

PANEL 1: FICTION DISRUPTION

For Your Words, I Shall Rip Out Your Tongue

Ryan Holmberg, Yale University

Shirato Sanpei began his manga epic *The Legend of Kamui* in 1964 beaming with faith in the figure of a rational individual who--with a careful technocratic intellect, a pure heart, and a most utopian vision of society--can perhaps overcome the contradictions of seventeenth century society. Most important to this figure will be the faculties of discourse. Shirato will pit this ideal against a totalitarian regime that rules by brute force and corruption. But by the closing chapters of *The Legend of Kamui*, published in 1971, it is clear that the ideal has had its day. It will not be enough to declare its failure. The ideal must be disfigured: the power of representation through language must be stripped.

This paper will in part frame this development in the work of Shirato Sanpei within the contemporary discourse of so-called “discommunication.” The term was used by a number of Japanese writers in the 1960s, and though specifics varied, each was concerned with the breakdown of private interpersonal exchange and of the practices of effective rational, transparent, and egalitarian deliberation promised by postwar democracy. Manga of the late 1960s was similarly concerned. But not all manga could handle the dissolution of this ideal of the speaking subject by displacing it, as did Shirato Sanpei, through historical allegory. This paper will close by looking at one short but famous work, Tsuge Yoshiharu’s *Nejishiki* of 1968, a work more sensitive in registering the specifics of the limits of language as perceived in the latter 1960s and showing that discommunication concerned also the codes of narrative discourse in manga.

What Is It Love?

Cathy P. Steblyk, Pennsylvania State University

Imura Takahiko’s 1962 experimental short film, *Ai*, translated *Love*, is an introspective engagement with heterosexual coupling. Imura’s work transcends Japanese narrative film grammar in his monochromatic study of human landscape that combines extreme close-up shots with sped-up long shots of two bodies geographies in order to disrupt typical diegetic patterns of classical romance story. Accompanied by Yoko Ono’s soundtrack of “shhhhhh” and public noise recordings, the film is, among other accomplishments, part neo-realist grainy documentary of the human organism, part new wave exploration of the ambiguity of dissection and identity, and part communication.

This last vector, of the sliding and gripping act of communication, which is not only that between the two on-screen unidentified bodies, but also the communication between the subject and audience, is the focus of this paper. I will argue that the affective dimension of such Japanese avant-garde production in the early sixties relies on idea and emotion and sensation experienced viscerally and individually, otherwise left incommunicable through other systemic and symbolic channels. In addition, while this work of sensual art is never coldly resolved to only one semiotic or media, be it visual, auditory, or tactile, so that communication occurs in diffuse ways, I will also raise the questions of the reconstituted modernist subject and perspectival authority. Finally, in relation to other avant-garde

performance, art, and poetry by Japanese artists of this period on the theme of love and sexuality, such as those by Ono, I will show how Imamura's work incorporates and transfers the observer through several media, through breathing and being, into the sensual system of the work in a neo-avant-gardist fashion that also points the way toward what later one might describe as a new neo-avant-garde.

The Silver Screen's Translucence

Steve Clark, Carleton College

Amid an era of politically charged cinema and hope that engaged films could alter consciousness if not actually mobilize the masses, Terayama Shūji began making films that demonstrated the ethereality of the medium--both its ineffectiveness when conceived as a political end in itself, and its material intangibility. One material property of cinema he returns to repeatedly is the semi-transparency of the silver screen itself, an interest he explains in interviews as arising when he was a high school student living in his uncle's large theater in Aomori City.

This often overlooked property of film develops over the course of Terayama's experiments into a register of meaning, or at least a cite of inquiry into the legitimacy of claims to cinema's indexical relationship to the profilmic moment, or to Bazin's notion of an ontological link between photographic image and reality. The opening scene in his first feature film *Sho o suteyo machi e deyō* (Throw out your books, let's get into the streets, 1971) mocks assumptions about the illusionism of cinema by having the protagonist speak as though he were actually behind a transparent screen. We are certainly entranced by films, but cinema never tricks us into thinking we are looking at real people--quite the opposite, actually, our consciousness of the reality of actor's existence in everyday life is typically effaced.

