

WHERE
IS
CHIKI
ART?

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10-9 Nishi Nibancho, Towada, Aomori 034-0082

Tel: 0176-20-1127

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Note

This book is a partial English translation of *Chiiki āto wa doko ni aru?* [Where is Chiiki Art?] (ed. Towada Art Center, Tokyo: Horinouchi Publishing, 2020), published as a record of the titular project that was held at Towada Art Center from 2018 to 2019.

- With one exception, the photographs included in the original Japanese book are not reprinted in this English translation. Accordingly, references to the photographs are removed from the text whenever doing so does not affect understanding of context.
- All people's titles and affiliations are as of March 2020, when the original Japanese version of the book was published.
- Name order follows the custom of the person's country or region of origin (or where they are based) with the exception of certain special cases or when an artist is known professionally by a specific name.

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Aspiring for an Alternative Direction

Koike Kazuko

Director, Towada Art Center

A certain art scene has been repeatedly implemented in Japan since 2000, which entails incorporating artists' activities into a particular region or community in an effort to promote creative production, and presenting the fruits of these endeavors in events such as exhibitions and art fairs. In addition, the term “socially engaged art” was introduced, and considerations and actions for a manner of art that is committed to society has come to be observed in various locations across Japan centering on its urban areas.

The exhibition *Stranger Than Fiction: Taking creation beyond location*¹ that was held as part of Towada Art Center's “Where is Chiiki Art (*chiiki ato*)? Project” is by no means unrelated to the current trends in the Japanese art world as described above.

What is more, gone are the days when museums simply function as “shrines for exhibiting artworks that have already been created.” In recent years there is increasing public awareness towards various international attempts that serve to explore the role of the museum that is sought after in the context of our contemporary society. Those who pay even closer attention to trends as well as the conditions of society both in Japan and the rest of the world further contemplate and continue to observe ways in which art can engage with real society.

1. A term that was used and redefined by critic Fujita Naoya in his text “Zen'ei no zombi-tachi: Chiiki ato no shomondai” [Zombies of the Avant-Garde: The Problems with Locality Art], published in the magazine *Subaru* (October 2014, Shueisha Inc). Fujita defines chiiki art as an “art event that bears the name of a certain region,” taking as an example the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale and the Setouchi Triennale. Furthermore he pointed out how chiiki art movements are called upon as part of government-led regional revitalization projects, as well as the fact that there is a tendency to exclude external criticism due to the high emphasis on communication and collaboration work. This critique caused significant controversy, and since, Fujita has published *Chiiki ato: Bigaku, seido, Nihon* [Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan] (March 2016, Horinouchi Publishing) featuring discussions and studies with various researchers, artists, and curators.

If such is the case, by what means do artists propose their current creations (and or activities)?

In response to an invitation from our art center, the three artists/units Kitazawa Jun, Nadegata Instant Party, and Fuji Hiroshi developed an exhibition that demonstrated their unique ideas and power of expression. The series of six talks held in parallel also provided an opportunity to understand how these guests with different backgrounds had arrived at creating diverse expressions and places, in addition to their social context. The details of such are recorded in the following pages of this book. It is worth mentioning here that more than 40,000 people in total visited Towada from all over Japan to experience this project.

As fieldwork prior to creating their works, each artist underwent the process of researching the urban environment and the surrounding natural environment, while also engaging with the local people before the exhibition opened. Although I am reluctant towards generically referring to this means of producing art as *chiiki art* what had driven over 40,000 people to visit this one particular museum in the Tohoku region? To put it simply, everyone was indeed interested in seeing how and by what means art could engage with society.

When deeply pursuing the relationship between art and society, history, and the community/environment, what begins to stand in the way are the problems of various existing frameworks and systems. Moreover, it is always the artists and their collaborators who must confront the present social system with its unreasonable prohibitions, indifference to various opinions, and the prioritization of group logic over those of individuals. Positive thoughts and actions such as creativity and independence can even be factored out due to being deemed incompatible with traditional systems.

What I constantly wish to point out is the fact that we may have to seek an alternative direction outside the system and amass the ability to move specifically. Numerous efforts are already being introduced such as artist initiatives, artist-run programs, alternative spaces, and new ventures based on art, yet we must further continue to search for a better direction and gather more momentum. It goes without saying that in proposing an alternative, what comes into question is not only the configuration of respective groups and activities, but also the very values and meanings of the art that is asserted.

Where is Chiiki Art? Project

Planning Team

Satomura Mari, Mitome Sayaka, Miyata Yuki

Towada Art Center is a publicly run contemporary art institution in Towada, a city in Aomori Prefecture with a population of sixty thousand. Notwithstanding its peripheral location some 3.5 hours from Tokyo, it attracts many visitors from Japan and beyond. Based on the Arts Towada Project, which treats the entire city as an art museum, those visitors can experience contemporary art throughout Towada in addition to the exhibits inside the art center itself. Contemporary art is a mirror reflecting the times and always relevant to us in order to richly contemplate the age through which we are living. Since the art center opened in 2008, its programming has encouraged residents to think of it as a familiar part of their everyday lives. As such, we wanted to undertake dialogue with artists and locals about the meaning of community and art engagement. The Where is Chiiki Art? Project has continued to explore the term *chiiki art* since 2017.

Literally meaning “area art,” *chiiki art* first appeared as a term in the essay “Zombies of the Avant-Garde: The Problems with Locality Art” (2014) by the critic Fujita Naoya and subsequently in his book *Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan* (2016). Fujita defined *chiiki art* here as “art projects” or “art events bearing the name of a certain area.” In the wake of the provocative attitudes encompassed in the term, people from various standpoints subsequently began a discussion that included its pros and cons, eventually shaping *chiiki art* into a single phenomenon.

Fujita’s book and the discussion it sparked contained meaningful issues and accomplished perspectives. However, we cannot help but feel uneasy about using one ambiguously defined term for everything discussed here, which differ in location and also have varying backgrounds and contexts. To evaluate only within that broad framework, without referencing the on-site behavior we consider important—that is, interacting closely with people and the circumstances where relationships naturally arise, and

then producing work through subtle exchanges and in-depth dialogue—makes the discussion seem insufficient.

Also of note is the sense we had of being pulled back forcibly into the rigid framework of “art.” Some of the people involved in art have continued to work while developing new sites of artistic practice through an awareness of the problems related to art conceptually and environmentally. To know the innate potential of art, we must surely venture into values not yet determined or expressed verbally, and verify things from the raw frontline of artistic practice that is difficult to understand by armchair theorizing alone.

Artworks created with the involvement of people in a community can usher in experiences specific to each and every participant. The artists who engage in this kind of practice feel dissatisfied with various frameworks—those frameworks that shape us, from the nation-state to social institutions, art, and so on—and in order to seek out alternative practices, travel to communities and engage in experimental endeavors. Many of the places included within the scope of chiiki art are, in fact, replete in ideas that have slipped away from the conventional framework of art. The discourse around chiiki art has not yet reached the essence that their practices aspire toward, an essence we wish to hone in on—and it is such a frustration that lies at the core of this project.

The project comprises three pillars: a six-part series of talks, an exhibition, and a book publication. In the talks, people from a range of positions considered why those practices are taking place and unraveled their origins in the hope of bringing together the diversity and urgency of chiiki art that cannot be pigeonholed in that one term. Doggedly confronting how such varied activities and practices have come to be labeled “chiiki art,” the talks also examined the act of critique itself whereby names are assigned to phenomena.

The exhibition was *Stranger Than Fiction: Taking creation beyond location*, featuring three artists who have consistently continued to pursue advanced and experimental practices: Fuji Hiroshi, Nadegata Instant Party, and Kitazawa Jun. The titular “fiction” was a reference to the fiction employed in artistic ideas and approaches. In Towada, we launched the practices of these artists who enliven reality by introducing that fiction into the community. When artistic contrivances appear out of the blue like “errors” or “bugs” in the city and gradually become part of everyday life, what we took for granted as normal begins to shift. Bringing different kinds of people together over the course of the eighteen months from the start of the preparations until the end of the exhibition to see what would happen, we wanted to drop the artists’ fictions into the everyday and, by so doing,

express that each one exists in reality.

This publication is not intended simply as a documentation of the talks and exhibition, but rather as something in which we carefully examine what happened at each occasion and consider how they can be put together.

The planning team for this project comprised four people. Through her research into modern and contemporary manga culture and new media art, the curator Kanazawa Kodama has questioned the unconscious frameworks ushered in by art transplanted from other contexts. She was joined by the three of us. Satomura Mari's interest in urban alleyways led her to study humanities, and after experience as an assistant director for documentaries, started working from 2008 all around Japan for art projects involving local communities. Raised in an environment with an awareness of gender and minorities, Mitome Sayaka was inspired to pursue a career in contemporary art from the doubts she developed about our present way of life following the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Having treated Art Tower Mito almost like her own backyard during her childhood, Miyata Yuki's attitude toward art has swung back and forth from trust to unease while developing community-based projects as an artist. In this way, the four members of the planning team each have their own resolve, and have worked with communities and art guided by their distinct senses. Though we have concerns about the conflicts and divergences arising at the intersection of community and art, these concerns form part of the unknown possibilities that enthrall us. This is because we sense the disabilities inherent in notions of both "community" and "art," and, as such, that perhaps we can get closer to the true essence of society.

The Where is Chiiki Art? Project was an opportunity for us to feel how the practices lumped together under the term *chiiki art* are an accumulation of phenomena where the awareness and intentions of not only the artists but all the diverse kinds of people involved are complexly intertwined. The examples highlighted here constitute a mere handful and even now at this very moment, others are emerging too numerous to comprehend.

Almost all the artists draw on their distinct sensibility to confront the place, people, and art, and pursue their work with dedication. A community is not a place where artistic assessment lies hidden under the surface. Leaving the space for art that is the museum and going out into the community to undertake artistic practice is something that intervenes in the everyday and creates situations where various types of people meet by chance within everyday life, thus requiring wide-ranging adjustments of a different sort from those at art museums. And to develop artworks in circumstances difficult to control and where various people are involved is to

also shift away from the original intentions of artworks and to pluralistically interpret and assess from our own standpoints (in non-art contexts). Accepting those risks, artists are nonetheless resolved to create work in collaboration with a community or otherwise based in a particular place.

