

**THE HISTORY OF  
BIGAKKŌ FROM ITS  
FOUNDING UNTIL 2019**  
(2019)

Edited by Bigakkō

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## FOUNDING OF THE SCHOOL

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THE ALTERNATIVE ART SCHOOL known as Bigakkō was conceived and established by Ishii Kyōji to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Gendaishichōsha, the publishing company he founded in 1957. The opening of the school was initially planned for October 1968, but actually took place in February 1969. There were two primary objectives in establishing Bigakkō: it both served as part of a tax strategy for Gendaishichōsha and provided technical instruction to students who had dropped out of universities in the aftermath of the Japanese protest movements known as *daigaku funsō*. In reality, however, Bigakkō became something quite contrary to what Ishii had envisioned for the school.

On flyers and in other promotional material distributed at the time, the basic principles of the school were outlined through phrases such as “complete mastery of the finest skills of today,” “the rigor of skill,” and “skills being first priority,” along with aspirations to “pave the way for students to make a living as artists.” However, the program through which Ishii had intended for students to acquire such practical skills was more like a Screen-Printing Workshop [*Shirukusukurin kōbō*]; many printmakers would eventually leave to become independent. In a later interview, Ishii remarked that what he originally had had in mind was not an art school, but a technical school to teach handwork, and thus it had been a failure.

The name Bigakkō was conceived by either Ishii Kyōji or Kawani Hiroshi, Editor and Deputy Director of the Planning Division of Gendaishichōsha at the time, but it is unclear who was ultimately responsible because both

claimed to have come up with the name. Nakamura Hiroshi writes that the school was referred to as Bigakkō during a preparatory meeting in which he was asked by Kawani to join as an instructor. However, it had actually been Imaizumi Yoshihiko who floated Nakamura's name as a potential instructor when Kawani had come to him for advice, and hence it was likely that the name Bigakkō had already been decided on before then.

During its first year, the school was located about a six-minute walk from Yotsuya Station, on the fourth floor of a building in Wakabachō, Shinjuku ward. The following year in 1970, however, Bigakkō relocated to the third floor of a building in Jimbōchō, Kanda, Chiyoda ward to expand its space and facilities. The school remains there to this day.

The distinctive logo, reminiscent of an insect, has also remained unchanged and was designed by Akasegawa Genpei, who taught a course on “Drawing Letters and Flower Letters [*Emoji hanamoji*]” the first year. The school mascot from that time, somewhat resembling a hybrid of a goat and sheep, is still in use as well. Nonaka Yuri had found the image in a vintage German magazine she was using as material for a collage work; after Nakanishi Natsuyuki claimed that the creature looked like Imaizumi Yoshihiko, it was adopted as the school mascot.

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## COURSE OFFERINGS

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IN ITS INAUGURAL YEAR of 1969, studio classes overseen by Hiroshi Nakamura and Nakanishi Natsuyuki and a course on theories of artistic expression taught by Imaizumi Yoshihiko commenced in February, ahead of other offerings that followed later. In April, a total of seven

courses on technical production started, and many instructors also joined the school to conduct lectures.

The studio classes of Nakamura and Nakanishi were not given a course name and were instead simply referred to as *ateliers* during recruitment. The classes both reached their full capacity of fifteen students each. Documented reports on the classes do not exist, but the recruitment flyers described them as follows:

<sup>1</sup> *Men-uchi* refers to the work of carving masks, typically for the arts of Noh and Kyōgen.

**Nakamura Atelier:** In this course, students will liberate painting from bonds of “expression,” identifying painting as a matter of “appreciation” and exploring its mechanisms.

**Nakanishi Atelier:** In my studio (precisely speaking, a recreation of my studio brought into the space prepared by Gendaishichōsha), students are not students, but rather materials and models; to be more precise, they are special and unique materials for making paintings. In this recreation of my studio, it is my hope to concentrate our efforts not on what kind of paintings to create or how to paint, but instead on the question, “What kind of situations and conditions can be overlapped with the emergence of paintings?”

As such, both courses offered studio classes focused on painting.

Imaizumi’s course on theories of artistic expression did not accept individual applications and instead was offered to students enrolled in either of the atelier courses. His statement on the school brochure was as follows:

The best education is one in which the necessary knowledge is learned and “stolen” without being taught.

