and Asian artists were a minority. That's just not the case anymore. Now artists gain recognition simply according to their individual merits. There are also more and more chances for artists to go abroad these days. In the 1980s it used to be that an

artist would have to make it big in Japan before going abroad, but now it's possible to become popular in other places like New York and then come back to Japan, and I think there will be more artists taking that sort of route from here on.

A Collection with a Personal Edge

An interview with Ryutaro Takahashi
— TAKAHASHI COLLECTION

RYUTARO TAKAHASHI, *director*
Born in 1946. Graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Toho University in 1977 and entered the . medical office of the Department of Neuropsychiatry at Keio University in 1980. After working in Peru as a medical specialist for Japan International Cooperation Agency, in 1990 he opened the Takahashi Clinic in Tokyo. His major field of study is social psychiatry and he has published several books on it. He is also one of Japan's foremost collectors of Japanese contemporary art and runs two spaces under the name Takahashi Collection.

● *What led you to start collecting?*

RT I started collecting in 1997, after seeing an exhibition of work by Yayoi Kusama at Ota Fine Arts. To me, Kusama represented the psychological or cultural spirit of the anti-establishment movements of the 1960s, so to be in possession of such a person's work was quite an emotional experience. However, for about two years after the bubble burst, I had already been wandering through second-tier galleries, encountering previously expensive works of art sold at deep discounts. Prints by various American Pop artists, including Andy Warhol and Jim Dine, were so cheap that I had already begun buying them from time to time. Back then I simply wanted them as art for my room or the clinic. It wasn't until 1997 that I spent a substantial amount of money on art.

● *What kind of collection are you trying to build?*

RT I don't have a general concept for my collection. Collections, especially private ones, evolve out of each collector's tastes and interests. I want to create a collection that reveals my personal taste; I'm focusing on young Japanese artists who have a solid training in the technical side of art production and whose work is sincere. I don't like works that are particularly minimalist or conceptual or those that depend on a lot of words to explain them.

● *Is it important to you to develop relationships with the artists themselves?*

RT For me, the artwork is everything. Let's say an incredibly mean artist created something that spoke to me eloquently; well, that's all I need. Although I want to be close to their work, I prefer not to become too friendly with the artists; it's better to keep some distance.

● *Do you generally buy from the primary or secondary market?*

RT Mostly I buy from the primary market, very rarely the secondary. Japan doesn't have an established secondary market, other than that of the auction houses. Lately, auctions have been flooded with not only Japanese money, but money from the rest of Asia, and the result has been a new bubble in the art market. Trying to develop a collection out of the works available at auctions would raise the cost exponentially, so I avoid it. The exception, of course, is if I see something unusually cheap on the secondary market.

● *What do you think makes a good collection?*

RT In my view, a collection gains meaning when it has a personal edge to it. I don't think you can collect an attractive body of work when multiple people are involved. This is the problem with public and corporate collections: you'll have ten or so curators discuss which works to procure this year to satisfy very broad demands.

When you look at foundations in Japan, even when you have a private collector inheriting the foundation, his or her personal selections become a public affair. The foundation ends up involving

the input of a curator, a city representative, then the family relatives and so on. By the time the second or third generation takes over the foundation, too many people have become involved and the collection will have lost much of the character it had at the beginning. A good collection is one in which collectors have made their own additions with each generation and yet it still maintains the freshness and edge it had during the first generation.

● *What do you look for in an artwork?*

RT I want artworks that grab hold of me at the moment I see them and draw me in. I don't look at them in terms of their financial value or their potential to stand the test of time. In terms of media, I tend to prefer two-dimensional works, as it simplifies the problem of display and storage. Paintings and drawings are also easier to evaluate from an amateur's point of view. For instance, I find it hard to assess the worth of three-dimensional conceptual art and installation art; I have no education in that area, so I tend to gravitate toward more traditional formats. Gallery owners have been able to pick up on certain trends in my tastes: whenever they show me a work that they think will appeal to me, they have usually been right.

● *Are your choices constrained by size?*

RT Yes. I don't want to collect big sculptures or installations that require lots of space. The biggest work I have is a twelve-meter-long painting by Satoko Nachi, but it's divided into panels, so it's not too difficult to store and display.

● *Do you have a favorite piece in your collection?*

RT It's a dangerous one: Makoto Aida's *Tsuki*, from the *Inu* series. I've always liked that piece. A woman's hands and legs torn off and bandaged. That piece was rejected from the Ueno Royal Museum's exhibition of Makoto Aida and Akira Yamaguchi's work last year.[1]

1 Held from May 20 to June 19, 2007.

● *What does that work say about Japan?*

RT It shows two opposing sides of the Japanese character: one side represents the delicate sensibilities that the Japanese possess, while the other reveals their brutality. To express those qualities through a woman is amazing. In the world of *ukiyoe*, you found this contrast in Kitagawa Utamaro's beautiful shades versus Ekin's depiction of the world in blood-red colors. But in Makoto Aida, those two contrasting worlds exist in one artist. That's what makes him great and attractive to the youth of today.

● *Why do you think there aren't many collectors of contemporary art in Japan?*

RT This may sound strange, but I think that contemporary art has yet to find acceptance in Japan. Impressionism is still at the forefront of many Japanese people's minds when it comes to thinking about art; there are still so many exhibitions of Impressionist works that draw huge crowds. There was a time in the 1950s and '60s when the Gutai artists had worldwide renown, but they didn't achieve the same level of recognition within Japan. It was the same for Mono-ha in the 1960s and '70s, which was at the vanguard of the world art scene, but somehow it didn't enter the Japanese consciousness.

● *Do tax laws in Japan have an effect on buying habits?*

RT In South Korea, any gains from art are tax-free; even inheriting art is tax-free. Plus, companies can pay for artwork over a seven-year period. Wouldn't that encourage anyone to buy art? Tax issues certainly have a lot to do with how a country that size has come to be so flush with contemporary art. Then again, during the bubble years everybody was buying art regardless of tax issues. Supporting contemporary artists by buying their work is the social responsibility of those who have the money to do so. While that spirit of sponsorship was more evident in prewar Japan, it disappeared with the postwar spread of democratic and egalitarian principles, which advocated the equal distribution of wealth and didn't encourage the creation of a wealthier social class that could afford to patronize the arts.

● *How has contemporary art in Japan changed over the past fifteen years?*

RT Fifteen years ago, museums had no money to collect and young artists had lost their energy, except for a few like Takashi Murakami, Yasumasa Morimura and Hiroshi Sugimoto. With the emergence of young artists like Akira Yamaguchi, Makoto Aida, Motohiko Odani and Yasuyuki Nishio, it was as if a tiny patch of green had sprouted out of the desert. In recent years, young artists are cropping up in numbers that I can barely keep up with.

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● *Where do you think Japanese contemporary art will go from here?*

RT Speaking in terms of quality versus cost, some Asian collectors have said that works by Japanese artists fetch a mere twenty-five percent of their true value, while Korean artists get fifty percent and Chinese artists are earning one hundred percent. Some Asian collectors are gathering a lot of information about Japanese artists and are furiously buying up Japanese works. I think that eventually the price of works by Chinese artists will decline, while works by Japanese artists are already on the rise. The talk is that in five or so years, the price-to-quality ratio for artwork in these three countries will equalize. At the very least, we can expect the work of young Japanese artists to grow in value for the next five years.

● *What are your thoughts on the Chinese contemporary art scene?*

RT No matter how you look at it, it seems that the Chinese contemporary art scene is going through a bubble. I think it will eventually decline. Money is pouring into their art scene from all directions. However, there are so few artists who can maintain such powerful appeal for very long. I can't help but be reminded of the extremely unpleasant precedent set by Japan's bubble economy. In time, the value of works by Chinese contemporary artists could even drop by half. It may be better for now to avoid buying their work.

- *What led you to open your spaces in Kagurazaka and then Shirokane? What do you aim to achieve with these spaces?*

RT I created Takahashi Collection as a viewing room, feeling a sense of duty to make my collection accessible to the public. Even by loaning my works to museums, I can only display one hundred or so a year. The remaining nine hundred would never get shown. It was while I was looking for a warehouse to store my collection that I came across the Kagurazaka space. I felt it was too nice to be used merely for storage, so I decided to hook up with new gallery owners Kimiyoshi Kodama and Yuko Yamamoto and make a go of it. The Kagurazaka space is a regular viewing room for group exhibitions, whereas exhibitions at the new Shirokane space will be executed by the artist as installations incorporating previously shown pieces, perhaps even featuring a new one too.

- *Do you find yourself buying in different frames of mind, sometimes for yourself and sometimes for the broader benefit of the Takahashi Collection?*

RT Putting my collection on public display has introduced that element. Occasionally I find myself wondering if I should acquire such-and-such a work to balance the overall scope of my collection, but I don't want to veer in that direction. My personal tastes and interests always take precedence over creating a sense of balance in the collection.

- *What is the future of your collection?*

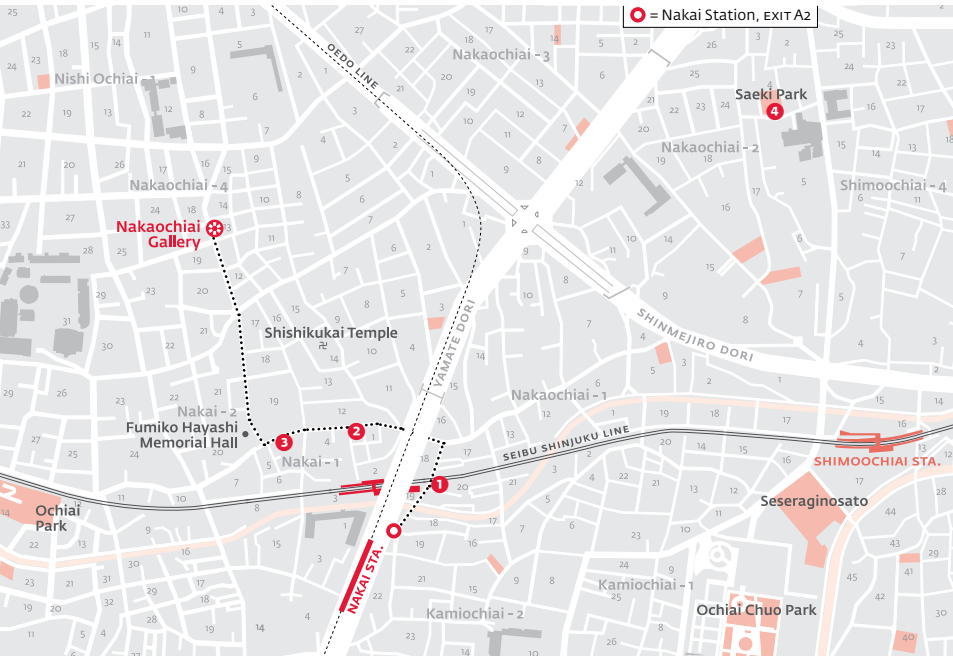
RT From August 2008, it will make two rounds over the next two years through three museums: Kirishima Open-Air Museum in Kagoshima Prefecture, the Hokkaido no Mori Museum in Hokkaido and the Ueno Royal Museum in Tokyo. Beyond that, at some point I want to open a museum for the collection.

2010 UPDATE: *In April 2009, Takahashi closed his spaces in Kagurazaka and Shirokane, and reopened them as a single, larger space at street level in Hibiya.*

Nakaochiai Gallery

Nakaochiai Gallery

NAKAOCHIAI



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A visit to the Nakaochiai area is a great chance to experience a bit of small-town Tokyo. Pickings look sparse from the map but all the more reason to meander. For a refreshingly at-home Thai experience, try Sawadi, close to the station. Just a bit further down the road is Aspen Coffee, excellent for an afternoon stop off. For those ready for something a little stronger, stop by the strangely named Rarara Bar for a cocktail or two. And if you're itching for a bit of exercise, Saeki Park, while something of a hike, offers six hundred square meters of greenery and the preserved studio of Western-style painter, Yuzo Saeki (1898–1928).

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ABOUT THE SPACE

Located in a serene residential neighborhood on the outskirts of the Yamanote line in northwestern Tokyo, Nakaochiai Gallery occupies a renovated Japanese house. Having passed through former incarnations as a garage, a store selling kakigori (shaved ice) and a Japanese sweets shop, the house was turned into a gallery in 2004. Since its latest transformation, it has showcased the work of young, innovative artists from Japan and abroad. The gallery also boasts a diverse range of programs and activities, including children's workshops and projects that explore the potential of the Internet.

With the garage door open, Nakaochiai Gallery's exhibitions are laid out for the whole neighborhood to see. It is not unusual to share your viewing experience with curious locals who have ventured in to make their way around the eye-catching installations as they chat with the gallery's director, curator and artists.

It is this willingness to engage with the local community that gives Nakaochiai Gallery its distinctive character within the Tokyo art world. Unlike galleries in other fashion-driven, commercial parts of the city, where a strong sense of community is often difficult to foster amongst so much urban chaos, the connection between this gallery and the community that surrounds it is both intimate and genuine.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Nakai
Lines: Oedo, Seibu Shinjuku
Access: 10 minute walk from exit A2 (*Oedo*)

Entry: Free

Address: 4-13-5, Nakaochiai, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo

Hours: Depends on exhibition. Also open by appointment.

Tel: +81-(0)3-5988-7830
Fax: +81-(0)3-3821-3553
URL: http://nakaochiaigallery.com
Email: info@nakaochiaigallery.com

Contemporary for the Community

An interview with Julia Barnes & Clint Taniguchi

— NAKAOCHIAI GALLERY, NAKAOCHIAI

JULIA BARNES, *owner / co-director*
Born in Wellington and moved to Tokyo in 1997. From 1999, she founded and coordinated Eyesaw, an international nonprofit arts organization based in Tokyo. In 2004, she established Nakaochiai Gallery. In February 2007, she co-founded Nonaca Co., Ltd, an experiential art firm providing project planning and production, art exhibitions and contemporary space transformations in Tokyo.

CLINT TANIGUCHI, *creative director*
Born in Oahu, Hawaii, and moved to Tokyo in 2004. In 2003, he co-founded Triple Base, a San Francisco art space that integrates art with community activism. Since 1995, he has provided art instruction at numerous organizations in the US and Tokyo. His artwork has been exhibited internationally, including the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the Drawing Center in New York and the Apple Store in Tokyo.

● *What brought you to Tokyo, Julia?*

JB I came to Japan in September 1997. My birth father had lived here right after World War ii as a New Zealand peacekeeper and had visited dozens of times after that. He decided I was too young to be working in New Zealand and should see the world, so he very generously bought me an air ticket to Japan. I spent all the money in Australia midway and arrived in Japan with only 50,000 yen! At that time I was making videos in New Zealand and Australia about all kinds of community projects, such as a rock 'n' roll high school in Melbourne. I came to Tokyo to try something a bit different.

● *How did you start to get involved in the Tokyo art world?*

JB At the very beginning I was making videos here. I met up with a group of artists, and together we moved around Tokyo working on a project called *The Twenty-Nine Stations of the Yamanote Line*, which was exhibited in 1998. Working and exhibiting with them made me realize I needed to keep meeting visual artists, and it led to me forming Eyesaw in 1999.

● *What kind of projects did you organize at Eyesaw?*

JB We were a not-for-profit platform for local and international up-and-coming artists in Tokyo. At the beginning it was set up to be just for video makers and photographers, Japanese and foreign. We tried to remove communication barriers: the programs were all bilingual. At the start we were based in the Vision Network complex in Jingumae. After a few exhibitions we outgrew that space and moved to a couple of others, like the Nolita Apartments in Harajuku, Super Deluxe's former space in Azabu-Juban and then to the Le Deco building in Shibuya.

● *How did you go from there to opening Nakaochiai Gallery?*

JB We ran Eyesaw for four years, from 1999 to 2003, at which point we went to San Francisco to hold the next Eyesaw event, and

it fell through because the people who we were working with insisted that it be a completely noncommercial event, with no sponsors allowed. I found it impossible to bring a group of artists all the way from Japan to America and make something happen without any financial help, so at that point I decided to stop Eyesaw. Later, through a friend in common, I met Clint while he was in Tokyo in the summer of 2004. Several discussions later, Nakaochiai Gallery was born.

● *Clint, what were you doing in San Francisco before you came to Tokyo?*

CT Before I met Julia, I was running Triple Base, an art space in the Mission District, with Oliver Rosenberg. Oliver and I work collaboratively under the name Crust & Dirt, and Triple Base was our headquarters to actualize art projects and hold exhibitions for other artists. I came to Tokyo on a birthday holiday to see a different place and a different culture, and met Julia. The similarities of our backgrounds and interests inspired her to set up Nakaochiai Gallery with Triple Base as a counterpart in San Francisco and initiate an artistic dialogue between our two cities.

● *So your first involvement with Nakaochiai Gallery was as an artist?*

CT Yes. The first show at Nakaochiai Gallery was *See You*, which exhibited photos from a community-based project that I did with Triple Base visitors, and I had Nakaochiai visitors create their own Tokyo version. The end of the exhibition coincided with the Sankyu (Thank You) art day,[1] so I participated from San Francisco via an iChat video feed and hung out with Nakaochiai visitors as they came to pick up their photographs from the project. Julia and I had been regularly using iChat to stay in touch but

1 Taking place on March 9 every year, this event was set up by artist Yoshiaki Kaihatsu to encourage galleries and museums to make art more accessible to people, whether it be through discounted entry fees, guided gallery tours or workshops. The name is a play on the date: 3/9 is read "*san-kyu*" in Japanese, sounding similar to the words "Thank You." See details at http://39art.com.

exploring an international artistic dialogue through technology really hit a chord, and that is how *Instant Drawing Machine* arose, which is a whole other story.

● *What made you decide to leave San Francisco for Tokyo?*

CT After being in San Francisco for five years, Triple Base was running well on its own, and Julia and I were wondering if she should come to San Francisco or if I should go to Tokyo. We decided to start together in Tokyo.

● *How do the Tokyo art world and the San Francisco art world differ?*

CT The San Francisco art community is very stimulating and has quite a legacy to show for it. Being a smaller city than Tokyo, San Francisco has a very tangible community of artists, curators and gallerists. The aesthetics are also different: the DIY spirit is alive and well there. My sense of Tokyo's art scene is that there are many things going on but they are spread sporadically throughout the city and are less cohesive.

JB Also the close-knit nature of San Francisco creates a sense of healthy, constructive competitiveness among the artists. They are all out there, showing at artist-run gallery spaces, commercial spaces, their friends' spaces and so on; they're seeing each other's artworks constantly and helping push each other to produce better work. There is a completely different kind of pressure on artists in Tokyo: it seems to be that artists give up hope if they haven't become successful by their mid to late twenties. To make it as an artist in the six or so years after graduation from art school is such a small window of opportunity—it's almost impossible—whereas in San Francisco, in a sense you never grow old. It's acceptable to be in your forties, hang out with your friends and make art, whether it's successful or not.

CT There are more alternative lifestyles in San Francisco, whereas here there are more limitations as to how society accepts you.

- *What are the main challenges you've faced as foreigners working in Tokyo, both at the local community level and in terms of the broader Tokyo art world?*

JB I guess being accepted into the Nakaochiai community came first. I put in a lot of effort to make sure that the whole neighborhood was informed about what we were doing a couple of weeks prior to the exhibitions, to smooth things over. We eventually managed to integrate into the community, but it did take a while.

CT We are interested in exhibiting international artists who engage both mainstream art audiences and the layman or the local community. For example, for her exhibition in 2007, Amanda Browder[2] made a call for donations for soft materials and clothes that she could incorporate into her installation. That show was really well received by the people living in this neighborhood. We had old and young folks coming to the exhibition opening for the first time, curious to see what had happened to their old futons and clothes.

JB In terms of the Tokyo scale, to be honest, we really haven't felt the need for Nakaochiai Gallery to become a part of the broader art world. We just wanted to be here, concentrating on the community in this neighborhood where we live. We do go out and see what's out there, of course, and when we meet people who are interested in what we are doing, we bring them to the gallery. For us to engage a local community, which has had little or no exposure to contemporary art, is full of challenges!

CT We really appreciate the people who go out of their way to come and support us and we have managed to cultivate a very healthy

2 *Amanda Browder—Beautiful Flux* was held from March 4 to March 24, 2007.

community of people around our gallery, made up of both Japanese and foreigners—it's a mutually stimulating environment.

- *Have their been any particular advantages in being foreigners working in the Tokyo art world?*

CT While the foreign audience in Tokyo may be a minority, that audience tends to be very excited and interested in what we're doing. Some foreign residents have told us that they don't feel too comfortable in Japanese galleries, that they're not being helped, that the Japanese contemporary art world feels very inaccessible to them and yet they're looking to find work by Japanese artists. So we're able to accommodate those needs.

- *What do you look for in the work of the Japanese artists you represent?*

JB We choose them for their aesthetics, their use of materials and their sense of narrative. All of the Japanese artists we work with are people I have known for many years, and during that time I've been watching very closely to see how they have developed their work. I can see how seriously they take their practice and I know that they will be making their work until the day they die; their art is innate to them.

- *What kind of international artists do you represent? Who are they, how do you meet them and how do you judge whether or not they will connect with the Tokyo audience?*

JB The artists that we choose tend to be not only people who create visual artwork, but also people whose investigations challenge us, engage communities and explore the experiential side of art. We meet artists through research, artists' friends and through the Net, and we make most of our decisions with our gut instinct.

- *How has your experience of curating at Nakaochiai Gallery differed from what you were doing back in San Francisco?*

CT I think just the sensibility and the awareness is very different. In Tokyo, there's not as much assumed knowledge about what art is or what is going on in the scene here or abroad. The people we show are from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, so to a degree, part of what they are saying may be lost in translation; we have to think about how things are presented to the audience here or else some messages may not be understood. It might benefit the artists to show here, but if they are not connecting with the Japanese, then there is no real meaning to it.

- *What made you set up Nonaca and start holding exhibitions in people's apartments?*

CT The name Nonaca comes from "*no naka*" which means "inside" in Japanese. We are interested in contemporary art projects that transform the inside of spaces, be it the physical space of a room or the inner space within ourselves.

JB The idea was born out of practical considerations. We wanted to show Akira's works, some of which are painted on very large boards, but we couldn't fit any more than two into the gallery. When we were at one of our clients' homes, we noticed how big the walls were, and when we suggested to them the idea of holding an exhibition in their apartment, they were very positive about it.

Even before that we had begun to find it too time-consuming to have our clients, many of whom live on the other side of the city, come and visit the gallery. We love being based in this residential neighborhood, but we also see the value of working in other spaces that are central and easily accessible to people. I think working in different spaces also introduces diversity into our program, for the viewer, for the artist and for us. In contrast to our locally grounded work with Nakaochiai Gallery, Nonaca's mission is to engage a much wider audience in Tokyo.

- *What are the curatorial challenges of working in a domestic space as opposed to a gallery space?*

CT Lighting, how much you are able to transform the space and working to make it a positive experience for the clients. Usually it's their first time to have their home rearranged for an exhibition, which is then presented as a semi-public event that brings strangers in. But I think that all of these apartment events have been positive experiences. I like how it fits in with the inherent transience of Tokyo's composition; this city changes itself all the time.

- *How has Tokyo's art scene changed in the ten years that you've been here?*

JB The biggest change I've seen has been the increase in accessibility for younger artists. An increase in artist-run galleries and art cafés provides a better platform for people who are starting to show their work and get noticed, and it bridges the gap between making the work and showing it in a gallery. That's the gap that I was trying to bridge with Eyesaw, back in the time when these places didn't really exist.

There are now even these little shoebox galleries in places like Koenji, which artists can rent out to display their work; they're mostly craft-oriented, but we've discovered some interesting people through them. Big events like GEISAI and Design Festa have also helped to promote young artists, and of course several new museums have opened. New bilingual publications like *ART iT* came out and in terms of making information about the art world truly bilingual and accessible, Tokyo Art Beat pulled the entire scene together. I think that contemporary art is more well known within Japan nowadays; it's talked about more in the mainstream media and in general there's more hype about it than there was five or ten years ago.

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Bilingual Tokyo Online

An interview with Paul Baron, Kosuke Fujitaka & Olivier Thereaux
— TOKYO ART BEAT

PAUL BARON was born in Paris in 1977. In 2002, he graduated from the London College of Communication and moved to Tokyo. After three years at Honda R&D as an interaction designer, he now divides his time between running Tokyo Art Beat and working at AQ as a usability and information designer.

KOSUKE FUJITAKA was born in Osaka in 1978. After graduating from the University of Tokyo with a BA in Economics, he worked in the Business Planning Section at Sony Ericsson as financial controller and then as a marketing analyst. As of January 2008, he has been based in New York.

OLIVIER THEREAUX was born in Rouen in 1977. In 2002, he moved to Tokyo, where he worked for the W3C as a web developer. As of February 2008, he has been based in Montreal.

- *How did the three of you meet and what made you collaborate to create Tokyo Art Beat (TAB)?*[1]

PB I had been living in London before coming to Tokyo. With *Time Out* it was very easy to find galleries in London, but there was nothing similar in Tokyo and very little information in English on the Web. Olivier and I met by chance in 2003 at a DJ party in Harajuku. Some time later we were discussing how we got our information about exhibitions in Tokyo and we realized we were both finding it difficult.

OT Realtokyo.com offered some recommendations, and we had also been getting our art information from AssemblyLanguage.com, which gave a good mix of recommendations of events and locations that weren't necessarily mainstream, but by the time Paul and I met, that site was dead.

PB The first emails we have that talk about making this website are from November 2003, just one year before the site went live. We needed a Japanese person to work with to make this project happen and through my cousin I met Kosuke, who was working at Sony Ericsson.

OT We met a few Japanese people who were gravitating around the project, but nobody had managed to commit to it. However, when Kosuke heard about our plans, he was as excited about it as we were. We had our guy!

- *How long did it take to make the site?*

PB Research and organization took maybe six months. It was during the summer of 2004 that we designed the site, coded it and entered all the data about venues with a team of volunteers. In September we started inputting exhibition data before our launch in October.

1 http://tokyoartbeat.com/

● *How did you build up the original team of volunteers?*

PB It was all friends and friends of friends, basically. As the project started to grow, more and more people around us got interested. Everybody felt the need for a website like this, so it was pretty easy to find volunteers.

KF There were two sets of people: casual art goers and people taking art curation classes at Arts Initiative Tokyo. I was studying at AIT and so were several of the people who volunteered for TAB at the beginning.

● *What are the main principles behind the way you present all this information?*

PB The initial goal was to create a database that would contain all information about venues and events and be updated on time.

OT When we first discussed the features we wanted to have, we came up with everything imaginable, but the later stages were about stripping back to the essentials. The fact that we were developing TAB as a side project to our main jobs helped: if we had had a team of ten people and a huge budget, we might have built a super-complicated website…

PB …and it would have been a failure as a result, since we didn't know all that much about user expectations at the time.

OT So instead we focused on making something simple and bilingual that wouldn't be too much work for people to use.

● *Given that you're handling such a vast amount of information, why is it so important to you to make it bilingual?*

KF There were no websites as comprehensive as TAB even in Japanese. Other than *ART iT* magazine, nothing that was going on in Japan was being introduced in English, in any media, so somebody had to take the first steps to promote the Japanese art scene in English.

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- *Why did you decide to run TAB as a nonprofit organization?*

OT We had no money of our own, so we couldn't pay anyone and knew we'd have to rely on volunteers. We felt the best way to attract volunteers was to make a nonprofit organization in which no one could directly profit from the work of our team. The whole system had to be nonprofit.

PB All we wanted was to gather information and build a site that is *useful* for people.

OT As a result I think we got a better reaction from people, who would work with us out of a sense of greater purpose than financial gain.

KF We also wanted the website to be neutral and independent.

- *How do you reconcile the neutrality of TAB event listings with selling banner adverts on the front page, bought by some of the venues listed on the site?*

PB TAB is perhaps a little less neutral for galleries or museums taking out adverts on the site, but TAB is just too big to run with volunteers only: we need to pay our core staff. However, we only run adverts that are relevant to our content; we don't do adverts for hotels and so on. It is true that out of the four hundred or so events that are listed at any time on the website, three or four will get a boost in visitor numbers as a result of having a banner on TAB, but it helps keep the site running, and free, and that in turn helps all the other galleries and museums.

- *What are you aiming to achieve with the TABlog[2] component of the website?*

PB We set up TABlog to give users another angle from which they can look at what's out there and decide what they might like to see. The TABlog writers are all volunteers and we ask them to

2 http://tokyoartbeat.com/tablog/

cover a wide variety of venues: big and small, famous and barely known. They aim to cover all different types of exhibitions, artists and media, and there is a fair balance of positive, neutral and critical reporting.

● *Were you well received by the galleries and museums when you started?*

OT Overall, the reactions were very positive. But yes, a couple of museums panicked, wondering what we might be doing with their data. We received faxes with printouts of TAB pages with big red circles all over them!

KF There were some really finicky requests and a few people who were really suspicious. I remember once having to spend an hour explaining to a gallery owner how we work. These kinds of situations were mostly born out of misunderstandings about the Web. But this kind of thing doesn't happen any more. That may be because TAB has become very well known, but now people also have a much better understanding of what purpose the Web serves.

● *How did the galleries and museums react to being mixed together?*

KF Some galleries probably don't like being listed next to rental galleries and art cafés. They care about their quality and the nature of their representation on other media. That may still bother them, but we haven't heard any comments about it for a long time.

OT We went against the trends of the time by mixing everything, putting art and design together, and allowing galleries, museums, art cafés, universities and so on to be listed alongside each other according to the area they are in.

PB The crucial thing here is that our approach is from the user's point of view; it's not about whether the art is being shown in a museum or a commercial gallery or a rental gallery, but about the art and helping people get to see it. As people become more

and more familiar with the venues out there, of course they will pick up the nuances in each gallery or museum's outlook, but our fundamental goal is to transcend the art world's established categories. I think that museums and galleries get smarter when they start to look at things from the user's point of view.

- *Have galleries and museums been smart in the way they use the Web relative to your experience in other countries? Is this slowness to get to grips with the Web a Japanese thing, an art world thing, or is it the whole world?*

OT It's everywhere, not just Japan. In Japan's case, it's simply taken a while for many galleries and museums to realize that in order to connect with the world, they need to have a website and that it should be at the very least partially bilingual.

PB We launched a few months after the Mori Art Museum opened. I think the opening of that museum was quite symbolic of the Japanese art world starting to open up to the rest of the world. Its first two exhibitions were *Happiness*[3] and *Roppongi Crossing,*[4] which were about showcasing the wealth of Asian contemporary art to the rest of the world. Suddenly within Tokyo, people realized that they were part of a global market, not just a domestic one. Our website came out at the right time.

- *How can* TAB *improve, and what is the future potential for the Web in Tokyo's art world?*

OT The Internet trend right now seems to be a fear of big sites like Google and Facebook, which offer so many services but are gathering a lot of power, potentially abusing people's personal

3 *Happiness: A Survival Guide for Art and Life* was held from October 18, 2003 to January 10, 2004. This exhibition featured around 250 works by approximately 180 artists, from all genres and periods.

4 *Roppongi Crossing: New Visions in Contemporary Japanese Art 2004* was held from February 7 to April 11, 2004. This exhibition brought together sixty Japanese artists working in a broad range of media.

information. I'd like to think that the future of the Internet is one in which there will be more sites and more services catering to local people. It wasn't really our strategy to aim at the niche of the Tokyo art world—it just happened that we were part of that crowd and that people needed what we were providing.

KF Another way of looking at it is that TAB physically connects people; it doesn't just exist on the Web. You search for the information you want and then you act on it and go and see an exhibition.

PB The future potential for the Web in Tokyo's art world is simply to have more bilingual websites. Recently we counted how many of our seven hundred venues have bilingual websites, and it's only thirty percent of them!

- *Kansai Art Beat*[5] *launched in April 2007, and you plan to launch New York Art Beat*[6] *in April 2008. What did you get out of the experience of helping* KAB *launch and how will new Art Beat sites have to adapt to their cities or regions?*

OT The real test for cultural adaptation will be in New York, because the experience of launching Kansai Art Beat was still within Japan. The venue types or the information about how to get somewhere on KAB are still presented in a manner that is specific to the Japanese context.

PB Unlike New York, Tokyo doesn't really have art neighborhoods. These neighborhoods were not a part of how we built TAB, so we will have to adapt the site for New York, although our model was fundamentally designed to work anywhere. There are already websites in New York that do some part of what TAB does, so there's also the challenge of how we will fit in. We're aware that

5 http://kansaiartbeat.com/ UPDATE: *service put on hiatus on July 1, 2008*

6 http://nyartbeat.com/

New York Art Beat could be perceived as an invasive presence, especially if it turns out to be more popular than the sites that are already there. We will probably tread on more toes in New York than in Tokyo, but if that's the price to pay for giving people good information, so be it.

KF I think that of course it's important for any Art Beat to be up to date and easy to use, but more importantly, it should have the people behind it putting a face on it; whatever city it may be, the people running the website have to go out and be an active part of the art scene. The blog is another way of giving the website a more personal and accessible feel to people who are new to the scene.

PB Another aspect is that in a way we're not opening in New York as New Yorkers, rather we're opening as New York Art Beat *from Japan*. The top of the homepage will link to Tokyo Art Beat and Kansai Art Beat, so people will view us more as a website that came from abroad. It's going to be funny to see how New York reacts to this site from a 'third world' art market moving onto its turf and setting a new standard. Hopefully the 'Japan cool' element will help.

The State of Art Journalism & Criticism in Tokyo

by Tetsuya Ozaki

In 2003, when I began publishing my Japanese/English bilingual quarterly art magazine *ART iT*, it was with an extremely simple premise in mind. Let me quote from the foreword to the first issue:

> "The Tokyo culture scene and the Japanese art scene are closed. Isolated. More tragically, very few Japanese are aware of that reality.
>
> "It is isolated because there are no media exposing it to the outside world. To put it simply, there is very little information disseminated in English. The controversy as to whether English should be uncritically recognized as the *lingua franca* aside, the real problem with all-Japanese media is the difficulty of conveying information abroad, both in terms of volume and time.
>
> "Being closed off poses a domestic problem as well. Like humming tunes in the bath, or amusing oneself singing karaoke in a soundproof booth, closed discourse is unexposed to criticism, thus it is never tempered. Insider favor, scratching backs, inside stories often result in nothing more than self-euphoria. Without international communication, there is no journalism."

These thoughts were also part of the reason I set up Realtokyo[1] in 2000. Realtokyo is a bilingual online culture magazine that gives event information not only about art, but film, theater, music and other fields. Criticism in Japan is in a sad state, but even before coming to that question of criticism, there was the need to address the vital lack of any media that offered efficient listings of cultural activities, exhibition information and so on. There were very few sources of information in languages other than Japanese, meaning that there was no kind of shared platform that could facilitate the exchange of opinions with foreign readers living in Japan or abroad. Unless you could understand Japanese, just trying to visit a single exhibition could potentially leave you feeling 'lost in translation.' I founded Realtokyo and *ART iT* with the aim of doing something to change this state of affairs.

The problem wasn't only limited to art; the media offered very few sources of primary information regarding any cultural event at all. One such source was the Japanese-only cultural listings magazine *Pia,* largely produced by film-enthusiast students and founded in 1972. But before that, when looking for film schedules, art exhibitions or live music events, with the exception of specialist magazines, you had only newspaper listings to refer to and no newspaper covered art events comprehensively.

At that time, the release of a compact and convenient publication like *Pia* was welcome, and yet from the mid-1980s, there was a decrease in articles being written about art. *Pia* started its ticketing service, which led to information about galleries and museums, both of which either charged no entry fee or very low fees, losing out to information about high-grossing films, theater, music and sports events.