In the field of community-engaged art, in addition to the artists themselves, coordinators and such mediators play important roles in “translating” the art for the community. And with the current rapid increase of art and community engagement, the cultural backgrounds and aspirations of the people carrying out these roles of coordinators and curators have diversified, and the function of the art museum in the community is also constantly changing. We might even say that the field of community art is encouraging us to update our attitude toward the very nature of art.

As this shows, there are many issues worthy of note when thinking about the field of community art, and the discussion has only just begun. This book forms, accordingly, a kind of prologue to what comes after *chiiki art*.

Though the importance of diversity is gaining recognition in recent times, peer pressure and the demand for uniformity remain deeply entrenched in society. Artistic practices taking place in communities can scramble that peer pressure, self-restraint, and authority, and restore the strong and supple state of chaos that was originally there. Community and art are not detached from people, but exist only when each person becomes directly involved.

To whom do the artistic practices taking place in communities belong? What has the term *chiiki art* tried to describe? And should we actually call that *chiiki art*? We want to think again about the practices known as *chiiki art*.

Stranger Than Fiction

Taking creation beyond location

This exhibition featured the work of Kitazawa Jun, Nadekata Instant Party, and Fuji Hiroshi, regarded by the planning team as the three most important artists working at the intersection of community and art.

Born in 1988, Kitazawa Jun has engaged with communities ever since his early practice, creating projects with the close involvement of local residents. For this exhibition, he introduced a type of Indonesian vehicle to carry out *Lost Terminal*, exploring ways to use the vehicle with visitors and locals. During the exhibition, the vehicles were put to practical use with residents, indirectly forming an experiment in revitalizing the city.

Formed in 2006, Nadekata Instant Party establishes “pretexts” for making things happen, by which the group brings members of the general public in to the process, elicits incidents, and turns these into artworks that incorporate contingency. For this exhibition, the group’s pretext was to make a virtual reality work, in which it engaged in dialogue and prototyping with over sixty participants to create the horse-themed *Local Mixed Media Museum*.

Born in 1960, Fuji Hiroshi is a pioneering figure in this field. Since the 1980s, he has continued to create what he calls “operating systems,” which participants take the initiative in starting. For this exhibition, he worked with curator Kanazawa Kodama to adapt the youth of an artist (based on Fuji himself) into a novel, *Shima Takeshi*, extracts from which were exhibited in the venue alongside traces of Fuji’s actual activities as *Shima Takeshi: A Novel and Its Surroundings*.

The exhibition attracted more than forty-five thousand visitors, the highest number for an exhibition at the art center since it first opened.

Double Localities

Where Distant Communities Overlap

Kitazawa Jun

Artist

Looking back, “streets” were always nothing more than pathways or routes for traveling to a certain destination. Perhaps the reason I became completely absorbed in skateboarding during my junior high school years, was because I saw it as a magical game of sorts that transformed the dull streets into a “destination.” *LOST TERMINAL* serves to criticize the streets that are bound by rules, as well as tendencies of movement in which people find themselves rushing to their next destination, and physical sensations of placing emphasis on efficiency. What had led me to install vehicles such as *becaks* (tricycle rickshaws human-powered by pedaling) from Indonesia was none other than the fact that they reflect everyday Indonesian life, from the toughness of evading the system, to chaotic street spaces, as well as people’s adaptability and bodily movements that enable them to survive in the city. Along with their physical sensation, I anticipated these vehicles to bring with them another reality. At the same time I felt that the idea for the project could potentially draw connections to the history of Towada’s planar urban areas built upon reclaimed land and the horse-drawn carriages that run along its streets, in ways beyond one’s imagination.

Having studied and overcome the restrictions of Japan’s streets, I transported vehicles in shipping containers, and finally created a scene in which *becaks* could be seen driving through the streets of Towada. These vehicles are all much harder to handle than they appear, and can’t quite be maneuvered smoothly. It is thus necessary to concentrate on how to handle one’s body, and think about what one is to do in that very moment and place. The *becaks* did not serve as a means to get to one’s destination, but instead became a medium to free our bodies from the systems that protect and bind us, reminding ourselves to use our very own feet to pedal across the surface

of this liberated world that is essentially difficult to traverse. When I visited Towada once again in time for the finale that marked the end of the five-month exhibition, I witnessed various people with their sun-browned faces handling the *becaks* as if they were some professional. What extended before my eyes was somewhat of a perplexing situation in which I couldn't help but question where exactly this was. Engaging with an everyday that is foreign from one's own can indeed undermine one's subconscious familiarities. That being said, the destination that *LOST TERMINAL* had aimed to arrive at was a "nowhere" that manifests as a result of mixing these foreign entities with elements of familiarity. It is a place somewhere that is neither Japan nor Indonesia.

As one might imagine based on a theory that describes the roots of *becaks* as rickshaws exported from Japan to other Asian countries during the Meiji period, it seems that neither "community," "culture," nor "language" can be understood in a uniform manner. At the same, it appears to be a testament of the fact that such had emerged due to the intermixing of different things in the first place. Perhaps the concept of a single community or culture is an illusion. It is no longer prudent to place faith in expressions that are conceived as a result of relationships that arise from within when intervening with a "unique" community. Nevertheless, that does not mean to say that one must avoid uniqueness and return to universality. Amidst this dilemma, I facilitated a specific encounter between two "localities" (common practices and localities of a certain community) that harbor the illusion of uniqueness, and found hope in the subtle "overlaps" that remained in their divide. This is because I believe that it is the very something that we who live in current times have fundamentally lost.

Presenting “Local Mixed Media”

Nadegata Instant Party

Collective, consisting of artists Nakazaki Tohru, Yamashiro Daisuke, and art manager Noda Tomoko.

To begin with, we proposed the idea of developing a project that centered on “creating virtual realities.” Once we began conducting research along with members of the project, we came to notice numerous horse motifs that were scattered throughout the city. The topic of horses was also naturally raised during a conversation we had with students who were visiting from the School of Veterinary Medicine of Kitasato University in Towada City. In this respect, we reaffirmed our decision to engage with horses, and thought to ourselves, why not take this opportunity to create a museum? While Nadegata Instant Party’s activities tend to be regarded as often taking place within the community (non-art spaces), we in fact are very fond of museums. Clean white walls are magnificent, as the artist need not think about issues such as measures against typhoons. We love the institution that enables the audience to perceive what is presented as works of art. Allow us to repeat in order to avoid any misunderstanding. Nadegata Instant Party loves museums.

In our previous projects we at times have adopted formats that are seemingly parodies of haunted houses and amusement parks. There is an entrance, a fixed route, categories and thematic divisions. The audience proceeds through the space in due course while gathering information, and eventually arrives at the exit. This format is essentially a “museum.” In truth we have often introduced the structure of the museum into locations such as abandoned houses and unused facilities, while incorporating parodies of entertainment facilities. In doing so, we appropriate a mechanism that allows what we present to be recognized as a work of art. That is to say, we created another museum that is nested inside Towada Art Center. “Situation-specific,” as evolved from “site-specific” is used to describe our works, yet if this is due to an attempt to understand what we produce based on locations

and circumstances, then the title of this project, “local mixed media,” reflects the intention to understand the work through its medium.

The fact that Nakazaki had participated in an exhibition at Towada Art Center in 2014 and was familiar with the local people is something that also assisted us in making great progress on the project. In addition to a horse previously made for a local festival being kindly loaned to us, a person of a tow truck company loaned us the vehicle that was installed in the venue throughout the duration of the exhibition which they also assisted in transporting and setting up, and the owner of a florist’s had visited the art center regularly every day to change and rearrange the flowers. Before we realized, the overall elements of the exhibition came to be determined due to the relationship with and backgrounds of these individuals who we were acquainted with. The text by G. K. Chesterton that is introduced in the preface was in fact taken from a belly-band supplied on a book about horses that a student participating in the project had brought along. As a result of these processes, we decided to apply the term “local mixed media” just before the project was completed, in the sense of it being a “medium” in which distinct local characteristics intermix. Its nuance perhaps harbors numerous things including relationships and backgrounds due to placing more emphasis on non-material aspects rather than the “medium,” which indeed is used as an art term.

Regions and Communities as a “Field”

Fuji Hiroshi

Artist

I believe that my own experience of artworks started with the patterns of Oshima Tsumugi, a traditional handcraft of the Island of Amami Oshima in my native Kagoshima Prefecture. Then in the 1970s I had been absorbed in building plastic model kits that were at the peak of popularity at the time, and this was later followed by an interest in manga and anime. When I was in high school and had started thinking about going on to university, I came across the statues of the *Senju Kannon* (Bodhisattva of a Thousand Arms) in *Sanjusangen-do* (Thirty-three ‘Ken’ Hall) and the *Miroku Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva Maitreya) in Koryu-ji temple in Kyoto, and it was this interest in Japanese art and crafts that led me to pursue my path as an artist. My fascination towards artworks that were deeply related to a particular region or community had thus already begun at the time. Furthermore, as I came to study art at university, I learned that every value creation from that of ancient Greece, the Italian Renaissance, the Impressionists in Paris, to the emergence of contemporary art in New York, had been orchestrated in accordance to the circumstances of each unique region and community, as well as a series of small and close-knit human relationships. Since Western art didn’t quite resonate with me, I considered it as a starting point for thinking about “what can be expressed here and now.”

What I attempted to convey in my novel *Shima Takeshi*, which was exhibited in the exhibition *Stranger than Fiction: Taking creation beyond location*, was the very attitude of art university students going this way and that in trying to come up with new activities while referring to the values created in the past, or the works that were in circulation at that time. Many art students find themselves fascinated by artworks that have been made so far, and therefore start by attempting to make something similar. However, imitating past artworks does not enable them to be recognized as artists. They will not be evaluated unless they go beyond artworks of the past to

present something that is new and unprecedented. Art students thus come to confront certain fundamental questions. What does it mean to create art? How does one create new value? What is expression?

Regions and Communities as a Format of Expression

In writing this novel, I reread one of my notebooks from around 1983 when I was a student, and in it came across a naïve remark that I had written at the time.

Are we trying to make “decorations” for the rich, “tools” for maintaining the authority of organizations, or something that is a “subject of investment”? By all means, that should not be the case!

Artworks are placed in a frame or presented on a pedestal, while dyed or woven textile works are made into a folding screen, a kimono, or displayed on a panel. In an era when formats were narrowly constrained, the city was filled with pop culture such as videos, magazines, advertisements, anime, manga, music, fashion, games, design, and thus expressions of a new era were burgeoning. I believe that we had looked to the streets in order to seek out fields of expression, rather than the art system of the time.