The other seven courses that focused more on technical skills were: “Design and Patterns [*Zuan moyō*]” (Kimura Tsunehisa); “Wood Sculpture and *Men-uchi* [*Mokkoku menuchi*]”<sup>1</sup> (Kobatake Hiroshi); “Drawing Letters and Flower Letters” (Akasegawa Genpei); “Pen Drawing



fig. 1

Akasegawa Genpei giving a lecture for his “Modernology [*Kōgengaku*]” course. Akasegawa’s work using enlarged images of thousand-yen bills can be seen in the background. (1981, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)

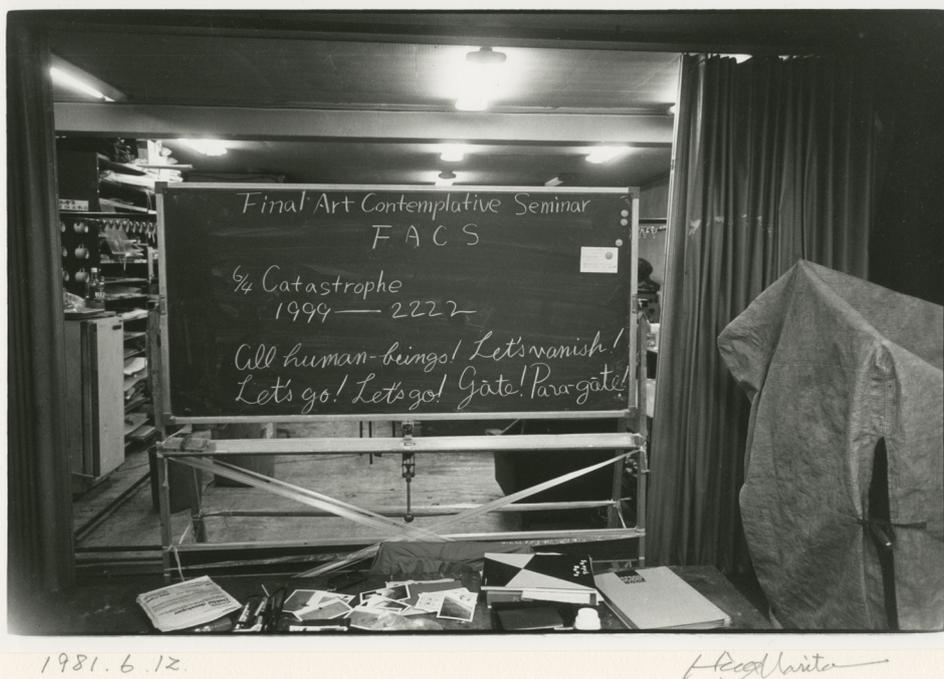


fig. 2

A phrase repeatedly found in Matsuzawa Yutaka’s works, “All human beings! Let’s vanish! Let’s go! Let’s go! Gate! Para-gate!” is written in English on the blackboard in “Final Art Contemplative Seminar [*Saishū bijutsu shikō kōbō*]” led by Matsuzawa. (1981, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)

fig. 3

Butoh dancer Ohno Kazuo leading a workshop “*Butoh San’nyu* [Butoh Intervention] by Kazuo Ohno” as part of a four-day event: “Butoh Pioneer Ohno Kazuo’s Varieté Tataro.” (1979, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)



fig. 4

Imaizumi Yoshihiko, who served as Bigakkō’s first Secretary-General and third Representative Director, at the school’s administrative office. (1982, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)