From the mid-1990s onwards, with a global art boom taking place, general interest magazines or fashion magazines increasingly

1 http://www.realtokyo.co.jp/

commissioned special features on art, and more and more articles on acclaimed up-and-coming artists or highly popular exhibitions began to appear. While magazines such as *Brutus* produced features of a very high standard, few sources offered comprehensive listings. With the exception of *The Japan Times, Daily Yomiuri, Tokyo Journal* or *Metropolis*, until recent years bilingual publications or English-language newspapers and magazines aimed exclusively at a foreign audience were barely in existence. Furthermore, while the newspapers and *Metropolis* would occasionally publish a damning review of something, for the most part these publications' reporting on art was so shallow as to be pathetic.

THE LACK OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS IN ASIA

Without getting into the complex debate over the legitimacy of the world's acceptance of English as its *lingua franca*, the current reality is that people in East Asian countries generally do not have a good command of English. Whether this is due to the fact that many of them have escaped colonization by Britain or the United States, or questions of educational systems or international trade relations is too complicated to consider in detail here, but the end result is that there are few situations in everyday life that require East Asian people to make use of English.

This lack of effective English ability in East Asia has repercussions that are a little more significant than Bill Murray finding himself confused in Tokyo: it hampers mutual understanding between the East Asian countries themselves. Art fans are losing out greatly without even realizing it.

It goes without saying that art originated in the West, and contemporary art derives primarily from Europe and the United States. With the spread of anthropology and cultural relativism, the decades after the *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition held at the Pompidou Center in 1989 have witnessed an increase in multiculturalism. However, for the most part there has been no change in

Western art's assured status as the center of importance. In short, all other forms of art have had their development stymied at the most rudimentary levels.

The result is that almost everybody within the contemporary art world adheres to the Western-centric version of art history and extols the virtues of work by Duchamp, Beuys and Warhol. They subscribe to *ARTnews* and *Artforum* and follow the latest developments in Matthew Barney or Damian Hirst's careers. They go to Venice and Kassel, and they attend the four big art fairs in New York, Basel, London and Miami. In recent years, the Chinese art bubble has drawn people and money to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, but in reality this is currently only a fledgling scene. Flush with dollars and euros, this incipient scene is a well-connected one, but I suspect that financial support will bottom out.

In short, the global art world has a treelike structure, with information flowing in one direction only, from the trunk up into the branches. The East knows the West, but the West does not know the East. Nor does the East have a mutual, shared knowledge of itself: Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Seoul, Jakarta and Beijing are all unfamiliar with each other. Art media exists in all of these countries, but they all remain short of information about what goes on outside of their own borders. Perhaps one can say that information about China is fairly well spread among these countries, but if this state of affairs does not diversify beyond this point, then it will all collapse overnight as soon as the Chinese bubble bursts.

FROM A TREE TO A RHIZOME

At long last, in recent years there has emerged a movement to change this treelike structure into what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call a 'rhizomelike structure.'[2] The Internet—itself a

2 Some plants and tubers have thick stems that grow along or under the ground, from which further roots and stems grow. Deleuze and Guattari use the word to describe multiple, nonheirarchical entry and exit points in data representation.

rhizomelike media—is the driving force behind this movement. While many of Japan's museums and gallery websites remain in Japanese only, after Realtokyo, the next bilingual art website to
64 appear was Tokyo Art Beat, launched in 2004. In addition to listing Tokyo's art and design information, Tokyo Art Beat also features TABlog, a blog-style publication that presents a broad range of art news, exhibition reviews and interviews. In October 2007, *ART iT's* website was relaunched to display the exhibition calendar that was previously published in the magazine. Shifting this feature to the Web made it possible to update our listings of exhibition information in the Asia-Pacific region—as well as publish reviews—to a degree that was not previously possible in the quarterly magazine format. Until recently, the long established website Artscape[3] (launched in 1996) had been published almost entirely in Japanese, but as of 2006 it started an English version, and on a monthly basis features a number of English-language reviews written by Japan-based art writers.

Of the English-only media available on the Web, there are
112 several personal blogs. Among them, Roger McDonald's Tactical Museum Tokyo[4] stands out as by far the best. McDonald is a Tokyo-based independent curator and one of the founding members of the NPO Arts Initiative Tokyo, which seeks to facilitate the establishment of an alternative art scene. Always published soon after the event has begun, his reviews are written with the precision and depth of insight of an art specialist.

Japan's art journalism does not actively report news from the art world. This is bizarre given how, as in other countries, people working in the art industry love gossip. In 2005, artist Tadasu Takamine's works were examined for authenticity at the Yokohama Museum of Art and subsequently rejected, and in 2006, Shintaro Ishihara made yet another arrogant assertion at the opening

3 http://www.dnp.co.jp/artscape/eng/

4 http://rogermc.blogs.com/tactical/

reception of the *Collection of the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo[5]—and yet these incidents were only reported in a small part of the mainstream media. Even if it means singing my own praises, it has to be stated that the most detailed articles on these incidents were in fact featured on Realtokyo.[6]

If you take all the above-mentioned publications and add *favorite*, a bimonthly free pamphlet published jointly by just over thirty major contemporary art galleries, it is possible to say that there is comprehensive coverage of all primary information regarding art events taking place in Tokyo.

The number of non-Japanese art lovers making use of all the aforementioned publications is thought to be steadily increasing. One hopes that the rhizome will extend its roots underground, where they will tangle up and allow nutrients to spread through all parts of the plant before bearing fruit.

THE POWERLESSNESS OF CRITICISM

While listings spread and galleries flourish, art criticism in Japan is in a stagnant condition.

For a start, there are few people writing art criticism. At the time of writing in February 2008, the website of the International Association of Art Critics Japanese Section (Japanese only; the English side seems to be permanently 'under construction') listed 160 members, among which are some who have already passed away, and a number of professors who barely produce anything. If you include people not affiliated with the Association of Art Critics, then there are perhaps only ten or so serious critics out there.

5 Held from April 22 to July 2, 2006.

6 In this report, Ishihara's words are paraphrased as follows: "I heard it was a fantastic exhibition, so I came looking forward to it, but in the end it hasn't amounted to much. Everything here is of bizarre taste."
http://www.realtokyo.co.jp/docs/ja/column/outoftokyo/bn/ozaki_141/

Secondly, the quality of media coverage is in decline. Japan's most representative art magazine is *Bijutsu Techo*. Founded in 1948, this magazine was closely connected to the development of post-war Japanese art. It was read in Korea during the 1960s and '70s, a period of military dictatorship during which the movement of people and information in and out of the country was restricted. The magazine follows developments in not only Japanese but European and American art as well. However, over the past few years *Bijutsu Techo* has been faltering and recently some issues have even come to resemble a job-hunting information magazine for young people aspiring to work in the art industry. In the midst of a long-term structural slump, publications that actually feature opinionated writing are barely selling at all. As a result, it is very hard for new publications to get started: when *ART iT* launched, it was declared "rash," "absurd" and even "idiotic."

Lastly, what are the readers after? It has long been said that today's university students don't read books, but it's true. When it is broadly conceived that journalism should be aimed at a general audience and that criticism should be aimed at those who create, then you could say that the average person doesn't necessarily need to read criticism. Do artists read? I can only answer based on my impressions, but barring a few artists such as Kenjiro Okazaki, Masaki Fujihata, Hideki Nakazawa and Chiezo Taro who are capable of excellent criticism, I suspect that the majority of them only read what is being written about their own work and their own exhibitions.

However, good art critics do exist, it's just that their words do not resonate with artists, they have no influence, nor are they the driving force behind anything. Shuzo Takiguchi (poet, artist, art critic, 1903–1979), Tatsuhiko Shibusawa (scholar in French literature, critic, 1928–1987) and Suehiro Tanemura (scholar in German literature, critic, 1933–2004) were the three notable exceptions. During their careers they were engaged with a community of people that transcended the boundaries of professions: poets,

novelists, artists, designers, playwrights, filmmakers, actors, editors and TV producers all gathered together with them in smoking salons where they engaged in fierce discussion. In the present age, there is no such culture.

Neither Japan, nor any of the non-Western countries that have been left out of the official annals of 'Art History', has produced any original artistic expression without basing it on this kind of cooperation or mutual influence that transcends professional boundaries. Works that have, reflecting the borderlessness of contemporary social reality and comprising contents and formats that transcend the categories of high culture and subculture, are perhaps the only pieces that one can declare to be original.

If art criticism is aimed at creators, then it has a solid *raison d'être* and a central role to play in the art movements of the future. Thus, in the current absence of an energetic culture of dialogue between critics and their peers working in other fields, the key to reinvigorating art criticism in Japan lies in the rhizomes of bilingual printed and online media. As a journalist who is trying to play his part in this process, I would like to give a modest shout of support to any criticism that emerges out of these intricate rhizomes and really challenges the way people think.

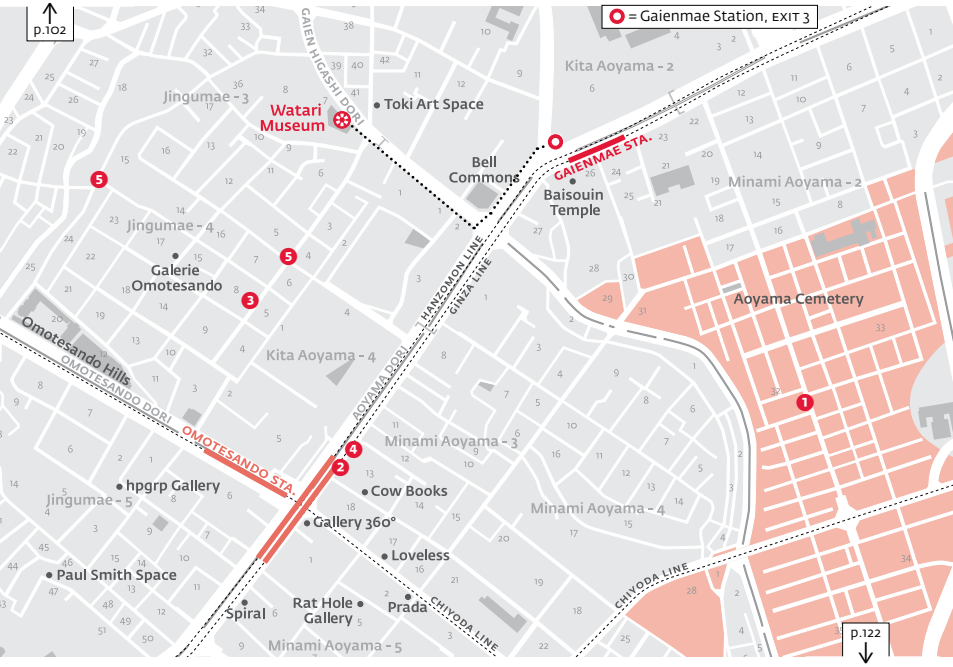
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1955 in Tokyo, Tetsuya Ozaki is the chief editor of Realtokyo and *ART iT*. He is also Editor-in-chief for Insight Diaries and Realkyoto. From 1989 to 1990 he worked as the associate editor for *03 TOKYO Calling* and in 1996 he was responsible for the editorial direction for the Japan theme pavilion at the Internet Expo. In 2007 he became a guest professor of Art Journalism at Kyoto University of Art and Design. In 2010 he stepped down as chief editor of *ART iT* and now focuses on Realtokyo.com and other culture-related projects.

Watari Museum
of Contemporary Art

Watari Museum of Contemporary Art

GAIENMAE / OMOTESANDO / AOYAMA



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

① The cobblestone lanes of Aoyama Cemetery offer surprisingly relaxing strolls, especially during the festive cherry blossom season. For a coffee break, you won't find a more serious or intimately poured ②③ cup than at Daibou Coffee. Maisen serves some of Tokyo's most delicious *tonkatsu* sets. If you just want to read a book and gaze out over ④ rooftops, Nid Café is a fine choice. But perhaps the best cure for those ⑤ with wanderlust is simply to stroll down the backstreets between Omotesando and Harajuku. Independent shops and small galleries intermingling with low-rise offices and unusually designed residences form a complex but quiet, quintessentially Tokyo neighborhood.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta and opened in September 1990, the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art (Watari-um) cuts a striking profile on the edge of Harajuku and Gaienmae. The abbreviated 'Watari-um' derives from the combination of 'Watari,' the family name of the founders, and 'Museum.'

Although spread out over several floors, Watari-um's exhibition spaces all pivot around the cavernous second floor gallery. The lightwell on the fourth floor affords you a bird's eye view of works displayed below, and the glass-walled mezzanine of the third floor makes for visual correspondence between artworks displayed in physically separate spaces. Among many thematic exhibitions held at the museum, artists shown here include Japanese and international figures at all stages in their careers.

The first floor is devoted entirely to the museum shop, an emporium of designer gadgetry, stationery, secondhand art postcards, Freitag bags and leather products. The basement houses both a café and the revered On Sundays bookshop. While located in the Watari-um, this very well-stocked bookshop is run independently by Kisato Kusano, a true bibliophile.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Gaienmae
Lines: Ginza
Access: 5 minute walk from exit 3

Entry: Adults ¥1000, students under 25 ¥800, members free. Tickets are valid for unlimited entry during the exhibition period.

Address: 3-7-6 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 11AM – 7PM; 11AM – 9PM on Wednesdays
Closed on Mondays (except national holidays). Closed December 31 to January 4

Tel: +81-(0)3-3402-3001
Fax: +81-(0)3-3405-7714
URL: http://watarium.co.jp
Email: official@watarium.co.jp

A Triangular Temple to Modernism

An interview with Etsuko Watari

— WATARI MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, GAIENMAE

ETSUKO WATARI, *curator*
Born in Tokyo in 1956. Graduated from the History of Art Department, Faculty of Letters, Waseda University. Established the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art in 1990. She has organized and curated exhibitions of works by Carlo Scarpa, Shinzo & Roso Fukuhara and a group show of Hungarian Constructivism. Published works include *The Laboratory of Rodchenko* and *Museum Goods*.

● *What led you to found this museum?*

EW My mother had a collection of contemporary art that she started around 1960. We wanted to build a museum so that we could show it to the public. Nevertheless, we also wanted to explore many other potential exhibition ideas. Being right in the middle of Tokyo, our space isn't that large, so we can't hold a permanent show and special exhibition at the same time. As a result, we hold a single show under a single theme each time.

Also, there were hardly any interesting museums in Japan around that time. We usually had to go abroad to see the art we wanted to see. We imagined how nice it would be to have our kind of art near us, no matter how little, so we simply said, "Let's do it," and got started. But running a museum turned out to be much more difficult than we had imagined!

● *In what way?*

EW The financial and advertising aspects of exhibition planning are difficult. In Japan, newspaper companies usually take care of advertising, but it produces very mixed results. Many, many people will go see an exhibition even if it's not that interesting; and yet on the other hand, even if it's a great exhibition, if it's not advertised, many people won't go. It's normal to have a large budget for advertising, but we choose not to spend money that way. People will come to our exhibitions and tell their friends that they liked it. We don't get huge numbers of visitors, but that's all right because we're a small museum.

● *How did you come to know the architect Mario Botta, and in what way did you work with him to develop the design of this building?*

EW We became interested in his work through books and magazines, and contacted him in 1985. We told him that we were going to be exhibiting contemporary art for the next couple of decades and asked him to design a building with that in mind. But if you think about it, nobody knows what forms contemporary art will take in the coming decades. It's a big challenge to develop a space for something that nobody can predict.

In the beginning, we didn't have a very detailed plan of what we wanted, so we developed our ideas in response to his questions. It was like talking to a psychiatrist—very revealing. Rather than discuss things like form and function, our talks were much more spiritual, about issues such as how we wanted to deal with art, what possibilities we felt there were and which ones we wanted to explore. It also had a positive influence on Mr. Botta, who went on to design the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1994. He said in an interview with *The New York Times* that he learned a lot about the possibilities, difficulties and appeal of contemporary art by delving into its essence with us.

We ended up spending three years on these discussions before building work began. Construction took around two years,

so this building took five years to complete. This is the reason we now hold many exhibitions on architecture. We have some insight into what architects go through in the process of design and construction.

● *What were the factors that defined the building's distinctive triangular shape?*

EW The basis of the building's shape is a result of Tokyo's urban planning for the 1964 Olympics. The street outside this museum used to be really narrow, but it was widened so that it could function as the main road to the nearby Olympic National Stadium. As a result, our land was expanded to make space for construction, and our plot became triangular. We built upon that shape, thinking that a triangle would be distinctive. Mr. Botta said he'd never worked on a triangular building before.

● *What is the character of your mother's collection?*

EW The collection is composed of art from all over the world: the United States, Europe, South America and, of course, Japan. We started collecting at the end of the 1960s. Being my mother's private collection, it was built up mostly out of her own personal interests. Looking at it objectively though, the collection has a strong leaning toward Modernism. It's not fancy, it's not decorative and it's not pretty: it includes works by Fluxus and Joseph Beuys that aren't beautiful at all. Being based on both my mother's ideas and the ideas of Modernist conceptual artists, this collection is more ideological than your average collection.

● *What goal is the museum aiming for with its exhibition program?*

EW Our basic policy is to focus on Modernism. We introduce artists whose works and ideas are necessary for us to live in this age. We show both young, up-and-coming artists as well as older ones. With a new take on older work, you can turn it into something that's needed today. For example, in 2007 we held an exhibition

of the architect Bruno Taut,[1] whose work was made over one hundred years ago but is still modern. The Watari-um is not a museum that displays artifacts for the sake of preserving history. Our mission is to exhibit works for creators living in Tokyo and to seek what is necessary for mankind.

● *How do you get to know artists? Do you go to events like art fairs or biennales?*

EW We hardly go to art fairs. Their purpose is to sell works, so unless you are there to buy, it's not a very stimulating environment. We go to biennales and we meet artists there sometimes; most of the time the artists turn out to be friends of friends. We go visit them and see their works a number of times; seeing a lot of different works and having continuous contact with people are the biggest factors in making decisions about who we work with.

● *How do you and the artists work together to create an exhibition?*

EW If we're working with a living artist, then it's critical to have them communicate what they want to achieve in the beginning. After that, we'll go over the details to see if it can be realized and if for any reason it can't, we'll try to offer as many suggestions as possible for alternative approaches. Sometimes we'll have to be realistic and say no due to budget constraints. It's important to have the artist submit his or her plans first; then we listen closely to what they want to do.

● *What exhibition did you find most challenging or rewarding to curate?*

EW Challenging? It's challenging each time! Solo and group exhibitions are very different. Solo exhibitions organized with a living artist have a clear process to them because the artist can make decisions on his or her own, whereas it's harder to curate the works of a group of artists under a coherent theme; you need a clear concept or else the show loses focus.

1 Held from February 3 to May 27, 2007.

I have curated two exhibitions in an ongoing series called *Empty Garden*,[2] and I'm in the middle of preparing for the third one. It's one of the projects that I've dedicated my life to. 'Emptiness' is a very Japanese concept; the sheer power of a work created with emptiness is amazing. It's not about the power of form or size, but of the spirit. It's a difficult concept to work with, but it's fascinating and very important to me.

● *What do you think of the white cube as a space to work in?*

EW Both the positive and negative aspects of the white cube are in-
92 teresting; it really depends on the work. With the Barry McGee exhibition that we held in 2007,[3] we designed the interior to look like outer walls and installed a truck in the main space to make it look like a random backstreet. We often alter things architecturally: the building itself is designed to be very flexible. The top floor has a cavity that allows viewers to look down into the main exhibition space, but we can floor it over when necessary.

To be more radical, we go outdoors. We once used the street to exhibit works. I think it's very interesting to do the exact opposite of what an ordinary white cube gallery would do. But as I said, it depends on the work: the purpose of the work decides what curators will do with the white cube. However, I don't think that the white cube is the only option: some works are better exhibited around town.

● *In what way do you engage with public space?*

EW We're right in the middle of preparing *Seed and Grow*, a solo exhibition of the French artist Fabrice Hyber, who will exhibit works under the theme of agriculture. We are going to use the sidewalk along the road from Gaienmae Station and transform each bit of

2 *Empty Garden* was held from April 24 to November 7, 1999 and *Empty Garden 2* was held from April 23 to September 26, 2004.

3 Held from June 2 to September 30, 2007.

land into a vegetable garden, leading all the way up to this museum. Visitors will be able to enjoy Japanese radishes, cucumbers and tomatoes on their walk from the station to the museum. It's difficult to execute these kinds of exhibitions, but it's very rewarding and we always aim to do one a year.

- *The logistics of realizing a work in public space—obtaining permission from various authorities and so on—must be daunting.*

EW Yes, it takes a lot of effort. We need to get permission not just from Shibuya Ward but also the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The authorities vary according to the street. Aoyama Dori, for example, is a national road, so it's under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Construction. Gaien Nishi Dori, the road in front of this museum, is under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan government. We visit them, explain what we want to do and ask for their support. For example, if we wanted to create a garden, we need signs to ask nearby residents not to park their bicycles on those spots during that period because it could destroy the plants. Building these relations has serious significance because through our work we come into contact with society and the people who live and work in this area. We start from there, work on building relations, and word about the project will spread around town. Some people will like what we are doing and some won't, but that's the thrill we wouldn't be able to experience if we stayed inside this building all the time.

- *What do you think of more conventional public art, which usually takes the form of sculpture?*

EW There are some interesting pieces, of course. What's important is that the work is needed at that particular location and makes it meaningful. There are some pieces like that, but I don't like works that look like rich people just dumped them there for the sake of it.

● *Do you think the government gives enough support to the art world?*

EW The government's support of the Tokyo art world is quite possibly the worst in the world. Watari-um only receives a little bit of financial support from the government; I think we receive more money from corporations. The government seems to give enough support to classical art, but there is something lacking in the way Japan uses its taxes for the support of contemporary art. The most extreme contrast is in how the French government supports contemporary art at national art museums: the fact that they use taxes for that kind of thing is amazing. Whether people like it or not comes next. The system isn't one hundred percent good or bad; it's just art in progress. In Japan, there's a common consensus that taxes can be allocated only when at least ninety out of one hundred people like the idea.

● *How has contemporary Japanese art changed in the last fifteen years?*

EW As I said in the beginning, there were almost no interesting art museums in Japan when we started building this one eighteen years ago. I'm not sure that much has changed in the way public museums operate. There's a big gap between art movements and museum programs. Even the newly built National Art Center in Roppongi feels like it's based on old ways of thinking.

It's still very hard for young people to make it as artists. Living expenses in Tokyo might already be too high for them. Meanwhile, architects and designers are in a good position. Their work may not be art in the purest sense, but commercial art is respected in Japan; their work takes them to different countries and they enjoy a high social standing. So therein lies the problem: are artists respected in Japan? The Japanese only seem to pay respect to people who can earn money, and that's a shame.

Looking back at the time when the bubble burst, certainly in financial terms the art world fell into a very severe state of affairs. But at the same time, I think it was good that artists became energized with the realization that money doesn't grow on

trees. That odd sense of greed will pull them in the wrong direction and they stop creating genuine art.

Art is at its strongest when created in the face of extreme adversity; it's when things are lukewarm that the art world is at its worst. At the moment it's hard to tell whether artists have money or not and how their financial situation may be affecting the way they make their work. In a sense, the beginning of the 1990s was a good time for art: people began to ask themselves where Japan is headed.

Under the Influence: The Syntax of Tokyo Graffiti

by Ian Lynam

80 Barry McGee is big in Japan—so big, actually, that the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art can't contain him. As I approach the museum to see an exhibit of McGee's work in this blustery September of 2007,[1] I notice that this formerly graffiti-free neighborhood in Tokyo's Gaienmae district is alive with stickers and tags. They adorn parking barriers, drink machines, street signs. As I approach the intersection that is home to Watari-um, I realize that McGee's show is not only *inside* the museum, it has leaked out onto the neighboring buildings. Most noticeable and immediate is the name 'Josh' painted in ten-foot high classic graffiti letters outlined in red with a yellow fill. One of McGee's stylized down-and-out street people is spray-painted on the building across from the museum as well. McGee, the renowned Bay Area graffiti artist, has made his mark in a bold way in this Tokyo neighborhood, and the local graffiti writers are following suit.

McGee has influenced the style of many of Tokyo's graffiti writers. A technically proficient painter with a pop sensibility, McGee has created a defined and aesthetically congruous kit-of-parts for his work. The art McGee makes is so stylistically strong and so signature that the parts are easy to identify as his. A number of artists, particularly graffiti artists, have picked up aspects of his work and run with them, especially in Tokyo.

1 Held from June 2 to September 30, 2007.

The letters J-O-S-H boom out over the street on this fall day, commanding passersby to look at the name of McGee's artistic collaborator Josh Lazcano.[2] Every show I have seen of McGee's work includes these types of nods to his friends, both in name and in deed—friends' tags adorning the walls alongside McGee's own. Some of McGee's recent explorations in loose geometric patterns hang inside the storefront windows, collaged with zine layouts, flyers and color xeroxes of street snapshots of bicycles. One of McGee's recent controversial images caricaturing American perceptions of Asian identity through a Mr. Magoo-esque[3] series of 'chinky' cartoons is in there as well.

The decorated storefront is a good overview of McGee's recent career—a diverse mix of influences from assorted aspects of American DIY culture: punk rock/hardcore, the San Francisco bike messenger/fixed-gear world, vernacular sign painting and graffiti. McGee stands front and center as an ambassador of a certain flavor of Bay Area culture to Japan, having exhibited repeatedly in Tokyo and continually bringing pieces of these assorted subcultures into his exhibitions. McGee has the street cred as well. Under his graffiti name, Twist, he has kept up a decades-long career as one of the most accomplished and respected graffiti writers on the streets, painting and tagging freight trains, mailboxes, walls and automobiles.

McGee's influence, both as a graffiti writer and a fine artist, could be felt nowhere stronger than in the 2005 exhibition *X-Color,*[4] Japan's largest gallery exhibition of graffiti as fine art to date. It took a few decades for domestic graffiti stylings to really make it as a full-blown gallery reality in Japan. Small enthusiast shows of graffiti art have

2 Josh Lazcano is a resident of San Francisco, fine artist and frequent collaborator with McGee. He has had numerous international shows.

3 Quincy Magoo is a squinty-eyed, farsighted, elderly cartoon gentleman who infallibly found himself embroiled in wacky situations in animations from the 1940s through the 1970s.

4 *X-Color - Graffiti in Japan* was held from October 10 to December 4, 2005 at the Art Tower Mito in Ibaraki Prefecture.

been commonplace over the years, with a growing street presence of graffiti by both international and homegrown writers.

The thirty-seven-artist-strong *X-Color* exhibition was unprecedented due to both the massive scale of the show, filling one of Japan's larger art museums from floor to ceiling, and because it was solely comprised of Japanese writers. Despite the exhibition being indigenous, foreign influences were prevalent in the majority of the work. McGee's stripped-down modern palette of black, white and red popped up time and time again within *X-Color*. Early in his larger gallery career, McGee made a habit of exposing the tools and ephemera of graffiti as installation, most notably in his first exhibition at Deitch Projects in New York in 1999. This trope was used here, as well: a room was assembled with an arsenal very similar to McGee's stockpile of inks, markers and spray cans surrounded by found objects, vernacular signage and snapshots tacked to the walls. One of Japan's more recognizable graffiti artists, Esow,[5] has made a career out of emulating Twist's work, painting very similar characters to the ones McGee became initially famous for on exterior walls and inside boutiques in Tokyo. McGee's work was only one of myriad contemporary influences notable in the show, but it was strikingly noticeable.

My favorite aspect of McGee's work is the one increasingly downplayed in his gallery work: his tags.[6] They are perhaps the most masterful, yet most overlooked part of his oeuvre: part calligraphic sign painter and part LA-influenced classic graffiti. It has been interesting seeing his tag out on the streets and seeing how it has changed since I lived in the Bay Area in the early '90s. These days it has become a bit more angular, a bit more influenced by his younger peers' lettering, turning from soft sign-painterly

5 Esow is a graffiti artist based in Tokyo.

6 Tags are calligraphic graffiti signatures. They are the simplest form of graffiti.

lettering highly influenced by Los Angeles graffiti writer Tempt[7] to something a bit harder-edged. Bits of ornament (asterisks, angled dots on his 'i's and curlique swash underlines), linked ligatures and the calligraphic bar on top of the 'T' anchor my love for McGee's tag.

In particular, I see echoes of the work of the MSK (Mad Society Kings) graffiti crew[8] in Twist's handstyle these days. MSK writers broke new ground in the assault on public space in the US—they coated freeway overpasses stories high, scaled buildings and painted the sides of ocean liners while slowly expanding membership from their hometown of LA to other cities across the US before hopping oceans to recruit crew members in Germany and Japan.

MSK members' graffiti sets the visual stage in Tokyo, as they are among the most prolific vandals, their stickers, tags and paintings outshining their graffiti peers in both quantity and placement. The Tokyo branch has definitely taken the crew ethos seriously, as they spend a lot of time putting their names up with the obligatory MSK shoutout all over town via paint, marker, sticker and other methods.

Graffiti writer Wanto[9] has giant geometric block letter pieces painted in nearly every ward in Tokyo. Using flat exterior housepaint, he rolls out giant geometric grotesk[10] capitals; he uses spraypaint to outline the letters and add a drop shadow. Popping up along most major train lines and on top of buildings seen from the highway driving in and out of Tokyo, these pieces have both a scale and frequency that is staggering.

Route 246, the artery funneling people through Tokyo, has a

7 Tempt One is a graffiti writer from Los Angeles. He is one of the founders of *Big Time*, one of Los Angeles' premiere graffiti magazines. He was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS) in 2003. He is considered to have one of the most influential tagging styles in California.

8 Graffiti crews are groups of writers who share a team name, often an acronym.

9 Wanto is a Tokyo-based graffiti writer affiliated with the MSK graffiti crew.

10 Grotesks are simplified sans serif letterforms.

several-mile stretch where Wanto has tagged every few feet sloppily and rapidly with a shoe-polish dauber filled with indelible ink. There is also the occasional pitstop to paint one of a variety of styles of throw-up:[11] straight, textbook block capitals; high-school-notebook bubble letters; or a cartoonish pointy-topped bubble-letter variant. Outlines loop and connect, the obvious product of a practiced hand working quickly from a mental blueprint.

The same can be said of writer Sect's[12] treatment of huge portions of Sangenjaya and Futako-Tamagawa, back-to-back stacked throw-ups lining the Den-en-Toshi line train tracks. The hastily spray-painted strokes loop from side to side, the overspray doing half of the work from the can being held back half a foot from the wall and finished off with a few quick outline strokes.

Benet's[13] business-card-sized BNE参上 (BNE has arrived) stickers are an omnipresent aspect of the Tokyo streetscape. Composed of screenprinted vinyl backed with an industrial adhesive, they do not come off easily like the works of other writers who use peeled-back paper 'Hello, My Name Is' stickers and United States Postal Service Priority Mail address labels. Tokyo retailers have taken to scraping the stickers off with a razor as chemical compounds don't seem to work very effectively.

Ekys'[14] mixed upper and lowercase tag adorns vending machines and outdoor air conditioners across the city. Using sloped, leaning-back straight Roman letter forms in ink and spraypaint, Ekys is potentially the most visible writer in Tokyo. From the windows of the Yamanote Line that rings Tokyo, his name pops up regularly in silver-filled and black outlined block letters, occasionally spelling out passing variations on his moniker such as EEEEKYSSSSSSSS, like animation cels for train-riding citizens.

11 Throw-ups are sizeable pieces of graffiti that consist of one color for the fill and another color for the outline. They are commonly comprised of bubble letters.

12 Sect is a graffiti writer affiliated with the MSK graffiti crew. He is based in Tokyo.

13 Benet is a graffiti writer affiliated with the MSK graffiti crew.

14 Ekys is a Tokyo-based graffiti writer affiliated with the MSK graffiti crew.

These writers focus on tagging and throw-ups—the less 'painterly' aspects of graffiti. They lean more toward vandalism than art as objects of beauty, per se. Their work offers up a potentially different variant of graffiti: it is a form of communication that has yet to be recognized: one of *syntax*. Through spatial repetition and placement, these writers deploy written language of the most minimal sort across Tokyo. There is a focus on what is being said, but just like other forms of language, speech and writing, *how* and *where* the statement is conveyed carries just as much meaning.

Tokyo's graffiti writers are tactically inserting this form of feral communication into the city's public sphere, forcing the public to interact with their names. Long workdays and extensive commutes leave the city's denizens with minimal time for inhabiting private space, making them more or less a captive audience to the spectacle of the Tokyo streetscape and how writers decorate it. Where writers choose to paint their names takes on meaning, repetition forcing cognizance, and particularly risky placement pushes the work's social relevance.

Perhaps the most interesting of the errant decorators is QP.[15] His oddball hybrid letter-form characters break from the highly readable norms of his compatriots. Preferring a monochromatic palette, his tags are the most difficult to read. QP has a unique approach to dissecting physical space with these ragged tags and clean-lined throw-ups. His placement is far less formulaic, and infinitely more idiosyncratic than his friends'. However, there is a commonality between QP and the other MSK writers: they define themselves and their practices by being *up*. It's about having as many pieces on the street as possible, not about creating something subjectively 'beautiful.'

Off of the street and in galleries, QP tends toward symbolism-heavy work. For the *X-Color* show, he created an exploded hut

15 QP (Querencia Peligrosa) is a Tokyo-based graffiti writer affiliated with the MSK graffiti crew.

rendered in corrugated sheet metal and discarded home electronics painted in black and white. With multiple generations living under one roof, home in Japan is most often a place to sleep, but not to relax for younger people. Shared space takes up that role during leisure time: *manga kissa* cafés, karaoke boxes, love hotels—spaces for hire where the individual can let down his or her guard. Tokyo has a deconstructed and different sense of space—discrete, but not truly private, privatized but somehow confused in our greed for things of our own. QP's installation—his mustachioed Qs painted from wall to floor to shipping container—hinted at this fractured sense of public and private. Microwaves spilled tags, while others had exteriors painted out, potentially protecting us from something dangerous inside.

I view these writers' work on the street as art's potential third sex: about neither concept nor beauty—instead relying on application, context and frequency to communicate their desire. Within the gallery, however, the Japanese writers-as-artists need to push further in some unknown direction to be seen as something other than formal stylistic emulation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After cutting his teeth writing music reviews for weeklies in New York and a decade-plus span editing and self-publishing zines in California and Oregon, Ian Lynam jumped ship to Tokyo in 2005 and opened a multidisciplinary design studio. Previously, he logged time as a designer and art director for some of the top design firms and advertising agencies in the US.

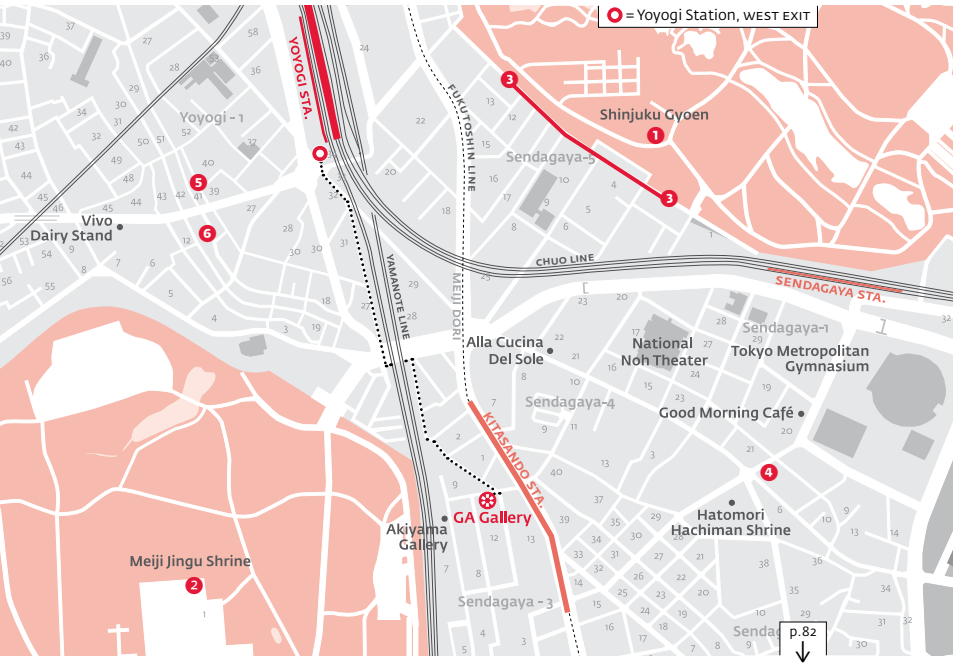
He is the author of *Parallel Strokes* (2008), an analysis of graffiti and typography. He is also the design editor and art director of the Japan-focused cultural journal Néojaponisme.