People don't possess that many means of expression in the first place. Just as expression through words can only be done in a language that one is familiar with, people are only able to express by a means (a vocabulary) that they themselves have experienced. What is more, the reality is that the more experience you have in expressing, the more you are bound by those means and techniques. And above all, the environment places constraints on expression. When children draw they are restricted by an image plane such as a sheet of paper or section of wall that are provided by the adults beside them. Both the time and place where they are allowed to shout and run around is also limited. Places where you can do as you please, and things you can engage with freely always exist in some space or another, and in these space, many things are controlled through rules, laws, and regulations. Furthermore, the eyes of others, common sense, and the atmosphere of a place also serve to suppress manners of expression.

Amidst such circumstances we try to find a place where we as much as possible are allowed to do as we please, then we acquire a permissible environment, encounter various means of expression, and try to express as freely as we can. In other words, we try to achieve the freest possible

expression with the materials and environment that is given and permitted to us. More vast and expansive than sheets of drawing paper, and more open than a closed and confined space—despite being subjected to various laws and regulations, perhaps communities and regions are a format that is both connected to society and opens out to the world.

Stakeholders that Expand from Communities and Regions

After graduating from university I explored various expressions while engaging with commercial facilities and spaces within the city centering on Tokyo and the Kansai area, yet I had constantly felt a certain of incongruity in being incorporated into the contemporary art exhibition system no matter how much I tried to deviate from it. I developed a strong desire to move away from the stakeholders of Japanese contemporary art at the time, and seek out my own form of expression in a completely difference place. Having gone to Papua New Guinea which was a developing country, and learning about primitive expressions, as well as developing an understanding of anthropological and sociological methods, I came to think that the basis of expression that goes beyond the framework and systems of art in fact could be found in the techniques used in deepening the connections between human beings and the very land on which they live and are engaged with.

Upon returning to Japan in 1988, when I had “aimed to be an artist who depicts images in local communities through cooperative relationships and appropriate technology,” I tried to describe in words the figure of the artist that I myself was aiming for. I told my friends and my juniors my desire to “depict images in the field that is the local community, just like painter paints and image on the canvas, and a sculptor carves an image on a lump of stone.” In order to put this into practice, I took an attitude of intervening in the fields of land development and urban/regional planning to seek out means of expression. It was a statement against being easily positioned within contemporary art historical discourse. At the same time, it was like some kind of fiction that was set up so I could distance myself from my seniors who all but frowned and lamented the narrowness of the realm of art. What it did was it enabled me to spend a loving, promising, and enjoyable time with the many people who were completely different stakeholders and were trying to create something new.

Thirty years have passed since then, and in recent years art expressions like relational art and community art, which are based on the nature and conditions of regions, communities, and relationships, have

come to gain a position within art history. I myself feel that I have been involved to some extent in the occurrence and development of certain key movements, such as the circumstances centering on the Kansai region from the latter half of the 1980s to the first half of the 1990s, art projects of the 1990s that engaged with local regions and communities as their field, demonstration-type expressions since the 2000s that utilize systems and networks, art festivals held in local regions and communities, and the way in which museums are involved in this context. That being said, I also feel uncomfortable regarding the current situation where these things are collectively referred to as “chiiki art.” If so, this may indeed harbor a great deal of potential.

A Chain of Expressions Initiated by a Sense of Incongruity

A slight sense of incongruity that occurs as an emotion, that is, the feeling that “something is not quite right.” There is no problem if one is able to “properly state what they notice.” However, when confronting new things, there is a certain feeling of frustration as one has difficulty putting into words what exactly is not right, despite being able to sense it. In fact, this frustration is the very seed of expression, and is an energy source leading to a manner of production that in turn serves to generate a new image.

We learn the process of production that entails confronting and giving form to this sense of incongruity when practicing to “draw” in preparation for taking art university entrance exams. In drawing, one must observe the entity that is the subject of depiction, then draw its image on the piece of paper in front of them, and figuratively give form to what one has perceived through the most appropriate lines. At first however, there are many discrepancies. These discrepancies are also interesting, yet it takes considerable knowledge, experience, and training to match one’s senses and sensibilities to the lines that are drawn. One objectively compares the lines drawn on the paper with the actual subject to find “what is different” and makes corrections. I feel that all means of expression require the same process. Whether in linguistic expression, music, cooking, craftsmanship, or local art projects, one makes full use of their sensibility to engage with what they have created, pinpoint the slight discrepancies and incongruities that are present, investigate the cause, correct them, and finally arrive at completion. In fact, it is necessary to culminate an extensive amount of trial and error in order to convey the slight incongruity that has emerged within one’s senses.

The troublesome thing is that the incongruities that we sense in our everyday exist limitlessly in multiple layers—incongruities regarding our own existence, our family and our relationship with our surroundings, the products and consumer society that permeate our lives, energy policies, taxes, pensions, insurance, environment, health, systems concerning education and art, and political systems that threaten freedom of expression and human rights. When trying to give form to something, another sense of incongruity arises from an unexpected place, and as one explores the meaning behind what this is, another sense of incongruity emerges in a complex and overlaying manner. In confronting this, many artists, or many young people who are aspiring to become artists, attempt at expressions in various fields and formats while repeatedly engaging in a process of trial and error. What I believe to be the most valuable is an open-minded society in which all of this is accepted.

Cross Talk 01

November 3, 2018

Thinking from the Inside and Outside, Looking at Things from a Wider Perspective

In this crosstalk, three panelists shared their work and explained what the term “chiiki art” means to them, after which a facilitator-led discussion explored the scope of what chiiki art can, and should be.

Kanazawa Kodama

Independent Curator / Senior Deputy Director of
Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center

Hayashi Akio

Founder & Managing Director, NPO inVisible

Fujita Naoya

Literary Critic

[Facilitator]

Harada Yuki

Artist

Fujita: I believe that I was in part invited to speak today due to my advocating the term “chiiki art” in my book, *Locality art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan*.

There are indeed numerous chiiki art related events taking place throughout Japan. I would like to take a moment to introduce just a few. In KENPOKU ART that takes place in the North of the Ibaraki Prefecture, artworks are exhibited across a vast area spanning both the mountains and ocean. The Saitama Triennale on the other hand, takes urban space such as the streets and city areas as its setting. The Onahama Hon-cho Street Art Festival in the Fukushima Prefecture is an art festival held in an area that was hit by the tsunami, and is voluntarily organized and run by the local people. The Reborn-Art Festival is held in Ishinomaki City in the Miyagi Prefecture. Again, it is an area that was greatly affected by the earthquake and tsunami. There are also works of art that are integrated with nature.

In Nara City Art Project KOTOHOGU NARA, works were installed near the city's world heritage site. HANARART that also takes place in Nara was started with aims to address the issue of the city's historic *machiya* (town houses) being left un-inherited. As abandoned houses could lead to a decrease in land prices and have a negative impact on surrounding areas, the local government purchased these buildings to be used for art events and cafes. (Other examples were introduced through photographs, such as the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, Sapporo International Art Festival, Yokohama Triennale, documenta, and Skulptur Projekte Münster.)

There are certain desperate situations that some of Japan's rural areas are confronted with, such as the declining birthrate and ageing population, elderly people living in isolation, as well as high suicide rates. In these dire situations, there is an anticipation to do something through art, offer a solution, and move on towards the future. There are certainly instances when I feel that these kinds of efforts have some sort of power to save the world. Frankly, I believe that they foster a sense of hope for living in a negative reality, or suggest a bright future, thus instilling me with a feeling of liberation and relief.

That being said, I also feel some concerns and apprehensions. When viewing *chiiki* art, I am always overwhelmed by a violent wave of manic depression. Sometimes I find myself in a state of double orientation where two "realities" of positive and negative simultaneously exist.

For example, there are times when tourism and local branding are raised as key objectives, and while such promotion measures are implemented and the cityscape is beautified, the history of the region is gradually lost. For instance, an event known as Koganecho Bazaar is held in the Koganecho area of Yokohama, which was formerly renowned as an illegal red light district. It was part of a "cleansing operation," and although it surely makes the area cleaner and more comfortable to live in, at the same time the things that have been around since the past have disappeared. In areas that were hit by the earthquake and tsunami the remnants of the disaster are no more, with pristine new shopping malls built in their place.

Naoshima, which serves as one of the venues of the Setouchi Triennale, has been successful as a town for contemporary art and tourism. Originally, Naoshima and its surrounding island had been known for the illegal disposal of waste and issues of pollution. The nearby island of Oshima had historically been home to an isolation facility for people with Hansen's disease (leprosy), where forced abortions were also implemented. These kinds of negative impressions can have an adverse effect on the local industry. Steps to transform the islands into a tourist location were

promoted as a measure against these negative rumors, and in 1990, Benesse Corporation founded Naoshima Cultural Village Co., Ltd. to engage in the operation and management of art programs. Furthermore, in 2000, the Kagawa Prefecture officially announced its “Regulations Against Harmful Rumors in Naoshimacho,” leading to the full-fledged activities of Benesse Art Site Naoshima which continues to this day. As a result, the “town of pollution and waste” was transformed into a “town of art and tourism,” and the financial difficulties that Naoshima was facing due to the withdrawal of Mitsubishi Materials, formerly a major enterprise of the island, were resolved. Naoshima could be described as having catapulted into becoming a winner amidst the various local promotion wars that were taking place across the country. That being said, I think it also reflects a sort of historical revisionist desire of attempting to deny what had happened in the past. I am cautious about this ambiguous power of art that chiiki art embodies.

It overlaps with the soft power strategy that the Japanese government continues to promote as a national strategy. In his book *Totetsumonai Nihon* [Extraordinary Japan] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2007), Aso Taro, who had served as Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, raises an example that while there was an anti-Japanese uproar in a soccer field in Chongqing, which was bombed by Japan in the World War II, there were 100,000 people who attended a live concert by musician Tanimura Shinji in Shanghai. In doing so, he anticipates the power of culture to overcome the memories of past historical tragedies. Although it is indeed a good thing for everyone to get along in peace, the memories of the past fade away. The same thing can be said for Fukushima, whereby positive and uplifting images of revival is all that is disseminated, and the negative reality is not communicated under the pretense of it leading to “harmful rumors.” There is a very severe plus and minus in this context, and political tensions continue.

We are living in risky yet interesting times in which images envisioned and reality are separated, and political power and culture/art are closely linked. While I recognize the need for this, my frank and honest opinion is that I don't quite know what future lays ahead, as an optimistic scenario and pessimistic scenario both alternately come to my mind.