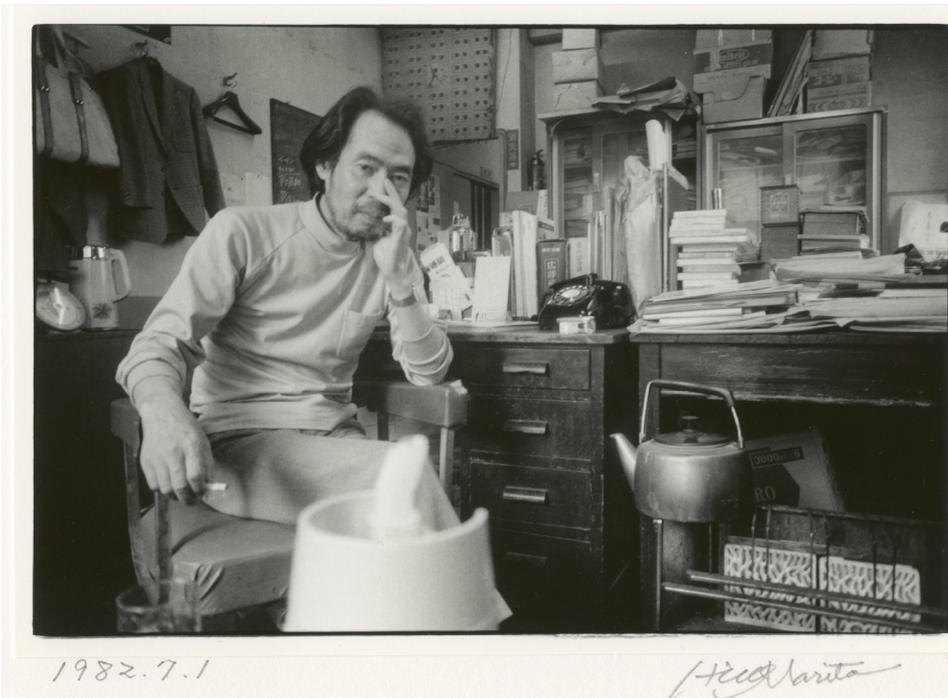




fig. 5

Tateishi Tetsuomi instructing "Miniature Painting Studio [*Saimitsuga kyōjō*]." The course is still being taught to this day. (1979, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)



fig. 6

Tanemura Suehiro giving a course lecture. (Early 1970s, photographer unknown)

and Graphic Novel Comic Drawing [*Kōhitsu ga gekiga*]” (Yamakawa Sōji); “Miniature Painting and Natural History Illustration [*Saimitsu ga hakubutsu ga*]” (Tateishi Tetsuomi); “Reproduction Drawing [*Mosha*]” (Fujita Yoshika); and “Manga” (Inoue Yōsuke). Additional courses such as “Wood Engraving [*Koguchi mokuhan*],” “Anatomical Drawing [*Kaibōzu*],” “The Art of Tatoo [*Irezumi*],” and “Machinery Drawing [*Kikaizu*]” were also considered as ideas for courses, among which “Wood Engraving” with Kitaoka Fumio as an instructor was eventually offered, but did not receive enough applicants for it to actually run. For the same reasons, “Drawing Letters and Flower Letters” taught by Akasegawa Genpei and “Manga” taught by Inoue Yōsuke were canceled. For the “Manga” course, Mizuki Shigeru was initially asked to be the instructor; when he declined, Tsuge Yoshiharu was then offered the position. Tsuge, however, did not want to teach the course alone, which did not fit with the policy of Bigakkō of one instructor per course, so this did not happen either.

The selection of instructors for the studio and technical courses was done by Kawani Hiroshi, Imaizumi Yoshihiko, and Nakamura Hiroshi. When the idea for the establishment of Bigakkō was first considered internally at Gendaishichōsha, Imaizumi suggested Nakamura Hiroshi and Nakanishi Natsuyuki as instructors to Kawani. They were officially hired a few months later, and Kawani and Nakamura went on to become core members who oversaw the allocation of instructors for the technical courses.

A number of prominent speakers served as guest lecturers in these classes. The following are some of the lectures that took place the first year of the school’s founding: “The World of Miyatake Gaikotsu”<sup>2</sup> by Akasegawa Genpei; “Imaginative Time” by Awazu Norio; “A Way of Appreciating/Seeing Antique Art” by Andō Tsuguo; “Surrealism and Painting” by Iwaya Kunio; “Theory of Language Communication” by Ōkubo Soriya; “History of the Body” by Kasai Akira; “Perspective and Freedom” by Kataoka Keiji; “Introduction to the History of Postwar Left-Wing Art Movements” by Katsuragawa Hiroshi; “Examining *Fūshikaden*”<sup>3</sup> by Kara Jyūrō; “Eros, Eschatology, Utopia” by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko; “The Possibility of Impossibility” by Shirai Kenzaburō; “Studies on Leonardo” by Susowake Kazuhiro; “Mannerism and the Present” by Tanemura Suehiro; “Atheist *Fūdo* [Climate]” by Deguchi Yūkō; “*Mediya* [sic; lit. Media]” by Nam June Paik; “Theory of Existence” by Haniya Yutaka; “Theory of the Body” by Hijikata Tatsumi; “Final Art”

2 Miyatake Gaikotsu (1867–1955):

Japanese author, journalist, and media historian

3 *Fūshikaden*: a seminal treatise on Noh by the fifteenth-century actor and playwright Zeami

by Matsuzawa Yutaka; “Eroticism of India” by Matsuyama Shuntarō; and “The Destruction of the Statue of Wadatsumi” by Mōri Yuri.

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4 The Sade Trial refers to a series of trials that began in 1961 after Ishii Kyōji of Gendaishichōsha and Shibusawa Tatsuhiko were prosecuted for public obscenity for Shibusawa’s translation of de Sade’s *Juliette*. In 1969, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled that Shibusawa and Ishii were guilty.