GA

GA Gallery

GA Gallery

YOYOGI / HARAJUKU



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

①② Shinjuku Gyoen and Meiji Jingu Shrine are two obvious points of interest in this area. Just be careful: Shinjuku Gyoen, while beautifully maintained, closes bizarrely early. The narrow road on the outskirts of the park, with its crumbling old homes and small shops, makes for a particularly pleasant walk. Follow it north into the heart of Shinjuku. Murakami Haruki fans must visit Jamaica Udon, located in the same space as young Murakami's famous Jazz bar, Peter Cat. For a drink or some snacks in a laid-back atmosphere, try Bottle Café, or if you're really into all the subtle variations of sake and sashimi, you'll find them at Chotto Gobu.

③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

ABOUT THE SPACE

Designed and constructed in 1974 by Makoto Suzuki and Yukio Futagawa, GA Gallery is a well-weathered building dedicated to the display of architecture, and is directed by Futagawa's son, Yoshio. Despite Japanese architects having achieved several decades of acclaim both at home and abroad, Tokyo only has two specialist architecture galleries of this kind.

GA Gallery is located between Yoyogi and Harajuku Station in one of those overlooked city recesses. The building sits in between the constant rush of traffic on Meiji Dori and the busy tracks of Yamanote line, and yet somehow this street manages to retain a sense of calm.

Once you have walked up the cantilevered stairs leading to the gallery, you find yourself in an uncompromising concrete cube of an exhibition space. GA Gallery's displays aim to illuminate the complexity of the process architects go though in order to design and realize their structures. While you look at schematics and maquettes, the gallery's bare concrete walls are a constant, tangible reminder of the physicality of the end result.

Even when the gallery is between exhibitions, it is worth a visit for its bookshop. There you'll find a comprehensive range of publications, with of course many from the 'Global Architecture' range of books and magazines distributed by the architectural publishing house behind the gallery.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Yoyogi
Lines: Yamanote, Chuo, Oedo
Access: 10 minute walk from west exit (JR) or subway exit A2 (*Oedo*)

Entry: Adults ¥500

Address: 3-12-14 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 12PM – 6:30PM
Closed on national holidays

Tel: +81-(0)3-3403-1581
Fax: +81-(0)3-3403-1462
URL: http://ga-ada.co.jp/english/ga_gallery/
Email: info@ga-ada.co.jp

Architecture Built to be Destroyed

An interview with Yoshio Futagawa
— GA GALLERY, YOYOGI

YOSHIO FUTAGAWA, *director*
Born in Tokyo in 1962. Graduated from the Department of Mechanical Engineering of the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Waseda University. He completed his post-graduate studies at Princeton University. Currently he works for ADA edita Tokyo, and is the editor of the publications GA Document and GA Houses.

● *What led to the founding of GA Gallery?*

YF The publisher ADA EDITA Tokyo, which was established in 1970, is the parent of the gallery, and this building was opened in 1974. At the time we had already recognized the limitations of portraying architecture through the two-dimensional media of magazines and books. Architecture is immovable, so architectural exhibitions require the use of photographs and text to give people a sense of the experience of being at the actual site. To overcome this, we felt it necessary to exhibit drawings and models, which architects use and create in their work process. Though we didn't start holding exhibitions here until 1983, Makoto Suzuki and I designed this building with the gallery in mind.

● *What are the challenges in curating architecture exhibitions?*

YF I think this can be said of both publishing and exhibitions, but it comes down to selection. We want to put on exhibitions that clearly convey our point of view. Rather than simply putting up numerous works, we try to clarify our direction and intent and select works that exemplify these ideas. Our goal has never been to achieve the highest quality of presentation in terms of beautiful drawings or complete renderings of the final product, but rather to show the struggle of the process.

● *Japanese architecture is famous worldwide, but there are few galleries here that deal primarily with architecture. Why do you think this is the case?*

YF This is not a problem limited to Japan. In fact, I think Japan has quite a few architecture galleries compared to other countries. The United States, for example, has barely any. There are many private architectural galleries run by art dealers, but very few that just show work, as opposed to selling it. On the contrary, in Japan, Tokyo has Gallery Ma and there was also TN Probe, although it's gone now. So having had three at one point, Tokyo actually had quite a lot. The reason architectural galleries don't last is because as businesses they cannot become commercially viable: what is being presented doesn't have much saleability. This situation has changed a little in recent years: we've seen Zaha Hadid's paintings or Frank Gehry's models selling for exorbitant prices.

Another factor is that the public's interest in architecture has grown, and larger museums have been holding more exhibitions that cater to a more general audience. Yet on the other hand, exhibiting architecture is completely different from exhibiting art—since you don't have the actual building in front of you, there is always the dilemma of never being able to show one hundred percent of the content.

● *From an architectural design point of view, what do you think about the assumption that galleries should be white cubes?*

YF On this issue, there is a gap between architects' thinking and curators' thinking. Architects tend to have a romantic notion of galleries as spaces that stimulate the creation of art. Galleries, on the other hand, prioritize flexibility and end up with a white cube. The white cube is easiest to use, so there is some necessary compromise there. At one time in the 1980s and '90s, there were some site-specific exhibition spaces, but they didn't last long.

From the architect's perspective, I'm sure there is a strong feeling that the white cube should be done away with. GA Gallery's space is a concrete space, and as a result some works display well and some don't. From the exhibitor's point of view, the white cube is efficient, and because of that I think it will continue to dominate. But I don't think that all galleries need to follow this model; it would be great if some more interesting spaces that bring architecture and art closer together could emerge.

● *How has architecture changed over the past fifteen years?*

YF From after World War II until the 1980s, architecture developed as a continuation of prewar modernist thought. Everyone followed the styles represented by architectural masters, thus creating a hierarchy. But after the 1980s and '90s, these masters slowly disappeared.

With the appearance of mass communication and information exchange infrastructure, such as the Internet, information has come to be relayed worldwide, instantaneously and in an undifferentiated way. At the same time this didn't lead to anything new or outstanding, but it did lead to a certain tautology. It's similar to fashion, in which the new and the old revolve around each other and become distorted; what looks the newest is not actually a breakthrough from masterpieces from previous eras. Architecture has become a culture that is consumed solely within the specific era in which it is made, like fashion. It has begun to lack the universal force that it formerly had, and it has become dictated by trends.

● *Do you think there is any potential for architecture to escape the trappings of being so trend-oriented?*

YF I don't think so. If at a certain point someone hits the restart button and ushers in some powerful ideology that everyone would bow down, or a person such as Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe appeared, the situation may change. But the structure of information in society has completely changed, and new information is consumed as soon as it's produced. It would be hard for such an individual to emerge, because this structure would consume them before they had a chance to mature. I hope that something like this occurs and architecture moves into a new phase, but realistically speaking, I think it's a long shot.

● *What do you think of Tokyo's public spaces and public art? Is enough of it incorporated into new developments?*

YF Recently, public spaces have been created through the vision of individuals or private investments; there are almost no major public spaces that have been created by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government or the national government. Even things that should be controlled by these public powers are not controlled at all. For example in Japan, it is a given that what ends up being built on an empty lot will be self-contained. Walking down a street like Omotesando,[1] you see a different building on every lot. Foreign visitors find this kind of ordered chaos fascinating, but the reason for it is that governmental institutions have insufficient regulatory powers over space, including public spaces. If public space, including public art, were organized as part of urban-planning initiatives, then architects could respond to the demands of public institutions and propose designs at a level that remains consistent within the city.

1 Omotesando is a catwalk of signature buildings by major Japanese and foreign architects, including Omotesando Hills by Tadao Ando, the Japanese Nursing Association Headquarters by Kisho Kurokawa, Tod's Omotesando by Toyo Ito, the Louis Vuitton store by Jun Aoki and the Prada store by Herzog & de Meuron.

- *What do you think of large-scale urban developments like Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown?*

YF I think they're awful. Essentially, their existence is solely based on economic principle: they are machines that create money on site, using fashion and trends. Those developments have been built to create the illusion of a cultural space, but those kinds of spaces are absolutely not what people should perceive as cultural space or public space. True public spaces take a long time to grow. Those kinds of instant cities are appropriate for Disneyland, closed to the public and experienced for limited spans of time. I think that allowing this kind of reality to exist in an uncontained, borderless manner in an area like Roppongi is damaging to the potential for cultural growth in this city.

- *Do you think that traditional areas or areas characterized by small-scale architecture like Shimokitazawa*[2] *can survive amid all this large-scale development?*

YF Shimokitazawa is already done for: its demolition and redevelopment have been decided. This is definitely a difficult question. There are different values about how beautiful or significant small-scale buildings are depending on where you are in Japan. For example if a *machiya*[3] in Kyoto were facing demolition, people would get much angrier about it than the demolition of Shimokitazawa. The debate becomes a question of age: people fight to save buildings that are several hundred years old, but not those that have only been around for a few decades. Shimokitazawa has only been around for fifty, at most one hundred years, and most of it was built after the war. I don't feel any nostalgia about Shimokitazawa. I think that the realistic problems of the current residents need to be solved, but as an urban planning exercise, I'm not against

2 Situated in Setagaya Ward in West Tokyo, Shimokitazawa is a residential area filled with theater and live music venues. In 2004, the Setagaya Ward Office announced plans to redevelop the area, significantly changing the character of the neighborhood. See http://stsk.net/en/happen.html for more details.

3 Traditional wooden townhouse.

a newer, safer development with appropriate land values. I am extremely conscious of the actual structure being built though; a structure with an awful architectural design or planning would anger me. Architectural design is where my interest lies.

● *How about the demolition of the Dojunkai Apartments?*[4]

YF Given the land values on Omotesando, I think their demolition was inevitable, no matter how much historical significance they may have had. Personally, I don't recognize the architectural significance of the Dojunkai Apartments. They were simply copies of the mass housing complexes of 19th-century Europe, downsized and localized to fit Japan; they had no significance in the international history of architecture. Rather, ordinary Japanese people felt a sense of nostalgia, and historians were also getting hysterical about it. It may be sad to see everything go, but let's say there's an earthquake and everything is destroyed. Nagata Ward in Kobe was completely cleaned up, leaving no vestige of the past.[5] There are some people who dislike that, and some who are extremely satisfied with it, and it keeps changing.

● *Is Japanese architecture particularly geared toward this ongoing cycle of construction and destruction?*

YF You can say that Japanese architecture is built to be destroyed. In other words, Japan still only has a very short history of building European-style masonry or steel-reinforced architecture. Fundamentally, Japan is a country with a history of earthquakes and wooden structures that were meant to be scrapped every twenty to one hundred years. The idea of preservation itself is an extremely

4 Built in 1927, the Dojunkai Apartments on Omotesando were demolished by Mori Building Co. in 2003, and the Omotesando Hills shopping complex, designed by Tadao Ando, was built in their place.

5 In 1995, an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter Scale devastated the city of Kobe in western Japan. Nagata Ward, home to 10,000 of the city's Korean residents, was particularly badly affected.

Western idea. The only structures preserved in Japan were temples, shrines, palaces and former capitals. The idea of preservation was brought into Japan during the Showa Period,[6] and there are historians who respond excessively to the notion of preservation.

● *Architects operate on a wide variety of scales, from furniture to urban planning, and collaborate with experts in other disciplines, such as fashion, product design, engineering and theater. What kinds of interdisciplinary collaborations do you see emerging or becoming more prominent in the future?*

YF I think these types of collaborations will increase in the future, but there aren't many collaborative projects that bring out true architectural logic. In the end, the decisive difference is that the fashion and industrial design fields emphasize economics and marketing; decisions about quality are based on likes and dislikes. This is because these fields demand high-speed action that can create new products that correspond to each era. On the other hand, the speed of architecture is completely different. Not only is it slow, but also its marketing strategies and way of thinking about things are different. Architectural judgment and logic are not as simple as that of other fields.

I don't think that the people who have been engaging in these collaborations have been able to use their abilities in a better way. Rather, they think that because they can design buildings, they can design cups, or they can make films. In an ideal world, cross-media collaborations should be more serious, the result of one's work truly developing—they should be born out of necessity and should not just be something that lies somewhere in between. The challenge for architects is to engage in collaborations that will truly make the most of their intelligence. ❂

6 The Showa Period lasted from 1926 to 1989.

A Huge, Ever-Growing, Pulsating Brain that Rules from the Empty Center of a City Called Tokyo

by ROGER MCDONALD

My memories of being brought up in Tokyo in the 1970s are faint, but very often brought back to life by small encounters I have in the city. One of my overwhelming memories is that everything was colored in a shade of brown or beige. This no doubt reflects a very particular 1970s aesthetic of American-influenced expatriate culture in Tokyo—the Tokyo American Club, my kindergarten, carpets at home and so on. Although I am from a mixed British-Japanese family background, the Tokyo of my childhood is heavily colored by a veneer of American home furnishings, architectures and television programs.

And yet amidst these memories are splendid spaces like the lobby of the old wing of the Hotel Okura. To this day largely unchanged, here one encounters the Tokyo of Sean Connery's James Bond in 1967's *You Only Live Twice*, with its elegant mixing of Japanese traditional and International Modern styles. Built in 1962 by architect Yoshiro Taniguchi, the Hotel Okura's interior remains one of the most stunning spaces in Tokyo, for me an architectural symbol of my own bicultural background.

Rather less grand, but equally wondrous is the wax museum in Tokyo Tower. A masterpiece of awkward, vernacular design, this museum is one of my favorites in Tokyo. Although a second, much taller and more spectacular New Tokyo Tower is due to open in

Oshiage in 2011,[1] the original 1958 tower retains much of its early 1960s charm. I remember visiting the wax museum as a child and standing wide-eyed before dusty figures of politicians or the somehow very odd-looking *Last Supper of Christ*. Only later did I come to appreciate the museum's collection of *Krautrock* musicians, standing in their flared trousers and long kaftan coats, surrounded by an impressive collection of memorabilia from this genre. Tokyo makes it possible for a myriad of personal interests or minor cultures to manifest themselves in this way, a consequence of the city's seemingly endless appetite for curiosities.

Although Tokyo seems to change constantly, it is a city that manages to remain embedded in the memory of its inhabitants and visitors, not so much through its physical presence as through its ongoing metamorphosis. One often hears people comment on what used to stand somewhere, mapping out an effective geography of traces and memories. There does not seem to be such importance placed on notions of maintaining something in its proper place for eternity. Rather, places are reinvented in multiple configurations, which can change with the passage of time and the fluctuations of one's subjectivity and memory. Maybe this is why so much significance is placed every holiday period on people going back to their *furusato* or hometown, away from Tokyo and back to somewhere with roots.

Tokyo is also remembered and its histories told particularly powerfully through the medium of photography, and more recently, film and video. This is an interesting fact to consider for a city that was almost totally annihilated twice during the 20th century—first through a major earthquake in 1923 and then through firebombing in 1945. One can argue that the city has undergone countless other, more tempered phases of annihilation in the postwar period as developers and city councils continuously redesign neighborhoods,

1 Under construction to accommodate broadcasting requirements when Japanese television turns digital in 2011, the 2,080-foot-tall New Tokyo Tower (officially named Tokyo Sky Tree in June 2008) will be the tallest structure in Japan.

tearing down buildings and parks in cycles of little more than twenty to thirty years. The role of photographers in such an absorbed city has therefore been significant. From the work of early figures such as Ihei Kimura to 1960s mavericks like Daido Moriyama and Nobuyoshi Araki to that of more recent practitioners such as Naoya Hatakeyama and Rinko Kawauchi, Tokyo is a city that has been caught and archived by the camera's lens. Can we suggest that it has been photographs that have offered Tokyo a sense of place and of history, by providing it with a memory of reproduction?

This sense of physical impermanence makes Tokyo something like a huge, ever-evolving John Cage composition, whirling itself through chance procedures and the interventions of its inhabitants/users. Few anchor points exist to bind histories to places or people to places, except perhaps for the vast emptiness of the Imperial Palace grounds in the center of the city. As Roland Barthes famously wrote in his analysis of Japan *Empire of Signs* (1970), Tokyo is a city with an "empty center," in contrast to Western cities, which place most of their important civic functions and architectures in a fully meaningful, significant core. The palace remains a place of symbolism where an essentially 'empty' Emperor resides and performs complex rituals on behalf of the nation. One of the consequences of this 'emptiness' has been the lack of a popular sense of political engagement that continues today. With the exception of the student demonstrations of the 1960s and the terrorist activities of the Japanese Red Army in the 1970s, Tokyo has seen very little popular protest or civil disturbance, at least in the European mold. The emergence of *manga kissa* cafés[2] and the subsequent phenomenon of 'Net café refugees'[3] points toward the greater privatization of public spaces. These 'empty' spaces can easily be 'filled' for a few hours by various kinds of people who either sleep in them or plug into the

2 These twenty-four hour cafés offer an array of manga for customers to browse.

3 Young people who are opting to make use of the cheap food, drink and wash facilities in these cafés rather than rent their own apartments.

Internet or other forms of mass entertainment. Not too unlike the Emperor's secret rituals, we do not see what kinds of silent ceremonials go on in the tiny booths of such cafés.

In discussing Tokyo's art spaces, it becomes necessary first to recognize the city's temporal nature and the ways in which it has passed its stories and histories on through various technologies and rituals. The histories of art in Tokyo have also reflected this condition to varying degrees. I must briefly mention the Japan Folk Crafts Museum (Nippon Mingeikan), which opened its doors as a museum early on in 1936. The Mingeikan is still a unique Tokyo museum, starting with its request that visitors remove their shoes and wear slippers upon entering. From the perspective of art spaces as physical architectures, Tokyo presents a relatively new arena. However, as I suggest, if we consider Tokyo to be a city that also constructs its own unique methods and spaces for telling stories, a different history of art spaces emerges.

This story is also a partly invisible story, or perhaps it would be better to say that it is a story about almost invisible spaces. Certainly in the postwar period, a number of avant-garde art events and actions have taken place in and around Tokyo—the more well known being held on trains, the tops of buildings and on the streets. However, it is only from the 1990s that Tokyo has experienced what can be called a history of 'alternative spaces' along the lines of European or American models.

This evolution of Tokyo's alternative spaces has its origins in the artist-run initiatives and squats of the early 1970s of New York and major European cities. In 1970 the American artist Robert Smithson was building his monumental land artwork 'Spiral Jetty,' espousing a critical position against urban art institutions; the very same year saw Japan engulfed in the opening of Expo '70 in Osaka and the unveiling of Taro Okamoto's giant quasi-primitive *Tower of the Sun* monument. In many ways the 1970s in Europe and the United States was a period of increasing movement away from institutional art spaces into derelict industrial spaces and lofts.

In Japan, Expo '70 symbolized a moment of victory for visionary young architects who realized their structures with huge influxes of public money. However, Japan's arts policy settled firmly into the so called *hakomono gyosei*, or box-building policy, which encouraged construction of boxy museums. The policy continues almost unabated to this day on various scales.

In Tokyo the now non-existent Sagacho Exhibit Space, located in an old food warehouse, is considered to be one of the city's first alternative art spaces, opening in the early 1980s. Closed in 2002, its building was torn down to make way for new developments in 2003. Since its closure, there has been no comparable alternative space in Tokyo, bar only a stream of smaller, tactical initiatives, some of which survived for several years only to fade out due to lack of funds.

The reasons for this lack of survival among Tokyo's alternative art spaces are no doubt tied closely to the nature of the city and its economics. Real-estate and rental prices remain high, and vacant buildings are usually tightly sealed to prevent squatting or quickly refurbished to await new occupants. Added to this is the frankly very poor infrastructural and financial support—either from the state or the city—for contemporary art in Tokyo. Funding is difficult to find and certainly not available for rental or running costs. This has created a 'realpolitik' in which artists and curators must operate. New project spaces or initiatives must invariably plan ahead and devise viable business models if they are to sustain themselves for more than a brief period. In this sense, art spaces may have to look like any other small business operating in Tokyo—and become just as invisible. Art finds itself sandwiched between different categories or functions and must find its place in the relative disorder of the city fabric. Unlike their New York or London East End counterparts, Tokyo's art spaces have rarely been able to advertise themselves loudly. Rather, like chameleons, they tend to remain hidden or coexist symbiotically next to neighboring businesses and homes.

However, Tokyo supports one of the most advanced public

transportation systems in the world. The lack of easily identifiable cultural or civic centers is counterbalanced by the considerable mobility of its inhabitants, who can safely and swiftly journey through the city, linking various small spaces as they wish. Like Michel de Certeau's analysis of the city walker who carves out unique pathways through the formally controlled environment, Tokyo's infrastructure encourages individuals to traverse spaces and 'draw' their own maps, molding a very specific understanding of the city's art spaces that does not privilege spaces so much as the creation of certain passages and durations. The density of the city perhaps shifts the focus from the spaces themselves to the operations that link them together, forming crisscrossed paths through Tokyo. Furthermore it is interesting to think of the numerous businesses in Tokyo that trade in time, including various service hotels, Internet cafés, massage parlors and karaoke booths. These establishments charge customers by the hour for the use of usually compact rooms or cubicles. Related to this would be the unique system of so-called 'rental galleries' in Japan—spaces that charge artists for the use of their exhibition space, normally for one week. The artist Hiroharu Mori created a text work for an Arts Initiative Tokyo project in 2007 which humorously contrasts rental galleries with karaoke booths in the Ginza area of Tokyo. The work consists of the following paragraph:

> According to my research on the Internet, there are over sixty rental galleries situated in prime locations throughout Tokyo's famous Ginza district. A breakdown of these galleries reveals that fifty-two indicate rental fees on the Internet. The average cost of these rental spaces is ¥267,807 per week (open six days a week). The average opening hours of these galleries per day is seven and a half hours. Therefore we can surmise that an average gallery space is available for ¥5,844 per hour. On the other hand, there are ten major karaoke boxes in the Ginza area as well. The average rental price for these places is ¥695 per hour.

> By the way, if I could sing a song for six days straight at a karaoke box, it would cost me ¥31,278. But how many songs do I need to sing before I become an established artist?[4]

Although rental galleries still make up a sizeable part of Tokyo's art spaces, since the late 1990s their scale and significance has somewhat decreased. This is due to the changing expectations of young art students as well as to the emergence of newer commercial gallery spaces, many of which combine multiple different functions including gallery spaces, shops and bar spaces.

Being spaceless is today both a result of Tokyo's exacting real-estate market as well as of its very specific social and psychological geographies. I would suggest that it is in fact the most effective method for operating in Tokyo at a time when the demands for space are greater than ever. In suggesting this, I am keenly aware of many key historical precedents that have also respected the route of least spatial conquest in engaging with art. Marcel Duchamp's *Boite en Valise* and its questioning of the relevance of authenticity in museums; André Malraux's proposal for a 'Museum without Walls' where the power of photography and reproduction techniques could render art spaces less important; the many ingenious and humorous multiples of Fluxus artists; and a panoply of more recent manifestations and experiments including Yutaka Matsuzawa's radical proposition to 'vanish objects' in the 1960s and Tsuyoshi Ozawa's 'Nasubi Gallery' made in tiny milk delivery crates in 1992. Matsuzawa, who died in 2007, is one of the most interesting artists in this regard, often considered to be a father of conceptual art in Japan. During the 1965 Yomiuri Indépendant Exhibition, he distributed fliers to the gathered visitors with the instruction to close their eyes and imagine themselves in a far away place, which he called his '*Han Bunmei Ten*' (Anti-Civilization

4 From *How Many Songs?*, included in the journal *Museum is Over! If you want it*, published by AIT in March 2007 on the occasion of *16 Hour Museum* in Tokyo.

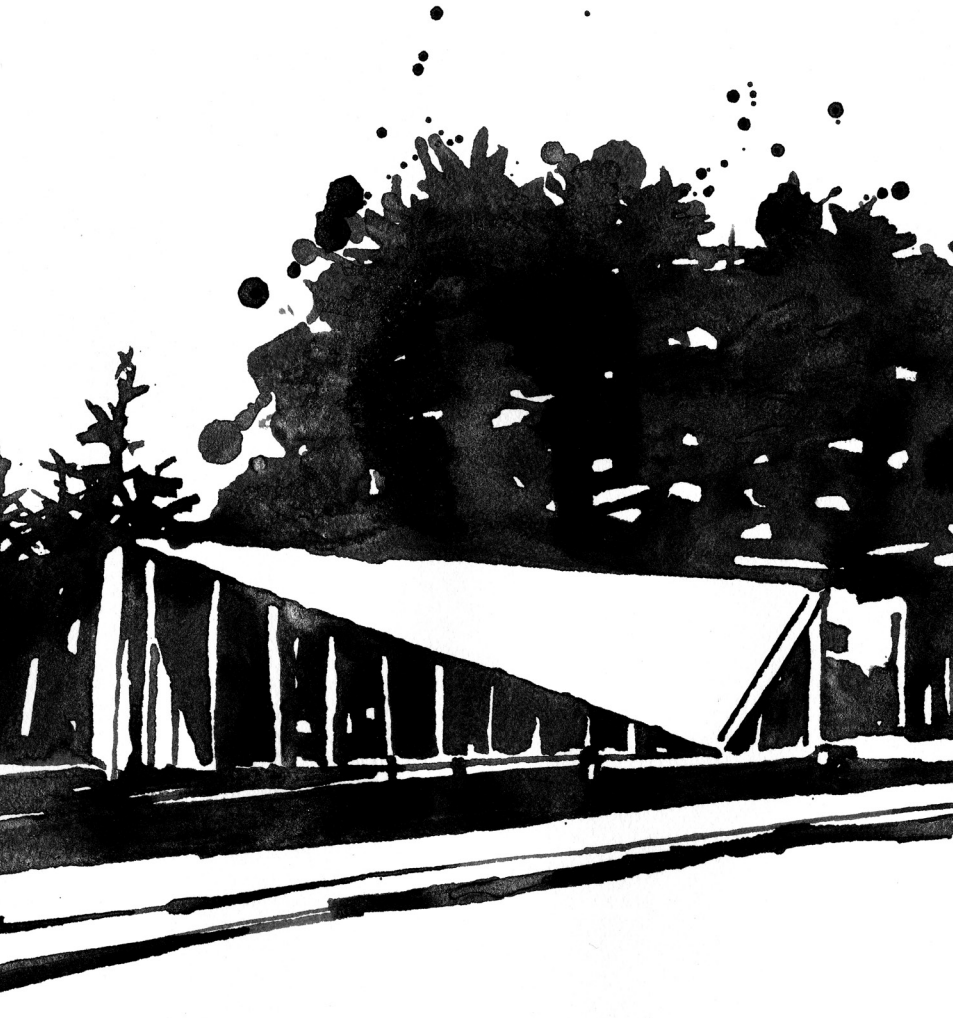
Exhibition). Inspired by Buddhist metaphysics, mysticism and telepathy, Matsuzawa's immaterial gesture embodies the most radical break with the sanctioned art space in Japan.

Standing amidst the whirlwind of a busy Tokyo crossing with one's nervous system assaulted on all fronts, Matsuzawa's almost invisible gesture of closing the eyes makes a certain kind of sense. It suggests that the holy grail of the white cube space may not be so final here and that slight gestures or the simple act of imagining can momentarily open up quite unexpected spaces for art and for a different kind of consciousness, pulsating with other kinds of codes and rules from what the city nurtures so confidently.

The title for this essay comes from the Orb's 1989 song *A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules from the Centre of the Ultraworld* (Big Life, WAU/Mr. Modo Records).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

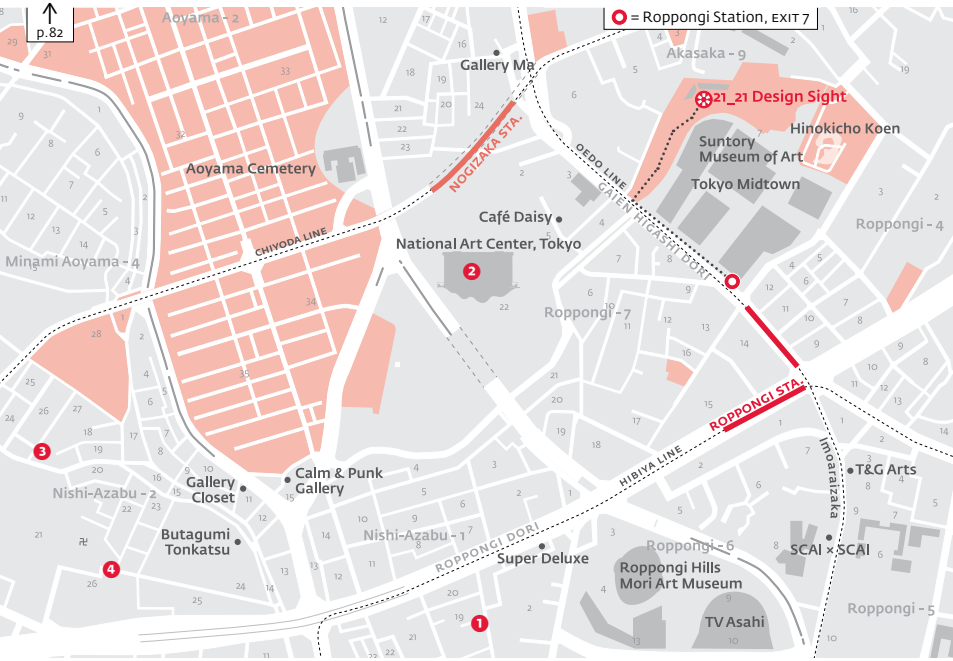
Born in Tokyo in 1971, Roger McDonald was educated in the UK. After completing his doctorate in art history, he returned to Japan to work as assistant curator on the first Yokohama Triennale in 2001. He is one of the founding members and deputy director of the nonprofit curatorial collective, Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT). Alongside maintaining his weblog The Tactical Museum and curating exhibitions such as AIT's *Hour Museums* and The Singapore Biennale in 2006, he teaches at Musashino Art University and Tama Art University.



21_21 Design Sight

21_21 Design Sight

ROPPONGI



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

As more developments continue to bulldoze their way into Roppongi, the startling mix of old and new becomes increasingly complex. Strolling around the neighborhoods just west of Roppongi Hills will give you a sense of what the area felt like ten years ago. Lose a few hours in the free art library at The National Art Center. A stop at Tahiti will reward you with excellent curry lunch sets that include dessert and coffee. Publishing house Switch runs the well-stocked Rainy Day Bookstore & Café down a quaint back street in Nishi Azabu. The nearby temple is also a great place to meditate for those shell-shocked by Roppongi's urban intensity.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Opened in 2007, this sleek, angular Tadao Ando-designed building is now one of Tokyo's signature works of architecture: two triangular shards of steel-reinforced concrete and glass that rise up out of the ground, conveying lightness and poise.

21_21 Design Sight is one of the more restrained additions to the ongoing redevelopment of Roppongi, a thoughtful contemporary transition between the monolithic shopping utopia of the Tokyo Midtown complex and the low-rise residential areas that surround it. Furthermore, whereas its seamless steel roof and concrete walls could have made for a cold and overbearing interior, its trapezoidal spaces manage to be both futuristic and intimate. Despite seventy percent of the building being located below ground level, a large lightwell lets in natural light. Exhibitions are ambitious, installationlike environments.

Given the international renown of Japanese design, it comes as a surprise that 21_21 Design Sight is Japan's first design 'museum.' However, directed by three of Japan's most famous designers—Issey Miyake, Taku Satoh and Naoto Fukasawa—its ambitious exhibitions, events and workshops strive to transcend preconceived categories and expectations of what design should be.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Roppongi
Lines: Hibiya, Oedo
Access: 3 minute walk from exit 4A (*Hibiya*), or 1 minute from exit 7 (*Oedo*)

Entry: Adults ¥1000, university students ¥800, middle and high school students ¥500, free for elementary school students and younger.

Hours: 11AM – 8PM (entry until 7:30PM). Closed on Tuesdays and from December 30 to January 2

Tel: +81-(0)3-3475-2121
URL: http://2121designsight.jp
Email: info@2121designsight.jp

Address: Tokyo Midtown, 9-7-6 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Rethinking Design

An interview with Noriko Kawakami
— 21_21 DESIGN SIGHT

NORIKO KAWAKAMI, *associate director*
After majoring in social science and journalism, Noriko Kawakami was the editor of design magazine *AXIS* from 1986 to 1993. Since then she has been working as an independent design journalist and editor, contributing to numerous design magazines, newspapers and journals in Japan and abroad. Her published writings include *Realising Design* and *le design*. She was appointed Associate Director of 21_21 Design Sight in 2005.

● *What was the background story to the establishment of 21_21 Design Sight?*

NK Back in the 1980s Issey Miyake felt strongly about establishing a design museum in Japan and was discussing the idea with some prominent figures, including artist Isamu Noguchi, graphics designer Ikko Tanaka and architect Tadao Ando.

At that time, the government was helping to build plenty of museums to house art collections, but there was no equivalent museum for design, since design is related to commercial activities. Companies and designers would work together, but the resulting work would never be archived; if a company cut off its relationship with a designer, that person's work might not find an outlet and could end up being forgotten. Talk of creating a design museum would surface from time to time, but then disappear. The contemporary nature of design makes it difficult to archive: new works are constantly being produced, so any talk of establishing a design museum will face questions of what budget it will require and how broad the scope should be.

● *How did it come to be established in Roppongi?*

NK In 2003, Issey Miyake wrote an article for the *Asahi Shinbun* titled, "Time to Create a Design Museum." The article got a great response and happened to coincide with the planning of the Tokyo Midtown complex. A specific site was being kept open for the building of a museum, but whether or not that would be a design museum was still up in the air. The first decision was to change our focus from accumulating an archive to creating a site for design-centered activities. It would be fantastic to have a design museum that could function as an archive, but considering the very expensive real estate in Roppongi, this would not be the ideal location.

● *If archiving is not its purpose, how does 21_21 Design Sight define itself?*

NK 21_21 Design Sight is neither a design museum nor a design gallery. Naoto Fukasawa, Taku Satoh, Issey Miyake and I wanted to create a place where many people could enjoy seeing, feeling, experiencing and learning about design. We deliberately eliminated the standard appointed museum positions and, as I said, there's no archive. We hold not just exhibitions, but also other programs, including stage performances. So, 21_21 Design Sight is a remarkably flexible place: it's a research center, an activity base—it's quite easy to string some words together to give a general description, but it can't easily be placed within any of the established definitions that people apply to other venues. In the end it's a kind of 'design facility.'

● *How are the personalities of the three directors reflected in the exhibitions?*

NK The three directors always discuss the facility's overall direction together. They are all extremely busy but have held monthly meetings since the beginning of 2005 to talk amongst themselves about current and upcoming projects. They decide everything together: the lack of hierarchy works positively.

Each designer works in different genres: Miyake-san in fashion design, Fukasawa-san in product design, and Satoh-san in

graphic design. The three of them put out their ideas and from there they discuss and reach their decisions together. One of the decisions they made was for each of them to organize an exhibition individually over the course of last year and this year. The three of them then each invited outside directors, and in collaboration with the directors and a lot of outside contributors, they proceeded to organize their respective exhibitions, periodically giving reports to the other two.

● *How do you go beyond the regular display of design works?*

NK Usually design galleries or museums display a certain type of product, whether it's chairs, bowls or stationery. The keywords we give our exhibitions are taken from everyday life but are deliberately abstract: for example this past year we had *Chocolate* and *water*; the next exhibition is XXI*st Century Man*[1] and the one after that will be *Nature*.