Hayashi: I suppose that in the context of this conversation, someone like me who makes a profit from art projects can be described as an “incarnation of evil.” (laughs cynically)

I in fact didn't attend art university, but had studied business at the Department of International Management. When I was at university I met Yamaide Jun'ya who had founded the BEPPU POROJECT, thereafter which

I started to get involved in the planning and operation of art related projects. As opposed to the theoretical aspects, today I hope to talk about the things I felt while working on site on various projects, including the incongruities I've encountered.

To be honest, I personally don't use the term "chiiki art" much. I find it difficult to envision what exactly it means. According to Mr. Fujita's definition, chiiki art refers to art events like art festivals that bear the name of a particular region or community. Of all the projects I have been involved in there are several that feature the names of specific regions including, the BEPPU PROJECT, Beppu Contemporary Art Festival, Kunisaki Art Festival, Aichi Triennale 2013, Tottori Artist in Residence Festival, Ichihara Art x Mix, Roppongi Art Night, and KENPOKU ART. So looking back, I do seem to have been involved in this area of what is referred to as chiiki art. I'd like to mention a little about the kinds of things I have actually been doing.

In 2009 I organized the project "Watercolor in the Water Atelier" with the artist Sarkis in Beppu. Hatoba Shrine, where the work was exhibited, was in a very bad condition at the time, but nevertheless we selected it as the venue for the project. I also conducted a workshop of making a watercolor painting in water in the garden of a hotel called Yamada Bessou.

There is the Beppu City Art Museum in Beppu, but I have never organized an exhibition there. In general, I have been doing projects in the city.

I did a project called "Let's Go Dancing!" with an organization called the Japan Contemporary Dance Network (JCDN). I organized a project that invited people to encounter dance expressions along with the city's history while strolling through its streets. For example, you'd be walking along and suddenly contact Gonzo would start a performance.

In 2010, a performance was held in a shopping street, where the artist BION ISEIJIN emerged out of a large ball like one you'd see in a ball-rolling race at a school sports day, and started performing.

Towada Art Center is home to Choi Jeong-hwa's *Flower Horse*. I remember working with him at the Kunisaki Art Festival. Initially, having seen the *Flower Horse* at Towada, I had completely envisioned the work also coming to the Kunisaki Peninsula. Various species of flowers grow in the Kunisaki Peninsula, so I hoped that he could create something using these as a material. However, as we searched for locations to install the work, and engaged in discussions, he started talking about wanting to create a hill, or an observatory, or a mountain. The idea was that various birds would flock to this hill over the course of the next 100, 200, 300 years, dropping seeds, which then would bloom into flowers. He stated, "My work will meet its completion one day, when all of this can no longer be seen." It seemed that

he had decided to create a work that would not be completed during the exhibition period. I recall thinking that an art project is not a place to show a finished work, but is essentially an opportunity to initiate a project.

At the Tottori Artist in Residence Festival, Hara Makiko curated the project *Ich Cho Shin Mu* (一場春夢) by a Canadian artist called Khan Lee in the city of Yonago. We rented an abandoned plot of farmland and created a landmark that measured approximately 100 meters × 30 meters. A yellow flowering plant known as Canadian goldenrod that grow on the plot create the Japanese kanji characters that read “*Ichi Jou No Shun Mu*” (一場春夢 glorious human life is short lived and transient like a spring dream). These characters gradually disappear as the seasons change. The work itself was what you could regard as “land art,” which as true to the meaning of the phrase, would eventually disappear.

Also, in the “Relight Project,” a work of public art titled *Counter Void* (by Miyajima Tatsuo) that has been turned off since the Great East Japan Earthquake, was illuminated once year for a limited period of three days from March 11th to 13th. This project was continued over the course of three years.

Now, the word that I mainly use is “art project” rather than “chiiki art.” What many of these projects have in common is that they are similar to the process of making a feature film in the sense that they are not brought to completion solely through the artist’s ideas and the efforts of their studio. Instead, what is important is the relationship with people at certain times, places and communities.

There are many things to do when trying to realize an art project, including getting permission from health centers, understanding the Road Traffic Law, and gaining the support of politicians, but in fact, I noticed that traditional festivals that have been passed down in local regions and communities have also done the same. With this in mind, when considering “what the value of an art project is” I feel that it is the fact that it enables us to think about the past, present, and future of certain places and activities through its various works and projects. Moreover, with participants and viewers who experience them playing a main and significant role, it becomes a platform from which something else can be further derived. What I in particular place importance on in art projects is to generate a sense of serendipity. In other words, I hope to create a chance opportunity for people who don’t necessarily wish to view art to come across works or project in an almost forceful kind of way.

As I mentioned earlier, the term chiiki art doesn’t really bode with me. To be honest, I don’t want it to be concerned with only thinking about

“art.” Various regional issues are occurring in locations across Japan today, starting with the declining birthrate and aging population. There are respective reasons for these issues, and it is necessary to consider them from a variety of different angles and take it in a positive direction. I hope that such activities themselves would come to be referred to as *chiiki art*.

Nowadays it is said that there are too many *chiiki art* projects and art festivals, but there are in fact more than 1700 municipalities in Japan. Mr. Fujita writes in his aforementioned book that there are only 100 or so among them that are actually engaged in doing art-related things. Considering that less than ten percent of all municipalities are doing it, I personally think that it is still a very small number. I hope that a situation could be achieved in which around 700 to 800 municipalities are involved in implementing a variety of art projects from a large-scale to those that are smaller and more experimental. I think that society will change only when it seems that it is a minority not to be involved in art projects.

Kanazawa: I would like to focus on the theme of thinking about *chiiki art* from the perspectives of historical discourse and art education.

I studied literature at university, and my graduation thesis was on Natsume Soseki’s novel *Kusamakura* (translated into English in 1965 as *The Three-cornered World*, and in 2008 as *Grass Pillow*). The novel describes the state of art around 1906 in the Meiji period (1868-1912) when it was published. The protagonist is an artist of Western-style paintings, which was still quite rare at the time, but he is referred to as a “画工” (*Gakou*, lit. “painting artisan”) rather than “画家” (*Gaka*, “painter”). Since there was no concept of an artist or painters at the time, the word “工” meaning artisan or craftsman was used. During the novel, the protagonist finds himself pondering over whether he should create nude paintings. In current times we are all used to seeing nudes through sculptures and statues in the streets, and it indeed may seem like nothing new. In the Meiji period however, everyone had been embarrassed and flustered by the nude paintings made by painters who had returned from France.

I further researched history in hopes to find out more, and it was then that I learned for the first time that Japan had imported the concept of art from the West during the Meiji period. I also learned that since then people have been exposed to long-term suffering. For example, museums came to be regarded as having a high threshold, that is, a place difficult to approach, and many people would dislike art as if they had some sort of aversion or allergic reaction to it. There would even be a strong tendency for those interested in art-related fields in Japan to pursue commercial art

like illustration, television, and publishing rather than the world of fine art. I feel that these things reflect the background and influences of such historical discourse.

I myself have suffered. When I was a toddler, I really liked drawing manga-like pictures of girls with big eyes wearing dresses. My drawings were actually really popular, so much to the extent that many friends would line up and ask me to draw for them in their notebooks. However, when I advanced into elementary school, these drawings had completely lost their value. This is because manga-like drawings did not correspond at all to the values posed in the arts and crafts curriculum at elementary school. When I talk about this, I find that there are many people who have had a similar experience. At home everyone would draw pictures of anime and manga characters like Pikachu and Doraemon, yet in school they were required to draw something completely different. This experience is precisely symbolic of this historical background.

Since there was no school education itself prior to the Meiji period, when it came to art education, textbooks were made featuring example pictures which students were asked to copy in the same way as practicing calligraphy. This was referred to as *Ringa* (replication drawing), but all of this became obsolete as well by the Taisho period (1912-1926). When learning how to draw manga, you also basically do it through copying. Since art as an educational subject has undergone a series of complex transitions, it is not possible to simply determine that replication drawings are that which is unique to Japan, and that free paintings are based on principles of Western art. Nevertheless, I think it is possible to see that the import of Western art concepts had resulted in something things being pushed aside.

In summary, the concepts and formats imported from the West formed the mainstream of art, which came to be recognized as “official” art, and education in museums and schools was dominated by this kind of art. On the other hand, the concepts and formats of crafts and popular art that existed prior to this had come to form the substreams.

From here I'll talk about *chiiki* art. It seems that around 100 art festivals are held in Japan. Their scales vary, but for example, when reading the report on Aichi Triennale 2016, an economic result of 4.8 billion yen was calculated against an expenditure of 1.3 billion yen, and it was a great success, attracting over 600,000 visitors over a period of 74 days. Of course there are some that have low profits and only a small number of visitors and as a result are ultimately discontinued, yet at the same time we hear news of new art festivals being initiated every year. From this situation, we can see that many people have a welcoming attitude towards art festivals. What is

behind this popularity?

Art festivals in Japan pretty much have a similar structure and consist of three aspects: “exhibitions in a museum-like art space”, “site-specific installations,” and “participatory art projects.” What I want to bring attention to are participatory art projects. This is rarely lacking in art festivals, and I believe that it is key.

Tom Finkelppearl writes that American social practices have evolved through local political movements and sensibilities such as civil rights movements, counterculture, and feminism (*What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*. Duke University Press, 2013). The acceptance and prosperity of art festivals in Japan may too in some aspects have evolved through local political movements and sensibilities. I think that local political movements and sensibilities in this context were of course feminist movements and the Anpo Struggles (mass protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty), as well as Japan’s disquieting relationship with the United States. In the field of expression however, I believe that the aforementioned import of art concepts during the Meiji period had presented a significant influence. This is sometimes referred to as “self-colonization” or “voluntary cultural imperialism,” but substreams had also become a powerful presence as a very reaction to this great impact, and this describes the situation of Japan.

It is also possible to see rebellions against official art in the context of official art. As Kajiya Kenji writes in the book *Locality Art*, the long history of outdoor sculpture exhibitions is based on a movement that encouraged displaying sculptures outside of the museum rather than the inside, and indeed can be regarded as one of such rebellions. The same goes for avant-garde art, as you know. In the 1990s, workshops came to be actively developed as a part of museum education. These were not for the purpose of teaching painting techniques and such, but had an experimental element of engaging in certain activities with the participants and not knowing what the outcome would be. I believe that this serves as the basis for welcoming chiiki art.