Many of Terayama's film experiments involved hybridizing screenings into partial performances, possibly to remind audiences of the real-time and partially improvised theatricality of the moment of filming. In this talk I will attempt an analysis of Terayama's interrogation of the silver screen, the potential its transparency holds, and how it might be historicized to the 1970s.

PANEL 2: EPHEMERAL IN THE 1960S

Off Museum: Staging Ephemeral Art in circa 1964 Tokyo

Midori Yoshimoto, New Jersey City University

Beginning in the late 1950s, Japanese avant-garde artists, represented by collectives Gutai Art Association and Kyūshū-ha, often rejected the confined environment of museums and galleries, and moved outdoors to present their multimedia installations and performances. The idea of expanding the sites for artistic expression was furthered in the early 1960s by several key artists. Shinohara Ushio and others of the Neo-Dada Organizers; Katō Yoshihiro, Iwata Shinichi, and others of Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension); Nakamura Hiroshi and Tateishi

Kōichi of Kankō Geijutsu Kenkyū-sho (Institute of Tourist Art); Akasegawa Genpei, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō of Hi Red Center; and Ono Yoko all actively furthered the movement, although their contributions have not yet been explored fully. With a focus on the recently rediscovered film *Some Young People* (directed by Chiaki Nagano in 1964) which documents many of the artists above, this paper investigates the socio-political landscape of ephemeral art in Tokyo and the artists' intentionality in staging their subversive art in public.

The year 1964 marks striking transitions in Japan's postwar economic development and avant-garde art. As the Tokyo Olympic Games held that year projected a successful and happy Japanese society, rapidly recovering from the damages of World War II, the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition (so-called *Anpan*) was terminated. The loss of this annual jury-free exhibition, held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1947, dampened the spirit of young artists whose outlet of radical artistic experimentation was primarily limited to *Anpan*. Subsequently, artists sought alternative venues for their exhibitions and performances. *Off-Museum*, a week-long series of outdoor performances and an exhibition organized by Shinohara, was one of the early attempts by artists to replace *Anpan*. By examining details of this *Off-Museum* project through Nagano's film and other documentation, this paper also explores how artists strove for public attention and engagement.

Dispensing with Art: Nengajō and Gutai Art Practice

Ming Tiampo, Carleton University

As with many artists in Japan, Gutai artists sent hand-made *nengajō* (New Year's cards) to their friends and contacts every year. Until now, these cards have been ignored by art historians and at best considered part of the group's documentation and material culture. This paper will introduce a set of *nengajō* from the collection of Yamazaki Tsuruko, and argue that the cards should be interpreted as an integral part of the Gutai project which not only sheds light on mainstream Gutai practice, but also establishes the *nengajō* as an early precursor to mail art with its own creative vocabulary and investments.

In particular, this paper will examine the role that *nengajō* played in breaking down the barriers between art and life in Gutai by forcing artists to think of their artistic production as part of a social exchange embedded in the everyday-ness of mail, the interactive, multi-sensory nature of opening it, and the social obligation of responding to it.

Finally, this paper will consider the importance of *nengajō* to the 1962 Gutai Card Box, a "vending machine" from which the artists dispensed small works resembling *nengajō* to exhibition viewers. Reading the Gutai Card Box as an attempt to frame the significance of Gutai *nengajō* in an exhibition context, I will argue that the Gutai Card Box was both a result and exegesis of the relationship between *nengajō* and Gutai art practice.

Encounter vs. Event: The Cultural Habitus of "Non-Art" in Japan, Circa 1970

Mika Monique Yoshitake, University of California-Los Angeles

The debates surrounding the artistic practices of the latter half of the 1960s to the early 1970s in Japan have centered on speculations around the avant-garde's institutionalization. What

becomes evident by the early 1970s is the emergence of a “Non-Art” practice in the work of two seminal art groups, Mono-ha (School of Things) and Bikyōtō (Artists Joint-Struggle Council). Despite their distinct expressive modes, their work produced a symbolic shift in the field of postwar Japanese art through ambitiously engaging the line between art and non-art and testing the very issues that sustained the field: namely, aesthetics and institution.