## GENDAISHICHŌSHA

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MANY PEOPLE NOWADAYS are impressed by the names of the instructors who taught at Bigakkō back then, but what is truly impressive is how Gendaishichōsha brought everyone together. Let us reflect slightly further upon the company that established Bigakkō. Gendaishichōsha—which changed its name to Gendaishichōshinsha in 2000—was founded by Ishii Kyōji in 1957 with a motto to “publish ‘sinful’ books against the tide of public morals and progressive groups.” Publishing translations of works by Jean-Paul Sartre, Henri Lefebvre, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, and George Orwell, as well as anthologies of the writings of Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, the complete works of Ōsugi Sakae, and literary works by Yoshimoto Takaaki and Tanigawa Gan, among others, the company enjoyed wide support from the younger generation. Gendaishichōsha also published a translation by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko of *Juliette* by the Marquis de Sade, which was known as *Akutoku no Sakae* in Japanese and famously became associated with the Sade Trial.<sup>4</sup>

## KAWANI HIROSHI AND IMAIZUMI YOSHIHIKO

THE TWO PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE for developing Bigakkō were Kawani Hiroshi and Imaizumi Yoshihiko, who met in 1952. Kawani was pursuing a degree in literature at Keio University, while Imaizumi was studying art at Nihon University. Both were actively involved in avant-garde movements in the 1960s, alongside other artists and musicians, which later helped facilitate their selection of instructors for Bigakkō. For example, in becoming acquainted with Takamatsu Jirō, Akasegawa Genpei, and Nakanishi Natsuyuki, who collectively formed the avant-garde art group Hi-Red Center, Kawani participated in several “performative events” such as *Yamanote Incident*, which took place prior to the group’s official formation, as well as *Shelter Plan* and *Be Clean! Campaign to Promote Cleanliness and Order in the Metropolitan Area* after Hi-Red Center was officially formed. Moreover, the event Goods Presentation Ceremony was conceived in particular for Kawani and Imaizumi. Imaizumi had actually been asked by Takamatsu at the time of the group’s founding to work with them on theoretical aspects of their activities, but he had declined. He also declined the request to be the head of the cleaning crew in *Be Clean! Cleanliness and Order in the Metropolitan Area*.

Imaizumi got involved with editing the coterie zine *Keishō* (which later changed its name to *Kikan*) in 1958; Kawani joined in 1961. Contributions by a number of artists were published in the magazine. Letters exchanged between Nakamura Hiroshi and Imaizumi, Imaizumi’s *Equipment Plan* (written under the pen name *Nagara Tō*), a

summary of the symposium *Signs of Direct Action Theory* that served as an impetus for Hi-Red Center's establishment, Kosugi Takehisa's and Tone Yasunao's scores, and texts by Nam June Paik and Kazakura Shō were featured in the magazine. During the “thousand-yen trials” which took place because Akasegawa Genpei produced work that replicated thousand-yen bills, Kawani served as Secretary-General of the roundtable and *Kikan* also featured an in-depth article on the trials.

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## THE MOVE TO JIMBŌCHŌ

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IN SEPTEMBER 1969, directorship of Bigakkō was transferred from Kawani to Imaizumi. This was because Ishii wanted Kawani to return to his core duties of the publishing business. Nakamura Hiroshi and other employees of Gendaishichōsha were asked to consider the position, but all declined; ultimately, Imaizumi was singled out for the job. On a side note, there was never anyone who held the formal title of School Principal at Bigakkō. The person who held the highest leadership position at the time was Ishii, as owner of the company, and below him was Kawani as Director and Imaizumi as Secretary-General. After 1975, when Bigakkō became independent from Gendaishichōsha, the leadership position was given the title of Representative Director.

As mentioned previously, Bigakkō moved to Jimbōchō in 1970. That same year, the “Silkscreen Studio [*Shirukusukurin kyōjō*]” headed by Okabe Tokuzō and “Etching Studio [*Dōhanga kyōjō*]” taught by Kanō Mitsuo were also established. Classes were eight hours long, from 1pm to 9pm, with an initial maximum capacity of twenty-five total students,



which was a large size for the commitment needed to teach such technical skills. Since the silkscreen studio class ended up accepting thirty students, the instructor workload was extremely heavy.

In addition, facilitating the “Art Practice Studio [*Bijutsu enshū kyōjō*]” were the three instructors of Akasegawa Genpei, Kikuhata Mokuma, and Matsuzawa Yutaka. The “Art Practice Studio” was divided into three groups, and instructors rotated at three-month intervals. There were twenty-five students per group, for a total of seventy-five students. In the first year, the students in Kikuhata’s class worked on a wall mural project that reproduced Yamamoto Sakubei’s coal mine painting, which was included in UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register in 2011. The following year, in 1971, the reproduced mural was exhibited in Fukuoka and Tokyo. It is said that there were also students who worked in the studio while wearing helmets, having just returned from participating in student demonstrations.