On the other hand, it is also possible to observe changes in the side that has continued to promote official art. Now, 150 years since the Meiji Restoration, contemporary art has come to the fore as a universal language when we begin to think about the revival of cultural identity, and in considering things like welfare and regional revitalization.

I mentioned the three characteristics of chiiki art earlier, but the third is indeed the most important, and I believe that this can be perceived in various ways. Art projects that have left museums and educational settings

can be regarded as a sense of refusal or antipathy of official art. What local governments implement can on the contrary be regarded as movements to conciliate its residents. It could also be rephrased in many other different ways. It can be said that “chiiki art was one way for people to nullify art that felt discomforting in the context of Japanese modernization and voluntary cultural imperialism,” or that “it was a way for people to regain art” or “a way to reconsider it.” For the authority, “it could be regarded as a way of appeasing those who had suffered as a result of policies concerning art” or “as a means of masking the division between art and culture.” My supposition today is that the dynamics of historical divisions caused by such political power and bargaining may be what is creating the vitality of today’s art festivals.

I also think that therein lies the potential to connect Japan’s chiiki art with more new things. I say this because when speaking with specialists from other countries, they are all aware of this very interesting situation that’s emerging in Japan, and I often hear of them wanting to visit Japan in hopes to see this.

Harada: Now from around here I would like to move onto the crosstalk, but before that, please allow me to briefly talk about why I am sitting here today. In 2013 I was in charge of compiling the book *Rassen to wa nan datta no ka?* [Essays on Works and Reception of Lassen in Japan] [sic] (Film Art Inc., 2013). This book self-critically examines contemporary art by comparing the phenomena surrounding the reception of Christian Lassen whose work gained extreme popularity in 1990s Japan, with the reception of contemporary art. The organizers who invited me to this panel discussion had read this book, and I recall talking with them about how in certain ways there were similarities between what is outlined in the book and the problems that “chiiki art” has. In connection with this, Mr. Fujita wrote in his book that, “chiiki art is a large field that is on par with contemporary art,” but is it in fact possible to raise the question: “is chiiki art contemporary art?” I would like to begin by asking everyone to exchange views regarding their basic understanding and perception of chiiki art and contemporary art.

Fujita: I think that chiiki art derives from contemporary art and is a part of it, but its new feature is that it is fluidly connected to what lies outside of the art world. As Ms. Kanazawa mentioned, I really feel the exciting potential for it to serve as a platform and opportunity for art to once again be rooted in the lives of Japanese people.

Hayashi: I think that chiiki art and art festivals are more comprehensive. They do not simply entail viewing artworks, but provide a total experience that includes encountering food and people. The fact that it also harbors an aspect of tourism is another reason why art festivals are being held in various places. Therefore, the angles for evaluating and discussing chiiki art and art festivals should be a little more diverse.

Kanazawa: The definition of “chiiki art as non-contemporary art” seems very bold and aggressive.

Harada: I think the biggest thing is the difficulty of linguistic and critical intervention. Are there any opinions on how to critique activities that are referred to as chiiki art?

Fujita: I believe that venturing into and experiencing fluid situations, as well as networks between people, and dynamic communities are decisively new points about this chiiki art paradigm. Again, the question is how to critique this.

Kanazawa: It is said that there are no critiques on chiiki art, but it is almost impossible to talk about chiiki art through the value standards of criticism that are currently in place.

Fujita: Whether it's subculture or film, whenever something new historically emerges, we have always searched for, invented and evaluated new narratives and discourses. So I believe that we should be able to do the same for chiiki art.

Hayashi: That's why we need to have more players who are involved in and talk about chiiki art, and I think this is difficult if it were solely entrusted to people in the art field. Rather than perceiving chiiki art as a small satellite in relation to a certain core/center, or as a substream that is distant from it, we should think about how to engage with it as something that is happening for a reason.

Harada: It was also mentioned that it is hard to gain the sense of what the term chiiki art exactly means.

Kanazawa: In fact, artists often tell me “please don't refer to my work as that (chiiki art).” There is the impression that all the things that have been thought about carefully and culminated up until this point is simply

discarded as a result of that single remark.

Hayashi: In my case, I always use the term “art project.” The words “art” and “project” are almost like oil and water. There seems to be certain conflicting points between “art,” which begins with an individual story that is abstracted and expanded in a place sought away from economic rationality, and a “projects” that are implemented through various experts negotiating rational aspects including issues of funding. However, I feel that attitude of trying to realize these conflicting things in the world itself serves to create value.

Fujita: I understand the feeling of not wanting to simplify things. Nevertheless, critics need to conceptualize and formulate a language for it. Concepts and language may in the first place seem merely approximate and insufficient in response to reality, yet they enable recognition and communication.

In the 2000s when I started engaging in critique, otaku culture and individualistic digital culture with little sense of physicality had still strongly prevailed in the urban areas of Tokyo. People were non-social and non-political. Then from around the 2010s, cultural phenomena and sensibilities including relationships with local communities and regions, one’s own body, nature, and between people started to grow rapidly. The term “chiiki art” was coined as a means to conceptualize these phenomena.

Hayashi: For example, when constructing skyscrapers and high-rise apartments, the floor area ratio can be increased through providing open spaces. It is a necessary debate whether we, who are involved in the planning and organization of art projects, can use these opportunities to create chance encounters in the context of urban space in order to bring out the creativity of the artist, as well as the sense of imagination that is inherent within us all.

On the other hand, we must also question the economics of art projects, which is a topic that is often raised. Considering the short-term economic percussions on a certain region or community, it may seem better to organize a concert of a popular singer or a sports competition. When it comes to the value of art projects, it is also indispensable to take into account things other than just its economic effects.

Fujita: If I may ask, what is the reason for doing art in local regions and communities even through its economic and political effects are not

clearly visible?

Hayashi: I think the reason is that the circumstances and relationships created as a result of art projects in turn generate new value for the region or community.

It creates an opportunity to re-examine and reconsider the challenges that many regions and communities confront today, such as diversity, tolerance, and making friends across generations.

Fujita: Perhaps we can think of it as an investment for exploring the future, and a site for innovation, development, and experimentation.

Kanazawa: I envision art as being similar to a social experiment. At an exhibition scheduled for April next year, we will invite three individual/collective of artists: Fuji Hiroshi, Nadegata Instant Party, and Kitazawa Jun. A characteristic of these artists is that they play a role in installing a certain system or story in the community. The artists themselves do not know whether the local people would achieve a sense of independence over the work, or whether a different situation could arise beyond that. However, I think that in their works and practice lies a desire to pave the path for a better future through such trials for social improvement.

Fujita: Why has art now come to be involved in things like social reform and the future?

Kanazawa: I think that it is because it is “easily accessible.” By saying that “it’s art” it becomes easier to gain the support of clients, and the hurdle for social involvement changes. It is the positive aspect of the “ambiguity of art” that was mentioned in Mr. Fujita’s presentation. On the other hand, I think the topic of ambiguity was an important suggestion in the sense that we need to be aware of the negative aspects as well.

Fujita: I can understand the sense of urgency and mission that art must play the role of an experiment that serves to invent the way of life in the future. I feel that therein also lies a certain power or desire to aid in realizing a better future.

Speaking of ambiguity, I am also interested in the point of “cultural identity” that Ms. Kanazawa mentioned. Even in the Aomori Prefecture, there is the possibility that something like the “Jomon Arts Festival” will be held in the future if the Jomon Archaeological Sites were to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a result, Aomori would

in a sense become “self-oriental,” making itself look exotic in order to attract tourists. What happens to the discord with the old when changing into a new identity?

In times when it is necessary for new changes, there will indeed be people who are intent on sticking to old cultural identities and things like “the home of one’s heart.” This can be cause for collision, conflict, and dispute. In this respect, I am currently curious about the future of “chiiki art” as a site for such conflict.

Diffuse Chiiki Art

Harada Yuki

Artist

From November 3 to November 4, 2018, two crosstalk events (Cross Talk 01 and 02) were held at Towada Art Center for the Where is Chiiki Art? Project. I served as event facilitator, participating in one of the talks with Hayashi Akio, Fujita Naoya, and Kanazawa Kodama. This short essay is based on the content of our discussion. The term *chiiki art* was proposed in Fujita's 2014 essay "Zombies of the Avant-Garde: The Problems with Locality Art." Though the term was already in use in everyday conversation, Fujita's essay was the first to clearly define it as "art events bearing the name of a certain area."

The November 3 crosstalk saw Fujita (someone centrally involved in chiiki art) join Hayashi (who has engaged in community revitalization and art project management all over Japan), Kanazawa (Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at Toward Art Center), and this writer (who works as an artist). The talk and the second one held the following day were not inward-facing events by people involved in the almost innumerable examples of chiiki art taking place everywhere, but rather an attempt to re-summon the discommunication that arises around that topic. This essay aims to describe the "bugs" embedded in the term *chiiki art* by disentangling the goals of the crosstalk.

What Is the Lassen Problem?

The first thing to confirm is that unless I had participated in chiiki art as an artist, I wouldn't have become involved in it in another capacity. In which case, why was such a person invited to facilitate a talk about chiiki art? And why is such a person writing this report about it? Behind this lies the aims of the organizers to overlay the issues of chiiki art with the series of compositions raised in regard to a book I edited, *Essays on Works*

and Reception of Lassen in Japan [sic] (2013). (A similar reason lies behind summoning up the “Lassen problem” here, something that seems at first glance completely unrelated to chiiki art.)

I would like to take a look back briefly at the discussion raised in that book. By examining the work of the artist Christian Riese Lassen, who was immensely popular in Japan in the 1990s, and its reception in Japan, the collection of essays attempted to bring out the “self-portrait” of art in the Japanese imaginary. Moreover, Lassen was also for a time severely shunned by people in the Japanese contemporary art world. A precedent for this issue came from the artist Nakazawa Hideki, who proposed a “Hiro Yamagata problem” about Hiro Yamagata, an artist occupying a similar position to Lassen, and called attention to the “utter defeat” of contemporary art in terms of popularity, market size, and exhibition attendance.

Following on from this context introduced by Nakazawa and offering a self-critique of the contemporary art world, the Lassen problem was an art project that, by emphasizing a stance of looking again properly at Lassen’s work (albeit from a different perspective than the Hiro Yamagata problem), attempted to re-examine contemporary art through words describing an artwork without falling into the trap of institutional critique’s posturing that is the hackneyed approach of contemporary art.