Taking Mono-ha’s *Relatum* (1969) by Lee U-Fan and Bikyōtō’s *Floor Event* (1970-71) by Hikosaka Naoyoshi as departure points, I will discuss the self-critical condition of artistic “practice” through the artists’ theoretical strategies of “encounter” and “event” respectively. I draw from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s main thesis from *The Logic of Practice*, in which he argues that in our understanding of “practice” we must make possible a reflexive return to subjective experience and the objectification of objective conditions of that experience. That is, practice informs one’s disposition for and external conditions of that practice, and as a result determines one’s habitus. In Mono-ha’s case, Lee U-Fan in particular, sets the terms for re-evaluating the historical genesis of art through dismantling the imposition of established (modernist) values such as meaning and expressivity through the aesthetic experience of “encounter.” In Bikyōtō’s case, Hikosaka problematizes the historical institution of art and the status of the artist through the idea of the “event.” Together they enable the possibility of the cultural habitus of “Non-Art” that not only tests the boundaries of art/non-art, but strengthens the autonomy of the field of contemporary Japanese art itself.

An Immaterial Condition of Dematerialization in 1960s Japan

Reiko Tomii, Independent Scholar

The “dematerialization of art object” is one of the dominant tendencies in global art since the 1960s. In Japan, this fundamental break away from the age-old conventions of painting and sculpture was critically termed Anti-Art (*Han-geijutsu*) and Non-Art (*Hi-geijutsu*), the two concepts constructed against the modernist notion of *geijutsu*, or “Art” with a capital A. These two movements unfolded over the 1960s, which in Japanese art history can be understood as spanning from 1954 to 1974, respectively marked by the foundation of Gutai and the “no-activity” pact of Bikyōtō.

Among many impetuses behind Anti-Art and Non-Art, the institutional aspect--especially the lack of the support system for contemporary artists--has received at best cursory reference in art-historical and art-critical literature but has seldom been examined in detail. However, if the increasing commodification of art compelled New York artists’ search for dematerialized practices, the commercially rewardless situation profoundly informed the experiment of their Japanese counterparts. Not only did this inherently immaterial (non-commercial) condition liberate vanguard artists from the shackles of Art in their individual practices; but this environment, in which “showing” took precedent over “selling,” also fostered collectivism among them and stimulated creative exhibition strategies that breached the traditional wall that separated art and society. In some cases, artists actively sought not a financial reward but a reward in the form of publicity, staging sheer spectacles in the public sphere while verging on pure exhibitionism.

It may not be an exaggeration to state that the ephemeral in 1960s Japan manifested itself in an ephemeral context. This paper will explore this local phenomenon through a few

notable examples: Ushio Shinohara's actions, the collective anonymity of Group "I," and Nomura Hitoshi's conceptual photography.

PANEL 3: ART AND THE GROWING NATION

The "Mexico Boom" in the Japanese Art World of the 1950s

Bert Winther-Tamaki, University of California - Irvine

Modernist and avant-gardist art in Japan in the 1950s has typically been narrated in relation to Europe and North America, whether as the expression of influence, opposition, or indigenous otherness. However, a striking encounter with Mexican art in 1955 played a catalytic role in the articulation of a stronger Japanese stance in the globalizing milieu of contemporary art. The "Mexico Boom," as it was termed, was triggered by *The Great Mexican Art Exhibition* in 1955 at the Tokyo National Museum, an unprecedented display of 1500 objects including Mayan and Aztec monuments (represented by large replicas), ancient pottery figures, and colonial Mexican art, as well as works by contemporaries including the celebrated muralists: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros.