For each exhibition, the director in charge interprets the keyword. For the *Chocolate* exhibition, Fukusawa-san drew on his experience of running workshops for young designers, so in addition to commissioning works from foreign designers, he incorporated workshops during which young designers could create new works. For the *water* exhibition, Satoh-san formed a team of core members that would discuss, conduct research, study together and take part in different elements of the creation process in the run-up to the exhibition. Each process was tailored to each exhibition.

Each of the three directors has had a long career and has first-hand knowledge of the conditions surrounding design today, and they use these exhibition settings to convey their own ideas. However, they're not specialists in exhibition planning, so over the one-and-a-half to two years leading up to each show, they put in the time and effort to learn how to make it happen the

1 The *Chocolate* exhibition was held from April 27 to July 29, 2007; *water* was held from October 5, 2007 to January 14, 2008; XXI*st Century Man* was held March 30 to July 6, 2008.

way they want. This customized approach to each exhibition is completely different from conventional museums. In one sense 21_21 Design Sight is a giant workshop.

● *How much does the building design itself define exhibition planning?*

NK The building is also unlike a conventional museum. It's not that it's too difficult to use, but there's a lot more to it than the typical white cube. You walk into a trapezoidal space from the entrance, and there are windows that let in natural light. Tadao Ando's plan was structured around there being Gallery 1 and Gallery 2, totaling nearly six hundred square meters, but in practice we use all of the building's spaces: the stairs, the space underneath the stairs, the area in front of the galleries and the narrow passageway at the back as well. Currently the space we use totals almost one thousand square meters. I'm not sure if this was Ando-san's original intention, but from our perspective we are constantly inspired by the irregularity of the space, and we really enjoy the challenges of figuring out how to work with it.

● *How do you achieve the balance of easy-to-understand exhibitions for people who don't know much about design and something suited to people working in the design industry?*

NK First of all, I think our location helps a lot: Tokyo Midtown is the ideal place for us as it attracts a diverse crowd of people, including regular shoppers and design aficionados. We put up the *Chocolate* exhibition posters during the Golden Week holidays last year. Some passersby had no idea who Naoto Fukasawa is or what kind of work might be on display inside, so they would stand around debating whether or not to enter the exhibition. But when they did, it turned out that they enjoyed the exhibition the most and would be exchanging opinions among themselves the most. I feel that this kind of chance encounter with design is extremely important. The fact that we are located at ground level in a park makes it easy for people to walk in casually.

Our exhibition content is accessible to a broad range of people since the three directors and I take our clues from our daily surroundings. Even if it's achieved through complete coincidence, I believe that our greatest success is if we manage to trigger someone's interest in design, encourage them to think about what it is and what it means to our lives, and maybe even inspire them to start creating themselves.

I'm not sure whether design professionals had certain expectations of what 21_21 Design Sight would be, but I doubt they expected a facility that would choose not to focus on displaying product design. The *Chocolate* exhibition wasn't about displaying chocolate-making utensils or actual chocolate; rather Fukasawa-san wanted to express something that was at once personal and yet could be shared, through the memories and experiences of chocolate that the participating artists had. Whether it is industrial, graphic or fashion design, the essence of design exists in this element of sharing.

● *What do you think about the redevelopment of Roppongi?*

NK I think the area has become very interesting as a result. Roppongi has always attracted creators. Mitsui Fudosan Real Estate even used 'design' and 'culture' as its keywords in redeveloping this area. The fact that design has become one of the main considerations for developers signals a new era and new possibilities.

● *Do you think that the founding of a design facility like this suggests that design has come to be considered a form of fine art?*

NK This is a very difficult question to give a simple answer to. 21_21 Design Sight is fundamentally meant as a place where people can tap into a sense of 'human creativity' and consider how it applies to our future. There's the word 'design' in the name, but we want artists to participate in our activities too. We've tried to stay away from the usual distinctions between art and design, since our focus is on 'human creation.'

Although we have not decided all of our future plans, the three major exhibitions we've had so far have not been about showing mass-produced products but about showing original pieces that convey the ideas each creator had in response to the exhibition theme. They may be artistic, but they convey a message that lies at the heart of design.

- *When does a design piece transcend regular client work and become worthy of display in an exhibition?*

NK In design, there is a process wherein the creator, whether it is a designer or manufacturer, seriously contemplates how to produce something that someone else will use. That process takes time: designers draw sketches, manufacturers make models and in the case of high-tech items, engineers become involved and argue with the designers. So many people are involved in thinking about how each product will be used in our lives, and these decisions shape our future.

This process leads to something beyond the present. As I just said, this process takes a certain amount of time, but some products on the market have been rushed. In terms of our own display criteria, products that have been produced over a sufficient period of time and that clearly lead to something in the future would make it to 21_21 Design Sight because they have a clear message.

- *Why do you think designers tend to establish themselves more successfully than artists?*

NK I suppose you could say that the mass production aspect of design makes it easier for designers to establish themselves. I don't know whether you would call this success or not, but one interesting difference is that someone could be using a designer's product even if they don't know the designer's name.

Whether it's art or design, people can fall in love with a piece regardless of whether they know who made it. Where product design differs is that a product circulating in society can freely

have an impact of its own without the designer or a museum being involved. Many designers care more about their creation being used in someone's home than being on display in a museum.

● *What do you think of the crossover potential between art and design?*

NK Art and design are overlapping more and more. For example, furniture is usually mass produced, but art galleries now produce limited-edition pieces, some of which may be made of rare materials that are too expensive to be mass produced. In effect these are a form of artwork. Art galleries and design galleries that do this are providing increasing opportunities for designers to realize experimental designs, and in turn they can use the feedback they receive from these experimental, limited-edition design pieces to enhance their designs for mass production. Pieces like these are then shown at design fairs and attract the attention of art collectors from the art world. For these collectors, a chair with a limited number of editions could become the centerpiece of conversation, as well as a usable art piece.

From another perspective, designers are now having to look within themselves, at their lives, and think about their purpose, in a process that is similar to the artistic creative process. Mass production in the 20th century was partly driven by the desire for a better material life, whereas now our lives are full of designed products, so the meaning and purpose of design needs to be reconsidered. We are currently in a transitional period, so I'm extremely curious to see what will happen next in art and design.

● *What changes have there been in Japanese design over the past fifteen years?*

NK The period before the bubble burst was one of experimentation, but the economic crash forced us to reevaluate design at a level more firmly rooted in our everyday surroundings. Naoto Fukusawa often mentions the words 'super normal' to describe the work he believes in, which is a complete contrast to designers of the previous era who where caught up in creating the extraordinary.

The last fifteen years has seen work by Japanese designers becoming available online or at international design shows. There are aspects of Japanese design that Japanese people had not identified as being Japanese until they were pointed out by a foreign audience. This recognition has given Japanese creators the confidence to identify and express Japanese design culture, and to transmit meaningful design from Japan, but not in a superficial or gimmicky way.

The previous generation of industrial designers currently in their sixties and seventies received a Eurocentric design education and cultural influences from Europe. Now young designers in Japan are finding their own way forward. There are local craft centers all over Japan, working specifically with materials like iron or bamboo and young Japanese designers have begun to take interest in how they can use the work of these regional manufacturing specialists. They are taking a serious look at the design that existed in Japan long before they were born.

Fundamental Change in Asia

An interview with Fumio Nanjo
— MORI ART MUSEUM, ROPPONGI

FUMIO NANJO, *director*
Born in Tokyo in 1949, he received his BA in economics and aesthetics from Keio University. He has organized numerous exhibitions as an officer of the Japan Foundation (1978–1986), as the director of ICA Nagoya (1986–1990), and as the founder and Director of Nanjo and Associates (1990–2002). In addition he has also curated numerous public art and corporate art projects, writes art criticism and teaches a course on art management at Keio University in Tokyo. He was appointed Director of the Mori Art Museum in 2006.

● *What kind of work were you doing at Nanjo and Associates?*

FN The original idea was for Nanjo and Associates to be a loose network of curators. However, it's actually very difficult to work efficiently with other curators because most belong to museums and are working on their respective programs. There are also very few independent curators, and they want to be free anyway. So Nanjo and Associates effectively became my own curatorial office, from which I coordinated art exhibitions and conferences coming into and going out of Japan; fundraising was a big requirement for these kinds of events. On the editing front, I did a lot of editing for public art features in *Space Design Magazine*.

Later on, Nanjo and Associates set up a lot of public art projects. Shinjuku I-Land in Nishi Shinjuku consists of a main office tower with a few other buildings around it. It was planned in

the late 1980s, and the developers had a very large budget to work with, allowing us to produce public artworks by big names such as Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein and artists from the Arte Povera movement. After that Nanjo and Associates was constantly receiving commissions for public art projects, many of which came to fruition all around Japan. There was less money around for art at the beginning of the 1990s after the bubble economy burst, so I shifted from working with major contemporary masters to young Japanese artists of the time such as Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara.

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- *What do you think about the standards of public art in Tokyo?*

FN It's not easy to make artworks sit well in public space. In the end the standard depends on the effort of each developer. Public art only tends to appear when it has been incorporated into the budget of a development from the beginning; once a new development has opened, usually there is no money for art to be added later. That's why you tend to see public art only in newly developed parts of the city. This is not really an ideal state of affairs; public art should be spread more evenly around the city, but I don't know who would want to pay for that after the completion of a development.

- *Does Japan have a 'percent for art' law?*[1]

FN Each prefecture in Japan has guidelines for the incorporation of public art in new public developments, but the truth is not many people care. There's little incentive to follow the guidelines: you lose nothing if you ignore them and you gain nothing if you pay attention to them. Without incentives, it's hard to encourage people to spend money on public art.

1 Governments often mandate that a small percentage of a building's construction costs, usually around one percent, be used for public art.

- *Talking about the use of public space in a slightly different way, Tokyo of the 1960s and 1970s saw a lot of public happenings and performances taking place on the streets, but this rarely occurs now. What has changed about the way people use the streets?*

FN Performance art in the streets booms when the country concerned does not have a fully developed art infrastructure and museums are not active in showing contemporary artists. This is the case in many Asian countries today. In the 1960s and '70s, few museums in Japan were showing young artists, so they had to go out on the street. However, many museums were built in the following decade. After the bubble burst, museums stopped showing expensive exhibitions, and there was a natural shift toward holding more contemporary art exhibitions because they are cheaper to produce. Perhaps the Japanese artists of today have lost the passion or motivation to use the streets because there are so many potential venues.

- *Do you think there are enough alternative spaces for artists in Tokyo?*

FN There are few alternative spaces that would count as stable infrastructure. There are always a number of temporary places, but they generally don't last long. This is particularly the case if you go to small cities outside of Tokyo, which are facing a decline in population and industry. Many shops have closed down in their city centers, so frequently local governments approach young artists and ask them to use these spaces for workshops, exhibitions and performances. They have a lot of opportunities these days, but I don't think this is really the best situation because it means that artists are being paid for time spent working rather than for their artistic creations. A healthy situation for artists is when their work is sold on the market and they can have more time to themselves to make their art.

- *What led you to set up Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT)?*

FN Nanjo and Associates was a corporation, so in 2000 I asked my staff to research the possibility of setting up an independent

nonprofit organization for art. After much discussion and fieldwork, two fundamental issues came up. Firstly, contemporary art needs more educational support. Many people say that they find contemporary art difficult to understand. This is the result of a lack of education about what it is, how it functions and what the background stories are. People need to know that it can be exciting and entertaining as well as academic. The second issue was that I felt that Tokyo needed an artist-in-residence program. I had been an adviser to ARCUS in Ibaraki Prefecture but there was no artist-in-residence program in Tokyo itself. AIT is now an independent and self-sustaining organization with several core members. It continues to develop and create new initiatives. The members approached several government agencies, particularly in European countries, which promised to send artists at their expense. Since then, the opportunities for artists to come to Tokyo have diversified a little.

- *Do you think it's easy for foreign artists to establish themselves in Tokyo?*

FN I think it's very difficult, but it's difficult for Japanese artists too. Again, it's to do with the lack of stable infrastructure. Foreigners don't know where to show. Museums are too big; they're not the place to start. There needs to be more small, light organizations that can make quick decisions and take risks. Commercial galleries have to think about selling, so they will be less likely to take risks. It can potentially cost the gallery a lot more to promote an unknown artist, and if their work is not easily collectable—if it is ephemeral or site-specific—then fewer collectors are likely to buy it. Compared to other developed countries, there are fewer commercial galleries in Tokyo anyway. The only possibility is to show at places like BankART in Yokohama, Tokyo Wonder Site or other small alternative spaces.

- *What effect do you think the Mori Art Museum has had on the Tokyo art world since it opened in 2003?*

FN I like to think that we have contributed to the restoration of

people's faith in art. After the bubble burst, a lot of masterpieces in this country lost their value and had to be sold to foreign countries. Many collectors lost money and this created a very negative mood in which art was perceived as something unreliable and dangerous to touch. In the early 2000s, I think everybody was ready for a change, so the timing of the Mori Art Museum opening right in the center of Tokyo was just right. We have shown that art is important, that it is enjoyable and can work as a positive influence on people's lives.

- *One of the aspects that sets the Mori Art Museum apart from most other museums in Tokyo is that it makes the effort to interact with the rest of the world: the first director, David Elliot, was Japan's first foreign museum director; the website is completely bilingual, and many of the staff speak perfect English. Do you think that Tokyo's art scene is capable of being truly international?*

FN The answer to that question is not just limited to the art world, actually. Japan itself is facing a problem over how it relates to the rest of Asia and the rest of the world. The Chinese economy is booming and its art market is growing. India is the same; Southeast Asia and the Middle East are following. The essential point is that their people all believe in the future. Their young people have strong expectations and ambitions and they are playing a real game of survival. Japan, on the other hand, has finished with that period of its development. People assumed during the peak of the bubble period that the country would continue to rise, but after the bubble burst, Japan lost its sense of national purpose. Equally, for the first time, Japanese people are more individualistic; everybody has different dreams and goals. I feel this is quite different from China and India. I wish that young people here would spend a little less time focusing on small, private pleasures and have more ambition for the future. If they engage with the future, they can establish a new identity.

● *So Japan is a very disconnected place, isolated from the rest of the world?*

FN Japan is connected economically, but at a social and intellectual level, it's disconnected from what is going on in Asia and the rest of the world. The TV doesn't really report what is going on in the art market in China. Even within the art world, not so many people are really aware of what is going on in China. Even if war breaks out in Iraq or Kosovo, nobody here cares. The news reports it, but the Japanese don't feel any sense of danger. The Japanese are aware that other people are engaged in games of survival, but they don't feel it. Japan is living in nirvana. But I think at least Mori Art Museum can struggle to be international. That is why we continue to be bilingual and try to be open to anybody.

● *As a curator, what do you think about working in white cube exhibition spaces?*

FN I think that the white cube functions as a compromise that accommodates all possible situations; all works look okay in the white cube. In a sense, it's the bottom line solution for an art space. You can make specialized spaces—concrete cubes or rooms with painted walls—but very often the artwork suffers as a result. For a museum that has to show so many different kinds of works, the white cube is the basic solution for multiple situations.

● *What kind of spaces do you ideally like to work with?*

FN I prefer old buildings with specific contexts. In 2006, I curated the Singapore Biennale, where we installed artworks in chapels, mosques, synagogues, Buddhist temples and Hindu temples. We also went to some rundown military barracks, kept them as they were and installed artworks. When you put an artwork in a white cube, you're just delivering one message, but in more specific locations you can achieve a dialogue between the space and the artworks and cultivate layers of meaning that relate to the histories and purposes of those spaces. It's more exciting to work with artists to find the right artwork for the right space, and the end result is more stimulating for the viewer.

● *What do you think makes a successful exhibition?*

FN That's hard. I don't fully know yet. Overall, of course you would need to judge on a case-by-case basis, but I think it comes down to what kind of surprises are set up for the visitors. It's important that they leave having experienced something unexpected and stimulating. It's not so interesting when you see an exhibition full of works you have already seen; it just confirms what you already know. So with this in mind I would like to show art from lesser-known areas of the art world such as India, the Middle East, South America and so on.

● *How has the Tokyo art world changed over the past fifteen years?*

FN There's been a drastic change. When I started working in the contemporary art field at the beginning of the 1980s, no Japanese artist expected to be shown in Western museums. The breakthrough came around the time of the Venice Biennale in 1988, for which I was commissioned to select some Japanese artists. There were also several very important exhibitions about Japanese contemporary art at that time: *A Primal Spirit: Ten Contemporary Japanese Sculptors,*[2] organized by Toshio Hara and *Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties,*[3] organized by myself and curators Shinji Komoto, the curator of the Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art, Thomas Sokorowsky and Kathy Halbreich. There was also *Magiciens de la Terre,*[4] organized by Jean Hubert Martin in 1989 at the Pompidou Center. These exhibitions were very powerful showcases of Japanese art at that time; they were instrumental in gradually shifting the focus from Western contemporary artists to Asian ones.

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People in New York or London may not feel it yet, but this change is going on now in a very powerful and fundamental way.

2 Held at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art from March 10 to April 14, 1990, and then at four venues in the United States and Canada.

3 Held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art from June 15 to August 6, 1989.

4 Held at the Pompidou Center in Paris from May 18 to August 14, 1989.

The boom in the Chinese art scene has affected the sensibilities of Western collectors. Before you had artists like Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Dan Flavin and Mark Rothko as the masters of modern art, and of course their works are very beautiful, but they are the last flowers of Modernism. The last fifteen years have seen the focus turn to a Postmodern sensibility of using the local culture of each artist for the creation of contemporary art. Now we are looking at Cai Guo Qiang, Xu Bing, Huang Yong Ping, as well as artists from India and Southeast Asia. In the 1980s, their kind of works—using material like dynamite, fish or Chinese traditional toilets—came across as very kitsch and local, and it wasn't regarded as universal or international. However, now people feel differently when they see works of this nature.

● *How do Japanese contemporary artists differ from their Chinese counterparts?*

FN Japan occupies a strange position in between Asia and the West and the two different vocabularies that they represent. The former is very local and uses vernacular languages for contemporary art. The latter is often still modern, minimal and universal in its aims. Of course, Japan has been the good kid in the story of Modernism in Asia. Chinese people have told me that the work of Japanese artists is not like that of the Chinese: it is more universal and abstract and Japanese tradition does not play such a big part in it. Of course we have Makoto Aida, Akira Yamaguchi and Hisashi Tenmyouya, who each make use of the *ukiyoe* or traditional painting style in their different ways, but overall the Japanese style of contemporary art has been pushed through some filters. Takashi Murakami's idea of Superflat draws on the Japanese traditional methodology of painting, which presents no concerns about three-dimensionality, unlike European artists who have been chasing this concern since the Renaissance. Nevertheless, while he uses Japanese traditional art, his paintings are very slick and clean, like industrial products; he is not selling traditional vernacular culture. This is a bit different from the way the Chinese draw on their traditions. ❁

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SCAI THE BATHHOUSE

SCAI The Bathhouse

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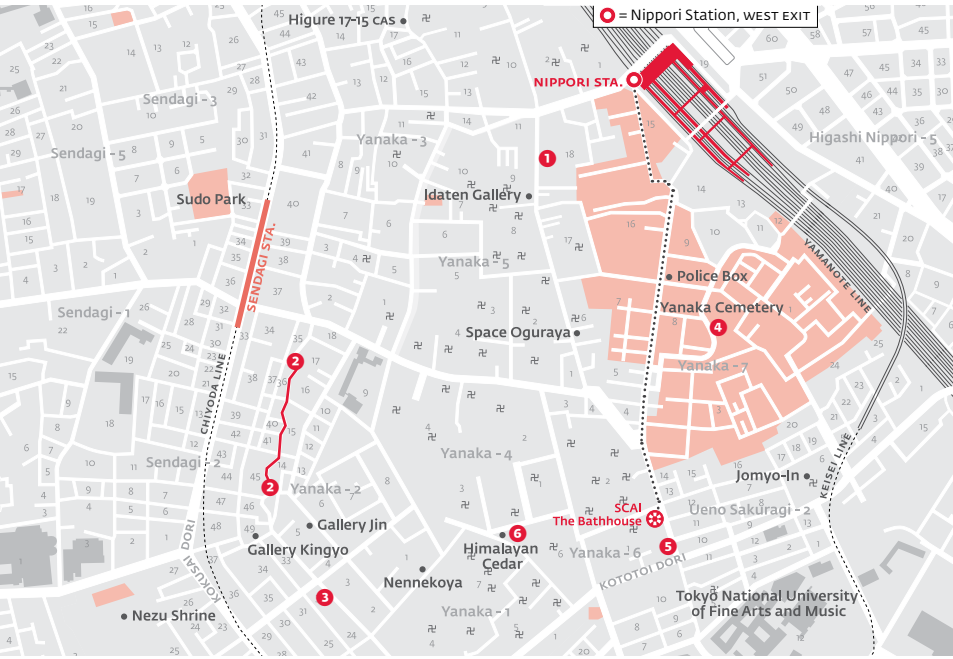
YANAKA / UENO



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

① Head to the roof of the Asakura Choso Museum to get a quick overview of the neighborhood. Meander down the curiously twisted ②③ Hebi Michi and grab a bowl of homemade soba at Nezu Takajo. If it's cherry blossom season, spend more time than you normally ④ would walking around Yanaka Cemetery, and even if it's not cherry blossom season, do the same—the light is unbelievably beautiful ⑤ in the late afternoon. A stop by the Bossa Café, just around the corner from SCAI, is great for a spot of organic coffee and cheesecake. ⑥ Or pop by long-term resident artist Alan West's glass-walled studio housing modern interpretations of traditional screen paintings.

ABOUT THE SPACE

In its previous life, SCAI The Bathhouse was just that: a bathhouse where the Japanese came to soak, and it stayed that way for two full centuries. The current building, constructed in 1951, is an eye-catching combination of old and new architectural design.

Although its interior has been renovated into a sleek, white-walled contemporary art gallery, one can still sense its past in a number of subtle details. The sudden curvature of the entrance hall once served the purpose of hiding bathers from outside view, and the wooden lockers in which patrons stored their geta remain.

The gallery's layout as a smaller antechamber opening up into the larger exhibition room allows for both intimate pieces and larger installations to find comfortable footing. It's not uncommon to find that the dimensions of the space have been rearranged to accommodate installations of varying complexity. Since its opening in 1993, this space has seen exhibitions by internationally renowned artists such as Genpei Akasegawa, Louise Bourgeois, Anish Kapoor, Tatsuo Miyajima, Kohei Nawa, Julian Opie and Tadanori Yokoo. The skylights in SCAI's eight-meter-high ceiling lend this space a refreshing sense of airiness that other galleries rarely have: where they once filtered afternoon light onto Yanaka residents enjoying an afternoon soak, they now free this gallery's exhibitions from total dependence on artificial lighting.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Nippori
Lines: Yamanote, Joban, Keihin-Tohoku
Access: 8 minute walk from west exit

Entry: Free

Address: Kashiwayu-Ato 6-1-23 Yanaka, Taito-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 12PM – 7PM
Closed on Sundays, Mondays, national holidays

Tel: +81-(0)3-3821-1144
Fax: +81-(0)3-3821-3553
URL: http://scaithebathhouse.com
Email: info@scaithebathhouse.com

Post-Bubble Determination

An interview with Masami Shiraishi
— SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, YANAKA

MASAMI SHIRAISHI, *director*
Born in Tokyo in 1948, he majored in aesthetics and history of art at the Faculty of Letters at Keio University. In 1989 he established Shiraishi Contemporary Art Inc. for the organization of exhibitions and selling of contemporary art. From 1989 to 1993 he was the vice director of Touko Museum of Contemporary Art and in 1992 he assisted in the establishment of Nippon International Contemporary Art Fair. He opened SCAI The Bathhouse in July 1993.

● *Before you opened SCAI The Bathhouse, what kind of exhibitions were you organizing at the Touko Museum of Contemporary Art?*

MS The Touko Museum of Contemporary Art was a kind of temporary art museum at the corner above Omotesando Hills. We held all kinds of art, architecture and fashion exhibitions there, including shows by Issey Miyake and David Lynch. Even though there was interesting artwork being made at that time, people always focused on fashion and architecture because they appealed more to the foreign audience. We tried to integrate art into fashion and architecture so as to get more people to look at it, and I think we were reasonably successful in achieving that.

By the time the bubble burst, I had achieved much of what I had wanted to do and I was thinking about what to work on next. In economic terms, the situation was bad, but my determination

to do something that would contribute to society was much stronger, and I wanted to overcome this adversity. At the time, there was some vestigial money left in society, and so I was able to fundraise enough to make certain projects possible.

● *What was your goal in setting up* NICAF*?* 150

MS Well, what was so unhealthy about the bubble period was that people were buying up modern art from abroad at very high prices, and these kinds of money games were becoming an everyday affair in Japan. In order to create a healthy art market, I gathered together the directors of galleries that had been around since the generation before the bubble period, stuck to my vision and did my best to raise funds. The art market at that time was far from mature, so I think the establishment of NICAF formed the basis for the art market of today.

● *Why did you decide to open your gallery in this bathhouse?*

MS Not many people frequent these old bathhouses anymore, which means they end up going bankrupt and getting demolished. I developed a good relationship with the owner of this place, who wanted to see the building survive. The residents of Yanaka also wanted to revitalize the area, and so my desire to open up a contemporary gallery here came at the right time. A wall is not enough to exhibit contemporary art: you need a good quality space. I liked the dimensions of this building and the fact that it has an eight-meter-high ceiling. As a former bathhouse, this space already has the inherent meaning of being somewhere where people would come and get to know each other. In that sense, I thought this space was well suited to our intentions. In terms of the neighborhood and the nearby museums, it's good to be near Ueno. Having worked in Omotesando before, and being familiar with the newer side of Tokyo, I enjoy the fact that Yanaka is the older Tokyo—that contrast is interesting.

- *How has the gallery connected with the Yanaka area and other galleries in this neighborhood?*

MS Some ten years ago, the gallery-related people in this area all got together and decided to form the Yanaka Art Link to try to revitalize the neighborhood. Everybody continued to run their own programs according to their respective interests, but we collaborated on publishing a map so that the area would appeal to a broader audience.

- *What do you look for in an artist's work before deciding to exhibit that work at the gallery?*

MS One of my guiding principles is to promote Japanese artists abroad, so I am looking for artists who will resonate with a foreign audience. In recent years, young Japanese artists have been the focus of a lot of attention, but SCAI also introduces Japanese artists of older generations through our connections with foreign art fairs and museums. When it comes to introducing foreign artists to Japanese viewers, I want to work with artists whose work will connect with the excellent aesthetic awareness of the Japanese audience.

- *What do you think of rental galleries?*

MS I think they serve a purpose to some degree. They have good points and bad points. I suppose if there hadn't been any rental galleries, then there wouldn't have been anywhere for people to show their work. In the Ginza area there were only a few galleries that would hold curated exhibitions without charging artists to use the space, such as Tokyo Gallery + BTAP and a handful of others. And there are a number of rental galleries that have interesting histories, like Kobayashi Gallery and Kaneko Art Gallery. But the bad side is that rental galleries ultimately take money from the artists, and this fundamentally goes against the idea of contributing to society. The money should be going to the artists.

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● *SCAI has helped realize a number of site-specific works. In what way do you think art can improve public space?*

MS You used to walk around Tokyo and see nothing but bronze nudes everywhere. Thankfully that has changed. Tokyo is constantly undergoing redevelopment, so it can be really interesting when large-scale art projects are realized as a part of new developments. In Europe and the United States you have the 'percent for art' schemes, meaning that public space has to be incorporated into new development. This is the kind of model that we should try to adopt here.

If Tokyo is able to realize some high-quality projects, then it will set a good example for the rest of the country. However, quality matters a lot. Of course, there can be budgeting restraints, but I think the people behind public artworks have to take responsibility for what they are doing and come up with truly exceptional works. Some people's business practice is just to put public artworks in any old place, which makes it hard for the public to distinguish whether it is a work of art or design, and that's a real shame.

Of the public art projects that I have been involved with, I am particularly proud of Tatsuo Miyajima's *Counter Void*[1] and Louise Bourgeois' *Maman*[2] in Roppongi Hills. If you imagine what those locations would be like if they no longer had those artworks in them, then you realize how empty they would feel.

● *How has the Tokyo art scene changed in the time since SCAI opened?*

MS In terms of the economy, the 1990s were awful. Money started to circulate again in 2000. Definitely since about three or four years ago, the art market started to take off again, as it has in the rest of the world. The last time the production of art was this active was fifteen or twenty years ago, but I hope that the art market

1 This work, built in 2003, features six digital figures counting up and down, from 1 to 9, on a large, curved neon screen outside the TV Asahi Headquarters.

2 A ten-meter-tall sculpture of a spider, placed at the bottom of the Mori Tower.

of today is completely different from how it was then. In the art market, the money should flow back into the art. Art is being treated as a kind of investment now: there has been an increase in the number of serious collectors. This kind of financial growth clearly has its advantages, but I think that it also needs to be seen with a certain grain of suspicion. These changes are partly occurring because of the media's influence in reinvigorating the art world. I would like the art world to be reinvigorated not simply because of media hype but because artists are producing serious work. I want collectors to be truly fascinated by what they are seeing and feel compelled to buy.

● *What do you think the next generation of galleries will have to do to help the Tokyo art scene grow?*

MS In my gallery's case, former staff have included Tomio Koyama, Yuko Yamamoto, Tomoko Aratani and Mutsumi Urano, who have all set up their own galleries with their own visions. Different galleries all have different outlooks, so I am glad to see members of my staff go out and start their own projects. It is natural that younger gallerists will eventually go in search of younger artists who will collaborate with them on the kind of projects they would like to do.

I think the main thing these galleries need to do is keep showing their artists internationally. It's important not just to be focused on the domestic market but the international one as well. Most of the Ginza galleries focused only on the domestic market, and as a result, they never grew. Artists don't want to settle for local critical acclaim; they have international connections as well, so of course they will want to show in galleries that can cater to and support those needs.

● *What made you open SCAI x SCAI in Roppongi?*

MS We use this space in Yanaka for exhibitions of big name artists, but we wanted to have a second space to introduce the work of young artists. Roppongi is a very convenient location for a lot of people, so

having a space there enables us to reach a large audience. I use the space to show just one or two works at a time by a young artist, specifically with the aim of marketing that work to collectors.

● *What do you think of the Roppongi Art Triangle?*

MS It's similar to Ueno, which has several types of museums and galleries clustered in the same area. The cultural infrastructure of an area is almost a kind of advertising strategy to draw people in. The big museums there have done big exhibitions, like Vermeer at the National Art Center Tokyo,[3] which draw in the crowds. There is a slight difference between the kind of people who go to the small galleries in the Roppongi Triangle and the big museums there, but in the end the Roppongi Triangle is about pulling in large numbers of people.

● *How do you think the Japanese art world compares with the Chinese one?*

MS I don't think the Chinese art market will last much longer in its current bubble. A lot of money is pouring in, and Chinese contemporary artwork is valued very highly in the international art scene at the moment, but mainland China doesn't have the kind of network of museums and galleries needed to support its art scene. Chinese artists are selling their work directly to collectors and auction houses, so if for whatever reason there is a sudden drop in prices, nobody will be there to help them. The market will fail and everybody will lose money, because everything is being done there solely with money in mind. The Chinese art scene is not stable. Perhaps the Japanese one isn't one hundred percent stable either, but it's still in a better state. I think there are some serious collectors here and I hope that, thanks to them, things will continue to progress.

3 *Milkmaid by Vermeer and Dutch Genre Painting - Masterworks from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam* was held from September 29 to December 17, 2007.

Classic Contemporary

An interview with Misa Shin
— ART FAIR TOKYO

MISA SHIN, *executive director*
After obtaining her MA from New York University, New York, she worked for several art projects there. Previously, she was a manager of public relations and development at Mori Art Museum and she has taught art administration at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music since 2000. She was appointed Executive Director of Art Fair Tokyo in 2005 and held the position until 2010.

● *What is the history of Art Fair Tokyo?*

MS Art Fair Tokyo started off as the Nippon International Contemporary Art Fair (NICAF) in 1992. It was Asia's first major art fair. At that time it focused only on contemporary art. The planning was done during the bubble era, and the fair launched just as the bubble burst. With the economy in such a bad state, NICAF was having trouble filling all its booths. As a result they went out of their way to bring in galleries from abroad, and a lot of rental galleries and other second-rate galleries ended up taking part as well, which brought down the quality of the whole event. It was an inevitable consequence of the times: there was no art market in Japan at the time, and yet they set up an art fair. Normally you would set up an art fair on the back of an existing market, but in this case the art fair was being held in the hope of jumpstarting

the market. It was an extremely impossible set of circumstances for anyone to work with. NICAF deteriorated greatly in the late 1990s, and I think it was hugely damaging to Japan to lose an art fair like that.

● *How did NICAF make the transition to being Art Fair Tokyo?*

MS When NICAF collapsed, a number of people from the art world like Hozu Yamamoto, Shugo Satani, Tomio Koyama, Atsuko Koyanagi and Masami Shiraishi got together and thought about how to revive the fair. At that time the Japanese contemporary art market was incredibly small, so they thought about allowing the fair to include *yoga*, *nihonga* and antique artwork. Having the 'C' for 'Contemporary' in NICAF limited the fair to that genre, so in 2005 it was relaunched as Art Fair Tokyo.

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● *What does Art Fair Tokyo aim to achieve?*

MS Japanese people already love to look at art: the Jakuchu Ito show[1] held at the Tokyo National Museum was the most visited exhibition of 2006 worldwide. The second was the Tsuguharu Foujita exhibition[2] at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. Out of the top ten most visited exhibitions in the world, five took place in Japan. However, going to look at artwork in a museum and actually buying it are two completely different levels of commitment.

A lot of Japanese people can't understand what it is to buy an artwork until they have actually done it, and Art Fair Tokyo is offering a lot of people the chance to do that. People often find galleries intimidating. It's hard for a lot of people to ask the price of an artwork; they're afraid that they will be looked down on. Art fairs alleviate those two problems: everything is open, there

1 Held from July 4 to August 27, 2006, *The Price Collection: Jakuchu and the Age of Imagination* had 6,446 visitors per day.

2 Held from March 28 to May 21, 2006, this exhibition had 6,324 visitors per day.

are a lot of people around and the prices are clearly marked everywhere. You can compare prices with neighboring galleries easily and measure that against your budget.

- *Why mix antique, modern and contemporary art galleries in the same fair?*

MS The contemporary art market in Japan is very young and extremely limited, whereas the markets for *yoga, nihonga* and antique artwork are well established. By putting all these genres together you can create a single, unique market. There are already art fairs like this elsewhere in the world, such as the European Fine Art Fair in Maastricht. Art Fair Tokyo is not Art Basel: we don't have people arriving in their private jets every year. At present there are about 150 major art fairs in the world, and many more if you add all the smaller ones. Every region is different and each art fair has its own distinctive characteristics.

- *Is there anything noticeable in the buying habits of Japanese collectors that sets them apart from foreign collectors?*

MS Japanese collectors like all sorts of things: they are cultural omnivores. By contrast, Chinese collectors only buy Chinese contemporary art. Having antique works, *yoga, nihonga* and contemporary artwork all together in the same place is suited to Japanese buying habits. Antiques collectors come to Art Fair Tokyo and see contemporary works they like; meanwhile, a lot of contemporary art collectors leave having bought antiques. Being a part of Art Fair Tokyo even led me to buy a work of *nihonga* for the first time. Had I not been working there, I probably would never have gone to a *nihonga* gallery; they have a stuffy image and I was under the impression that the works were more expensive than they actually are.

- *What has Art Fair Tokyo learned from other art fairs around the world? How does it establish its identity in relation to other Asian fairs?*

MS There are a lot of art fairs in Asia now, in Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore and Hong Kong just for starters. Everyone has

this unreasonable obsession with being international: I always get asked how many international galleries there are taking part in Art Fair Tokyo, and when I say there are only seven out of 108, people react with surprise. But I think this is a good state to be in. Obviously I don't want to get rid of the foreign galleries, but I think the main priority for a Japanese art fair should be to present the best of Japanese artwork.