The Detour That Is Relational Aesthetics

In that regard, what kind of concept is chiiki art? We should first point out that the practices called chiiki art form an aggregate of experiences arising as radically different things depending on the point of observation.

In the talk, Fujita distinguished chiiki art from modern and contemporary art, in which just looking at artworks is enough, by describing chiiki art as something that can be experienced for the first time by entering a human network or community, and as something that molds situations, communities, and communication itself, showing what is there as “beauty,” and it is that he asserted was a new paradigm.

This makes sense: presenting “situations, communities, and communication itself” as an artwork has been frequently undertaken until now as the theoretical justification for chiiki art, citing Nicolas Bourriaud’s idea of relational aesthetics. But as it is clear from what Fujita said about showing what is there as “beauty,” we should rather question the view of art that is present whenever we champion chiiki art. Another issue that arose during the discussion was whether the (somewhat outdated) concept of

relational aesthetics can keep up with the novelty of *chiiki art*.

In this regard, Kanazawa cited her experience of being told by curators from Europe and North America that the works exhibited at biennales and triennales in Japan do not seem “serious,” which led her to suggest the peculiarity of *chiiki art* in Japan. What does this mean?

Art-Like Things

Far from being particular to *chiiki art*, art professionals excluding a certain subject as “not art” is something that has always happened. The aforementioned Lassen problem is one example, while contiguous fields like illustration, design, and crafts have been frequently invoked in order to distinguish between art and “non-art” by prefixing them with “merely.” If we limit our attention only to *chiiki art*, this kind of exclusionary discourse does not function effectively in all respects. Kanazawa and Hayashi had the following exchange about this.

Firstly, many different systems and concepts were imported into Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912), leading to the appearance of a Japanese word for fine art [*bijutsu*, literally “beautiful technique”]. But today in the twenty-first century, the rules and ideas of the Meiji period that defined fine art like that are no longer suitable for our present-day circumstances in many ways. As such, Hayashi remarked on the need to break away from the illusions we have held until now and, in the case of art, described the demand for “art-like things” in local areas. The Japanese word for fine art coined in the nineteenth century has, he said, apparently changed meaning within Japanese regional society over the course of a century and a half.

Should We Call It *Chiiki Art*?

What then becomes the greatest problem here is whether or not the term *chiiki art*, encompassing as it does the word *art*, is merely yet another imitation of the now-ubiquitous labels we have for art. Historically, contemporary art has excluded many external elements while also expanding fields by subsuming certain elements. That these art labels are continuing to increase ad infinitum is a remnant of the imperialistic movement to expand art. To wit, is the debate around *chiiki art* just another tedious “movement”?

It was Hayashi who gave a clear and resounding “no” to this question.

Instead of interpreting *chiiki art* as something distant from the center like a little satellite or an imitation, he suggested we think of how we can accept it as something that was meant to occur, and which is occurring. Kanazawa is frequently told by artists involved with *chiiki art* projects not to call their work *chiiki art*, which she sees as due to them having an impression that all the things that they have carefully accumulated and conceived will be discarded. Fujita responded that, as a critic, he focuses on the paradigm: in the 2000s, an individualistic culture with a faint physicality centered in cities was prominent, but the 2010s witnessed the rapid extension of cultural phenomena and sensibilities like the interrelationships of communities, the body, nature, and people, and we came to use the term *chiiki art* as a way to describe that paradigm shift.

The essence of the phenomenon relating to the term *chiiki art* perhaps lies in a kind of “magnetism” that, as the crosstalk showed, reveals the respective positions of people from various stances in regard to the pros and cons of the term. The event certainly functioned as a platform for expressing positions in regard to *chiiki art*, and as a platform for members of the audience to witness those.

In closing, I would like to briefly indicate my own position. I believe that *chiiki art* must not function as a term for subsuming contiguous fields and expanding the interests of contemporary art instead of sincerely confronting contiguous fields and reflecting back critically on contemporary art. The communities/areas we mean by *chiiki* are, in fact, infinitely and richly varied in abstract ways, and I am resistant even to lump them all together under the same word.

On the other hand, to leave behind a word (that is, a concept) is to describe history. As such, it is a fact that this term is functioning and, accordingly, what we can do is the task of thinking about words, exchanging words about words, and ultimately cultivating words. From mannerism to impressionism, history is full of examples of art movements with names initially used pejoratively but whose meanings later evolved. If the meaning of the term *chiiki art* also evolves in the future, when they look back from that time, the discussion at the crosstalk will reflect the term’s process of change. In which case, that people with remarkably diverging positions on the term *chiiki art* expressed their opinions with one another and could continue to disagree did in itself eloquently tell us about the present state of the term *chiiki art*.

Cross Talk 02

November 4, 2018

A Report from the Artists

Artists, who have created works based on their in-depth consideration of regions and communities, society, and people, took this occasion to introduce their activities, further delving into the significance of their practice through a dialogue with the moderator.

Fujii Hikaru
Artist & Filmmaker

目 [mé]: Kojin Haruka & Minamigawa Kenji
Art Collective

[Facilitator]
Hoshino Futoshi
Lecturer, Kanazawa College of Art

Hoshino: Since the word “chiiki art” was used by Fujita Naoya, it seems that it has come to be established as a general term for labeling art projects and art festivals that take place nationwide. However, even if such are collectively referred to as chiiki art, it is a fact that there are considerable differences depending on who takes initiative and control over the project – whether it is the artist, an administrative body, or another agent altogether. In today’s talk I hope we can spend some time thinking about this issue in detail. I would like to start by asking the members of 目 [mé] to talk about their work and practice.

Minamigawa: 目 [mé] is an art collective that operates under three core members consisting of Kojin Haruka, Masui Hirofumi, and myself.

This overlaps a bit with what the curator Kanazawa Kodama spoke about in yesterday’s talk (Cross Talk 01), but I myself enrolled at art university in the 1990s, and during this time I had questioned methods that were grounded upon things like sketching plaster figures. My major was printmaking. I chose printmaking as I was told in cram school that it

would give me the freedom to do anything I wanted, whether it was video or a three-dimensional work. However, when it came to working on my graduation project, I was required to produce something that was strictly limited to the category of print. I also got into an argument with my teacher when I said that I wanted to work in a group for my graduation project. I was that kind of student.

After that I had been in employment for some time, but what I started in hopes to really pursue the actual experience of art was *wah* document, which is the predecessor of 目[mé]. Our activities entailed gathering ideas from numerous people regarding what they envisioned as amazing works of art, and actually realizing them through engaging in discussions. We realized around 60 ideas over the course of 6 years. For instance, the work *thousand arms* involved quietly standing behind a person waiting at a traffic light and putting one's hands out so that they looked like the Thousand Armed Avalokiteshwara when seen from the front. We practiced this many times from the early hours of the morning, and executed it in a way that would be entirely unnoticed. We later contacted these people to inform that we were filming them, and asked for their permission to use these photos.

The idea and scope of our projects started to escalate from around the time we had complete 50 or so. This project is called *lifting house*, and entailed using manpower to lift a house located in the Saitama prefecture, which was on rent for 35,000 yen per month. After various research we found out that in houses that had been built up to a certain period, the foundation and the building itself are simply bolted together. We asked for the aid of three building contractors as well as two companies specializing in structure relocation, and also recruited people to take part in the lifting. We attached a set of horizontal members to vertical pillars, and though we didn't know how things would pan out, gave it a try anyway. Then what do you know, we managed to lift the house. There was a great sense of accomplishment with this project, to the extent that I even felt that there was no need for us to continue our activities.

The request from Kyoto Art Center was something that we took on under the presumption that it would pretty much be our last project. We came up with the reckless idea of creating a situation where around 20 people would be walking across a set of tightropes all at the same time, and despite twists and turns, we somehow managed to get to the stage of being able to do this. Due to the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake however, the center called for its cancellation. Nonetheless, when we asked for the opinion of the volunteer staff of the art center that had long been involved in the project, they told us that it by no means should be canceled. We

therefore engaged in renegotiations, and ultimately presented the project in the form of a performance that was limited to 30 minutes. Dissatisfied with the fact that it was reduced to a mere 30 minutes, and the idea that we should not implement our activities with the earthquake having occurred, we collected donations from people who had gathered at the venue, asking them to cooperate as we thought about organizing a “wah in Tohoku.” We ended up collecting around 300,000 yen.

I would like to talk about the project that we as wah document did in the disaster-affected areas immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

We stayed in the Oshika Peninsula, in an area where the tsunami had hit and demolished everything besides from the community hall that was near enough all that remained. We took up lodgings in a room inside a facility that was also used to store the bodies of those who had lost their lives. At the time I had my doubts about doing art in an area devastated by the earthquake. Many artists were in a situation where they would start by working as disaster-relief volunteers helping to shovel away the dirt in order to build a relationship of trust with the local people. I too hesitated for a moment, but in the end we went there to do art. Arriving at the conclusion that we should be confident in engaging in artistic activities, I had left my shoveling equipment back in my studio in Saitama. I didn't want to be in a state where I was intermittently doing art while walking on eggshells. When we started calling for ideas in a corner of the community hall, everyone had at first given us the cold shoulder, and some people had even shouted at us with scorn. Eventually however, children and their mothers had gathered with us, and in the end we decided on the idea of making a “child's movie theater.” Nevertheless, it was very difficult to produce work in a disaster-affected area where even living circumstances are unstable, and even the day before, everything was in such a (imperfect) state. What is more, after this we were met with strong winds, and with everything having been blown away, we found ourselves in a situation where we really thought it would be impossible to implement the project. Despite this—and perhaps they had been watching from the sidelines—various people suddenly came to join us, and we somehow managed to get everything into shape with the aid of the town community. It wasn't a touching story whereby local people who were seeing how things were going had ultimately lent us a helping hand... instead, it was more like a horrific experience. I couldn't quite get my head around it. All the people who you see here—we don't know anyone. We managed to borrow a screen and a projector, but when we were having trouble due to finding out that the video could not be displayed onto

cardboard, one of the locals remembered seeing a screen buried amongst the rubble, and had gone to get it. When he was pulling the screen out from beneath the rubble, an air conditioner pipe pierced his arm...so he brought it to us while being covered in blood. While we were very truly thankful, the whole thing was somehow horrific. We don't know where people had gotten news about the project, but the cinema was jam-packed on the day of the screening, attracting more children than the building could hold. I soon noticed that many cars were lined up in the parking lot of the community hall. People opened the boot of their cars and were having drinks while savoring the cinema as a "side dish." They were saying things like, "watching children frolicking in high spirits makes drinking much more enjoyable." I thought it was a failure in terms of the degree of perfection of the work, but the people who had gathered appeared to be satisfied. Kojin, who had accompanied me on the project, said to me, "we have been given permission", and these words enabled me to reach a certain understanding of sorts. We were asked to exhibit this project at Art Tower Mito, yet we canceled at the last minute as I felt that we couldn't present it as a work of art.