In 1971, the “Art Practice Studio” led by Akasegawa, Kikuhata, and Matsuzawa was disbanded. Each instructor took on individual courses, with Kikuhata leading the “Drawing Research Laboratory [*Byōsha kenkyūshitsu*]”, Matsuzawa teaching “Final Art Contemplative Seminar [*Saishū bijutsu shikō*]” and Akasegawa skipping one year but returning in 1972 to lead a course on “Drawing and Letters [*E/moji*]”. Over the two years following the move to Jimbōchō, Bigakkō developed a school system that it still follows today. To be more specific, it is a model that doesn’t include admissions exams and age restrictions, nor course credits and testing; instead, unlike universities and vocational schools where students are required to take a number of courses within a general education program, Bigakkō offers individual courses independent of each other.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRANCH CAMPUSES

IN 1973, A BRANCH OF Bigakkō was established in Suwa, a city in Nagano Prefecture where Matsuzawa Yutaka lived and worked. This location began to offer the courses of “Final Art Contemplative Seminar [*Saishū bijutsu shikō kōbō*]” led by Matsuzawa, “Wood Carving Studio [*Mokuchōkoku kyōjō*]” by Kobatake Hiroshi, “Oil Painting Studio [*Yusaiga kyōjō*]” by Nakamura Hiroshi, “Music Studio [*Ongaku kyōjō*]” by Kosugi Takehisa, and “Suwa Bigakkō Art Classroom [*Suwa Bigakkō bijutsu kyōshitsu*].” In addition, as an affiliate of the “Final Art Contemplative Seminar,” an archive called Gendai Geijutsu Shiryō Center [the Data Center of Contemporary Art, DCCA] was established, collecting documentation and research material on conceptual art from all over the world. The name of “the Data Center of Contemporary Art” (DCCA) can be found on stationery still left in Bigakkō’s archive, which is thought to have been used in collecting the material. Because of a lack of students, the Suwa campus of Bigakkō closed in August 1976.

In 1974, the year following the opening of the Suwa campus, another branch was opened in the city of Iruma, Saitama Prefecture. Students of the “Wood Carving Workshop [*Mokuchōkoku kōbō*]” and “Oil Painting Workshop [*Yusaiga kōbō*]” courses studied here. In the “Wood Carving Studio Class” course, other techniques and mediums such as clay figures, stone carving, casting, and terracotta were included in the curriculum in addition to wood carving, and in 1977, the course name was fittingly changed to “Sculpture Workshop [*Chōkoku kōbō*].” In 1980, Kobatake became independent from Bigakkō, and the activities of the Iruma campus were carried on as Kobatake Sculpture Workshop Iruma.

## FACING A RISK OF CLOSURE

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ACCORDING TO IMAIZUMI, the number of enrolled students was on a downward trend several years after Bigakkō's founding, with student protests and resistance movements coming to an end, as well as Gendaishichōsha's sales from publishing declining. The number of students had increased from 116 to 222 between 1969 and 1970, then decreased to 182 in 1973, then reached a peak in 1975 with 279 students and 241 in 1976. However, the school was operating at a loss every year, and in 1975, Tanaka Riki, an employee of Gendaishichōsha, personally financed Bigakkō, making it independent from Gendaishichōsha. It is likely that establishing the Suwa and Iruma branches had put a financial strain on operations.

After 1976, the number of students began decreasing, and from the '80s until the '90s, the enrollment hovered around one hundred, give or take fifteen students. In 1979, the school faced a crisis due to these declining numbers. Tanaka Riki resigned, carrying with him a large sum of debt, and Imaizumi, Secretary-General at the time, virtually took over as Representative Director and embarked on a new start in 1981.

## COURSES AFTER THE 1970s

IN THE '70s, COURSES on subjects other than art began to be offered. In the years between 1975 and 1977, Kosugi Takehisa instructed a course entitled simply “Music [*Ongaku*].” In its first year, students taking the course formed an improvisational group called East Bionic Symphonia and released a self-titled analog record. Kosugi proclaimed that one of the reasons for producing the record was to help students pay tuition with money generated from sales. Formed in 1997 and still active today, Marginal Consort also originated as an improvisational group consisting of Imai Kazuo, T Koshikawa, Shii Kei, Tada Masami, all of whom were students enrolled in the “Music” class of 1975.