The other Asian art fairs have all chosen to go down the international route and as a result, you have some very average galleries taking part. When I go to Beijing, I really want to see the best of what Beijing has to offer, but with all the money they're making at the moment, the Chinese are fixated on showing the likes of Damien Hirst and Andy Warhol. I think if you really want a Hirst or a Warhol, you should go to London or New York. It doesn't make sense to go to Shanghai for it.

● *How do you think the current Chinese contemporary art boom might affect Japan's market?*

MS I think the whole of Asia will come into focus as a result of the Chinese art boom. Chinese contemporary art has become so expensive that the focus will inevitably shift to Japan. China is developing so rapidly, and art is being incorporated into a variety of different strategies, cultural, political, commercial, investment and otherwise. The Chinese also have a very strong desire to make money. But the risk is that China is entering a bubble like Japan did in the 1980s. At that time the Japanese art market was worth $10 billion, but all the investment was going into Impressionists, rather than living Japanese artists, which was part of the reason why the market crashed. The Japanese art market now is only worth ten percent of what it was back then, but at least this is a real number and not a bubble. China's art boom will have a positive influence on Japan, but equally China needs to learn from Japan's past mistakes.

156 ● *How does the emergence of 101Tokyo as the first satellite fair to Art Fair Tokyo change things?*

MS I think it's great. This year's applications to Art Fair Tokyo exceeded the number of places we have available. We are scheduled to continue using the International Forum as our venue for the next few years, but we have already come to the limit of its three-thousand-square-meter capacity. We don't rent the booth walls but have them made ourselves, and all of this material needs to be kept in a warehouse, which of course costs us a lot of money. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government should be supporting us, but we don't get any financial assistance from them whatsoever. For those physical and financial reasons we are unable to expand, so I think it's is great that some young people have decided to get together and set up a satellite fair—101Tokyo has come along at just the right time.

● *So, do you think that compared to other large cities elsewhere in the world, Tokyo's art world receives insufficient investment from the government?*

MS There is an incredible lack of investment from the government. In fact, I believe that Tokyo Wonder Site may even have a higher budget than the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. We asked the Tokyo Metropolitan Government for support, but their reaction was basically "Art Fair Tokyo is just a trade show, isn't it? We don't support events for buying and selling." They haven't a clue what an art fair is all about. This is in huge contrast to fairs like ARCO in Madrid, for example. There, the government treats the art world as a real industry and gives it a lot of support: every year they invite two to three hundred VIPs from all over the world to the fair and cover the costs of their accommodation, and then the media hold a big party for everyone, making it into a real event.

● *Nevertheless the Tokyo art market is slowly growing. What are the main changes that you have seen?*

MS It's only now that private collectors are really starting to emerge. During the bubble era, it was mostly corporations that were

doing the collecting, but that has completely changed. Art museums aren't buying anymore, so I think it's really good that the number of individuals buying artworks for their own pleasure has increased. Art Fair Tokyo's buyers are all private collectors.

● *How much are foreign investors a factor in the growth of the Japanese art market? Is the market vulnerable because of its dependence on foreign buyers?*

MS That's quite possible. I don't have the precise figures, but Art Fair Tokyo puts a lot of its resources into foreign publicity; the market in Japan is so small that it isn't enough just to focus on Japanese buyers. Japanese art is very popular abroad, particularly among Asian buyers, so I want more of them to come to Japan. But in truth, what we really need is for Japanese people to be buying Japanese art. That is what will bolster the art market here and turn art into a more robust industry.

● *What is it that holds the Japanese art market back?*

MS Well, it all comes down to economics in the end. It's the same for Art Fair Tokyo and for public museums, but so many of the people working in the Japanese art market are women, students and volunteers. Men are rarely willing to work in such a precarious field for such little pay, whereas students and volunteers are. Of course there are some outstanding, talented people among them, but the fact is that everyone is working for very little pay, or for nothing at all. This situation is not good for sustaining their motivation and cultivating their talent.

I think the Japanese art world has to become more of a robust and mature industry, one that can generate more professions. The Japanese government has to start investing more in the art world in order to motivate people to follow a lifelong career as art critics, art historians, art professors, curators and gallery owners, as well as all the professions that support those roles, like administration, PR, development and marketing. Without this investment, the art market here can never fully mature.

Tokyo's First Satellite Art Fair

An interview with Agatha Wara, Antonin Gaultier Julia Barnes & Kosuke Fujitaka
— 101TOKYO CONTEMPORARY ART FAIR

AGATHA WARA, *director*
An artist and curator, born in Peru but of Bolivian heritage. Based in Tokyo from 2004 to 2008, she currently lives in Miami, where she co-directs the nonprofit alternative space Bas Fisher Invitational.

ANTONIN GAULTIER, *producer*
Born in Paris, he moved to Tokyo in 2005. He is a musician, the co-owner of the Tokyo Fun Partyrecord label and he organizes monthly art and music events in Tokyo.

JULIA BARNES, *development and vip relations*
The owner/co-director of Nakaochiai Gallery and Nonaca Co., Ltd. Nonaca produced 101Tokyo Contemporary Art Fair in 2008.

KOSUKE FUJITAKA, *director of operations*
One of the co-founders of Tokyo Art Beat and New York Art Beat, he manages 101Tokyo's public relations and marketing.

● *Why did you feel that now is the time to set up a new art fair in Tokyo?*

JB The idea of making a new fair came up shortly after attending Art Fair Tokyo 2007. Art Fair Tokyo is set up to show antique and modern art as well as contemporary art and I felt that it wasn't presenting Japan's contemporary art scene in the best light. We're all working here in Tokyo to nurture the art scene, the artists, increase the number of local patrons and generally increase the substance of what is being produced, and if our only place to show is Art Fair Tokyo, it won't make Tokyo a destination for contemporary art. We're not trying to replace it, but it's necessary that Tokyo has an all-contemporary art fair showing fresh, exciting and challenging works. Otherwise why bother?

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AW There are a lot of cool, new, internationally oriented contemporary art galleries popping up here in Tokyo. They are taking part in fairs all around the world but they don't have the chance to participate in an art fair in Tokyo. The contemporary art scene here has been getting more and more vibrant over the past few years, and there are people around the world who want to take part in what's going on in Tokyo, so the timing is just right. Visiting all the other art fairs around the world, it just made sense. Why not? Why isn't there something like this already going on in Tokyo?

● *Is the Japanese art market ready for a second major fair?*

JB Yes! No! Yes, initially we received criticism from art figures in Japan and abroad. We were told frankly that the art market is not big enough for two fairs to exist in Tokyo. We know that in announcing to the world that Tokyo has an international contemporary art fair, we have to make sure it's good. I initiated the idea of making a fully contemporary fair and through a conversation with Agatha, 101Tokyo was born. We're aiming at newcomers to the scene: we want people to get interested in art for the first time and we want to cultivate a new generation of young buyers.

Our lecture series at Bloomberg prior to the opening is an insiders' guide to the art market, on how to go about collecting art and so on.

KF It's really easy for people to say that Tokyo is not ready, but you can look at it the other way around: by adding a second major art fair you are pushing the Tokyo art world and making the assertion that yes, Tokyo *is* ready. Also, if you look at the prices of Japanese contemporary art, it is significantly cheaper than Chinese or Korean art, so this is the chance to make the Japanese contemporary market bigger. It's really important for 101Tokyo and Art Fair Tokyo, as well as any other art movements here, to inject the art market with some vigor. There are so many people who could be spending money here but aren't.

- *Other than focusing exclusively on contemporary art, what are the main ways in which this fair will differ from Art Fair Tokyo?*

AG Ultimately, art fairs are nothing new. They have existed in Europe and America for a long time as a way for galleries to connect with people interested in investing in art. This approach of prioritizing collectors over art lovers and the general public has worked well but has resulted in galleries seeking the highest return on investment, pushing only the established artists they know they can sell. To me, this is 'art fair 1.0,' safe and established in a nice space, and Art Fair Tokyo is an example of that type of fair. That doesn't mean it can't be successful, but it will have to reinvent itself—as all 'old' fairs do at some point—or else people will start to find it boring. 101Tokyo is a 'version 2.0,' and this city has just the right kind of creative environment to make such a fair successful. People working here are very open to the potential for crossovers in art, design, magazines, fashion or music; there are great local galleries and artists.

AW We've been particularly inspired by the model of other fairs like NADA and LISTE, where there is a real feeling of excitement surrounding the fair. We want to pump up the volume on the way art business is currently done in Japan, create a strong program of events in addition to the fair, involve more artists, projects, panel discussions and social events to generate some excitement. Tokyo already has Tokyo Design Week; we want to make Tokyo's first Art Week in April, so people can come here expecting great art and an opportunity to connect with other people in a stimulating environment.

- *What can 101 Tokyo do to make the experience of viewing art in such a commercial context more inspiring?*

JB The fair takes place in an abandoned junior high school building in Akihabara, so already the space has atmosphere. We have invited a young and energetic architecture firm called Point to design the space and several artist groups and individuals to do artist projects on the building façade and in other spaces throughout the school. The entire building will be an inspiration.

KF The main difference is that there will be no aisles. We are having architects design the booths so that they won't be typical white cubes. The booths will all be interconnected like a maze, so that viewers and gallery owners have to wander through the spaces, rather than just past them.

AW We've kept this in mind throughout the planning of the fair. We understand that a fair is very commercial by nature but we are also interested in upholding quality and keeping in mind that a large part of our audience will be the general public. A panel carefully selected the galleries, based on their applications. So each of the booths will be showing mini-curated exhibitions for all audiences to enjoy. With this innovative architectural design, the whole space will really be an experience to step into.

● *At the practical level, what have the main challenges been in setting up this fair?*

JB In the early stages, Agatha and Antonin and team spent six weeks on the phone every night from 10pm to 5am, calling up hundreds of galleries all over the world. Typically galleries receive invitations to art fairs in the post or by email, but we wanted to introduce this fair to the international art world with a more personal touch.

● *Were the galleries receptive to that kind of approach?*

AW It was totally like telemarketing. We had our pitch and we got pretty good at keeping galleries on the phone, no matter how much some of them wanted to hang up on us. A lot of galleries wanted to come but they couldn't because of scheduling difficulties. I recently read that there are four hundred art fairs worldwide, so frequently they already had something else scheduled. But in general people were receptive; I only remember two international galleries that just yelled, "We're not interested!" and hung up. The Japanese side was a bit harder though.

● *Why is that?*

AW I think that the Japanese galleries really know their scene, so their familiarity with the status quo makes them doubtful when something new comes along. There were a couple of galleries that were very interested from the very beginning, like Megumi Ogita Gallery and Magical Artroom. Tomio Koyama has been particularly supportive and wanted to be involved from the word go and has been one of our Principal Advisors. He understands the need for this fair and has been very proactive in trying to convince galleries sitting on the fence that they should take part.

KF At first, a lot of galleries weren't sure about us. We started organizing in August 2007, which gave us a very tight schedule. That, plus the fact that they had never heard of us made them doubtful about whether this fair could really happen. And of course they all

wanted to know who else would be taking part before committing. So Tomio Koyama did a lot to help break that deadlock. We had to put a personal face on our interactions with the Japanese galleries, visit them a lot and talk with them in detail about the project.

- *What are your criteria in deciding which of the applicant galleries can take part in the show?*

AW Edge! They have to be handling edgy and fresh work. We went back and forth about whether the fair should be about 'young' galleries and 'young' artists, but we decided that we don't need to create a niche for ourselves. We're the only truly international art fair in Tokyo, so we can take the best of what's on offer regardless of age. It doesn't matter if the galleries are well established or not as long as they're showing exciting work.

KF We also set the condition that they have to exhibit new works at the fair, which is an important selling point. We don't want a fair full of inventory works!

- *With June dominated by Art Basel, October by Frieze in London and December by Art Basel Miami Beach, are you confident that you can claim April for Tokyo?*

KF When I visited ShContemporary, I felt that Tokyo's infrastructure makes it a lot easier for foreigners who want to take part in the art scene here. Tokyo is very worry-free on many levels in comparison with China, and Tokyo has become a lot cheaper than it was before; if you can cope with London's prices you can easily cope with Tokyo. There's a lot of latent potential here, but there isn't much in the way of a local event that everyone in the Tokyo art world can focus on, so setting up an art week in April is a good opportunity for that.

AW There are a number of events happening at the same time as Art Fair Tokyo and 101Tokyo, collectively referred to as Marunouchi Art Weeks. Art Award Tokyo is taking place in the Marunouchi

Building, the 'New Tokyo Contemporaries' association of young
210 galleries will be doing a collaborative show there too. Shinwa Art Auction has also scheduled an auction for the same week. We hope that this combination of events will create a sense of momentum and make people realize that if they want to do something related to contemporary art in Tokyo, then this is the week they should do it in. Of course, we can't compare these events to the scale of what takes place at Frieze or Art Basel Miami Beach, but we feel a change happening in the contemporary art scene and people taking the initiative to start it.

- *What have you seen at other art fairs that you either do or don't want to emulate?*

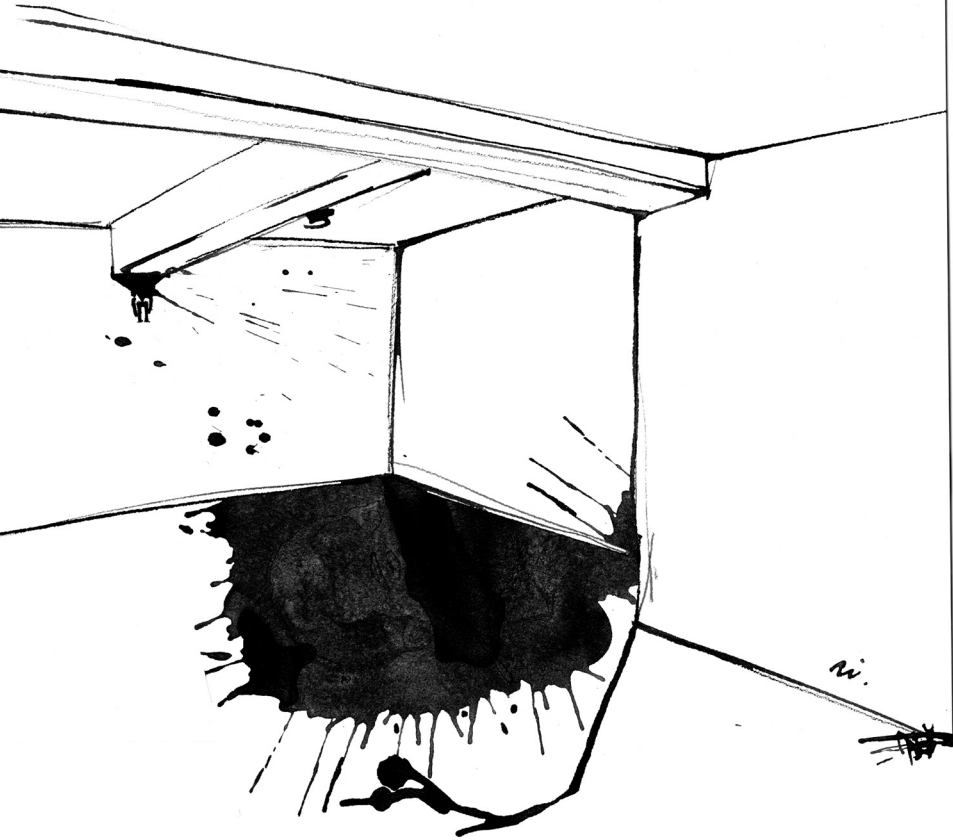
KF At ShContemporary, the participating Japanese galleries all said that they were selling to Koreans and Taiwanese but not mainland Chinese clients. There's this lingering concern that perhaps Chinese people don't like Japanese art, but it's probably just that there is little to connect Chinese collectors with Japanese galleries. The connections between the Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese contemporary art markets are a little more established and well developed, but there is not so much awareness of Japanese contemporary art in China, so ShContemporary was the first real opportunity for Japanese galleries to make themselves known there. We don't have any Chinese galleries taking part in 101Tokyo, but in the long term we will aim to build up ties within the Asian contemporary art world. Asian art fairs are the best opportunity for Asian galleries and collectors to get to know each other and start a dialogue.

AW I'm focusing on the things I see at other fairs that work well and inspire me. I'd like to avoid this feeling of 'too much-ness' at fairs, too much visual stimulation not giving you time to really look at anything. I've been to some fairs where the atmosphere is all too serious, and people are whispering. I'd definitely rather stay away from that kind of environment.

AG I think we face a number of challenges for the years to come. Firstly, we need to work on getting more people to buy art. Deals between art fairs and banks are a good start in facilitating that process, but it may take time to win Japanese banks over. Secondly, simply being a version 2.0 art fair is not enough. What should a version 2.5 art fair be like? How can we better ourselves and differentiate ourselves, not only from Art Fair Tokyo, but from Frieze or NADA? Thirdly, as Kosuke explained, we need to build a new ground for collaboration between Japan, China and the rest of Asia.

Finally there is the more historical and philosophical question of whether 'contemporary' makes sense any more. I believe it is starting to sound as tired as the word 'modern' and is even becoming quite irrelevant. So how can an art fair truly represent a survey of the art of 'now'? I think there is a role for art fairs to occupy a position between those of art biennales, museums, galleries, magazines and so on ... we just have to keep the question open.

2010 UPDATE: *Although 101Tokyo 2008 was broadly considered successful, creative differences among the fair's co-founders led to the 2009 edition being organized by a different team. Due to the unavailability of the former Rensei Junior High School (where 101Tokyo 2008 was held) the 2009 edition was staged at the nearby commercial event space Akiba Square, and was pitched as a more conventional art fair. A lack of financial backers meant that the 2010 edition was not held in April 2010, as previously scheduled. At the time of going to press in May 2010 the future of 101Tokyo remains uncertain.*



Tokyo Gallery + BTAP

Tokyo Gallery + BTAP

GINZA

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

① If you happen to be in the area around lunch time, Hibiki on the top of the Ginza Green building offers an amazing Japanese buffet lunch for ¥1000. After stuffing yourself with organic greens,

② Morimae, a bonsai shop just around the corner has a beautiful (and affordable!) selection on display. They even offer a service to tend to your bonsai if you take off for a monthlong trip to Tibet.

③ For a 'perfect own roast hand drip' cup of coffee, L'ambre, which has been pouring since 1948, can't be beat. And if you like your art

④ to be provocative, the exhibitions of erotic art at Vanilla Gallery are usually just that.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Tokyo Gallery was founded in 1950 by Takashi Yamamoto, the man largely responsible for introducing contemporary art to Japan. As Japan's first commercial contemporary art gallery, Tokyo Gallery has been at the center of the Tokyo art world for several decades and has continuously exhibited groundbreaking works by Japanese, Asian and Western artists.

During the 1950s and '60s, the gallery exhibited the cutting-edge work of some of Japan's first major contemporary artists, such as Yoshihige Saito and Jiro Yoshihara. It was also the first to introduce Western artists such as Yves Klein and Lucio Fontana. Ever since the late 1960s, it has been a staunch supporter of the Mono-ha artists. While the 1990s saw new galleries emerging in other areas of the city, displacing Ginza as the center of the Tokyo art world, Tokyo Gallery has managed to remain consistently at the forefront and has extended its influence well beyond Tokyo. In 2002, it opened Beijing Tokyo Art Projects (BTAP) in the Dashanzi (798) area of Beijing, an abandoned factory and warehouse district that has since become the epicenter of the booming Chinese contemporary art scene.

Renamed Tokyo Gallery + BTAP and run by Takashi Yamamoto's sons Hozu Yamamoto and Yukihito Tabata, the gallery now focuses primarily on contemporary artists from Japan, Korea and China.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Ginza
Lines: Ginza, Marunouchi, Hibiya
Access: 5 minute walk from exit A4

Entry: Free

Address: 7F, Dai-yon Shuwa Bldg., 8-10-5 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 11AM – 7PM; 11AM – 5PM on Saturdays. Closed on Sundays, Mondays, national holidays

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Fax: +81-(0)3-3571-7689
URL: http://tokyo-gallery.com
Email: info@tokyo-gallery.com

Ginza:
Tradition, Inspiration and Louis Vuitton

An interview with Hozu Yamamoto
— TOKYO GALLERY + BTAP, GINZA

HOZU YAMAMOTO, *co-director*
Born in Tokyo in 1948. After graduating from the Department of Architecture in the Faculty of Art and Design at Musashino Art University, he worked as an aide to a member of the House of Representatives. He started working at Tokyo Gallery in 1979. As well as handling Asian contemporary art, he is involved in projects that look at the application of art in society and town planning.

- *How did Ginza develop into being the center of the Tokyo contemporary art world?*

HY The Shiseido Gallery was the first place to show paintings in Ginza, and that was the starting point for many other galleries to open in the area. At that time, the Nihonbashi area was the center for galleries handling classical art and antiques, and then with the establishment of galleries in Ginza like Galerie Nichido and Yayoi Gallery, Ginza became known as a part of town full of galleries that handled yoga painting.

● *What was your father's background and what inspired him to set up a contemporary art gallery?*

HY My father had studied classical art at a gallery called Heisando. Although it was a gallery specializing in classical art, he started to show interest in handling some yoga work. That was met with some resistance from the owner, so my father decided to set up his own place. In 1948, he opened the Sukibayashi Gallery, which he ran for two years, and then he renamed it Tokyo Gallery.

For the first few years he was selling *yoga* works, but when he visited London and Paris, he discovered the works of the Informel artists and the Abstract Expressionists. He realized that postwar art was about abstraction and after returning to Tokyo he showed the work of a lot of Western contemporary artists for the first time in Japan.

● *How did people react to your father's introduction of contemporary art to Tokyo?*

HY Just as China is now, Japan back then was in the midst of an incredible period of growth, encompassing the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Expo '70 in Osaka.[1] During this time a lot of people at the managerial level of the manufacturing industries took an interest in abstract art and started to buy it. So the number of galleries in Ginza increased in tandem with the economy.

Another aspect is that few Japanese art schools had professors teaching contemporary art at that time. The teachers at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music had all studied in Paris, so they were primarily teaching figurative painting of the Impressionist style seen in works by Seiki Kuroda or Tsuguji Fujita. But when my father opened Tokyo Gallery and started showing abstract works, it captivated the young people's imagination and influenced them.

1 Held from March 15 to September 13, 1970 under the theme "Progress and Harmony for Mankind," Expo '70 was Japan's first World's Fair.

● *In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Mono-ha group of artists was a pioneering force in Japanese contemporary art history. How did Tokyo Gallery come to be involved with them?*

HY During the 1960s, some university professors of my father's generation were influenced by the same foreign artists in the same way that my father had been, and they were teaching their students to look at abstraction in order to generate new ideas. My father already knew the artist Yoshihige Saito, who was one of this generation that was exploring abstraction. He taught the Mono-ha artists at Tama Art University and, as a result, a lot of them came to see exhibitions at Tokyo Gallery.

Until the Mono-ha artists appeared, Japanese artists essentially got their influence from foreign artists and made their work through a process of imitation. The Mono-ha artists were the first to create work in a cultural context unconcerned with that of the West. Lee Ufan had been studying traditional painting in Seoul and then came to Tokyo to study philosophy. He met Nobuo Sekine at the very time he was thinking that a new art form needed to be created. He was deeply moved by Sekine's work and their mutual influence on each other gave birth to a new form of art.

● *How has Ginza changed in the time that you have been working here?*

HY Unfortunately, young people hardly come here any more. I remember that when I was young and my father was running the gallery, a lot of people my age would come here, listen to what people older than them had to say and be inspired to create something new. In that sense, the gallery was a place for creation. In the 1970s, all the art schools started to move out into the suburbs. A lot of students are based out in places in West Tokyo like Kichijoji, and when they come into central Tokyo, they only go as far as Shinjuku or Shibuya, not Ginza.

More broadly speaking, this area used to be overwhelmingly about manufacturers and craftsman working here, but that's not the case anymore. Ginza has become more and more about

luxury goods being imported from wherever they were made and sold in chain outlets, so this neighborhood has lost a lot of its power to inspire people's imagination. Ginza is now flooded with people fixated on money, and socially it's not very diverse as a result. This area has lost a lot of its charm.

- *Given that a lot of galleries are leaving Ginza and moving to other areas of the city, what keeps Tokyo Gallery here?*

HY Art thrives on social connections. For example, when people see a Louis Vuitton bag, they know exactly what it stands for, and they can buy it without the need for explanation. But it's hard for people to buy an artwork without talking about it first. Often it's the communication that my brother and I have with our clients that encourages them to buy.

With all the social connections that we have cultivated in Ginza, if we were to leave we would have to start all over again. Young galleries don't have these pre-established connections in Ginza, and of course it's very difficult to establish yourself in an area where the rents are so high, so they can cultivate relationships from scratch wherever they like. And yet at the same time, it's hard for them to cultivate these relationships by themselves, so they end up grouping together in the same buildings, like the galleries in the Sagacho Exhibit Space, or more recently the Imoaraizaka gallery building or the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa gallery building.

Lastly, with so many good restaurants here, this neighborhood is also really suited to inviting our clients out to lunch or dinner after a meeting. You need good places to eat if you're to cultivate ongoing relationships in an area.

- *What do you think the future is for Ginza? How can it preserve its connections with contemporary art?*

HY At the moment, I'm doing my best to work toward making this consumer neighborhood into a creative neighborhood. A creative town has a lot of talented people gathering together in it. In

every city, museums are being set up to preserve the country's legacy and offer people a source of inspiration. I'm working to cultivate places like that in Ginza.

I'm currently collaborating with a company to organize an international photography biennale here in Ginza. Ginza doesn't have any large venue like the Pompidou Center in Paris, so I'm looking at how to borrow a number of companies' spaces to make this kind of event happen.

I'm also organizing a window-display competition. The idea is to give an opportunity to the best students from six art universities to do the showroom design for ten companies in Ginza. This would give young people the opportunity to show in Ginza, and it would inject some new vitality into each company's image. It would be different from the slick, professionally produced window displays you usually see and would offer something fresh with a bit more imagination.

● *Do all the different corporations that sponsor art in and around Ginza cooperate with each other much?*

HY Not really. They tend to keep to themselves. The Marunouchi area is run by the Mitsubishi people and Nihonbashi is run by Mitsui people. Ginza isn't particularly dominated by any one company, but each of the major building owners have their influence. Japan is a bit tribal like that, which renders it hard to make things happen. But people in Ginza are beginning to realize that this is not the right way to work. Borderlessness has become the global standard of business practice now, and with spaces in both Ginza and Beijing, Tokyo Gallery + BTAP has to think in terms of a more international scope.

● *What does Tokyo Gallery + BTAP aim to achieve in its relations with the surrounding neighborhood and beyond?*

HY I would like us to harness the talent of the people who are connected with us and feed it back into the local area. We have

Korean and Chinese artists whose work has an impact on the people who come here, and it in turn may inspire people to go visit those countries. It's this gallery's job to cultivate a close relationship of artistic exchange between Japan, Korea and China.

Between Tokyo and Beijing

An interview with Yukihito Tabata

— TOKYO GALLERY + BTAP, GINZA

YUKIHITO TABATA, *co-director*
Born in Tokyo in 1950. After graduating from the Department of Art in the Faculty of Humanities at Wako University in 1973, he started working at Tokyo Gallery the following year. He focuses on promoting artistic exchange between Japan, Korea and China. In October 2002 he opened Beijing Tokyo Art Projects in the Dashanzi area of Beijing.

● *What was it that started off your interest in Chinese contemporary art?*

YT My father had been handling Asian art—primarily Korean contemporary art—since the 1970s. At that time China was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, so it was impossible to go there. My father died in 1988, and I continued to concentrate on Korean contemporary art, but in the middle of the 1980s a lot of Chinese students had started coming to Japan to study at universities. Since Tokyo Gallery was handling Asian art, we got to know some of these Chinese artists who were based in Japan, and we started holding exhibitions of their work. One day in February 1989, one of them told me that there was going to be the first exhibition of Chinese contemporary art at a Chinese art museum, and invited me to come and see it. Of course I was interested in Western art, but Chinese art was more fascinating to me: it was still a work in progress. It was a little behind Western and Japanese art, but it had a lot of power, and so I started to bring Chinese artists to Tokyo to introduce to the Japanese audience.

● *How do Chinese and Japanese contemporary art differ?*

YT To put it very simply, it comes down to the degree of foreign influence. Japan has had a great deal of external influence. For example, in the Meiji Period, all the Japanese painters moved to Paris to study at places like the Académie Julian, and then they brought their knowledge of Western painting back to Japan. Then, in the 1950s, American contemporary art came to Japan. Japan has for a long time had this ongoing contact with the West: we've gone through stages of European and then American influence to get to where we are today. On the other hand, China cultivated its contemporary art by itself: its postwar experience was that of the Cultural Revolution, meaning that it didn't have the same connection with the West. Well, if you were to pick out some kind of foreign influence, I think you could say that German art has had an influence on Chinese contemporary art, but basically where China really differs from Japan is that it hasn't had anything like the same amount of foreign influence.

● *What led you to open Beijing Tokyo Art Projects (BTAP)?*

YT Around 1995, I started to want to open a gallery in China. There was a chance for me to open a gallery in Shanghai at that time, but Chinese contemporary art wasn't fully appreciated, so I decided not to go ahead with it. Nevertheless, I still wanted to do something there. I had been friends for a long time with Huang Rui, a Chinese artist based in Japan. From time to time he would go back to Beijing and he said he wanted to open a studio there. We thought that if we could find a good location, then he could open a studio and I could open a gallery … well, it wasn't so much a gallery that I wanted but more of an art space where we could make interesting projects happen. Then Huang Rui found these empty factory spaces in the Dashanzi area of Beijing, which everyone now knows as the 798 district. As you can imagine, when I first went to see that space with him I was intrigued by it. This big Bauhaus-style factory was screaming for contemporary art

to be installed in it. Another appealing aspect was how cheap it was: to get a space that big for such little rent was like getting it for free. Even with all the costs of refurbishment put together it was really cheap. To have opened a gallery in the United States or Europe would have been incredibly difficult, whereas setting up a gallery or 'space' in China was remarkably cheap.

- *As a Japanese person opening an art space in China, were there any political obstacles that you had to overcome?*

YT There were limitations, in that it was very hard to open any kind of 'gallery' with the stated aim of doing business there. So that's why we used the term 'art projects' instead of 'gallery' in the name. We wanted people to focus on the idea of us providing a collaborative space for people to work in rather than one designed for selling.

- *What are the fundamental differences between the Chinese and Japanese contemporary art scenes and markets?*

YT The fundamental difference again comes down to the fact that the Japanese are oriented towards Europe and the United States. When it comes to buying artwork, the Japanese have spent phenomenal amounts of money on the Impressionists and on contemporary art from the US—12 billion yen on a Renoir or a Van Gogh, and so on. The Japanese like to spend big on Western art, and yet they don't buy Japanese artwork. On the other hand, the Chinese don't buy anything from the West and spend their money on Chinese artworks. You can say that the two countries are complete opposites in that way. The Chinese tend to think of their country as the best in the world, and as the source of novelty. However, Japan has been influenced by so many countries: Korea, China, Portugal, Spain, Holland, England and America. With all this foreign influence, the Japanese are now used to thinking of new things as coming from the outside.

● *Has the Chinese art boom had any effect on the Japanese market?*

YT Absolutely none at all. Japan is the only country to be isolating itself from the world market. The Japanese are still fixated on Europe and the United States, and yet the Europeans and Americans are all looking towards China! So Chinese artworks are steadily increasing in value, but this has had no influence on Japan whatsoever.

● *Are Chinese collectors interested in Japanese contemporary art?*

YT No, not really. Chinese people basically don't buy Japanese art. Well, you can't say that there isn't a single Chinese collector who buys Japanese art, but I would say that something like ninety-eight percent of Chinese collectors don't buy from Japan. You can also make a distinction between three types of Chinese collectors: the mainland Chinese, those from Taiwan and those based abroad. The ones from Taiwan and abroad do buy Japanese contemporary art, but the mainland Chinese don't.

● *Do Japanese collectors go to China?*

YT Not really. Maybe only about five percent of them.

● *Who are the primary collectors of Chinese contemporary art?*

YT The number one collectors of Chinese contemporary art are the Swiss. I believe the collector Uli Sigg has some fourteen hundred works. And the Swiss-based Belgian couple Guy and Myriam Ullens[1] has a collection of about the same number of works. The big collectors of Chinese contemporary art are from Europe. My impression is that the European collectors are going to China while the American collectors are going to India. There don't really seem to be many American collectors of Chinese contemporary art—it's overwhelmingly the Europeans.

1 In November 2007, Guy and Myriam Ullens opened the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in the buiding next door to BTAP. At 8,000 square meters it is one of the largest contemporary art spaces in China.

● *For the fifth anniversary exhibition held at* BTAP*, you showed the work of forty Asian artists. What kind of message is Tokyo Gallery + BTAP trying to send out about inter-Asian exchange and cooperation?*

YT Beijing didn't used to have anywhere for artists to show their work like this, so with BTAP we worked to improve this situation and also introduce their work to a Japanese audience. In the year that followed BTAP's opening, a lot of galleries opened up in Beijing, and Chinese artists constantly held exhibitions. So I feel that my role and purpose now is to get Chinese artists to look at Japanese artists' work and stimulate artistic exchange among Japanese, Chinese and Korean artists in Beijing. Asia is becoming more and more of a global presence in the 21st century. Put together, India, China, Korea and Japan have a vast land area and population, which is going to continue to produce outstanding talent. The only problem is whether or not these countries can improve their relations with each other. If they can, they will share a phenomenal power.

It's not that Tokyo Gallery + BTAP won't handle Western art, but as we have been handling Asian art since the 1970s, of course I have felt it my role to consider how to cultivate Asian art. Furthermore, China, Korea and Japan are still left with a legacy of problems from World War II, so I would like to do my best to help overcome these problems and make it easier for young artists to show their work. When Japanese, Korean and Chinese people actually meet and work together, they realize how much they have in common. If young Asian artists work together, I think they can help overcome regional differences.

● *Has commercial success affected the quality of Chinese artists' work?*

YT The Chinese market is going to get bigger and bigger. It's likely that the stronger China becomes economically, the more the art market will swell. The world is wondering when the Chinese contemporary art bubble will burst, but I still believe that it's only in its early stages. There was the same feeling about Japan around the time of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Of course, there will be ups and downs,

but looking at it for the long term, I think the Chinese art market is destined to grow. In Japan's case, it was clear that when the yen went up in value, the quality of the artwork dropped. Money always ends up changing people. When artists are making money easily, then they make their work easily. When artists are poor, then they devote everything they have to selling their work and making more work. When I started to handle Chinese art in 1989, Chinese artists were putting everything they had into their work, and it was really interesting, whereas Japanese artists were producing theirs in the middle of the economic bubble, and it wasn't of good quality. Now it's completely the other way around: the Chinese art bubble has messed up a lot of the artists, whereas Japan has been in an economic slump and so artists here are all working hard. From the latter half of the 1980s to today, the situations in China and Japan have gone through a complete turn-around.

● *Do you think that more foreign collectors will show interest in Japan as a result?*

YT Yes, I do. The difference between good- and bad-quality works is clear for all to see. One the one side you have artists giving their life and soul to produce their work while on the other you have artists doing it purely for financial gain. It's very easy to tell which are the good-quality works. So I'm pretty sure that Western collectors will show more and more interest in Japanese contemporary art.