Let's move on to talking about some of the works we've produced as 目 [mé]. The Reborn Art Festival is an art festival that takes place in the disaster-affected areas of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Kojin: When we visited the disaster-affected areas soon after the earthquake, I asked myself whether it was right for us to simply watch what was going on, given the circumstances. Walking around the town while thinking about such things, I came across a certain scene. All the houses were washed away, and only their foundations remained, covered in sand. Overall, it looked like a city that was on the verge of transforming into a beach. Looking at the layers of sand, I suddenly thought that I was perhaps standing at the boundary between the transitions from one stratum to another. I had sensed a repeated cycle. This place would become a beach or a part of the sea, whereupon people would again build their homes, after which it once more returns to an oceanic state.

Minamigawa: 6 years later, when I visited the disaster-affected areas again after some time, I truly came to understand the meaning of what Kojin had said. The city appeared to have returned to the way it was before the earthquake had hit, and I mean to sheer precision, with everything from the blocks lining the sidewalk to the orange tiles of the convenience store having been restored to their original position. It looked to me like the town had simply been restored for the sake of restoring it to its former state,

disregarding various emotions and expectations.

In the center of Ishinomaki city, we built a warehouse like one that would've originally stood there. This warehouse serves as the entrance to the work. Beyond that there is what appears like a service entrance of sorts, and through it is an *engawa* space (a corridor that runs around a room or the outside of a building, in which case resembling a porch or sunroom). When visitors sit in a chair on the *engawa*, the *engawa* itself starts to gradually move, eventually venturing out into the city. This *engawa* travels across the Minamihama area of Ishinomaki city. It passes by the super levee, and the one tree that remained standing in the Minamihama area. If I may say so without fear of misunderstanding, it was a work that attempted to observe the disaster-affected area once again from the perspective of a house that was swept away, through a gaze that was detached from emotion and sentiment. The theme was to grant the permission to bear witness to this situation.

The other work I want to introduce is *Day with a Man's Face Floating in the Sky*, which we made in 2014. The Utsunomiya Museum of Art had asked us to produce a work on-site as part of their outreach project. The museum curator had given us a tour of vacant properties in the local neighborhood that could serve as the setting for the work, yet as we engaged in conversations with one of the owners who seemed completely uninterested in the project, we started wondering whether or not we could do something that would urge this elderly man to come and see it. It was then that Kojin suddenly remembered a particular dream that she had.

Kojin: It was a dream I had back around when I was in junior high school. I was on the train one evening, and after passing by some woods the view opened up to reveal a panoramic view of the city at dusk. Then looking above, I saw a person's head floating in the sky, shining like the moon.

Minamigawa: Kojin said that she did not quite remember the exact face of the person whose head she saw floating in the sky, but all that included, I wanted to try and realize this as a work. So I proposed this idea to the museum.

We rented one of the vacant buildings in the shopping district to create a base for our activities, and held a briefing session. The museum staff was explaining to citizens the significance of locally implemented art projects, saying things like, "It's important for us to make something together with everyone in the community" and so on. Then all of a sudden, the chairman of the neighborhood association cut in and said, "Okay, I think that's enough with the explaining." And you know, this is a true story. According to him, even he and the other old townfolk knew all about the need for participation

and working together. He said, "If you guys are artists, I want you to put your heart and soul into doing art." I was greatly moved by this, and I also heard Kojin quietly whisper something like, "Yeah, that's right."

We collected faces from all over the city. In the end we had collected a total of 218 faces, after which we held a "face-to-face meeting" to discuss and determine which face to float in the sky. I can't quite put it into words straight away, but I thought to myself, "Hey, this face-to-face meeting is turning out to be pretty fruitful." Because you can't make a selection if you don't share with these people all the thoughts and reasons behind why you want to do this particular project. Various people had taken part, ranging from those in their teens to an elderly man who was 80 years old. After a five and a half hour continuous discussion, we had narrowed the selection down to two faces: one wearing glasses and one not wearing glasses. In the end we chose the face without glasses, as the opinion was that the one with glasses would ensue higher production costs.

Having started somewhat ambitiously and with no guaranteed budget, it had taken two years until we managed to realize the project. We held regular meetings with the locals, but the atmosphere seemed to gradually worsen as situations were further complicated. At one point, one of the participants called Mr. Watanabe had taken us out for drinks on three consecutive occasions, during which he pointed out that we should voice our honest opinions at the meetings. There were some people who were against doing this, and I myself had felt a certain sense of unease. That being said, I couldn't just show the white feather and hold myself back, so as Mr. Watanabe suggested, I let it all spill at the meeting. Having done this I saw the participants break into smiles. Thereafter at the proposal of Mr. Watanabe it was decided that we would ask each person to share their reasons for giving up their weekends to take part in these meetings, and that's how all the participants started to introduce themselves. Some of the museum staff said that this had made them uncomfortable, as they found the experience to be reminiscent of some cult religion gathering. Nevertheless, through listening to people speak I understood that each of them had their own particular reason or thoughts for taking part in this project. For example, there was one person who mentioned how this gathering had inspired them to make a career change.

Tani Arata, who was the director of the museum at the time, had happened to be listening to the meeting during his surprise visit to check on the project. Right there on site, he said to us, "I'll make this happen." He declared to us that he'd risk his own neck to make the project happen. From that point on things got better and better, and started progressing.

Although there were many technical difficulties, Masui did a thorough research of pretty much all the companies in Japan to find one that could produce an enormous three-dimensional object that could stand afloat in the air. The most costly part was the technology of transferring the image of the face onto the object. Masui decided that it would be done manually, so all of us spent around two and a half months transferring over 700,000 image dots by hand.

Finally, we managed to airlift the enormous three-dimensional face into the sky. As anticipated, lots of people came to see it. There was a woman who rolled around in laughter, while many elderly men and women had come out from the retirement home, dusting off their cameras to take pictures. A housewife also came up to me and told this bizarre story of the experience she had when she went to the top of the bridge to see the work. There she had apparently encountered an old woman walking from the other side of the bridge, and after meeting in the middle, they hugged each other and were crying for some time. The work had given rise to various emotions within the people who saw it, but strangely enough, I felt like I could sympathize with every one of them. If I may also add, the work did indeed shine at night.

Kojin: It was a strange sight when I had dreamed of it, but actually seeing it in person was far more of a puzzling experience. It was completely absurd. I myself was happy that we were able to create something that we couldn't quite put our finger on.

Hoshino: Thank you. We have just heard from 目 [mé], but what I found interesting was that as the project progressed, there were a number of points where the central role increasingly shifted and became ambiguous. While we speak of chiiki art or community-based art projects, from what you have said I have come to more specifically understand that the motives and backgrounds of those involved in it are different for each person, and that works are realized in the midst of the various interactions and entwinement of these things. Next I would like to ask Mr. Fujii to talk about his work and practice.

Fujii: What has been discussed so far was very interesting, and I had a lot to think about. There are indeed many different kinds of regions and communities, so I think it is necessary to slightly increase our focus to look at the uniqueness and distinct qualities of that particular place.

Until now I have worked in villages that have experienced depopulation and are in danger of disappearing, as well as remote islands.

I have also implemented activities in local municipalities like this that are home to a museum, in Tokyo, or within a much wider regional context that encompasses Japan or Asia as a whole. What I want to talk about today is the right to fiction as a debate concerning chiiki art.

What is fiction in the first place? It is a format used primarily in literature and cinema. In fiction we are able to tell stories that aren't true or of things that don't actually exist, and at the same time we may incorporate elements of falsehood into a factual narrative. Of course, in fiction, whether it may be human emotional love or murderous intent, we are given the freedom to express things in the way that we wish. When I say the right to fiction, I mean whether or not we are entitled to give an account of everything. This is what I hope to think about.

With regards to this issue, the French writer and literary theorist Maurice Blanchot has remarked, "One must say everything. Freedom is the freedom to say everything."¹

However, can we really give an account of everything when it comes



to the activities that take place within regions and communities?

For example, this photograph was taken a few months ago with the help of the local people in a difficult-to-return zone situated in the town of Okuma, Fukushima Prefecture. The house's dilapidated state is not due to the result of the damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The reason it had become like this was because over the past six years, small microorganisms and animals like rats and wild boars had broken into the house by gradually gnawing through the floors. I asked the residents whether I could take a photograph of the exterior of the house as well. However, they had strictly declined as they felt it would be an invasion of their privacy.

The first thing I want to take a moment to confirm is that art has no unconditional right, that is, it does not have the right to give an account of everything to begin with. It can pose as a threat to public welfare, including the invasion of privacy, or the communication of racist or sexist commentary.

To produce work in a region or community in a sense means that you yourself are not the sole producer. You inevitably require cooperators, that is, people who collaborate with you in producing the work. It's a curious

1. Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by Susan Hanson, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 229.

experience to produce something together with others. In the short term, you need to adapt yourself to their society, or need to be flexible in various ways to ensure the various relationships that are entailed there. To put it positively, your respect and consideration for others establishes you as a social being within that community, and the work itself also becomes a kind of social being. In such circumstances I try to self-restrict my own aspirations or dark desire of sorts, like my request to photograph the exterior of the house as I just mentioned.

However, various other forces besides from the self-restrictions you place still come into play when producing art. For example, I am sometimes contacted by certain communities that have experienced some kind of downfall or collapse, with requests to depict the reality as being much brighter than it actually is, or to convey a more hopeful world. This is a kind of social, collective request and appeal, and you may find yourself wondering how to respond to it. I myself refuse when I am requested to produce such work.

What I would like to talk about here is that these requests to depict a brighter world, to put it strongly, is an act of censorship. Various forms of censorship that take effect within the social relationships that unfold in specific networks, that is to say, censorship enlisted with economic, media, ideological, religious, and political power et al., occurs in almost every situation involving art. I always bear in mind that producing work means that I am under the influence of these things.

