

Panel 1: Fiction Disruption

For your words, I shall rip out your tongue

Ryan Holmberg

Shirato Sanpei began his manga epic *The Legend of Kamui* (Kamui-den) 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 17th-century society. Most important to this figure are the faculties of discourse.

Shirato pits this ideal against a totalitarian regime that rules by brute force and corruption. But by the closing chapters of *The Legend of Kamui*, appearing 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. In manga, this ideal of human subjectivity found its essential form in the talking head. The two are more or less isometric. The talking head, a spatial configuration that gives increased space to text and the space of writing at the expense of the body and pictorial representation, enables a fictional subject who subordinates the body to spoken and written language. That which the configuration of the talking head suggests as a formal arrangement, is also embodied ideologically. This paper thus considers the possibilities and limitations of the talking head and closes by showing that, in *The Legend of Kamui*, disfiguration entails, not the deconstruction of the talking head, but the emergence of an entirely different aesthetic and semiotic.

What Is It Love?

Cathy P. Steblyk

Takahiko Iimura's 1962 experimental short film *Love* (Ai) is an introspective engagement with heterosexual coupling. A monochromatic study of human landscape that transcends Japanese and international narrative film grammar and theatrical tradition, *Love* combines extreme close-up shots with sped-up long shots of two bodies' geographies in order to disrupt typical diegetic patterns of the classical romance story as well as individual identity. Accompanied by "brrr," Yoko Ono's mechanical soundtrack of 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 experimental communication.

This last vector, of the sliding and gripping act of communication, not only between the two on-screen unidentified bodies, but also between the subject and audience, is the focus of this paper. I place *Love* in a context of a study of the avant-garde--from the historical avant-garde to the postwar neo-avant-garde to the present avantgarde. Similar to other Japanese neo-avant-garde performance, art, and poetry thematizing communication, such as the works of Yoko Ono, Iimura incorporates and transfers the observer through several media, through breathing and being, into the sensual system of the work. The affective dimension of Japanese avant-garde production in the early 1960s

relies on idea, emotion, and sensation experienced viscerally and individually, otherwise left incommunicable through other systemic and symbolic channels. While this work of sensual art is never coldly resolved to one semiotic or media, be it visual, auditory, or tactile, so that communication occurs in diffuse ways, this interest in joining technology and mechanics to the body may be elaborated in relation to a more general theory of the neo-avant-garde.

The Silver Screen's Translucence

Steven Clark

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 the city of Aomori.

This often overlooked property of film develops over the course of Terayama's experiments into a register of meaning, or at least a site 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, *Throw Out Your Books, Let's Get into the Streets* (Sho o suteyo machi e deyō, 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 an 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 improvised theatricality of the moment of filming. This paper attempts 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

Beginning in the late 1950s, Japanese avant-garde artists represented by the collectives Gutai 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. Ushio Shinohara and others of Neo Dada (initially, Neo Dadaism Organizer);

Katō Yoshihiro, Iwata Shin'ichi, and others of Zero Dimension; Nakamura Hiroshi and Tateishi Kōichi of Sightseeing Art Research Institute; Akasegawa Genpei, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō of Hi Red Center; and Yoko Ono. They all actively furthered the movement, although their contributions have not yet been fully explored. With a focus on the recently rediscovered film directed by Nagano Chiaki, *Some Young People* (Aru wakamono-tachi, 1964), which documents many of these 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. Although the Tokyo Olympic Games held that year projected the image of a happy and successful Japanese society rapidly recovering from the damages of World War II, the termination of the annual Yomiuri Independent Exhibition created a crisis within the art world. The loss of this jury-free exhibition, held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum since 1947, dampened the spirit of young artists whose formal (museum-based) outlet of radical artistic experimentation was primarily limited to the Yomiuri Independent. 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 the Yomiuri Independent. 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

Like 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 introduces two collections of *nengajō*, one belonging to Yamazaki Tsuruko, the other to the Gibson Gallery at the State University of New York, Potsdam. Theorizing *nengajō* as performative objects, I argue that these *nengajō* contributed and responded to three central theses of Gutai art: the integration of art and life, the incorporation of time and space into painting, and the articulation of new social spaces as exhibition spaces. I also address how the concept and function of *nengajō* changed as the group came into contact with Ray Johnson's nascent mail art in 1956 and established itself as an international presence with the Gutai Pinacotheca in 1962. Without losing any of its conventional meaning, the *nengajō* was first transformed into an "embodied visit," then to gift, and finally to promotional material.

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

Encounter vs. Event: The Emergence of “Non-Art” in Japan, Circa 1970

Mika Yoshitake

The debates surrounding the artistic practices of the latter half of the 1960s to the early 1970s in Japan have centered on speculations about the institutionalization of the avant-garde. Signaling a radical shift away from Anti-Art (*Han-geijutsu*) groups such as Hi Red Center, Neo Dada (initially, Neo Dadaism Organizer), and Zero Dimension, who used subversive, performance-based tactics against museums and juried exhibitions, this essay examines the cultural emergence of Non-Art (*Hi-geijutsu*) in Japan around 1970, focusing specifically on the work and writings of Lee Ufan from the group Mono-ha (Things School) and Hikosaka Naoyoshi from the art collective Bikyōtō (Artists Joint-Struggle Council). Despite distinct expressive modes, these works produced a symbolic shift in the field of post-1945 Japanese art by ambitiously engaging the line between art and non-art and testing the very issues that sustained the field: namely, aesthetics and institution.