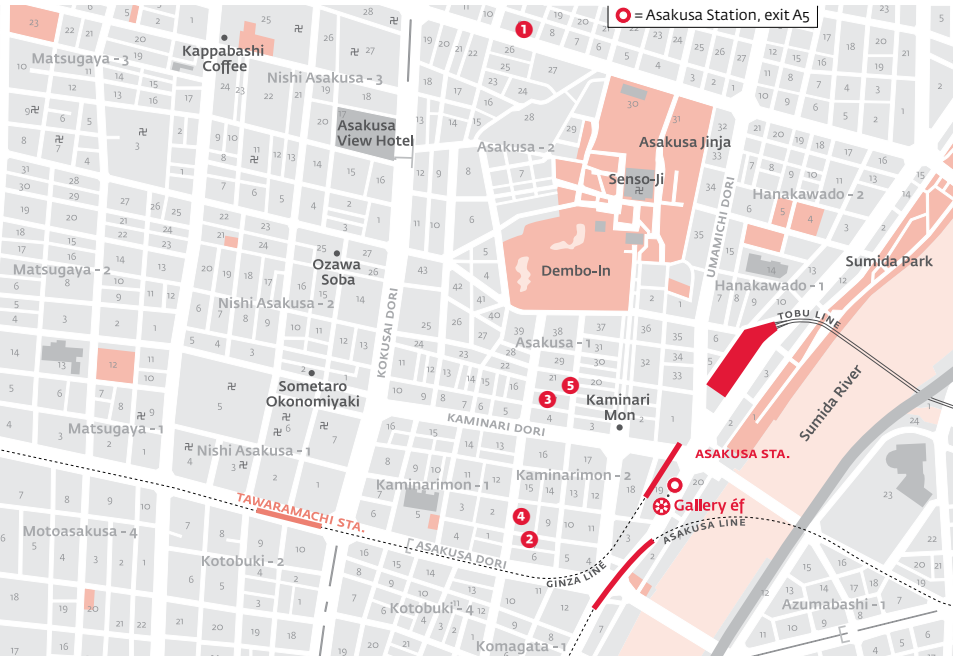
● *Do you now find yourself less interested in Chinese art than you were before?*

YT It's not that all Chinese contemporary art is now bad; there are still good Chinese artists. In particular there are a lot of good Chinese artists based in America and Europe, such as Cai Guo Qiang, Xu Bing and Huang Yong Ping. So I haven't lost interest at all, but I do feel that I have come to the end of my role as a promoter of Chinese contemporary art. From now on I want to think about how to promote Japanese artists, get Western collectors to buy their work, and improve their situation. I want to focus on the least successful area of the Asian art world and inject new life into it.

Gallery éf

Gallery éf

ASAKUSA



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

① Go grab an *onigiri* and some *miso shiru* at Yadoroku, one of the oldest
② *onigiri* shops in Tokyo. Or if you're a ramen fan, Bazoku hand-rolls
fresh noodles with every order. After a long day of gallery trotting,
③ nothing beats a cold beer in a smokey *izakaya*: Kakurenbo delivers on
④ all fronts. Operating since 1907, Hatsuogawa serves up some of the
tastiest *unagi* in town. If Maisen in Omotesando didn't satisfy your
⑤ *tonkatsu* cravings, one of the fifty varieties of *tonkatsu* at Katsukichi
should hit the spot. In case you haven't noticed, those living around
Asakusa are well fed.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Simply passing by on the street without noticing Gallery éf's name, it would be easy to assume that this is just another café. In fact, not only does this gallery have a great café in the front that hides the exhibition space from the street, but since its opening in 1998, it has been by far one of Tokyo's most unusual art spaces.

To enter the gallery, you stoop low and pass through a small door, where you remove your shoes before stepping up onto the raised floor. Looking around, you find yourself inside an old Japanese warehouse, the antithesis of the white cube. The walls are earthen, the floor is a deep lacquered red and the entire space is cast in dark, rich hues, accented only by the occasional point light. The gallery focuses on unknown artists, and exhibitions here often respond directly to the space's physical or historical setting.

More so than any other gallery, this space invites you not just to look but to touch. Its cool walls—many of them original—have witnessed a remarkable history. At over 140 years old, this building has survived two fires, the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the firebombing of Tokyo in 1945. The mere fact that it exists in a city so intent on relentless demolition and reconstruction is reason alone to celebrate. That it has been beautifully restored and is now a free art space open to the public is all the more reason to make this gallery a must-see for any art or architecture lover visiting Tokyo.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Asakusa
Lines: Asakusa, Ginza
Access: 10 second walk from exit A5 (*Asakusa Line*), or 1 minute walk from exit 2 (*Ginza Line*).

Hours: Gallery 12PM – 7PM; Café 11AM – 7PM; Bar 6PM – 12AM (until 10PM on national holidays; until 2AM on Fridays and the day before national holidays) Closed on Tuesdays

Entry: Free

Address: 2-19-18 Kaminarimon, Taito-ku, Tokyo

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URL: http://gallery-ef.com
Email: mail@gallery-ef.com

Asakusa Contemporary

An interview with Mahiro
— GALLERY ÉF, ASAKUSA

MAHIRO, *director*
In addition to his work as director of Gallery éf, Mahiro has been director of Jibo Salon, an art space in Shanghai, since 2006.

● *How did you come to use this warehouse as a gallery?*

M The older generation in my family had bought the entire property, and there was a metal wholesaling company here. The café area used to be the garage and a metal workshop, and the *kura* storehouse that just happened to be attached. When our grandfather passed away, the remaining family members decided that it needed to be sold. In preparation we cleaned out the building, including the storage area at the back. It looked like an ordinary room, but when we pulled the walls down, the actual building structure appeared along with writing that indicated that it had been built in 1868, the last year of the Edo Period, or the first year of the Meiji Restoration. At that point we still wanted to sell, but we came up with the idea of telling the outside world what once existed in that location before the final sale.

● *But somehow you didn't end up selling…*

M No, in the end we didn't. At art school I had met a student whose illustrations I really liked, and I thought it would be interesting to exhibit her works in a rundown building like the one we had—just once. But this was over ten years ago, after the economic bubble had burst, so we couldn't find anyone interested in purchasing the property. And although we still wanted to sell, it also dawned on us that since the *kura* is old, it would probably be destroyed and replaced with a brand new apartment building soon after, and that seemed less than ideal. So we decided to do whatever was within our power to make this place survive. We didn't set out to open a gallery as such, but gradually that's what we ended up doing.

● *How did you manage to restore the space when there was so little money around?*

M At that time we happened to meet a lacquer artist named Tsugio Nabeshima who volunteered to help renovate the building. At first there were three of us doing demolition work and other tasks, but since he was very well connected with artist friends, every day someone new would be doing some work in a part of the space. People just gathered here like that, and in the end over a period of six months we accumulated two hundred days' worth of labor from them. We didn't have any money, but we thought the least we could do was to feed everyone. There were even some people who just came for the snacks, but you couldn't even tell who they were at that point! One time I asked Nabeshima-san why he was willing to do all this for free, since that kind of thing is usually unheard of. He said, "It's really difficult to 'play seriously'—not to just go out on the town, but to really put all your effort into playing. For someone to give you free reign to do any work you want over an entire building is truly rare. If someone is letting you play like that, why would you ask for money?" It made sense to me. In terms of time, at first we thought we could renovate the building in three months, but that became four, and five, and in the end it took a year with six months of that spent on construction.

● *At the renovation stage, did you have an idea of what the completed space would look like?*

M I think of buildings in terms of the people involved with them, rather than in terms of the space itself. Even if you have a good space, if there are no people, then you're left with nothing, so I was constantly thinking about how to create a space that would attract people. This building has a 140-year history, so I wanted to represent that physically in the building through a series of 'stages.' The entrance area is the present, and the innermost part represents the building's earliest history.

Since the work was done by artists, there was no set idea of what the final space should look like. The end result was the balanced outcome of not one person leading the process, but of everyone speaking and communicating in imagery and coming to an agreement. We had professional carpenters working in the café area, but carpenters are used to working to a client's brief. We, on the other hand, were telling them to do whatever they wanted. Initially they were frustrated and told us they couldn't work like that, but we continued to tell them to just do whatever they wanted. In the end they started playing around too.

● *What do you look for in artists before offering them exhibitions here?*

M We don't emphasize exhibitions of famous, top-selling artists. One reason is because we want to remember all the unknown young artists who volunteered to make this place what it is. The volunteers made us realize that there is a lot that can be done without money; they showed us that level of imagination, and so we want to work with artists who offer us the possibility of that kind of creativity.

The other has to do with our space. Typically solo exhibitions are held in gallery spaces where an artist gathers his or her friends to view their work. People call them exhibitions but all too often they're actually exhibitionist activities that are all about creating a stage for yourself and saying, "Look at me." We

want the artists who exhibit here to create a stage for the works, not for themselves. Also, we want them not to depend on the strengths of the space. We don't want them to use the space simply to make up for something that may be lacking in their works. These are our two points. It's not that we ask them to put on exhibitions that fit these two criteria—we just don't accept artists who don't share these ideas.

● *The white cube style of gallery is everywhere in Tokyo; if anything it's an international standard. What are your thoughts on it?*

M I'm envious, because it's easier to work in those kinds of spaces. I don't think it's uninteresting. It's just that our way of doing things is different, because the space that we're working with is different. If we had a white space, we would be working in different ways also. We just coexist differently with the space.

● *What are the practical issues behind designing an exhibition in this space?*

M You can't hammer nails into the walls. In a white cube gallery you can, but this building has earthen walls so you can't make any holes. It's at this point that some artists give up and others start thinking about how to realize their creative styles. We inform our artists of what can and cannot be done in this space beforehand, but we don't just want to dwell on what cannot be done. If an artist has something he or she wants to express, it can be realized if the artist thinks about the execution, but you can't shortchange that step. If you try something and it doesn't work, that's one thing, but you can't give up what you want to do without even trying.

Another difficulty is that you can't position the light rails to surround the pieces, so lighting needs to be well thought out. We spend about six months to a year communicating with the artists about how they might want to use the space and ask them to keep on coming up with ideas. This back-and-forth is the only way to realize an exhibition here. Of course we're busy too, so we

can't accept an artist one week before an exhibition. It's impossible to use this space unless you're willing to think creatively and use your imagination.

● *Do you have any views on the Tokyo art scene as a whole?*

M I spend two-thirds of the year in Shanghai, so I'm not very familiar with Tokyo's art scene. I'm conscious of how I might be influenced by knowing too much. I want to work from a blank slate, so I don't look around Tokyo very much. It's the same way with clothes: you can get to know different styles from looking at magazines, but I don't want to do that. So I look around at as little as possible in order to maintain my originality. I have no idea whether I'm ahead of the times, or whether what I'm doing is in fashion or not; I don't know if what I'm doing is 'correct' or 'incorrect,' but that's my style.

● *You've opened a sister gallery in Shanghai too, called Jibo Salon, right?*

M Yes, we've been in Shanghai for about eight years, and we've had a space since a little over a year ago. Originally I went to Shanghai to learn about the roots of our culture and study *kanji* characters as the point where communication originated. My initial purpose was not to open a gallery. One day we started talking about wanting a place to hold cultural events, and we decided to create one, but not a gallery. We wanted a multipurpose space that could be used as an office, an exhibition space, a yoga hall, whatever you wanted. China isn't organized like Japan—people will just put their things down and eat in galleries—so we decided to use that to our advantage.

● *What are the points in common between the way the two spaces function?*

M I think they both function as places where people can gather and communicate. Nothing will happen if people don't gather, no matter how great your location and physical space.

We'd like to continue using the space as a place to express *Jibo*

ideas[1] by holding exhibitions and events relating to *kanji* characters and communication, and collaborating with overseas artists.

● *What do you think Gallery éf's role or function is in the Tokyo art scene?*

M I think in terms of Asakusa rather than Tokyo, but I think art carries with it the image of being hard to approach. People will say, "It's hard for me to even make a living—I couldn't possibly think about buying art," especially because unlike Aoyama or Ginza, this neighborhood has never been known as a place for art. I want to tell them that it's not so. We all live our lives based on imagery, and yet people project an unapproachable image onto the expressive arts. If there is a role that we can play as Gallery éf, it's to give art a more approachable image in Asakusa, so that more people will know that art is something that can be enjoyed casually, without the fear of being judged.

● *Are there disadvantages to being located in Asakusa?*

M Most of the people who come to Asakusa are here for sightseeing; they're not in the frame of mind for buying art. It's a weakness of this space also, but our exhibitions tend to look like installations, and it's sometimes unclear to viewers whether the works can be purchased or not. If this were solely a gallery, we might not have survived, so I'm glad that we had the chance to run a café and bar here.

The positive point is that we can run a casual environment. For example this luggage that's been left lying around on the floor would definitely not be allowed in a gallery in Aoyama. Here, foreigners complain, Japanese people cry, people of all ages come in, and all kinds of barriers are broken down. People who are not so interested in art have the opportunity to meet artists and become inclined to take a look. This process in which people gradually take interest is very visible, partly due to the tight

1 '*Ji*' means 'character' (as in *kanji* character) and '*bo*' can mean 'workshop' or 'monk.' Together, the word represents the gallery's philosophy of bringing people together in one space for creative interaction.

shitamachi[2] old town connections. I've seen middle-aged men step into an avant-garde exhibition here and go home saying they enjoyed it. This probably doesn't happen in Aoyama.

● *What do you consider to be a successful exhibition?*

M As a phenomenon, having a lot of visitors. But that alone is not enough. At our opening parties, both the usual crowd and those who haven't that much interest in art will have some kind of contact with an artist, and that will become the trigger for that person to become conscious of something he or she was totally unaware of until then. Viewer numbers alone are insufficient: it's just numbers. Communication needs to take place. There are moments when I can actually feel the change in someone. For example, when I hear a lot of opinions flying about, whether they are good or bad, it means that those people were moved. I think that being able to feel that change or movement is what makes an exhibition successful.

● *Gallery éf is celebrating its ten-year anniversary. Where do you see things going from here?*

M These ten years turned out to be really fun for us, but in going forward we would like to be more conscious of how we can share this joy and fun with everyone. What awaits you may be different from the future you envision, but it could be even better. We have learned that there is no money to be made this way. If we tell this to the younger generation though, they only have two options: to feel content producing art that doesn't make money, or not to produce art at all.

As I've been saying, if you are imaginative and don't bend your will, there are times when the unexpected happens. You

2 *Shitamachi* can be translated as 'downtown' but in the Tokyo context it refers to all districts that that were lower than Edo castle. Like Asakusa, many of these areas retain an old world feel to them. There is even a Shitamachi Museum: http://www.taitocity.net/taito/shitamachi/

need to hang on to what you want to do and meet people who will understand and support your ideas, and then perhaps they will allow you to realize them.

Also, since artists tend to be as stubborn as we are, I want to become better at exchanging different opinions. At times we have had such intense confrontations that it's as if we're denying each other's very existence. Still, for the most part we don't clash but become closer. At out gallery the communication we have with artists takes place at an intimate level, and I think fundamentally that is what makes our work successful.

The Undecided Space in the Audience's Mind

An interview with dancer Ikko Suzuki & artist Kirara Kawachi

IKKO SUZUKI, *dancer*
Born in Tokyo in 1972. After he entered Ritsumeikan University in 1992, he started to study theater performance. Since 1997 he has been doing dance and butoh performances in countries all over the world. At present, he is studying kagura and exploring the fundamental elements of butoh.

KIRARA KAWACHI, *artist*
Born in Chiba Prefecture in 1971. She graduated from the Department of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, USA. Ranging from video and sound installations to drawings, her work addresses concepts based on history and the fusion of art and science.

● *How did you become a dancer?*

IS I started performing as an actor when I was a college student in Kyoto. After I graduated, I started to investigate a style that would have fewer limitations. When you take plays abroad, the audience won't know what you are talking about if you speak in your own language; they will only be able to see the quality of your acting. I began to concentrate on using bodily expression as a tool for communication. I studied many styles of dancing like butoh and kagura, one of the oldest styles of dance in Japan. From both modern and traditional dances, I build my own style.

● *How do you work with the space you're performing in?*

IS The space in which I dance is something I take seriously. Of course, in a theater, we perform in a 'box'—a black box. There, the way you decide to use the box in making your art is called into question. Dancing in a space like Gallery éf is different, however: it has been a *kura*[1] ever since the beginning. I dance every year at Jomyo-in temple in Yanaka where there are 84,000 *jizo*[2] statues. I also danced at this two-hundred-year-old traditional Japanese tearoom called Oukyokan last year. These spaces have their own unique histories that define why they are shaped and situated in their particular ways. Although I am not an architect, I sense that there is a certain meaning in a space and I try very hard to capture what it is. Studying these things is very important to my choreography. I want to understand the sense of time within each space.

180

● *Specifically what kind of details in the space have you picked up on?*

IS For example, the Oukyokan tearoom was named after a famous painter from the Edo Period called Oukyo Maruyama. It had a room where he once stayed as his eyesight began to fail from

1 A small warehouse or granary.

2 The small replicas of Jizo Bodhisattva are used in Japan to protect unborn, aborted, stillborn or miscarried babies.

illness. He kept painting during his stay and after he recovered, and the room still has a *fusuma*[3] that he painted. The building was originally situated in Aichi Prefecture, but it was moved to the area behind the Tokyo National Museum, where it exists today.

When I was asked to perform there, I tried to imagine what it would be like for a painter to lose his eyesight, and incorporated that into my dance in terms of emotion and physical movement. How would your sense of perception be affected if you couldn't see anymore? Did he lose sight in one eye? Or was it both his eyes? What would happen when your space became partitioned? Addressing questions like these changes the way you respond to and absorb the space you are performing in, and it affects the way the audience views your dancing.

● *How did the collaboration for '3.10—100,000 People's Words' come about?*

KK The collaboration draws on the firebombing of Tokyo on March 10, 1945. It was only through working with an American sculptor after 9/11 and then again later during an artist-in-residence program here that I had come to learn about the huge air raid on Tokyo. One hundred thousand people died right here in Asakusa, but I didn't known much about it until then. I think a lot of Japanese people are unaware of this too, since there were so many massive air raids on Tokyo.

We didn't have enough time to create an artwork about this event during the residency. But at the end of the residency, we met Suzuki-san and immediately I felt that this could be another opportunity to make a piece on the bombing of Tokyo. Suzuki-san and I tried to produce a video piece in various locations including a *nagaya*[4] in Sumida Ward that survived the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, but it didn't work out well.

Our ideas finally started coming together when we were

3 Sliding screen / door.

4 Row house.

introduced to Gallery éf in 2004. It's likely that this performance wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for this particular space. The gallery staff had been working on a project called *Collapsing Histories* with an American curator that year and had just started to think about presenting an art piece on the theme of war that explored communication and interaction with history. That's when we came along. The timing was just right.

- *Suzuki-san, how did you react to this particular space and its history? How does it influence your choreography?*

IS This *kura* is a witness to a long history: it's been around longer than any human beings alive today and has survived so many disasters. I felt that it was a challenge to try to talk to this entity and sustain a worthwhile conversation. Simply comparing myself to its history, I would never be able to live up to all the things it must have felt and experienced up until now. But I think about how I might be able to come closer to it. Although it's already our fourth time performing here, this space gives me new discoveries every time and that changes my dancing every time I perform here.

- *Kawachi-san, how did you respond to the space in order to create the sound work for this collaboration?*

KK For me, it's the idea of the 'time' that the space owns. I am adapting my own perception to find a moment when everything that happened on March 10, 1945—the spatial and temporal aspects of that night—comes together into a single moment that can be connected with the present day. The sound work consists of a layering of the voices of survivors recounting their memories of the past as well as other sounds that we can all identify as coming from the present, such as the noise of level crossings and trains passing, or the sound of water lapping against the banks of the Sumida River. For this year's version of the performance, I've added the sound of children reading about the bombing from history textbooks. I think the artist's job is to think about what

can be drawn from the past to improve people's lives in the present. I want to connect 2008 with those horrendous times in the past so that people will truly understand. I want us to share it all, both the past and the present day.

● *What do you think of the potential for cross-media collaboration in general?*

IS Cross-media collaboration has a lot of possibilities: it draws the attention of people with different fields of interest. I think it's very important when people who have no familiarity with dancing get a chance to see a dance performance, or when people who focus entirely on dancing pay attention to architecture; it broadens their way of thinking. If you focus solely on just one art form, you can become judgmental about what is good and what is bad and forget about everything else. Cross-media work allows the audience to have a more open and undecided space in their minds, and it's in that space that people's values begin to change a bit. If viewers allow themselves to broaden their minds like this, then fields of art will start growing and spreading as well.

● *So in a sense, the audience's expectations are a form of media in itself?*

IS Well, for example, when I danced in the Oukyokan tearoom, the audience came neatly dressed in kimono as if they were there for the tea ceremony, but we never served them any! So when I flew in dancing, I think they were surprised to see that style of performance in a tearoom of all places. But they ended up enjoying it. It was not something they were expecting to see in that context, but cross-media ideas allow the audience to wander into a new world.

In terms of artists working with each other, cross-media collaborations demand that you be mature enough to communicate. It is not about seeking out a hierarchy but showing respect to other artists while communicating clearly and straightforwardly with them. It's all about connecting with someone who has special knowledge of an area of art that you have no knowledge of. Process is incredibly important: there would be no value in, for

example, an architect just building some sort of space and asking me to dance however I like. In a situation like that, if the architect and the dancer don't communicate with each other and discuss the meanings behind the space and how that should relate to the dance taking place within it, then the final work probably won't be any good for the audience.

KK In the process of creating *3.10,* the staff at Gallery éf, Suzuki-san and I talked a lot. Then Suzuki-san and I would go talk to people who experienced the bombing. We would be very persistent in confirming and refuting things with one another. When you lose that combination of tenacity and honesty during a collaboration, you know that the work will end up seeming fake and unconvincing. If you placate each other by pretending to understand what the other is talking about even when you don't, then you are starting off on the wrong foot.

● *You both live very close to Asakusa, across the river in Sumida Ward. What does this area mean to you?*

IS I was born and raised in the *shitamachi* area across the river; it's my hometown. People tend to have complicated feelings toward their hometowns, and I was the type to distance myself from it—I went away to university in Kyoto. There's a big distinction between East and West Tokyo. If you take the Sobu Line from west to east, you can see how the character of the passengers gradually changes as the train makes its way across the city. The train starts off full of the more stylish-looking people you find in Tokyo, but by the time you arrive at a station such as Ochanomizu, you'll begin to see more and more blue-collar laborer types on the train. Whenever I see that sort of scene, it really hits me that this is the area where I was born and raised. I don't get the impression that people living in the west—even though they are residents of Tokyo too—can understand how it feels. They may see what I am seeing, but they won't feel it with the same intensity.

● *So you have an acute sense of Tokyo's social space?*

IS There is a big gap between the culture that *shitamachi* areas have been cultivating through the ages and the casual atmosphere of Tokyo in general; certainly it is very different from the atmosphere that has emerged out of the development of Roppongi Hills. People in the *shitamachi* areas are more *zakkakenai*.[5] There are no barriers between them. They are kind, open, and they step into other people's homes. If you are having a problem, they worry and come around to make sure you are all right. In the old days, if you ran out of soy sauce, you would go borrow some from your next-door neighbor. More and more, people live in condominiums, so this kind of social space is dying out. But there is still some of that old-time spirit left in the neighborhood where I live. There's nothing wrong with condominiums, but they have changed the way people relate with one another.

● *How have your respective fields of art changed over the past fifteen years?*

KK I think that when it comes to sound work, there has been a general trend towards using brash industrial sounds and noises, or mixtures of city sounds. I don't understand the significance of those sounds. I think that the processes through which the creators of these works came to find possibilities in such sounds are very interesting. However, for me, it is important for artworks to have a deeper meaning within.

● *What about in the field of dancing?*

IS So-called 'contemporary dance' in Japan hasn't produced anything I find particularly exciting. There is a real trend towards introverted performances that feel like someone is reading out of their personal diary. On the other hand, I do see extreme improvement in the physical abilities of Japanese dancers. Japanese dancers used to have an inferiority complex about their abilities

5 Crude and candid.

in comparison to the many excellent dancers in Europe and in other countries, but they have overcome that.

Back in Japan, a lot of people have become bored with dance in the last eight years or so. The mood at the moment is one of wanting amusing entertainment and not much more. It feels like there are few artists and creators who are committed to inquiring deeply into the substance of their creations. Nevertheless, I expect that in a few years this tendency will turn around, and people will start thinking more.

Presently, there are so many people saying that everything has already been done before and that there is no such thing as a new dance. I feel that it's actually becoming true. I think, in a way, we are at a dead end.

The question is, where do we all go with things being the way they are? Do we just keep dancing because as long as you can dance it's okay? I want to think hard about the bigger questions in life and incorporate them into my work. I would be really happy to see other dancers do the same from their own viewpoints; that would create a stimulating environment here. We shouldn't always have to rely on other countries as places to realize our art; we should be able to do it here in Japan as well. However, I recognize that being abroad allows you the freedom to dance in an environment with fewer expectations of how you should be dancing.

I sense that dance in general is suffering a low period right now. But I also believe that dancers can overcome this situation. When things are down, the only way we can go is up.

Aoyama | Meguro

Aoyama | Meguro

NAKAMEGURO

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The whole of Meguro River is worth a slow, leisurely look, but ① if your time is limited, check out Cow Books' eclectic selection. ② Close by the station, Café Façon roasts and serves some of the best cloth-dripped coffee in Tokyo. And don't miss their bacon sandwiches. Make sure to stop by ③ Mizuma Art Gallery where Aoyama-④ san of Aoyama | Meguro cut his teeth. The Jakuzuregawa Walking Path will take you through the back end of Yutenji and toward Sangenjaya. And in keeping with the literary theme, the bar with ⑤ the largest bookshelf in Nakameguro is undoubtably Combine.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Aoyama | Meguro occupies a former shipping company's warehouse on Komazawa Dori. Its large glass doors make it easy for passers by to catch a glimpse of exhibitions and venture in.

Inside, the broad, unpolished space is partitioned by rough chipboard walls that separate the exhibition space from the office. Even when the gallery is between exhibitions it feels as though it is already occupied by an architectural installation. Indeed, this structure was built by architectural office Sschemata, which shares the space with Aoyama | Meguro under the collective name 'happa.'

Aoyama | Meguro is one of a number of so-called 'next generation' galleries that have opened in Tokyo since 2004. Their young directors have all worked for the major commercial galleries that were established in the 1990s and have tried to reinvigorate the Tokyo art world. Thus, they have opened their galleries with the training and experience required to push the contemporary art scene to the next level. Aoyama | Meguro shows the work of young but increasingly well-known artists like Koki Tanaka and Junya Sato.

Down the road from Aoyama | Meguro, the Nakameguro neighborhood is well known as a place to walk along the peaceful tree-lined river, where you can enjoy trendy cafés, bars, restaurants and design shops.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Nakameguro
Lines: Tokyu Toyoko, Hibiya
Access: 8 minute walk from station

Entry: Free

Address: 2-30-6 Kamimeguro, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0051

Hours: 11AM – 7PM
Closed on Sundays, national holidays

Tel: +81-(0)3-3711-4099
Fax: +81-(0)3-3711-4099
URL: http://aoyamahideki.com
Email: a@aoyamahideki.com

A Shared Space for the Next Generation

An interview with Hideki Aoyama
— AOYAMA | MEGURO, NAKAMEGURO

HIDEKI AOYAMA, *director*
Born in Tokyo in 1968. After working at Gallery Takarashi from 1990 to 1995, he started working at Mizuma Art Gallery in 1996. In 2004 he opened Aoyama | Meguro. Following the gallery's move to its current location in 2007, he has been collaborating with architectural unit Sschemata under the name 'happa.'

● *How did you come to work in the art world?*

HA When I was a student I liked to go and see art as a normal art fan, but I was working as a bartender back then. I went to the United States on holiday for about a month, but when I came back, the bar that I had been working at had closed down. The owner introduced me to his friends who were running bars and so on, but I felt it was time to explore other kinds of work. I applied to some galleries and got a part-time job that I kept for four years at Gallery Takarashi. It was that coincidence that eventually led me to what I am doing now: it wasn't like I had always dreamed of working in the art world.

● *What led you to work at Mizuma Art Gallery?*

HA The first gallery that I worked at gave me all sorts of opportunities to go on business trips to France and learn about Impressionism and the Ecole de Paris. However, in the end I lost interest in that type of art. I had become acquainted with a gallery owner in London, and he invited me to work for him as his assistant for three months in 1995. He showed at a lot of art fairs; three months was only a short time but I learned a lot from the experience and began to connect with contemporary art through it. After I came back to Japan, Sueo Mitsuma asked me to help him out at his gallery. I ended up working there for nine years.

● *How did the contemporary art scene change during those years?*

HA Those years were driven by the need for sales. Right now Mizuma Art Gallery is doing really well, but back then the whole contemporary art scene was struggling and the focus of activity was largely on trying to sell. It's only since I left Mizuma Art Gallery in the summer of 2004 that the art market started to pick up.

Last year was the first year that buying contemporary art came to be perceived as a relevant shopping activity and not just a trend. The contemporary art market has increasingly been the focus of the popular media, and even business journals are writing about it. However, this current period of growth is not the same as the 1980s bubble: even if we're hit by another economic recession, the art market is more stable this time around because buying contemporary art has become a more broadly accepted custom in Japanese society.

In terms of trends in art, I couldn't say for sure or make a generalization since trends in the art world are becoming increasingly diversified. However, one thing is that in spite of this diversification of trends, the ratio of high-quality works to low-quality works hasn't changed in the last fifteen to twenty years.

● *What was your experience of setting up your own gallery?*

HA Aoyama | Meguro's first space, which opened in late 2004, was a small, ten-square-meter section of an apartment I was sharing with some friends in Meguro. It was a normal residential area, so at first we only allowed visitors on an appointment basis. We stayed there for about a year, and showed the work of artists Koki Tanaka and Junya Sato, but we didn't really expect many people to come. However, they sent the address out to people they knew, and that led to a surprisingly large number of visitors coming, even some from overseas. At that point I realized that even though a gallery might be very small, it's good for artists to be associated with a specific space because that way, many people will actually contact them and come to look at their work.

● *How did you go from that apartment to this location?*

HA After that first year, we moved to another space behind the Meguro Museum of Art, but immediately after we moved, we were evicted from the building. Never knowing exactly when we were going to be kicked out made it really hard to plan any exhibitions. Instead, artists and people from galleries would come and hang out every day, and that lasted for about a year, during which we did at least manage to hold two exhibitions. When it came to finding a new location, we looked at properties all over the city, and then the real-estate agent told me that there was something available in Meguro. It made sense since I was already based here. I had walked past this building many times in the past—it used to be a delivery company's office—and I always thought the space was great, so I immediately jumped at the chance to move here.

● *How do Aoyama | Meguro and architectural unit Sschemata share the space?*

HA As a collective, we're called happa, and we use this space to show architectural prototypes made by engineers and craftsmen such as lighting equipment and so on—things that people don't usually get to see in the process before mass production. We exhibit

these works not merely as products, but as a sort of installation. At the same time, this space also functions as Aoyama | Meguro, to show the artists that I represent. We have separate offices, but the space itself interchanges between Aoyama | Meguro and happa depending on the event.

● *What kind of art does Aoyama | Meguro handle?*

HA Primarily I work with conceptual art. But it has to be visually interesting at the same time. I say 'conceptual' but more specifically what I mean is that it has to be artwork that doesn't clearly reveal its history or background. In other words, it doesn't matter what media the work is, whether it was made by a Japanese person or a foreigner, whether they are young or old, male or female, dead or alive: I'm looking for artwork that doesn't give these facts away. When the background to the artwork is a mystery, the artist's connections and schooling become irrelevant. Only works of truly high quality can stand up to scrutiny on their own.

● *How did you become interested in conceptual art?*

HA It was back while I was a student. Although I didn't study art, I traveled a lot and saw a lot of exhibitions in Europe and the United States. In 1990, I was in New York, where I saw an exhibition by Vito Acconci. I knew nothing about the artist, but I was deeply moved by his work. I had seen some shows of his in Japan, but the scale of this exhibition was so much bigger and it had a powerful effect on me. One of the pieces on display was a massive sculpture of a bra—so big that you couldn't tell what it was. I only realized that it was a bra later, and then much later, after I had started working in the art world, I realized which specific artwork I had seen that day: *Adjustable Wall Bra*. From the beginning I was attracted to things that are amazing for no apparent reason. I mean, even people who aren't all that interested in art would look at this work and be amazed. I saw this work when I was nineteen or twenty and it still affects the way I work today.

● *How do you find artists?*

HA It's always a very natural process. There have been times when I've built relationships with artists whose artwork I have already seen at an exhibition or art fair somewhere, but those shows wouldn't be the only reason for the connection with them. Seeing their work is only one factor among a continuous series of events that gradually leads to something more significant. I don't specifically go to biennials or art fairs with the intent of finding artists: encounters of that kind have never led to anything.

● *Aoyama | Meguro is part of the 'New Tokyo Contemporaries' group of seven young galleries. How did this group form?*

HA To put it simply, we're all galleries that have opened since 2004. We've just begun and we don't have much of a budget to participate in art fairs, so this collaboration is a form of advertising. Like me, all of the directors of these galleries opened their spaces after working at other galleries in Tokyo, so we've known each other for a while. We've established our galleries based on experience rather than as venture operations. Last autumn we were talking about holding an art fair, but the space we had available is far too small for a full-size art fair. That was how the venues were decided—it was all very impromptu, kind of like a session band. The event itself will not just be a typical art fair with the sole aim of selling, but a curated event with performances and so on.

● *What do you think is the most important approach that these new galleries have to take to push the Tokyo art scene to the next stage?*

HA I think that people simply want to see good art. There are all these works out there that have won art awards and have been shown at biennials and art fairs—it's as if they have been stamped with these badges of merit, but this is not necessarily intelligent art. I would like to contribute to creating a fairer art environment, where truly good art can be shown and can make a direct connection with the audience.

Bidding for a Better Market

An interview with Yoichiro Kurata
— SHINWA ART AUCTION

YOICHIRO KURATA, *president and ceo*
Born in 1965. Having graduated from the Faculty of Economics at Tokyo University in 1987, he worked at S.G Warburg Securities Ltd., Warburg Asset Management and Mace Pearson Asset Management. In 1998 he worked as a financial advisor to the minister in charge of financial reconstruction. In 1999 he became president of Minerva Asset Management. He was appointed president and CEO of Shinwa Art Auction in 2001.

● *Briefly, what is the history of the auction industry in Japan?*

YK After World War II, the Japanese economy was shattered and both the government and the people needed to find ways towards a quick recovery. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry worked to get the people to push up supply, which created demand and kickstarted the economy. This period lasted all the way from 1956, just after the US occupation of Japan had come to an end, to around 1987, the height of the bubble economy.

Up until 1990, the auction market was characterized more by *kokankai*, these 'auction-type sales.' It was an entirely closed affair: members-only, with no note-taking allowed and no publishing of sales results. Dealers would set the market price in that kind of environment.

● *How does that system differ from the way the art market works today?*

YK An open market is better for everyone. If the market remains closed, then prices are set mainly with profit margins in mind. People pay the price and nobody thinks too much; that's what happened in the closed market of the 1980s. *Kokankai* still exist and I suppose they are useful if you really want to sell a work in total discretion, but nowadays you don't see very interesting pieces appearing at them; most dealers prefer the value of the open market, which usually achieves higher prices anyway.

If you think of it in terms of regular consumer goods like cars and refrigerators, the suppliers set the price and the public has to pay it, and yet there's no clear justification for that price. Auctions are different because it's the consumers who set the final price. The auction house holds a preview of the sale, people come and look at the work, and then the bidding establishes the value of the work through open competition.

● *What are your guidelines for fair practice?*

YK In getting consignments, we have to pay equal attention to dealers and galleries. My definition of fair business is that the auction house has to hold the auctions on a regular basis; you need to give people a regular opportunity to buy and sell. As I said earlier, auctions also should be open to the public, with anyone able to attend. The last key principle is that the results of the auction should be disclosed as soon as the event is finished.

● *What has the relationship between Japanese auction houses and galleries been like?*

YK This relationship is very interesting. In the 1990s, Japanese galleries were finding it difficult to survive because of deflation. As a result, some of them shifted their focus to attending foreign art fairs and selling to foreign collectors, and they may also have been consigning works to overseas auction houses.