Shortly after the exhibition, a snoozing peasant with a straw hat turned up in a painting titled *Siesta* by nihonga painter Kayama Matazō, while Toneyama Kōjin protested the oppression of Japanese workers by capitalist bosses at a construction site west of Tokyo with imagery reminiscent of Mayan monuments. Admiration and fascination with Mexican culture is recorded in the art and writings of numerous other artists such as Fukuzawa Ichirō, Katsura Yuki, Kawara On, Kitagawa Tamiji, and Okamoto Tarō. Meanwhile critics such as Hariu Ichirō, Hijikata Tei'ichi, and Takiguchi Shūzō grappled with the significance of Mexican accomplishments to such desiderata of Japanese art as "modernity" (*kindai-sei*), "world character" (*sekai-sei*), and "ethnicity" (*minzoku-sei*).

The "Mexico Boom" in the Tokyo-centered Japanese art world provides a striking transaction of what the historian Benedict Anderson has termed the "modularity of nationalism," namely the spread of modes and infrastructures of nationalism from one national context to another. Moreover, focus on the "Mexico Boom" promises to contribute a more complex and nuanced understanding of the emerging global position of Japanese art after World War II.

"A Phoenix Reborn From the Ashes of the Past":

***Sōsaku Hanga* in an International Context**

Alicia Volk, Yale University

In 1957, Hiratsuka Unichi carved and printed a portrait of his American patron James A. Michener, the famed novelist and expert on Asia. In the image, Michener is encircled by Japanese prints taken from his 1954 book *The Floating World*, which both chronicled the history of *ukiyo-e* and announced the arrival of *sōsaku hanga*, the contemporary "creative print" movement, on the international stage. *Sōsaku hanga*'s star rose following World War II, when Americans became infatuated with things Japanese during the period of occupation.

“These days when I think of America,” Hiratsuka said to Michener, “I feel as if history is repeating itself. It was you Americans who really appreciated classical *ukiyo-e* and today it has been other Americans who have recognized artists like [me].”

How was it that the creative print became the most popular of Japanese art forms overseas, and how did its contact with a foreign market and the international art world transform it? This paper will present the story of *sōsaku hanga* in the context of Cold War geopolitics (from the close of hostilities in 1945 through 1970), and within the historical framework of the Euroamerican aestheticization of Japan. It will examine the patronage and reception of contemporary Japanese prints by an American audience during the particularly intense wave of *Japonisme* that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, and describe the role of the print in strengthening political and cultural ties between two nations that had recently been enemies at war but that were now allies in peace. In conclusion, it will demonstrate the ways in which *sōsaku hanga*, as an artistic practice, was transformed by the exigencies of being “a medium of cultural exchange among nations.”

Minamata and the Photography of W. Eugene Smith

Yasufumi Nakamori, Hunter College, The City University of New York

This paper will examine the roles of W. Eugene and Aileen M. Smith in authorizing the visual culture of Minamata Disease through their photographic essay *Minamata* (1971-75).

Beginning in 1971 for more than three years, the Smiths lived in Minamata, a small fisherman’s village in Kumamoto in Kyūshū, where Chisso Corporation has had factories producing chemical products since 1906. They photographed the village, the villagers who fought, and those dying of Minamata disease. The disease, the world’s first occurrence of widespread methyl-mercury poisoning, was created, as early as in the late 1950s, as a result of Chisso’s manufacturing of acetaldehyde and vinyl chloride and its contamination of the Minamata Bay with methyl-mercury, which, subsequently, entered the food chain.

The Smiths published the photographic essay *Minamata* in periodicals including *Life*, *Asahi Camera*, and *Camera 35* before it was published as a book in 1975. Both in Japan and the U.S., they frequently organized exhibitions of the Minamata photographs and appeared in the mass media, championing the struggle of those suffering from the disease, playing a significant role in raising the consciousness of the general public regarding the disease and other environmental pollution in Japan. Arguably, the photographic essay and the Smiths’ activities influenced the outcomes of the first legal proceedings which turned out favorably to the disease patients in 1974. In 2004, after thirty years from such decision, Japan’s Supreme Court upheld the ultimate responsibilities of the Government of Japan and Chisso for Minamata disease.

The paper will conclude with an ironic turn of the photographic essay, the recent withdrawal of *Tomoko in Bath* from the public at the request of the late Tomoko’s family, the image so integral in the visual culture of Minamata disease the Smiths created.