Taking Lee's *Relatum* (Kankeikō, 1969) and Hikosaka's *Floor Event* (1970-71) as departure points, I discuss the self-critical condition of artistic “practice” through the artists' theoretical strategies of “encounter” and “event” respectively. In Mono-ha's case, Lee Ufan sets the terms for re-evaluating the historical genesis of art by dismantling the imposition of established (modernist) values such as meaning and expressivity through the aesthetic experience of “encounter.” In Bikyōtō's case, Hikosaka turns the institution of art itself into an internal mechanism of one's practice--that is, a disposition one always carries within as an “internal institution” through the idea of the “event.” Together they enable the possibility of a Non-Art practice that not only tests the boundaries of art/non-art, but also works to strengthen the autonomy of the field of contemporary Japanese art itself.

An Immaterial Condition of Dematerialization in 1960s Japan and the Culture of “Showing”

Reiko Tomii

The “dematerialization of the art object” has emerged as one of the dominant tendencies of 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.

Among the many impetuses behind Anti-Art and Non-Art, the institutional aspect--especially the lack of a support system for contemporary artists--has received at best cursory reference in art-historical and art-critical literature. However, if the increasing commodification of art compelled New York artists' search for dematerialized practices during this decade, it was the ultimately rewardless (*mushō*) situation that 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 Japanese artists and

stimulated creative exhibition strategies that breached the traditional wall separating art and society. In some cases, artists actively sought a reward in the form of publicity, staging sheer spectacles that verged on pure showmanship in the public sphere.

What I call the culture of “showing” (which can be translated into Japanese as *miseru bunka*) in 1960s Japan demands that we find an alternative to the staunchly object-based perspective of art history. Indeed, it is essential for the artist to show his art, no matter what kind of work he may make. By re-inserting artists as an active agent of change and examining the activity of “showing,” we can narrate an overarching story that unites the often fragmented histories of *Nihonga* (the modern adaptation of traditional painting), *yōga* (which practically means “oil painting”), and the avant-garde, thereby further extending our historical understanding to “contemporary art” (*gendai bijutsu*).

Panel 3: Art and the Growing Nation

The “Mexico Boom” in the Japanese Art World, 1955

Bert Winther-Tamaki

Modernist and avant-garde 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 Mexican Art Exhibition* in 1955 at the Tokyo National Museum, an unprecedented display of 1,500 objects, including pre-Columbian artifacts, colonial Mexican art, and works by contemporaries such as 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, On Kawara, Kitagawa Tamiji, and Okamoto Tarō. Meanwhile critics such as Hariu Ichirō, Hijikata Teiichi, 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. Study of the “Mexico boom” contributes 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

In 1957, Hiratsuka Un'ichi 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 *The Floating World* (1954), 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 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 *sōsaku hanga* 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? The development of *sōsaku hanga* in the postwar period must be seen in light of Cold War geopolitics and within the historical framework of the Euro-American aestheticization of Japan. 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 played a part in strengthening political and cultural ties between two nations that had recently been enemies at war but were now allies in peace. As an artistic practice, *sōsaku hanga* was in turn transformed by the exigencies of being a medium of cultural exchange among nations. I argue that in conjunction with the print medium's elevation to fine-art status, the modernist formalism and expressionism of *sōsaku hanga* were eclipsed by prints in the vein of Pop and Conceptual Art that came through increased contact with the international contemporary art scene.

Minamata and the Photography of W. Eugene and Aileen M. Smith

Yasufumi Nakamori

This paper examines W. Eugene and Aileen M. Smith's photographic essay *Minamata* (1971-75), which was created during the height of the citizens' movement in Minamata, and its contribution to the visual culture of Minamata Disease.

Beginning in 1971, the Smiths lived in Minamata, a small fishermen's village in Kumamoto, Kyūshū, for more than three years. The factories that Chisso Corporation had operated in Minamata since 1906 manufactured chemical products that contaminated the Minamata Bay with methyl-mercury. The mercury subsequently entered the food chain and by the late 1950s caused the outbreak of a disease--the world's first occurrence of widespread methyl-mercury poisoning. The Smiths photographed the victims of what has come to be known as Minamata Disease, as well as the villagers who fought Chisso Corporation, and those allegedly in power. As historian Timothy S. George points out, the Minamata photographers were significant not only because they disseminated the story of Minamata Disease, but because they affected its outcome through their participation. Among those photographers who played an important role in the history of

Minamata Disease are Shiota Takeshi, Kuwabara Shisei, Akutagawa Jin, and most notably Eugene and Aileen Smith.

The Smiths published *Minamata* in periodicals including *Life*, *Asahi Camera*, and *Camera 35* before publishing the photographic essay as a book in 1975. In Japan, they frequently organized exhibitions of the Minamata photographs and appeared in the mass media, championing the cause of the victims. Their photographs and activities have significantly contributed to the visual culture of Minamata Disease and arguably influenced the favorable outcome of legal proceedings by victims of the disease.

In an ironic turn, the Smiths' best-known photograph, *Tomoko in Bath*, was recently withdrawn from public view at the request of the late Tomoko's family. This paper concludes with a discussion of this photograph, an image integral to Minamata Disease and its visual culture, which the Smiths strove to create.