During this period, many of the art dealers who had been used to the closed market of the 1980s were resistant to

developing any relationships with Japanese auction houses; they were afraid of losing their profit margin. Auction houses only take fifteen percent commission from the buyers and five to ten percent from the consigners, whereas dealers might be making a two hundred or three hundred percent profit on their sales. So at that time, the fledgling auction industry was essentially supported by its relationships with collectors, who were still very keen to set the value of their works in an open market.

● *At what point did galleries become more willing to work with auction houses?*

YK The turning point occurred in 1999, one year after the Asian Financial Crisis.[1] Many Japanese companies had to be nationalized and restructured, and in this process some were even forced to sell off their collections of artwork. Most of these sales were made in the same manner as the closed art market, so nobody could know what the artworks were being sold for and whether the quality was any good. However, a few spectacular works did appear in the auction houses at that time.

The relationship between auction houses and galleries improved after that, because the gallery owners realized that the open market is a more transparent one that allows people to see for themselves what kind of works are being made available. In the past, the gallery world and the auction world were two separate fields of business, but that has completely changed now.

The art market here continued to be in a pretty bad situation until 2003, but since then there has been a lot more cooperation between the two fields, and that has improved the condition of the market enormously.

● *What do you think makes a good collection?*

YK From a personal point of view, the first step in building up a good

1 The crisis began in July 1998, when the Thai baht collapsed after the Thai government decided not to peg its currency to the US dollar. The currency crisis spread throughout the region.

collection is to try to incorporate many different pieces by many different artists. Collectors should look for artists who are important to the art history of their own countries and to the rest of the world. This is the approach I have taken as a collector, but in the future I will probably focus on just one or two artists who I want to support and help increase the value of their work in the market. A good collection should also contain some top-level pieces by each of the artists, and it should reflect the history of their development from the early stages of their career to the present. I think that collectors should also display their collections to the public and perhaps employ a good curator to make the exhibition interesting.

- *As a collector, do you prefer to buy from the primary market or the secondary market?*

YK It doesn't matter so much. Clearly, the primary market is cheaper; buying at auction will usually mean you pay a higher amount to obtain a work than if you had bought it at the gallery it originated from. Auctions do a lot to draw attention to some artists. A certain work may fetch an unusually high price, people get excited about that, journalists and critics may write something about the work at that point, and this makes people consider what they actually think of the work.

- *What kind of qualities do you look for in a specific work, and how do you go about obtaining them?*

YK We look for high-quality pieces; we need a wide range of works from all stages in the artist's career. But this is difficult to achieve. Before the 1990s, most galleries in Japan did not take responsibility for their artists' careers. They didn't keep good records of where works were being sold, and a lot of them closed down after the bubble burst. The result was that many works have become untraceable. Now that galleries actually take good care of their artists, we need to focus on cultivating good relationships with a diverse range of collectors and galleries. For the

art market to work, it needs to be driven by people with a good eye for the work that is out there. That means we need to be part of a network of informed, professional clients, galleries, dealers, collectors and critics. If the reserve prices you set are to be seen as credible, you need to have people's consensus on the value of what you are selling.

● *Have Japanese collectors' buying habits changed over the last fifteen years?*

YK Habits have changed over time. In 1989, the Japanese were the ultimate buyers. They could buy anything; people would joke that if a country went up for sale, the Japanese could buy it! But now people are cautious. Japanese consumers have become very conservative; they bail out at the sound of bad news and are still cautious even when they hear good news from Asia or Europe because they know that good times can quickly fall into bad times again.

● *What are your thoughts on the growth of the Chinese art market?*

YK The Cultural Revolution was on one level very damaging for China, as it led to the death of many of its cultural figures. On the other hand, it shifted all the focus onto production, and so the Chinese came out of that period in the mid-1980s with a really aggressive desire to improve the economy. Everything is very tightly controlled and the country has a strong, unified sense of direction. The strength of China's economy is helping to fuel the rise of the Asian region as a whole, including Japan.

When it comes to the art market, it's a slightly different story: the Chinese have no rules! Chinese contemporary artists bypass the galleries and sell directly to everyone, and that's not good for them in the long term, as they end up spending too much time thinking about how to create their own market. I think that artists should concentrate on making their artworks and leave the business side to the galleries that represent them. The market needs high-quality art, and you can't really get that when artists are only thinking about how to make money.

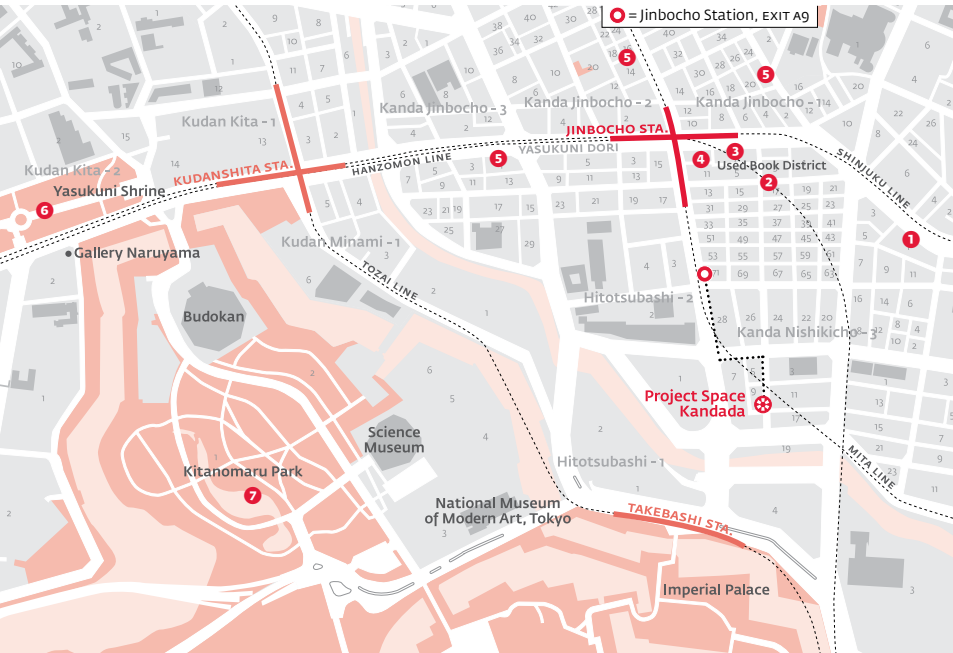
● *Shinwa Art Auction also runs the Shinwa Art Museum. How do you use this space?*

YK Of course, we use the space to hold previews for our auctions, but we also hold exhibitions. We rent it out to people who want to hold exhibitions and events on the understanding that they are contributing to the cultural value of Ginza. This building is owned by a publishing company that really cares about Ginza's status as a cultural center. Recently, an electrical-appliances retailer offered to pay the building owners more than two and a half times the rent in order to take over our office spaces, but they rejected the offer. In the future, we would consider opening a school in order to educate people about the art market.

Project Space Kandada

Project Space Kandada

JINBOCHO / KANDA



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Jinbocho, a jungle of used Japanese books, is a bibliophile's utopia. ① Head into Book Brother for used art and design tomes, or wander ② in and out of the back-alley shops displaying their wares on the ③ street. Café Brazil will delight any coffee lover looking for a serious ④ cuppa joe, and Café Saboru is worth a stop for the wild scribbles on ⑤ the walls. If you're hungry, one of the Imoya branches for *tendon* or *tonkatsu* is never a bad idea. Time permitting it's just a short walk ⑥ up to the controversial but stunning Yasukuni Shrine. Should you ⑦ start to feel tired, the benches along the lake at Kitanomaru Park offer a welcome respite from all the hard edges of city life.

ABOUT THE SPACE

Sitting on the edge of Jinbocho, Project Space Kandada occupies a renovated printing warehouse and feels like a rough cut of the typical white cubes that are so prevalent in the city.

Kandada's simple configuration—the main space with its high ceiling, subdivided by a smaller box—affords it the versatility to stage ambitious large-scale installations together with smaller, more enclosed displays.

Project Space Kandada is founded on a more fluid idea of an art space than most. Run by the nonprofit art collective commandN, the current space moved here in 2005 after several relocations. Deriving its name from the surrounding Kanda area and the Dada art movement of the early 20th century, Project Space Kandada functions as a base of operations for activities that engage with public space and communities in Tokyo and elsewhere in Japan. This approach is neatly summed up in an artwork by Hiroko Ichihara that you may notice on the counter: a small backlit sign on which three characters read '*bijutsuchu*'—'Art in Progress.'

UPDATE: *In April 2010, commandN closed Project Space Kandada and relocated to the former Rensei Junior High School in nearby Akihabara. There, they initiated 3331 Arts Chiyoda, a multilevel art center containing a diverse mix of commercial and nonprofit galleries. Despite the closure of Project Space Kandada, we still highly recommend that you visit the Jinbocho and Kanda neighborhoods.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Jinbocho

Lines: Hanzomon, Mita, Shinjuku
Access: 3 minute walk from exit A9

Entry: Free

Address: Seikosha 1F, 3-9 Kanda Nishikicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Hours: 12PM – 7PM
Closed on Sundays, Mondays

Tel: +81-(0)3-3518-6176
Fax: +81-(0)3-3518-6177
URL: http://commandn.net
Email: kandada@commandn.net

Plugging into Public Space

An interview with Masato Nakamura & Shingo Suzuki

— PROJECT SPACE KANDADA, JINBOCHO / KANDA

MASATO NAKAMURA, *director*

Born in Akita in 1963. He graduated from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music with a BFA in 1987 and and BFA in 1989. He now teaches there as an assistant professor. He formed the nonprofit art collective commandN in 1998. He has organized and exhibited in a diverse range of exhibitions, including *Akihabara TV* and the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001.

SHINGO SUZUKI, *artist*

Born in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1966. Graduated from the Department of Graphic Design at Tama Art University. As a member of commandN, he is involved in running Project Space Kandada. His artwork deals with the relationship between society and the individual and has been included in exhibitions organized by commandN, such as *Akihabara TV* and *Sukima Project*.

● *How did commandN begin?*

MN The starting point came in 1997, when I returned to Tokyo after having been in Hong Kong for ten months. That year I participated in the *Sleeping Beauty* exhibition at the Ueno Royal Museum, where I had the opportunity to interview a lot of people. The conversations we had got me thinking about the Tokyo art scene and how artists can engage with the city.

At that stage I already had Akihabara in mind as a place to work. I had this image of doing a project called *Akihabara TV* in which we would take over all the video and TV monitors in the area. It was in considering who to collaborate with that I spoke to Shingo about it, and around five or so people joined us at that stage. I found a property that would work very well as our base of operations, smack bang in the middle of Akihabara in Suehirocho, behind what is now Rensei Junior High School.

That place was so dirty that we had to put a lot of effort into cleaning it. Through the process of renovating the space and creating the gallery, we formed a sort of unity or collective consciousness, which I wanted to give a name to. I had this image of leaping forward, and that's where commandN came from—you press 'command' and 'N' on your computer keyboard and a new window opens. The name primarily refers to this ongoing collective of people, but since the space we were working in at the time was so small—no more than the size of a single parking space—we called it commandN Cube.

● *What was the idea behind Akihabara TV?*

MN The original idea came to me while I was in South Korea in 1995. There's a market in the Cheonggyecheon area of Seoul that is basically the Akihabara of Seoul; it looks like something out of *Blade Runner*. One day they were showing an NHK broadcast of a sumo tournament on one of the TVs there. It was being shown live, but occasionally the image would get interrupted or go fuzzy. When I saw that, I noticed that the hardware and the broadcasted image

were out of synch. I had thought that all images being shown on TV were protected by law and maintained properly as legitimate television, but you can receive the same signals in neighboring countries too. Realizing that there's actually quite a lot of freedom with that kind of technology, I thought it would be interesting to take over TV monitors in an electric town like Akihabara or Cheonggyecheon and install images we created ourselves. By changing the images being displayed on all this hardware, you could completely transform the town. The first *Akihabara TV* took place in 1999.[1]

● *The logistics of making such a project happen must have been incredibly difficult. How did the electric companies react when you approached them about it?*

MN It wasn't good. There's a labor union called Akihabara Electrical Town Organization, which consists of the directors of about four hundred stores in Akihabara. They were skeptical at first. But we managed to do a presentation in which we introduced the work of a variety of artists who were committed to Tokyo and who we thought were interesting.

However, just getting that presentation together at a technical level was really hard to pull off. For the first installment of *Akihabara TV*, we were using really cumbersome analog methods to edit our videos: we rented a stack of video decks and started to copy the artworks to VHS cassettes, but later when we checked, we found none of them had actually copied properly! I had to start all over.

By the second time around,[2] people had begun to understand how interesting the project was, and we were able to attract more money. So we decided to give the project a more international vibe and asked some foreign curators to collaborate and recommend artists to us.

1 The first *Akihabara TV* was held from February 27 to March 14, 1999.

2 The second *Akihabara TV* was held from March 16 to 29, 2000.

- *How did you go from being based in Akihabara to opening Project Space Kandada in Kanda?*

MN After commandN Cube, in 2000 we did a project in which we moved our office and gallery space into SCAI The Bathhouse for three weeks. Making that move was a lot of hard work. After that we moved to a building called House Akihabara back in Akihabara, where the Laox computer store building is now. From 2002 there was a one- or two-year hiatus during which we didn't own a space and I answered calls in my own office. We then moved to this current location in September 2005. 140

- *How come you kept moving from space to space?*

MN Rent was a factor, but more importantly it was also a problem of people's attitudes towards our projects. We were gradually beginning to be seen as this alternative space, and a lot of people came to us with proposals and artworks, which made us more and more dependent on the gallery space. We were beginning to get tired of this dependency. Plus, the building was owned by Chiyoda Ward, meaning that people perceived us as this artist group that worked for free. That's not a bad thing, but at one point it felt like we were a division of the municipal ward. We removed ourselves from that as a way of regenerating.

- *Why did you choose to run commandN as a nonprofit organization?*

MN Whether we were operating in public or private spaces, our concepts and aims were always fundamentally about art and culture, and like *Akihabara TV*, a lot of our projects were very open to the public. In this light, I felt it was better for the projects not to be commercial. Of course, as an independent artist I make artwork for money but I also thought that it was very important to present the function of art in the city through working as a group and not for individual profit. Whatever project commandN works on, it's about a variety of artists presenting their work in the same conditions on equal terms rather than in a hierarchical structure.

● *What do you think commandN's role or function is in the Tokyo art scene?*

MN I think it's important to question what people define as the 'art scene'—is it based on galleries and museums? I think people perceive the art scene mostly in terms of finished artworks, which is usually all they are able to see. The process of the artwork's creation and the artist's agonizing is rarely ever exposed, so I felt it was necessary not just to show artists' work but also to create a place where students and the other people who create the art scene can get together. It's in circumstances like this that something 'real' is bound to happen. We need to reestablish the art scene by including all those anxieties and mistakes. I held a lot of guerilla exhibitions and so on in the early 1990s and through those experiences I've thought a lot about what it is to rebel against the art scene. I realized that the goal is not to climb up the preexisting structures, but to develop the art scene with your own hands. Of course there are times when this doesn't work, but I think that we should accept commandN as a succession of those concepts that don't necessarily work every time. We hold very experimental exhibitions, and a lot of artists have grown from that.

SS I agree. Masato invited me to join commandN when I was working by myself after graduating from school. When I decided that I wanted to make art and enter the art world, I didn't have a clue what to do—should I go around galleries or museums? Were there any cafés where people like me would gather, anywhere where I could meet likeminded people and hear interesting stories? When Masato invited me, I had this hunch that a lot of people—not just artists—would probably join this project to exchange information and create a movement together. Members of commandN view their collective role as that of a hub that connects two or more things or places together. You can meet artists and people from other genres through us. We're basically playing a similar role to that of galleries and museums but showing that they aren't the only entities that can achieve this.

● *What do you consider to be a successful project or exhibition?*

MN With museums, I think that it depends a lot on the project itself and which artists have been chosen. With us, of course what we show is very important too, but the process of thinking about how to create art with other people is considerably more significant than the actual act of showing artworks. A successful exhibition isn't just about the number of visitors. For *Akihabara TV*, a lot of people came because it was in a public area. We brought a lot of people together, which made it an extremely effective project in terms of our initial role of being a hub. More recently, we've been taking our projects to obsolete towns with the aim of stimulating regeneration, and this in turn helps creativity flow back to the residents. We're trying to give back to towns and cities through our artwork. Success isn't when an artist exhibits a good piece of work; it's when voluntary ideas and creativity are given the opportunity to grow.

SS Our goal isn't to draw in customers and sell work. It's to try to effect some sort of change through our exhibitions or projects, something that should endure beyond the end of the exhibition. People will look at the work, and hopefully it will change the way they think, or lead them to take some sort of action. Unless an artist's exhibition leads to a next step, I don't think there's any point in producing art.

● *Do you receive any financial support from the Tokyo government to realize your projects and exhibitions?*

MN Our space is made possible through support from the government, other foundations and the owners of this building, and although it's not much, it's enough to run this organization. However, we're now at a stage where we have to think more about how to raise funds by ourselves. The issue is how this organization can survive by getting a certain amount of profit while also maintaining the quality of our work, which is essential.

Usually people involved in group activities like us only survive for about two or three years; they are really passionate in their twenties but by their mid-thirties they get tired and focus on how to support themselves financially.

● *The activities you carry out in public space are fairly rare for contemporary Tokyo; decades ago there used to be much more artistic interaction with public space, whereas there is barely any now. What do you think has changed?*

MN I think the 1950s and '60s were an era in which art became completely in synch with society's feelings of rebellion against the system, whereas now there isn't that clear focus of resistance. So-called avant-garde people in the 1950s were walking down the streets with mohicans, but people do the same thing today as a fashion statement.

This process of generalization has also applied to the way society makes urban space itself, and the service sector as well, especially in areas such as nursing care. Elderly people lie in the interior, private space of their bedrooms at home, but then the nurses will come to their houses and enter those private spaces; these days there are many services like this that consist of outsiders entering private homes. Of course, this phenomenon isn't limited to Japan, but I find it interesting to consider contemporary Tokyo in terms of the 'surface' and the 'interior.' For example in Akihabara, even though you are outside you can identify what kind of shops are on each floor of a building simply from all the signs stuck on its façade. In places like Akihabara, interior space is clearly evident from the outside, whereas if you're in Otemachi looking at a glass-covered building, you have no idea what's inside. The strength of boundaries between interior and exterior space has always varied, but over the last few years these boundaries have blurred.

● *How do you think the Tokyo art world has changed in the past fifteen years?*

MN Before the widespread emergence of commercial galleries, the gallery scene in Tokyo mostly consisted of rental spaces, largely in Ginza. They've always been very expensive, although there was some variation in prices among them. In one sense, it's good that rental galleries keep things relatively neutral and dependent only on the artist paying money, but generally speaking I don't like how obvious the steps to success are: you rent out a gallery, do a show and then maybe you eventually get to exhibit at a museum. From the 1980s onwards, people in my generation gradually began to establish commercial galleries in areas other than Ginza; Tsutomu Ikeuchi's Roentgen Kunst Institut was a highlight of the time. Many more interesting commercial galleries appeared in the 1990s, and galleries began to nurture artists rather than merely sell their work. Gradually, people have been using rental galleries less and less; they still exist, but not in the numbers they used to.

SS There were hardly any alternative spaces when we started out, but now it feels like there are many more. Previously, artists would rent out galleries, but now I think that rather than saving money to do that, young artists should share a space together and try to rent out studios or even manage a space by themselves. This sort of self-motivated action is very evident these days.

MN It's fun to take risks and create something from scratch, rather than do something in a protected environment, right? It's much more stimulating to create an alternative path by yourself. Unfortunately too many young people today think that success is a solo exhibition in a commercial gallery followed by showing their work at a museum. That's not the be-all-and-end-all of art.

Tokyo's Art Scene Today: The Power Napping of Art Showing

by Eric Van Hove

I liken Tokyo to a black hole. Having entered modernity with a gigantic explosion, it then started to collapse into a fascinating, fast-spinning, bulimic and invisible urban gravity that consumes and processes its surrounding realities: time, memory, cultural behaviors, TV programs, languages, fashion habits, architecture and much more. Contemporary art, a Western institution that has elicited global enthusiasm, is not immune. It too is sucked into the black hole of Tokyo along with many other spiritual and material realities.

After studying Japanese classical calligraphy for five years under Master Hideaki Nagano, I slowly came to ponder this phenomenon: while the practice of calligraphy comes from China, contemporary art comes from the West. If practicing calligraphy in Japan partly consists of copying the Chinese classics over and over in an effort to learn from the source, then contemporary art embodies a similar form of 'copying' of the Western modus operandi. What look like unknown paintings by Picasso can be found in suburban museums; they turn out to have been recently made by Japanese painters. Why would the art scene and museum structures be any different?

Perhaps because nothing exits a black hole, few galleries of international reach are found in Tokyo. Young, motivated Japanese artists soon find it easier to head elsewhere, leaving behind them a void in the cultural landscape. At a typical gallery opening in

Tokyo, the vast majority of the crowd will consist of a number of designers and public-relations agents from the fashion industry—people who find in the art scene fertile ground for mingling their brand with the art halo.

In a similar fashion to the Cartier Foundation in Paris, Agnès b, Prada, Shiseido, Hermès and other fashion brands in Tokyo all boast art showrooms in their flagship stores. Here, dandies congregate around contemporary artworks sipping cherry-flavored champagne, but where are the insubordinate artists? These are the people we need to generate nonprofit venues and form a real scene. How does this colossal city develop its art scene without them?

By October 2007, Tokyo Art Beat tracked and listed 400 art events a month in Tokyo. Many of these events take place in hybrid spaces such as shops and department stores, design galleries and rental venues. On the other hand, the great many private and public museums in Tokyo are heavy, inflexible structures. In contrast to Shigeru Ban's Nomadic Museum, a temporary structure of recyclable and reusable elements set up in Odaiba to house Gregory Colbert's *Ashes and Snow* photography exhibition, conventional institutions remain relatively aloof to the mood of the urban Nipponese rhythm and the global shifting realities that frame it.

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For better or worse, while Takashi Murakami's Neo Pop "Disney on amphetamines"[1] both learned from and usurped the urban culture dynamics of Tokyo with an eye to the outside world, the same can hardly be said about art institutions in this city, even though they could probably learn some tricks from the city's dweebie-style psychedelic clubs, wireless Internet centers and pachinko parlors. If Murakami's Mr. Dob is Mickey on steroids, I can't wait to see a similarly techie museum structure that manages to connect the city drift with the architectonics of art display.

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Tokyo offers many local gallery spaces that are tucked into

1 Murakami is rightly criticized in Yoshitaka Mouri's 'Subcultural Unconsciousness in Japan,' in *Popular Culture and Globalisation in Japan*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, Routledge, 2006.

residential areas and apartment buildings. They are at times generous and enthusiastic, but their sphere of influence is limited and tends to be disconnected from the outside world. Aside from these, there are the dozen or so internationally oriented Japanese commercial galleries that take part in international art fairs. These galleries are what they are, and show what they show, but there isn't anything particularly engaging or visionary in their endeavors: there are hardly any political, ecological, educational or social messages detectable in the work that they promote.

Besides public initiatives like the clumsy Métro Musée[2] of East Japan Railway Co. or the infamous Tokyo Wonder Site of Tokyo's nationalist Governor Shintaro Ishihara, embassies, cultural institutes and exchange centers such as the Goethe and Franco-Japanese institutes serve as temporary art spaces. Venues such as these usually turn out to be the palliative solution to the lack of sharp and free-minded art venues in developing countries from Myanmar and Syria to Senegal, so their presence in Tokyo is another indication that something here is lacking.

Sadly, art universities remain largely entrenched, consanguine and poorly networked environments, unable to significantly broaden their activities outside their walls and contribute more fully to the Tokyo art scene.

Some organizations are proposing interesting solutions to this lack of flexible exhibition space. For example, in addition to its curatorial courses, Arts Initiative Tokyo has on several occasions held the *8 Hour Museum* and *16 Hour Museum*, a series of art events set up in temporary locations under the idea of a museum defined more by time than by space. CommandN's Project Space Kandada also offers an alternative approach to exhibition goals. And there have been a number of biennial-type transdisciplinary events created through a process of direct interaction and communication from within urban realities, such as Jun Miyagi and Titus Spree's

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2 http://metromusee.com/

Wanakio,[3] a project in Okinawa that addresses the transformation of society and the urban environment triggered by globalization and the ubiquitous process of modernization.

As an artist living in the city for many years to research classical Japanese calligraphy, I clearly couldn't avoid being anywhere but here. Consequently, my practice slowly adapted itself to the rules of Tokyo's urban scheme: transience, impermanence, precariousness, networking, annexation, foreignness, wirelessness and adjustability. I came to understand that these were the walls and the ground on which my work would have to be shown in order to be both critical and pacesetting, and to some extent, I would argue that these are the true art spaces in Tokyo.

After using Buddhist temples, embassy swimming pools and cherry blossoms as exhibit spaces for site-specific, eclectic and barely categorizable installations, my latest attempt to draw on my knowledge of the city and make a critical consideration of its schemes was to develop an experimental, transitory and subversive art platform that I named *Off the Record*.[4]

Tokyo has a number of locker systems that users can lock and unlock using a touch screen and their cellphone numbers as digital keys. In this initiative, the locker becomes a satire of the gallery space. The artist, publisher or member of a collective places an artwork or some other likely proposition into one of the dozen or so lockers selected for the event and passes the show on to the next person by choosing a number from their cellphone address book to enter as the combination code. This initiates a chain reaction guest list—a game of 'Chinese whispers' as it were.

While entirely hosted within public space, *Off the Record* nevertheless remains private and known only to invitees. As a show, it is designed to function as a parasite feeding off of more established exhibitions taking place in the city and is timed to share

3 http://wanakio.com/

4 http://transcri.be/projects/offtherecord.html

the same opening date. I invite some of the artists taking part in these shows, which in turn draws in other art-world figures.

The first occurrence of this 'high-tech and low-life' initiative took place in a Sega video game arcade in Shibuya in May 2006 simultaneously with the opening of *Africa Remix* at the Mori Art Museum,[5] with such artists as Federico Herrero, Lara Baladi, Ahmad Nadalian, Ana Prvacki and Sue Williamson, and guest curators such as Simon Njami, Nathalie Anglès and Tran Luong taking part.

My concurrent hope was also to drive the art crowd to commingle with people typically disregarded by their community, such as Shibuya's Lolita maid girls, cyberpunk mafia dandies and video-gaming technopagans. In December 2007, the project occurred at Shimbashi subway station during the Pipilotti Rist solo exhibition
16 at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art. This time, the marginalized, alienated loners I wanted the art-goers to encounter were the Tokyo homeless.

The different levels of possible interactivity ranged from Lara Baladi's piece being hijacked by art students who flooded the locker with their portfolios, to North Korean artist Soni Kum using the locker as a drop-off library where users would be able to consult photocopies of state-censored press materials and publications from both North Korea and Japan.

The displayed propositions and artworks are editable and entirely at the mercy of the viewer, who, usually alone with the piece, is able to alter it in any way he or she wishes before inviting the next person. This is similar to the Heian Period sequential collaborative tanka called *renga* (linked poem), a popular poetry form for many centuries. The initial proposition of the artist could hereby stand for the opening stanza of the renga chain, called the *hokku*, the forebear of modern haiku; the confined dimensions of the locker as an exhibit space tend to give proposed interventions a haikulike proportion.

5 *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*, held from May 27 to August 31, 2006.

Since I came to Japan to learn Japanese calligraphy, hoping to receive substantial influence from it, the *Off the Record* structure implicitly sent me back to the *Lantingji Xu*, the most famous work of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi, made in 353. This is how poems were composed during this legendary meeting at the Orchid Pavilion:

> Wine cups were floated down a small winding creek as the calligraphers sat along its banks; whenever a cup stopped, the man closest to the cup was required to empty it and write a poem. In the end, twenty-six of the participants composed thirty-seven poems.[6]

The grove of the ancient past here becomes the Sega video game center or the subway station, while the meandering stream is the cellular circuitry or the rivulet of communication flowing between viewers. Opening a locker, one is metaphorically and tacitly required 'to empty it and write a poem.' While in the end feedback in the form of self-documentation is made by the user himself via cellphone snapshots sent by email and subsequently uploaded onto the project's website. Like a delayed flash mob, participants in the project can mail whatever additional information they like to the next person they invite to the 'exhibition.' In theory, once started, this locker exhibition may continue indefinitely. It is said that there are only six degrees of separation between us and any other person on Earth.

6 Kraus, RK; *Brushes with Power*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991, p 27.

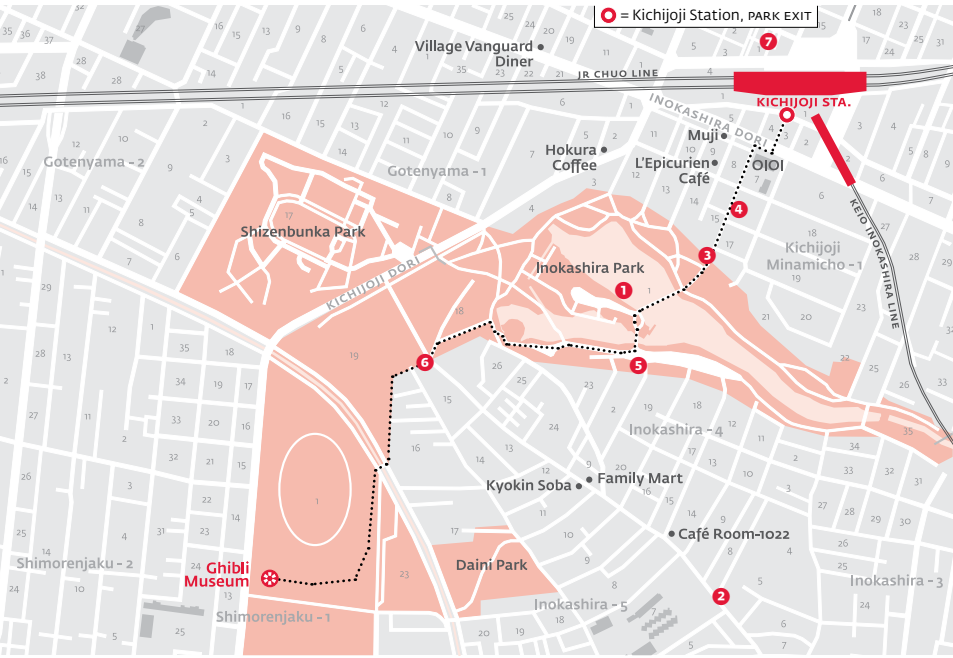
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1975 in Guelma, Algeria. He was educated in Cameroon, Belgium and Japan. He received his BA from the ERG in Brussels, his MA in traditional Japanese calligraphy from Gakugei University in Tokyo and his PhD in contemporary art from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He has been based in Tokyo since 2001. He has exhibited internationally and held artist residencies in New York, Jordan, Israel, Iran and China.

Ghibli Museum

Ghibli Museum

KICHIJOJI / MITAKA



IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

① Sundays are best for seeing Inokashira Park at its liveliest—the park teems with street performers, musicians, manga readers and flea ② markets. The neighborhood just south of the park, where the suburbs eventually turn into farmland, is a wonderful place to stroll and house-gaze on a sunny afternoon. Food stops include a cold beer and ③ ④ some *yakitori* at Iseya, a Japanese take on Indian curry at Oh! India, Thai ⑤ ⑥ eats in the park at Pepacafé or a galette in the woods at Café Du Lièvre. ⑦ Don't be deceived by the gaudiness of the covered shopping streets just north of the station: nestled within their jumble are bars, jazz cafés and small galleries worth searching out.

ABOUT THE SPACE

The Ghibli Museum, opened in 2001, is quite possibly the most attractively placed art space in Tokyo. The museum recommends arriving via Mitaka Station, but we suggest approaching from Kichijoji Station. The walk from the bustling park exit of Kichijoji, down its crowded, narrow shopping alleys and into the woods of Inokashira Park is as enchanting as the animated works of Studio Ghibli. Founded by Hayao Miyazaki in 1985, Studio Ghibli is the production company behind anime classics such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke* and *Howl's Moving Castle*. Fans of these fantastical works will smile as they wander past the old wooden structures hidden away at the end of the lake or make their way through the almost pathless woods—classic Miyazaki territory brought to life.

Tucked into the far end of the park, the museum slowly emerges from the woods. Inside you'll find a world of narrow spiral staircases, elevated walkways and stained-glass windows. We highly recommend spending a full day taking in the museum and the surrounding neighborhoods. Maybe it's just us, but the museum brings out that childlike wonder that Miyazaki's films are famous for.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Station: Kichijoji
Lines: Keio Inokashira, JR Chuo
Access: 15-20 minute walk through Inokashira Park from the Koen (Park) exit of Kichijoi Station.

Entry: Adults ¥1000,
middle & high school students ¥700,
elementary school students ¥400,
preschoolers 4 and older ¥100,
children under 4 free

Hours: 10AM to 6PM
Closed on Tuesdays
Advanced ticket sales through kiosks at Lawson Convenience Stores only.

Address: The West Park of Inokashira Park, 1-1-83 Shimorenjaku, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo

Tel: +81-(0)570-055777
URL: http://www.ghibli-museum.jp/
Email: post@ghibli-museum.jp

From the Woods of Mononoke to the Woods of Mitaka

An interview with Kiyofumi Nakajima
— GHIBLI MUSEUM, KICHIJOJI / MITAKA

KIYOFUMI NAKAJIMA, *managing director*
Born in 1963, Oyama City, Tochigi Prefecture. After graduating from the University of Tokyo with a degree in economics, he entered Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp. In April 2004, he became associate director of Tokuma Memorial Cultural Foundation for Animation, which manages and operates the Ghibli Museum. He became managing director of the Ghibli Museum in June 2005.

● *How did the Ghibli Museum get established?*

KN When *Princess Mononoke* was released in 1997, there was an exhibition of original illustrations held at the same time in Tokyo. That exhibition drew in a lot of visitors, which led Hayao Miyazaki and Toshio Suzuki, the producer, to think about setting up a museum. The aim was to create a museum that would allow people to relax and feel at home, somewhere with a bit of personality, a place that would be appealing to children but treat them sensibly without patronizing them. We don't want there to be anything pretentious or arrogant about this place. We came upon Inokashira Park through Mitaka City when we were looking for a place to build the museum. Studio Ghibli used to be located near here, situating us close to where Miyazaki produced illustrations when he was young. After three years of preparation, we opened in October 2001.

- *What do you aim to achieve with the temporary exhibition space as opposed to the permanent exhibits? Is it a challenge to keep people coming to the museum when it is largely dedicated to a permanent exhibit?*

KN We don't bring in pre-completed exhibitions to the Ghibli Museum. We always curate unique exhibitions and make sure that all of the items on display are suitable to each space. It's been seven years since we opened, but Miyazaki, in his capacity as the museum head, has added items to the permanent collection. We rotate the exhibits on a regular basis so as to avoid displays from becoming stagnant and uninteresting to return visitors.

- *How do you keep the exhibits interesting to adults as well as children?*

KN Miyazaki often says that displaying 'real things,' actual objects, appeals to children and that this also works with adults. We curate exhibitions so that children will find them truly interesting, instead of just trying to placate them. We believe that by doing so, we can provide children with something fun that will stimulate and satisfy their curiosity while intriguing adults at the same time.

- *To what extent is the Ghibli Museum a part of the broader Tokyo art world? Does it keep to itself or is it part of the network of other galleries in Tokyo?*

KN We don't have that much interaction with other museums, but there have been a couple of opportunites to work with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. Kazuo Oga worked for many years as the artistic director for Studio Ghibli's films, creating background imagery for works like *My Neighbor Totoro*. We helped organize a big exhibition of his work last year.[1] The curators of the Ghibli Museum participated in everything from the planning to the selecting of works and arranging the exhibition space. There will be another exhibition at the same museum this summer, and we're involved as extensively with that exhibition's organization as we were with the last one.