In 1975, “Film Techniques and Production [*Eiga gisaku*]” was collaboratively taught by Suzuki Seijun, Suzuki Kōichi, Okamoto Yoshihiko, and Kimura Takeo. Course information on the school brochure read as follows:

To expect an ordinary lifestyle working in narrative film is pretty much hopeless. It has by now become one of the hardest professions to make a living with. A man named Rokumusai<sup>5</sup> [literally meaning “six nos”] once said he had neither money, nor a wife, nor a printing block. In this world, it is like you are subhuman, aimlessly wandering through a labyrinth of nos . . . Nanamusai [seven nos], Hachimusai [eight nos], Kyūmusai [nine nos] . . . and befuddled with the beauty that is so faint to the point of being almost discernable. If you are someone that can let go of being human, come and join!

**5** A Japanese military scholar with the given name Hayashi Shihei (1738–1793). Rokumusai was a pen name with the literal meaning of “six nos” after he famously declared, “I have no parents, no wife, no children, no printing block, no money, but I also have no desire for death.”

**6** The term was named after American pinch-hitter Gary Thomasson, who was recruited by the Yomiuri Giants baseball team in Japan, but whose bat rarely connected with a ball, to which Akasegawa compared found structures in the city with no obvious purpose.

IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY MANIFESTO. The course “Film Techniques and Production” was offered until 1979.

Then in 1980, Akasegawa Genpei’s course “Drawing and Letters Workshop” changed its name to “Modernology.” This became a prominent course at Bigakkō and a main draw of the school, with Akasegawa’s classes being held outdoors on the streets of the city. Street observations conducted during the classes, together with a series Akasegawa was writing for a magazine, became a social phenomenon. The street lectures investigated architectural features with no discernable purpose (such as staircases that led to nowhere and unexpected doors appearing on the exteriors of buildings), which was later renamed “Hyperart Thomasson”<sup>6</sup> by Akasegawa and his students in the course. The Thomasson Observation Center that was also established around this time continues its activities to the present day.

Akasegawa’s course saw the successful emergence of several students including the illustrator and essayist Minami Shinbō, the manga artist and musician Kusumi Masayuki, and the illustrator Watanabe Kazuhiro. In 1981, Akasegawa was awarded the Akutagawa Prize under the pen name Otsuji Katsuhiko, which made him increasingly busy over the following years, and his course at Bigakkō concluded its final year in 1986.

Other courses that were offered during this era included “Butoh Studio [*Butō kyōjō*]” (1972–1973) by Kasai Akira, “Photography Workshop [*Shashin kōbō*]” by Narita Hidehiko (1976–1999), “Lithograph Workshop [*Sekihanga kōbō*]” by Abe Hiroshi (1978–1999), “Etching Workshop [*Dōhanga kōbō*]” by Yoshida Katsurō (1980–1992; Special Lecturer from 1993–1999), “Principles of Plastic Arts [*Zōkei kiso*]” by Nabeta Tsuneo [1990–present], and a special seminar course “Art and Science Experimental Workshop [*Geijutsu kagaku jikken kōbō*]” by Ishiguro Atsuhiko Management (1988–1993).



fig. 9

Students working in the “Lithograph Workshop.” (1981, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)



fig. 10

“Etching Workshop” instructor Yoshida Katsurō. (1979, photo: Narita Hidehiko, courtesy of Naganuma Hiromasa)

## FROM 1990 TO 2000

ACCORDING TO CURRENT Representative Director Fujikawa Kōzō, Bigakkō in the '90s was like a regular art school, with printmaking courses as the main offering along with other art-related courses. In 1999, the thirtieth anniversary of Bigakkō's founding, the number of enrolled students declined drastically and there was apprehension that the school would not be able to survive into the next millennium. A change in leadership, however, from Imaizumi to Fujikawa, who worked in administration and was a member of Bigakkō's first graduating class, took place and various reforms were implemented.

Firstly, in 2000, three pillars were created with the establishment of three new courses: “*Tonchiki Art Class [Tonchiki āto kurasu]*” on the subject of contemporary art practices led by the artist Ozawa Tsuyoshi; “*Manga-like Audiovisual Room [Manga-teki shichōkakushitsu]*” led by the manga artist and musician Kusumi Masayuki; and “*Art Project Practices [Āto purojekuto enshū]*” led by Yamano Shingo. The painter Utsumi Nobuhiko was also invited to lead the “*Painting Expression Research Lab [Kaiga hyōgen kenkyūshitsu]*.”

The design of the school brochure and other promotional material was also changed greatly. On the cover, Ozawa Tsuyoshi, Yanobe Kenji, Murakami Takashi, Gorgerous (an artist duo comprised of Ujino Muneteru and Matsukage Hiroyuki), Kusumi Masayuki, and Aida Makoto each contributed a design for a sheep representing the logo of Bigakkō.