1 *Kazuo Oga* exhibition was held from July 21 to September 30, 2007.

- *Does Hayao Miyazaki's work fit into the typical category of anime, or would you say it is art? What is the difference between manga/anime and art?*

KN I don't regard Miyazaki's works as being the same as 'typical anime' that are made with foreign export in mind from the beginning. Miyazaki says that his works are a form of entertainment that can be enjoyed by many people, that he inserts his own ideas into the creation process but that he does also think about how to make a profit out of it. I think of art more as being the work of people like the Russian filmmaker Yuriy Norshteyn, who doesn't think about making money and creates films without compromise.

- *What do you think manga and anime's influence is on contemporary art?*

KN I think that contemporary art is something that comes to be evaluated by later generations. There's not much that we, living in the same time that it is being made, can really say about it.

- *Why do you think manga and anime have suddenly exploded in popularity in the US and Europe over the past five or so years?*

KN That's just media hype. I didn't feel that manga and anime were widely accepted by the general public when I went to Europe, so at least from my own experience I find it hard to believe that its popularity is exploding.

- *What do you think of the Japanese government using manga and anime's popularity as a way of promoting 'Japan Cool'?*

KN I think Japan has much cooler things than anime and manga! If the government is going to position anime and manga as an important part of Japanese contemporary culture, I'd like to see it offer more financial support to the industry.

- *Do you think manga and anime can successfully be created by non-Japanese people?*

KN I don't know much about manga, but there are some high quality animated films made elsewhere in the world and there will

be more. The sad thing is that there aren't many opportunities in Japan to see them. The Ghibli Museum has previously held exhibitions showcasing work by Pixar from the United States and Aardman Animations from the UK. We also run a distribution business that introduces high-quality animated films from other countries. Being an animation museum, I'd like to continue showcasing good films, regardless of the country they come from.

● *How has the manga and anime industry changed over the past fifteen years?*

KN With the declining birthrate and aging population, the target of manga and animated films has shifted from children to adults, meaning more content of a violent and sexual nature. In terms of the domestic industry, we've generally seen a hollowing out of human resources.

● *Why do you think that is? Does the Ghibli Museum have any strategy to help promote the profession?*

KN The past decade has seen a lot of reports in the media that the anime industry is all hard work with little pay, so that has probably put a lot of people off. Also, nowadays everyone has their own computers that are capable of producing high-quality work, so there's a whole generation of people who have the ability to produce work on their own without needing to enter the industry.

This is supported by the development of online video websites where anyone can upload their work and share it with everyone else. These technologies allow people to create their own material but it has also facilitated the increase of illegal copies, which violates the creators' rights. Whichever way it is used, the growth of technology and the Internet has undermined the anime industry. The Ghibli Museum doesn't have a strategy as such to promote the industry. I simply want the children who come to this museum to enjoy their time here. But it would make me very happy if as a result of what they see here, they are inspired to create anime and enter the industry.

Takashi Murakami: Tokyo Impresario

by Roland Kelts

I first saw Takashi Murakami's art in the form of his sculpture called *Hiropon*: a wide-eyed girl-woman with massive breasts swinging a stream of lactating milk like a jump rope around her skipping body. The torso and legs were lean and athletic, the breasts comically huge. The milk looked nearly lethal—more a bondage device of rippled eaves than a stream of life-enhancing liquid.

Hiropon's sparkly oversized eyes above a pert and tiny nose at first struck me as too self-consciously borrowed from anime cliché. But upon closer inspection, I realized why they were making me increasingly uneasy: blank white orbs of reflected light sat just off-center, adding a hint of Orphan Annie inscrutability to the colorful swaths surrounding them. Viewed from other angles, their vapidity could look menacing.

She was cute, even sexy by way of hyperbolic parody. But she was also, quite possibly, deranged.

I was new to Tokyo then, but discovering Hiropon in an otherwise unremarkable western suburb made perfect sense. Tokyo had already become for me a city in which stumbling upon the tantalizing amid the mundane had itself become commonplace.

A few days later, I learned that *hiropon* referred to amphetamines—in particular, the uppers consumed by Japanese laborers during Japan's postwar reconstruction. The word was also a street name for heroin.

Murakami has since become well known internationally as a bridge between Japan's contemporary pop culture imagery—largely via manga, anime and toys—and its contemporary art and fashion scenes—largely via ample commercial success in the former and rampant commercialism in the latter. He has also become something of an impresario, presenting contemporary Japanese artists to the global art market via Tokyo and New York, and offering provocative theories in order to both explain and brand them for consumption. That he has shrewdly and strategically positioned himself as such naturally arouses some criticism and probably more than a little resentment, but neither response seems to bother Murakami, whose recent self-portrait appears in the form of an overweight and sleepily self-satisfied statue called *Oval Buddha*.

Murakami originally called his production companies and teams of assistants in Tokyo and New York "Hiropon Factory"—a brazen and somewhat sly nod to Andy Warhol, for Murakami has his commerce-tweaking work reproduced not only for the high art market, as Warhol did, but also in the form of everyday products such as key chains, toys, figurines, T-shirts and posters. Now a formalized organization channeling the flow of money and art in and out of Japan, his Kaikai Kiki Co. has expanded dramatically overseas, recently moving from an old warehouse in Brooklyn into a larger and more functional space in Long Island City, Queens, and hiring several new staff members over the past few years.

"Takashi's basic lament has always been that there is not much of an art market in Japan," says Murakami's New York publicist, Joshua Weeks. "[Kaikai Kiki] is in New York because it's the center of the art world, not because it's about Japan or Japaneseness."

The Takashi Murakami who has been opening major shows in Los Angeles, New York and Europe is a seasoned businessman, unabashedly so. Newspapers gleefully call him "the artist as CEO," and complaints arose from the usual suspects in 2003 when he accepted Luis Vuitton designer Marc Jacobs's invitation to brand

the company's famous brown handbags with the smiling colorful flower icons of earlier Murakami paintings.

Murakami has also almost single-handedly opened Tokyo to the buyers, critics and fans of the global art circuit. With his own aesthetic whims as guidance, he selects and helps to cultivate the careers of Japanese artists such as Chiho Aoshima and Mr., both of whom now work in the newly constructed artists' studio space in Queens. Through his GEISAI Art Fairs in Japan, Murakami hopes to open the Tokyo art world to the ambitions and achievements of the city's native artists. "In the West, you [already] have your galleries and exhibitions," Weeks adds. "But in Japan it's much less rigidly defined. Takashi's fairs are to stimulate buying and selling and to get young artists exposed. He's trying to establish an art market for less established figures."

So who is the real Takashi Murakami? A skillful huckster, spinning shallow art and consumerism into a capitalist enterprise and shoving it back at the West at inflated cost? A middle-aged, postmodern hipster with a native knack for blending high and low in the name of the now that rivals Madison Avenue's brightest? Or a bit of both—plus a genuinely serious trained craftsman who is able to convey today's Japan in all of its cartoonish identities and show the West what it wants to see therein?

Those of us who've lived and worked in Tokyo may see less reason to begin asking these questions or even raising debate, for Murakami is very much of and about the city in which he still spends most of his time. His oft-cited boilerplate theories—'superflat' as a culturally specific aesthetic style and 'little boy' as a culturally specific historical pathology—are better personified in the city of Tokyo than anywhere else in the world.

Superflat is hardly new, but it is handy—a single word to summon images of sleek computer monitors and flat-panel TV screens while suggesting a historical lineage of respectability and mystique. Japanese artists' relative emphasis on the manipulation of the line, or the outline of shapes and forms, for effect over the

shading techniques (classic chiaroscuro) of depth perception and perspective pursued by Western artists is an example of superflat that can be traced back to the *emakimono* picture scrolls of the 12th century. The Japanese have always seen and conveyed the world in this way, according to Murakami, and now, with our addictions to streaming Internet videos, computer games, cellphone and LCD screens, so do the rest of us.

When I was forced to describe the contrasting views of New York and Tokyo from above (an airplane porthole window) in my book *Japanamerica*, I used the following metaphors. New York, with its rising stone skyscrapers and falling avenue valleys in gridlike order, its shapely rivers and natural contours and stolid burnished lights, appeared to me as a jewel below, elegant and sturdy, clearly defined as it reached up toward you, beckoning calmly. Tokyo, by contrast, with endlessly circuitous patterns seeming to follow their own Byzantine logic, an uncertain relationship with the sea (an artificial island in the middle of the bay?) and red lights and neons blinking neurotically and sleeplessly seemed more like a computer chip, a tangled mass of somehow interlocking devices that never revealed a start or a finish yet continued to course on endlessly.

From above, New York is all about rising and falling, foreground and back, the space between the Empire State Building's mighty spire and the broad dark magnificence of 5th Avenue at its side. Gazing down over Tokyo, I can rarely identify a single street, building or neighborhood. Instead there is the seemingly endless, and very flat, expanse of the urban.

As above, so below. Stroll down Broadway from upper Manhattan. Unless you're a native, and thus too frenzied and focused to pause, you'll be taking time out to view the balconies and turrets, the forceful thrust of buildings like the Flatiron, or the cavernous gaps of courtyards behind iron gates. Light and shadow blast you and lure you in.

In Tokyo, the casual visitor is awash in light. Buildings assert themselves, to be sure, surrounded by narrow alleyways that are

barely visible in the glow. But it's hard to notice them amid the action on the street—flashing signs inviting you to all-night *izakayas* (food and drink bars), karaoke bars, hostess clubs, fast-food counters and noodle shops. They envelop every train station, so where you are matters less than the fact that you are there. Wherever you alight in the city of Tokyo, this is what you expect—and this is what you get. Superflat.

Is it any wonder that Murakami greets us with the proliferating mushroom clouds of the only nation struck by nuclear bombs, that he sends us flowers of power with quizzically broad smiles, that his drugged up, dazed and giddily mindless Hiropon has vast breasts, mammoth milk—and an unnervingly aggressive desire to please?

Superflat is a clever word for an artistic approach that may well have been historically amenable to Japanese tastes. And Murakami may be at least partly right in suggesting that an accidental convergence is taking place in the 21st century, making manga, anime, fashion, high-and-low and East-and-West more blissfully confused and connected than before. To paraphrase the Vapors: Maybe we are, in this manner, "turning Japanese."

Murakami's "little boy" theory—that his nation has for sixty years learned to become servile to Western interests and developed the appropriate resentments and related irreverence—is a psychohistoric aesthetic of wounded pride and disfigured ambition.

To pursue, but not embrace, his positing of America, and the West, as big brother, I still think it's helpful to look directly at Tokyo.

I have a personal stake in this vantage. My mother is Japanese. And while she was born in Tokyo, she was raised in northern Japan, first in the village of Esashi, later in the small city of Morioka.

If you visit either Esashi or Morioka today, you will find little of the combined deference to, worship and disenchantment with the West that colors Murakami's vision. Despite enduring harsher economic conditions than those in Tokyo, local citizens in those communities act with sincere beneficence—and also a sincere sense of cultural differences. They don't expect non-Japanese to

behave like the Japanese do, hence they seem more provincial to the international traveler. At the same time, they don't harbor the vindictiveness or self-loathing inherent to Murakami's best work. They are neither buried in Western icons nor burdened by American soldiers. No wonder.

Little Boy makes most sense in Tokyo. Where else in the world would a capital city boast as its landmarks crude copies of other cities' landmarks? Among the first: Tokyo Tower, a crass copy of Paris's Eiffel Tower. In Odaiba, Tokyo's high-tech artificial island: a crass replica of the Statue of Liberty. And in Shinjuku, heart of Japan's domestic business class, a dark, featureless and nearly uninhabited telecom tower modeled on the Empire State Building.

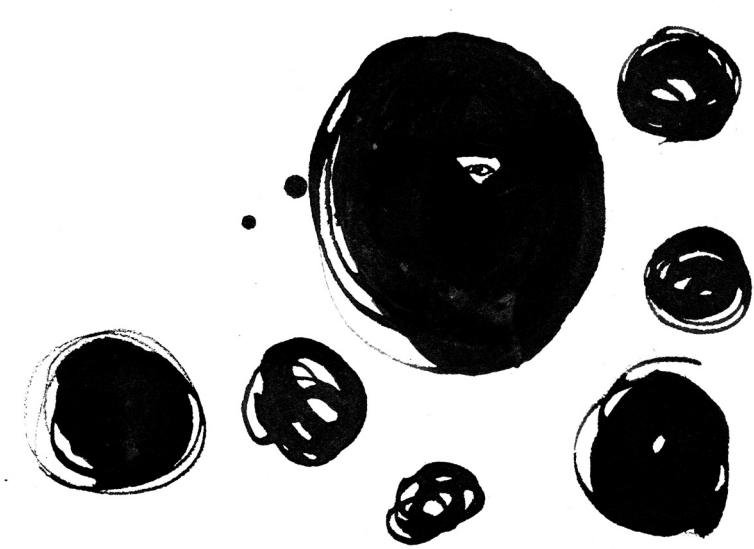
None of these structures possess the grace and elegance of their more storied sources. But perhaps that's the point.

Takashi Murakami then becomes a crucial artist because he is emblematic of Tokyo—a city that thrives on imitation and self-betterment, and an Asian enclave of the new artists of our still newish century. His shrewd business sense and apparent nonchalence towards mass production seem to me emblematic of a city that needs to copy before it knows itself. His historical contexts are mostly accurate—but also beside the point. His position as an impresario is necessary. We all need bridges, great ones and poor ones, to get to where we're going.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roland Kelts is a half-Japanese American writer, editor and professor who divides his time between Tokyo and New York. He is the author of *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture has Invaded the US*, published in English and Japanese, a professor at the University of Tokyo and the University of Sacred Heart Tokyo, an editor of the New York-based literary journal, *A Public Space*, and a columnist for *The Daily Yomiuri*. His writing appears regularly in several publications in both the US and Japan.

Endmatter



Appendix A: Terms

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

A style of painting that emerged during the 1940s and '50s, pioneered by artists based mainly in New York. The term covers the dynamism of 'action painting' as typified by Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning and the calm of 'color field' works by Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman.

ARTE POVERA

A term coined by Italian art critic and curator Germano Celant in 1967. Literally meaning 'poor art,' the artists associated with this group explored the unrestrained use of media other than painting.

AVANT-GARDE

The French term for 'advance guard' or 'vanguard,' meaning to be 'at the forefront.' Avant-garde art refers to work that pushes conventional boundaries of mainstream social values.

BAUHAUS

Operating from 1919 to 1933, a German school of art and crafts founded by Walter Gropius. Its aesthetic became highly influential in the fields of architecture and furniture design in Western Europe, Israel and the United States.

BUBBLE ECONOMY

Japan's bubble economy of the 1980s was characterized by rampant speculation and banks issuing risky loans, which drove Japanese equity and real-estate markets to astronomical price levels. The bubble burst at the turn of the decade, leading to severe recession during the 1990s.

BUTOH

Also known as *Ankoku Butoh* (Dance of Complete Darkness), butoh is a style of dance pioneered by Tatsumi Hijikata in the late 1950s as an exploration of man's primal energy and a criticism of society and culture. Usually characterized by dancers performing almost nude and wearing white body make-up, butoh can range from jerky, visceral bodily expression to almost imperceptibly subtle movement.

CONCEPTUAL ART

A broad range of artworks produced during the 1960s in which the ideas behind the work are primary in conveying their message to the viewer, in rejection of the conventional art object. Key conceptual artists include Joseph Beuys, Yves Klein, On Kawara and Yoko Ono.

DADA

Emerging simultaneously in Europe and the US during World War I, the Dada artists had a cynical attitude towards bourgeois social values and ridiculed culture and traditional forms, believing them to be the root causes of the war. Artists associated with the movement include Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray.

FLUXUS

The Latin word for "to flow." Founder George Maciunias used it to describe a loose network of artists, poets, composers and designers who were engaged in experimental forms of art, music, poetry and performance art in New York and West Germany during the 1960s and '70s. Key figures include John Cage, Yoko Ono and Shigeko Kubota.

GUTAI

Active from the mid-1950s to 1972, the Gutai Art Association *(Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai)* was a group of artists based in the Osaka-Kobe region. Led by Jiro Yoshihara, their work was as diverse as it was unusual: Kazuo Shiraga wrestling with mud, Saburo

Murakami running through large layers of paper, and Atsuko Tanaka's dress constructed out of fluorescent tubes are some of the group's most well-known works.

HAPPENINGS

A term initially coined by American artist Allan Kaprow in 1959 to describe actions and theatrical events performed by artists with audience participation. Like the **PERFORMANCE ART** that developed after it (focusing less on theatricality and more on artists' actions), it is usually documented through photography and video.

IMPRESSIONISM

A painting movement begun in the 1860s, made up of artists such as Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Auguste Renoir who paid close attention to subtle changes in light and went against convention by painting with small, opaque daubs of paint rather than thin, translucent layers.

INFORMEL

'Art Informel' was a term used by French art critic and dealer Michel Tapié to describe a wide variety of abstract painting spanning several countries during the 1940s and '50s and emphasizing the use of 'material' and 'gesture.'

LAND ART

Projects, often large in scale, undertaken by several US artists since the late 1960s. Most prominent was Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a fifteen-hundred-foot-long coil of rock, earth and algae protruding into the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Particularly large works such as this are also known as 'Earth Works.' By making works outside of the gallery, which were often eroded by natural phenomena, the Land Artists attempted to counter the perception of art as an acquirable commodity.

MEDIA ART

New-media art incorporates the use of new technologies, including the Internet, computer graphics and animation.

MINIMALISM

Works of art, music and design that are stripped down to their bare essentials. Developed in the United States in the 1960s, minimalist artworks are typically simple geometric two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and are considered in part a reaction against ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM. Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Robert Morris are some of the movement's most well-known artists.

MODERN ART

Modern art began with Gustave Courbet and Pablo Picasso in the early 20th century and had the connotation of 'contemporary art' at the time. After World War II, there emerged a need to distinguish 'modern art' from 'contemporary art' for aesthetic as well as institutional reasons. Definitions of contemporary art can vary from post-1945, to post-1960, sometimes even post-1980.

MODERNISM

An approach to art, architecture and design that rejects past art forms in favor of constant innovation. The term has been applied to the succession of art movements from the mid-19th century to the end of the 1960s.

MONO-HA

Literally meaning 'School of Things,' this group of artists was active from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. They sought to challenge pre-existing perceptions of material and space by juxtaposing a wide range of natural and manmade materials—left as far as possible in an unaltered state—to allow materiality to speak for itself, almost entirely free of artistic intervention.

NHK

Nippon Hoso Kyokai, the Japan Broadcasting Corp., Japan's public television and radio broadcasting corporation founded in 1926.

NIHONGA

Literally 'Japanese painting,' it is in effect 'Japanese-style painting' developed after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to counteract the emergence of Western-style YOGA. It follows conventions and techniques of traditional Japanese painting, using mineral pigments or ink bonded with animal-hide glue on Japanese *washi* paper or silk.

PERFORMANCE ART

Originating from HAPPENINGS, the use of the body by an individual artist or group of artists to create an artwork as an action at a particular time at a particular place. During the 1960s, key performance artists included Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys and Yoko Ono.

POP ART

Made famous by artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Peter Blake, Pop art was a 1950s and '60s US and British movement that took imagery from popular and commercial culture—be it celebrity icons, action hero comics or multicolored targets. Their works were a reaction against ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM and MODERNISM and heralded the onset of POSTMODERNISM.

POSTMODERNISM

An intellectual climate in which it was felt that new, original AVANT-GARDE work could no longer be produced. Postmodernism was a reaction against MODERNISM and applies to art, literature, philosophy, architecture and criticism. It rejects the notion that reality can be subjected to objective, scientific categorization, positing instead that it is constructed by human understanding and interpretation.

PRIMARY MARKET

The market that handles the first sale of an artwork, composed mainly of commercial galleries that represent artists' interests.

SECONDARY MARKET

The market for the reselling of artworks after their initial sale, including auction houses.

STABLE

A term that gallery owners use to refer to the artists they represent.

WHITE CUBE

The great majority of exhibition spaces in galleries and museums are white-walled, boxlike spaces, designed to be as neutral a display environment as possible.

YOGA

Literally meaning 'Western painting', *yoga* was an art form that made use of the Western oil painting techniques that poured into Japan following the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Western-style painting that predates the Meiji Restoration is known as *yofuga*. *Yoga* continues today, largely emulating the work of the IMPRESSIONISTS.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS (YBAS)

A group of artists recognized since the late 1980s for their diverse range of multimedia works. Iconic works such as Damien Hirst's shark in a tank of formaldehyde, Tracy Emin's dirty bed and surrounding detritus, and Chris Ofili's images of the Virgin Mary incorporating elephant dung were both highly controversial and commercially successful.

Appendix B: Places & Events

ARCUS

Launched in 1995 by the Ibaraki Prefectural Government, ARCUS is primarily an artist-in-residence program, but it also organizes exhibitions, workshops, lecture series, concerts and film screenings.

ART AWARD TOKYO

Held from April to May each year at the Gyoko Chika Gallery in Marunouchi, this is an exhibition of works chosen from the graduation exhibitions of the major art colleges in Japan, and awards are given to the most outstanding artists.

ART BASEL

A major international art fair for modern and contemporary works, held every June in Basel, Switzerland. It features nearly three hundred top galleries from every continent. More than two thousand artists are represented in the show's multiple sections.

ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH

The sister event of Switzerland's Art Basel, this is the most important art fair in the United States, held every December.

ARTS INITIATIVE TOKYO (AIT)

Established in 2000, AIT is a nonprofit organization that offers courses on curating, art history and media. It runs an artist-in-residence program and organizes experimental exhibitions and events as well as artist and curator talks.

BANKART

BankART 1929 and BankART Studio NYK are two buildings in Yokohama used for artist-in-residence programs and exhibitions that are supported by Yokohama City.

DASHANZI

Also known as 798, this area of former factories in northeast Beijing has been a major focus of the Beijing contemporary art world since 2002, with many artist studios and galleries opening up there.

DESIGN FESTA

Started in 1994 and held twice a year at Tokyo Big Sight, Design Festa is an art event open to all artists who want to exhibit their work.

DOCUMENTA

Founded in 1955 and held every five years in Kassel, Germany, documenta is a highly prestigious art event that brings together modern and contemporary art from all over the world, including much site-specific work.

FRIEZE ART FAIR

Held every October in Regent's Park, London, this art fair was conceived by the founders and publishers of art magazine *frieze* and showcases more than 150 international galleries.

GEISAI

An art fair/festival held twice a year at Tokyo Big Sight since 2002. It was set up by Takashi Murakami with the aim of reinvigorating the Japanese art market.

IMOARAIZAKA GALLERY BUILDING

Opened in April 2003, this building was occupied by Taro Nasu Gallery, Weissfeld-Roentgenwerke AG, Ota Fine Arts, Gallery Min Min and hiromiyoshii (whose space was later taken over by Magical Artroom). It closed in February 2008, and the galleries relocated to various parts of Tokyo.

INTERCOMMUNICATION CENTER

Opened in April 1997, this art center in Nishi Shinjuku showcases and archives new-media art, including virtual reality work and interactive technology.

KAGURAZAKA GALLERY BUILDING

From 2005 to 2008, this former printing warehouse housed Takahashi Collection, Kodama Gallery, Yamamoto Gendai and Yuka Sasahara Gallery. In January 2008, Kodama Gallery and Yamamoto Gendai relocated to the SHIROKANE GALLERY BUILDING and their spaces were taken over by Mori Yu Gallery and Yuka Sasahara Gallery, respectively. Yuka Sasahara Gallery then relocated to Kanda in 2009, and its former space in Kagurazaka is currently occupied by Ohshima Fine Art.

KAIKAI KIKI CO.

Founded by Takashi Murakami in 2001. With offices in Tokyo and New York, this art production company manages and promotes artists, organizes GEISAI and produces art-related merchandise and animation.

KIYOSUMI-SHIRAKAWA GALLERY BUILDING

Since 2005, this former warehouse building has housed Tomio Koyama Gallery, hiromiyoshii, Shugoarts, Taka Ishii Gallery and Zenshi. Zenshi relocated to Kanda in 2009.

LISTE

Begun in 1996, this is a satellite art fair to Art Basel that focuses on young galleries and young artists.

MARUNOUCHI ART WEEKS

Begun in 2008 and spanning late March to mid-April, this is a three-week-long series of events taking place in and around the Marunouchi area of Tokyo. It incorporates Art Fair Tokyo, ART AWARD TOKYO and the NEW TOKYO CONTEMPORARIES, as well as programs at surrounding galleries and museums.

MORI ART MUSEUM

Opened in October 2003 on the 53rd floor of the Mori Building in ROPPONGI HILLS, this museum was founded by Minoru Mori, President & CEO of the Mori Building Co. It was Japan's first museum to have a Western director, David Elliott, who was succeeded by Fumio Nanjo in November 2006.

MUSASHINO ART UNIVERSITY

Founded as Teikoku Art School (Imperial Art School) in 1929, renamed Musashino Art School in 1948 and then renamed Musashino Art University in 1962.

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, TOKYO

Opened in 1995 in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa; designed by Takahiko Yanagisawa. The museum's permanent collection comprises approximately four thousand works.

NADA

Founded in 2002, the New Art Dealers Alliance is a nonprofit collective of professionals working with contemporary art that aims to foster a stronger sense of community within the art world by bridging the gaps between large galleries to small spaces, nonprofit and commercial alike. The NADA art fair is held in December in Miami.

NATIONAL ART CENTER, TOKYO

Opened in January 2007 in Roppongi; designed by Kisho Kurokawa. This museum has no permanent collection; its 14,000 square meters of exhibition space are rented out to third-party organizations for temporary shows.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, TOKYO

Established in 1952 in Kyobashi. Reopened in its current building (designed by Yoshihiro Taniguchi) in Kitanomaru Park in 1969.

NEW TOKYO CONTEMPORARIES

An association of seven of Tokyo's commercial galleries that have opened since 2004: Aoyama | Meguro, Arataniurano, Misako & Rosen, Mujin-to Production, Take Ninagawa, Yuka Sasahara Gallery and Zenshi.

ROPPONGI ART TRIANGLE

An area of Roppongi defined by three museums opened since 2003: the MORI ART MUSEUM (2003), the NATIONAL ART CENTER, TOKYO (2007) and the Suntory Museum of Art (2007).

ROPPONGI HILLS

Centered around the 54-floor Mori Tower, this commercial and residential complex was constructed by Mori Building Co. in 2003. The MORI ART MUSEUM is located on the 53rd floor.

SHCONTEMPORARY

Begun in September 2007 in Shanghai, this is the leading international contemporary art fair of the Asia-Pacific region, featuring 130 invited galleries.

SHINKAWA GALLERY BUILDING

From January 2003 to its closure in 2005, this building was occupied by Tomio Koyama Gallery, Taka Ishii Gallery, Shugoarts and a viewing room run by Gallery Koyanagi. Several of these galleries relocated to the KIYOSUMI-SHIRAKAWA GALLERY BUILDING.

SHIROKANE GALLERY BUILDING

This building opened in January 2008 with Kodama Gallery, Yamamoto Gendai and Takahashi Collection's second space after the KAGURAZAKA GALLERY BUILDING. In April 2009, Takahashi Collection closed its Kagurazaka and Shirokane spaces, and reopened them as a single, larger space in Hibiya. Nanzuka Underground took over its Shirokane space.

SUPERDELUXE

A popular bar, club and event space in Roppongi run by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham of Klein Dytham Architecture.

TAMA ART UNIVERSITY

Founded as Tama Imperial Art School in 1945, it changed its name to Tama Art and Design School in 1950. Renamed Tama Art University in 1953.

TOKYO BIG SIGHT

Opened in 1996. Formally known as the Tokyo International Exhibition Center, located in Odaiba. Built by a number of contractors, the conference tower is distinctive for its four inverted pyramids.

TOKYO DESIGN WEEK

Taking place in late October to early November, Tokyo Design Week takes over the Aoyama, Gaienmae and Shibuya areas with a myriad of exhibitions, events and parties. It incorporates the separate events Tokyo Designer's Week, 100% Design Tokyo, Design Tide and Swedish Style, bringing together both professional and student displays.

TOKYO MIDTOWN

Opened in March 2007, this ten-hectare complex of six buildings in Roppongi, including Tokyo's tallest building (until the opening of the Tokyo Sky Tree in 2011), was built by real-estate company Mitsui Fudosan. It houses stores, restaurants, offices and hotels, including the Suntory Museum of Art.

TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

Established in 1872, the museum moved to its current location in Ueno Park in 1882. It is the oldest and largest museum in Japan and has a collection of 110,000 archaeological objects from Japan and Asia.

TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS AND MUSIC

Formerly two institutions, the Tokyo Fine Arts School and Tokyo Music School, both founded in 1887. Merged in 1949 under its current name.

TOKYO WONDER SITE

Opened in 2001. A government-backed organization with exhibition spaces in Shibuya, Aoyama and Hongo that seeks to support emerging artists through residence programs.

YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE

First held in 2001 and taking place from September to November, the Yokohama Triennale features artworks by around sixty to seventy selected artists from around the world, encompassing a broad variety of media, including site-specific works.

Appendix C: Resources

WEBSITES

Art Fair Tokyo — Tokyo's largest art fair
http://artfairtokyo.com/en/

ART iT — Bilingual companion website to *ART iT* magazine
http://art-it.asia/

Artscape Japan — Monthly English-language art magazine
http://www.dnp.co.jp/artscape/eng/

Japan Times, arts section — Weekly articles & exhibition reviews
http://japantimes.co.jp/entertainment/art.html

Jean Snow — Tokyo art, design & pop culture blog
http://jeansnow.net/

Kansai Art Beat — Bilingual event listings for the Kansai region
http://kansaiartbeat.com/

Metropolis — Cultural event listings, articles & reviews
http://metropolis.co.jp/arts/art-reviews/

Nadiff — Tokyo based art & design bookshop
http://nadiff.com/home.html

New Tokyo Contemporaries — association of seven young galleries
http://newtokyocontemporaries.com/

Néojaponisme — Broad-based cultural analysis of Japan
http://neojaponisme.com/

PingMag — Articles & interviews relating to design
http://pingmag.jp/

PingMag Make — Weekly interviews with Japanese craftsmen
http://make.pingmag.jp/

Realkyoto — Cultural event listings & articles for Kyoto
http://realkyoto.jp/

Realtokyo — Cultural event listings & articles for Tokyo
http://realtokyo.co.jp/

Shiftblog — Hokkaido-based Japanese art & design blog
http://shift.jp.org/en/blog/

Snow Magazine — Tokyo art & design magazine
http://snow-mag.com/

The Tactical Museum — Roger McDonald's art blog
http://rogermc.blogs.com/tactical/

Tokyo Art Beat — Bilingual event listings for Tokyo & around
http://tokyoartbeat.com/

BOOKS

Kaneko, R. and Vartanian, I., (2009) *Japanese Photobooks in the 1960s and '70s*, Aperture Foundation

Kelts, R., (2007) *Japanamerica: How Japanese Culture Has Invaded the U.S.*, Palgrave Macmillan

Lindemann, A., (2006) *Collecting Contemporary*, Taschen GmbH.

Munroe, A., (1994) *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky*, exh. cat., New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Tucker, A., (2008) *The History of Japanese Photography*, Yale UP.

MAGAZINES

ArtAsiaPacific — English-language Asia-focused art magazine

ART iT — Bilingual quarterly art magazine for Japan & Asia

AXIS — Bilingual design magazine

Brutus, Feb 15, 2008 issue *'Suisui Wakaru Gendai Ahto'* — Special art issue (Japanese only

IDEA, 2007, *'Design of Kenya Hara'* — Bilingual issue on Japanese designer Kenya Hara

An Abbreviated Chronology of Events in the Tokyo Art World

2010	commandN closes *Project Space Kandada* and opens 3331 Arts Chiyoda
2009	*ART iT* magazine ceases its print version, becomes a web-only publication Takahashi Collection relocates to Hibiya TKG Daikanyama closes
2008	101Tokyo Contemporary Art Fair launches First New Tokyo Contemporaries event held Imoiraizaka Gallery building closes Shirokane Gallery building opens Global Economic Downturn
2007	*National Art Center Tokyo* opens *21_21 Design Sight* opens *Suntory Museum of Art* opens *Aoyama	Meguro* relocates to present location
2006	*Tomio Koyama Gallery* opens TKG Daikanyama SCAI × SCAI opens
2005	NICAF relaunches as Art Fair Tokyo Kagurazaka gallery building opens *Gallery Koyanagi* relocates to present location *Project Space Kandada* relocates to Kanda
2004	*Nakaochiai Gallery* opens *Aoyama	Meguro* opens *Tokyo Gallery* relocates to present location Tokyo Art Beat launches
2003	*Mori Art Museum* opens Imoaraizaka gallery building opens Shinkawa gallery building opens *ART iT* magazine launches
2002	*Sagacho Exhibit Space* closes GEISAI #1 held
2001	*Ghibli Museum, Mitaka* opens Arts Initiative Tokyo established *Tokyo Wonder Site* established First Yokohama International Triennale of Contemporary Art held

2000 Realtokyo.com launches

1999 First *Akihabara TV* event held
Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery opens

1998 commandN opens *Project Space Kandada*
Gallery éf opens

1997 Asian Financial Crisis

1996 *Tomio Koyama Gallery* opens

1995 *Gallery Koyanagi* reopens as a contemporary art gallery
Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo opens
Shinjuku I-Land public art project completed
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography opens

1994 *Mizuma Art Gallery* opens
Taka Ishii Gallery opens

1993 *SCAI The Bathhouse* opens
Touko Museum of Contemporary Art closes

1992 NICAF launches
Wako Works of Art opens

1991 Japanese economic bubble bursts
Roentgen Kunst Institut opens

1990 *Watari Museum of Contemporary Art* opens
Art Tower Mito opens

1989 Shinwa Art Auction established
Shiraishi Contemporary Art Inc. established

1988 *Gallery Koyanagi* opens
Touko Museum of Contemporary Art opens

1983 *GA Gallery* opens
Sagacho Exhibit Space opens

1979 *Hara Museum of Contemporary Art* opens

1970 Expo '70 held in Osaka

1969 *Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo* relocates to present location

1964 Tokyo Olympics

1952 *Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo* established
US occupation of Japan ends

1950 *Tokyo Gallery* opens

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Preface, wayfinding notes, neighborhood and art space descriptions by Craig Mod and Ashley Rawlings

ARTWORK

Cover illustration, *Tokyo by Chome* by Craig Mod
Profile and art space illustrations by Nobumasa Takahashi

INTERVIEWS

Mahiro from *Gallery éf* by Manami Kamikawa, October 2007
All other interviews by Ashley Rawlings, winter 2007–2008

TRANSLATIONS OF INTERVIEWS AND ESSAYS AS FOLLOWS

Yuko Enomoto: *Ryutaro Takahashi, Fumihiko Sumitomo*
Manami Kamikawa: *GA Gallery, 21_21 Design Sight, Gallery éf, Aoyama | Meguro*
Lisa Kato: *Ikko Suzuki & Kirara Kawachi*
Darryl Jingwen Wee: *Hara Museum*
Lena Oishi: *Project Space Kandada, Aoyama | Meguro*
Ashley Rawlings: *Gallery Koyanagi, Tetsuya Ozaki, SCAI The Bathhouse, Misa Shin, Tokyo Gallery +* BTAP*, Ghibli Museum*
Tomomi Sasaki: *Watari Museum, Ghibli Museum*

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Those Responsible for the Look, Feel and Voice of What You Hold in Your Hands

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Nobumasa Takahashi's atelier is located in a house in Itabashi Ward. It is old and lovingly called the "*Ba-chan* (grandma) House." When you pitch a project to him there, he will offer you delicious chocolate. As you eat that chocolate, you will feel a draft creep between the loose floorboards. He will scrutinize you—brush in hand—but he will like what he sees and hears, and he will grace your project with his beautiful illustrations.
http://www.bamboolove.com/

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