“*Tonchiki Art Class*” was only held for a year, but included guest lectures from Nakazawa Hideki and *Shōwa 40 NenKai* [The Group 1965],

a group of artists who were all born in the year 1965 and later taught at the school; this course inspired several contemporary art courses later on. In 2001, as a successor to “Tonichiki Art Class,” a course taught by Aida Makoto entitled “Bara Bara Art Class [*Bara bara āto kurasu*]” began, which would enroll students such as Ushiro Ryūta, Okada Masataka, Inaoka Motomu of the artist collective Chim↑Pom, artist Ai☆Madonna, and artist Usui Ryōhei.

Other contemporary art practice courses that were established included: Gorgeros’s “Body Lesson [*Nikutai juku*]” (2002–2006); a course titled “Yore Yore Art Class [*Yore yore āto kōsu*]” (2005–2009) led by the group of those born in 1965 (Aida Makoto, Arima Sumihisa, Oiwa Oscar Satio, Ozawa Tsuyoshi, Tosa Masamichi, Parco Kinoshita, Matsukage Hiroyuki) started in 2005 to mark the year they turned forty years old; and Fuji Hiroshi and KOSUGE-16’s “Spatial Expression Practice Studio [*Kūkanhyōgen jitsugen kyōjō*].”

Bigakkō began to offer several courses in fields other than fine arts. These included “Manga-like Audiovisual Room” led by Kusumi Masayuki, “Sound/Audiovisual Senses [*Saundo/Shichōkaku*]” by Itō Atsuhiko, “DJ Training as Brain Exercise for Adults [*Nō wo kitaeru otona no DJ torēningu*]” by L?K?O, “Figure-Training for Scratch Builders [*Skuracchi birudā yōsei kōza fgyua*]” by Mechikuro, and “Fashion Research Laboratory [*Mōdo kenkyūshitsu*]” by Hamada Kenichi.

Furthermore, classroom lectures (as opposed to practical training) that had just barely existed since the late 1970s were restructured. Art critics Ogura Masashi and Takami Akihiko, curators Hara Makiko, Azumaya Takashi, and Roger McDonald, as well as the artist Nakazawa Hideki and architect Imamura Sōhei were invited as lecturers. Matsuyama Shuntarō, a specialist in Indian philosophy who had been teaching at Bigakkō since 1969, was also a lecturer. The present-day Music Department coordinator Kishino Yūichi (who refers to himself as a “studyist”) also gave lectures, which led to the establishment of the Music Department later on.

After Fujikawa became Representative Director, intensive study sessions and events such as talks and live performances were also held in addition to annual courses. In April 2006, the school organized an art festival called Gigmanta 2006 by reviving the tradition of *Artrance Gigmanta* ‘83, a student-led group exhibition launched in 1983. At venues such as UPLINK, Terpsichore, SuperDeluxe, and out-lounge,

events such as live music, performances, talks, dance performances, and exhibitions took place. The flyers promoting these events list the names of artists from a variety of music genres, including Kurosawa Mika, Kubikukuri Takuzō, Kishino Yūichi, Yuasa Manabu, Yamabe Keiji, Taguchi Fumihito, Matsukage Hiroyuki, Mobu Norio, Itō Atsuhiko, Nakahara Masaya, Haino Keiji, Kusumi Masayuki, Shiriagari Kotobuki, Agata Morio, Koyama Tomio, Nakayama Daisuke, Katō Taneo, Kumakura Sumiko, Chino Shūichi, Itō Tāri, Chim↑Pom, Endō Ichirō, Kitaōji Tsubasa, and the Aida Family BAND. Some events were collaborations with the venues, but others were booked by Fujikawa himself. Each event was advertised separately, and there was nothing linking all of the events together.

The year 2008 marked Bigakkō's fortieth anniversary, for which *Gigmenta 2008, The Now of Bigakkō 1969* was held at the Artcomplex Center of Tokyo. Included in the event were the exhibitions *GARO and Bigakkō*, “*Legend of Kamui*” and “*Rebellion of the Physical Body*” and *Matsuzawa Yutaka and Final Art Contemplative Seminar*, along with several stage performances and talks. From 2009 until 2012, the name of the event was changed to *BIGAKKO ANNUAL REPORT*, but this was reverted back to its current name of *Gigmenta* from 2013 onwards. The participating artists were Matsukage Hiroyuki, Odajima Hitoshi, Nakazawa Hideki, Tanaka Ichirō, O JUN, Kikuchi Naruyoshi, Miura Kōshi (of the group Kuchiroro), Tentenko, Yoshida Ami, Ōtani Yoshio, Kishino Yūichi, as well as several other younger artists including naonakamura, TENSAI High School!!!!, Shibuhouse, Kōzuma Sekai, and MES, who curated and held exhibitions.

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## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUSIC DEPARTMENT

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IN THE 2010s, an impactful milestone for the school was the establishment of the Music Department. With the department emerging from a group of new course offerings, Bigakkō's program underwent a restructuring, and classes were also held in offsite locations.

The timeline of its establishment can be summarized as follows: The initiative first started in 2012, with the move of the "Music Aesthetics" course being held at Eiga Bigakkō [the Film Art School] in Eurospace in Shibuya. Due to the similarity of the names of the schools, they are often confused, but there is no connection in their management. When Eiga Bigakkō moved to its Eurospace location in 2011, it downsized the scale of its classes and its Music Aesthetics course was in danger of being discontinued. Kishino Yūichi, who was coordinating the program at the time, approached Bigakkō through a personal acquaintance to propose the idea of transferring the course, which was agreed upon. The course entitled "Music Course" began at Bigakkō in October 2012, initially as a six-month long experimental initiative. The following year, it was formally set up as the Music Department, and in 2014 it was restructured and divided so that "Composition and Lyrics" and "DTM" became two separate courses, which is the format that continues today. Instructors for the courses have included Kikuchi Naruyoshi, Takayama Hiroshi, numb, Nakamura Kōsuke, Yokogawa Tadahiko, Hosoma Hiromichi, DJ TECHNORCH, Sebu Hiroko, and Kusuma Kei.

With the additional offering of music courses, the Jimbōchō campus lacked sufficient classroom space, and there were concerns

about the adequacy of its soundproofing. Hence, the music courses were also held at offsite locations, namely RRR (Ryōgoku Rakuen Room) initially; from 2014, a coworking and event space called EDITORY, located a one-minute walk from the Bigakkō campus; and from 2019, a space in the local neighborhood called Bigakkō Studio newly founded by the school.

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## **RECENT YEARS**

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THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE of Bigakkō also faced a turning point in 2008. At this time, Bigakkō operated with Fujikawa as Representative Director and Hisama overseeing administration. However, Kyūma suddenly fell ill. With student enrollment on the decline again, Fujikawa, who was left alone to manage the school, sought help from seven or eight instructors and graduates of the school. This group of members, from whom Fujikawa had sought advice on restructuring the school, set up a PR and communications office, working together with volunteers to create websites, flyers, and brochures, host events, and use social media for promotional activities. In 2011, the designer Ogura Hiraku joined the team, and in 2012, with the establishment of the music course program and new course offerings, the number of student applications began to increase.

The courses that were held during those years included “Painting

and Aesthetics and Drawing and Techniques [*E to bi to ga to jutsu*]” jointly taught by six instructors, namely Satō Naoki, Tsuzuki Jun, Magic Kobayashi, Odajima Hitoshi, Ikeda Masanori, Mizuno Kenichirō; “Design Song Books [*Dezain songu bukkusu*]” led by designer Ōhara Daijirō; “Theater Performance–Liminal Explorations [*Engeki nite-hi-naru mono*],” an actual performance work and course led by Ikunishi Yasunori; “Hyperart Manga Studies [*Chōgeijutsu manga kōza*]” by Nagao Kenichirō; “Special Manga Artists: The Path of the Avant-Garde [*Tokushu manga-ka—Zen’ei no michi*]” by Nemoto Takashi; and “Aesthetic Experience Classroom [*Bigakujuku*]” by JINMO. Contemporary art courses that were offered included “Art Recipes [*Āto no reshipi*]” led by Matsukage Hiroyuki and Mitamura Midori; “TENSAI High School!!!! [*Tensai haisukūru!!!!*]” by Ushiro Ryūta of Chim↑Pom; “Art Department of the School of Future Art [*Mirai bijutsu senmon gakkō ātoka*]” by Endō Ichirō; and “The Advice of a Heretic [*Gedō no susume*]”<sup>7</sup> by Matsuda Osamu and Kotō Hiroya.

During this period, new school branches were opened. In 2008, Nose Iseo founded the Okayama campus and in 2009, Itami Hiroshi established the Kōenji campus. Similar to how the Iruma and Suwa campuses operated in the 1970s, these school branches are not overseen by Bigakkō but function like franchises and are managed as entirely independent entities.

<sup>7</sup> This title is a parody of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s book *Gakumon no Susume* [An Encouragement of Learning], 1872.

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