Philosopher Jacques Derrida stated that the essence of censorship is not to drive discourse into absolute silence, but to limit the range of those who receive that discourse, as well as its scope and territory. He articulated that censorship occurs as soon as things like the expansion of areas of research, response towards discourse, and the broadcasting of information are restricted by a number of forces. This situation is occurring not only in art, but also in educational institutions such as universities, society, and on a global scale. How to deal with this network of censorship is a significant issue for me.

First of all, I myself admit that a certain level of censorship or authority does indeed exist. For example, economic development and the tourism industry do have some positive impacts on this society, so I don't wish to make the kind of sweeping generalization that such are bad. Rather, the problem is that there are things that you aren't able to convey because of this.

What I think about in response to this situation is how to create places of non-authority and non-violence that lie beyond the reach of the

censoring subject, instead of simply trying to oppose it altogether. I believe that in these places, art can exert its social utility that will serve to bring about creative changes in public spaces. Of course, the idea of utility should be criticized when considering the circumstances of art in the former Soviet Union that had been under the influence of socialism...

For example, *Les nucléaires et le choses* is a multi-channel video installation edited from a symposium of the same name that I organized, directed, and filmed. The Futaba Town Museum of History and Folklore is located in the town of Futaba in the Fukushima Prefecture, just four kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Historical, archaeological, and folklore artifacts, have been inherited and preserved by the community for future generations to come. The symposium convened commentators from various fields as well as local citizens, and asked them to discuss what happens to such historical memories and the collective memories of a community when the community itself is broken up and destroyed.

This discussion was a narrative for restructuring a new public space, and while it was indeed still a matter of fiction at the time of debate, it eventually developed into a single concept. To put it a little more abstractly, it also meant publicly speaking about the possibilities of another present that is different from the catastrophe that had actually taken place.

If we pursue the debate about the social utility of art, we start venturing into issues such as human nature, human rights, crimes against humanity, and historical questions that concern them. I would like to confront these questions that form the basis of our social life and think about the “social utility” of art.

I would also like to introduce another example. This is the work called *Playing Japanese*, which I presented at the Nissan Art Award. This work adopts the methodology of considering what has changed and what has remained the same between the past and the present, and thinking about the future by taking into account these changes. This work attempts to reproduce in the 21st century, the kind of “human zoos” that had taken place from the 19th to 20th centuries in the main pavilions of the expositions held by the great nations of power at the time, whereby people of colonized regions were placed on display for viewing purposes.

Japan, which followed in the footsteps of Europe, had also organized its own “human zoo,” presenting live displays of the Ainu, Okinawan, Korean, and Taiwanese people. The exposition proved to be highly popular, attracting around 4,000 visitors per day. However, the “human zoo” encountered fierce criticism from those “races” who were presented. I recreated this controversial debate that had once arisen in Japan, by reading

from newspapers and historical documents from the time.

I now want to take a moment to confirm the possibilities of art and fiction. Fiction is the very movement of energy that eliminates the world of values, such as good and evil, virtue and vice, denial and affirmation. It is a condition for the possibilities of freedom itself. Therefore, a work of art emerges as a place where nothing can escape re-questioning, or in other words, a place to examine and reconsider everything within a particular region or community, including its democracy and current established system. Today, exclusivist discourse is gaining tremendous power in the world, but it is implemented within the existing system of democracy. I hope that art will emerge as a “place” where it would be possible to re-question everything including such system.

Hoshino: Thank you Mr. Fujii. Before starting the discussion I want to personally respond to what Fujita Naoya had mentioned in yesterday’s symposium (Cross Talk 01). That is, my response to the point he raised that, “at local art festivals, art is sometimes used to mask the dark history of that particular region.” One example I know of is that in the city of Suzu in the Ishikawa Prefecture, where the Oku-Noto Triennale is held, there had been talks in the 1980s of inviting plans to build a nuclear power plant. While construction was ceased due to subsequent protests from residents, this incident had completely divided the community. For this reason, it is a place with a negative history. However, the art festival that was held last year had in fact once more shed light upon this negative history. In this way, I feel that art festivals don’t only function to obscure or conceal.

Another example is an exhibition held in the town of Uchinada, which is located next to Kanazawa City. In the 1950s, there was a resident protest over the US military bases that had remained there even after the end of the US Military Occupation of Japan. During this period in the midst of the Korean War, the coastal area of Uchinada was requisitioned as an artillery range to train United States Army units. It is said that the residents conducted a sit-in, with many activists and intellectuals joining from all over the country, protest every day for about a year against the backdrop of the loud commotion from the firing range. Recently, a colleague of mine who specializes in history had come to develop an interest in the “Uchinada Incident,” and held an exhibition after conducting two years or so of research. There are always two couples whose names come up when researching this struggle, and what is interesting is that their stances on the Uchinada Incident are completely different. While one couple regards the struggle as a beautiful memory of their youth, and the other thinks that

the existence of the base had contributed to the current development of the town of Uchinada. Even in the events that took place over half a century ago, there is a large discrepancy in the view of history due to the difference in one's standpoint. The fact that these things had come to light is indeed one of the achievements of this exhibition and the research that accompanied it. There are currently a myriad of art projects, and community-based art festivals and exhibitions. If you study each one of them carefully, you may find that each one has a different history, memory, and culture.

Minamigawa: What I find interesting about Mr. Fujii's video work is the way in which he attempts to consider things in a self-questioning and introspective manner, and it was very fascinating to hear him talk about the essence of this today. On the other hand, I feel that each artist has a completely different idea and way of thinking that serves as the grounds for their practice. I'd like to hear Mr. Fujii's opinions on this.

Fujii: When I am invited to take part in an art festival, I ask myself, "What is my role?" If you were to expand this interpretation, you could consider each citizen as being an actor involved in moving society. There are NPO activities as well as activism, and society changes as these things connect and interlock with one another. I feel that I am working within this kind of view of the world.

I would also like to ask you a question. I have heard that you extremely struggled in terms of budget for the work *Day with a Man's Face Floating in the Sky*. This struggle is something I can relate to, as the aforementioned symposium held in the town of Futaba was realized with the support of the Fukushima Museum and overseas grants. My applications for grants in Japan had all been turned down. In other words, my projects could not be implemented without overseas support. I feel that the relationship between art projects and money is very important. Doesn't the issue of where the money comes from have an effect on various things when you engage in acts of expression? This is something that I'm very curious about.

Minamigawa: It may seem a bit extreme, but from our point of view, since money itself doesn't belong to anyone, we simply think of it as a "currency" and try not to get too caught up in it. What I find interesting is the very situation whereby money goes from someone's pocket to a completely different place.

Hoshino: Discussions concerning money often run the risk of resulting

in faultfinding, but when thinking about production and activities rooted in a particular region or community, I believe that the issue of money is inevitable. I would like to carry this over for further discussion and ask those in the audience to share their thoughts.

Hayashi Akio: When thinking about things like the social utility of art, I'm always curious about what happened to people after their involvement in these projects. Nowadays, such endeavors tend to seek great success, but I wanted to think about possibilities and specific measures regarding the kind of language or discourse that could be created outside of the economic sphere.

When it comes to money, I generally have the same attitude as 目[mé]. I often find myself thinking about how to use money in a way that's different to ulterior motives and intentions of where it comes from. For example, like the way in which wah document had raised funds to go to Fukushima, I feel a certain potential in the process of trial and error as to how to design possibilities that would make people want to provide funding.

Hoshino: We often think of the word social utility in the short term, but I think what Mr. Fujii was talking about earlier was something more fundamental with a wider scope. The word “publicness” often comes up in such discussions, but this concept of publicness tends to be misused these days. After all, publicness is not about what kind of effect it has in the short term, for example, whether it has an economic effect. It originally has the scope to think about the world a few generations beyond one's death.

Fujii: What I want people to think about first and foremost is “the autonomous creativity of art.” The issue of the autonomy of art has been debated for decades throughout the history of art in Japan. Bearing in mind the situation that things considered to be chiiki art have received discriminative treatment within this paradigm, I myself am inclined to use the term “social utility of art.”

When writing grant applications in this area, everyone mentions the social utility of the project, which leads not only to problems that are occurring today, but also to those of the past and future. In other words, when it comes to utility it is necessary to envision society far beyond a mere few decades ahead. In reality however, such proposal would not pass the application for a grant. As a way of getting around this in a sense, I think projects that maintain a distance or slightly deviate from clear social causes while having strong experiential qualities, will come to hold meaning. For

example, like the work of 目[mé] where many people come together to view and appreciate the face of an unnamed elderly man.

Kojin: There's nothing anymore that is overwhelmingly unfathomable. If you look at the world, there is a reason for everything and there is absolutely nothing that cannot be explained at all. I think the face of the elderly man also embodies this.

Fujii: If I may say so to avoid any misunderstanding, I believe that cultural grants should provide funding for art that concerns truth and history related to human rights and crimes against humanity. It is difficult to deal with political issues with the current Japanese grant system, and it is indeed necessary to reconsider the nature of Japan as a nation that makes this the case.

Hoshino: For about two centuries, art has been said to exist autonomously, while being supported by various social dynamics. However, I feel that recent art festivals and art projects have brought to light that this was simply some kind of fiction. As long as artistic experience is connected to life, the experience of appreciating the work and the process leading up to it must be considered in continuum.

Nakazaki Tohru: I have a simple question. The title of this discussion is "Where is Chiiki Art?" So I would like to ask you all where you think it is.

Minamigawa: If you truly want to seize hope, I think you have to stand in the midst of antagonism. In order to think about this, it is necessary to really plunge towards the edge of the cliff, and I feel that it is possible to do this through works of art. In other words, we ourselves have to decide where chiiki art is going.

Hoshino: Based on the discussions we have had over the past two days (Cross Talk 01 and 02), I would like to respond as follows. It is perhaps possible to answer this question in two ways. The first is that "chiiki art is nowhere to be found." In reality, one could say that there is no such thing as works of art that could be collectively defined under the category of chiiki art.

At the same time however, it can be said, "chiiki art is everywhere." We cannot produce or think about things without any concern for locality such as our place of birth or place of residence. In the sense that no activity is possible without this, I thought that chiiki art could be regarded as something that is ubiquitous, or alternatively, that "everything is chiiki art."

The Hegemony of Fiction

Hoshino Futoshi

Lecturer, Kanazawa College of Art

The crosstalk (Cross Talk 02) held with the artists 目 [mé] and Fujii Hikaru seemed to bring out, even if just fractionally, the complex layers encompassed collectively under the word *chiiki* [area, community]. As discussed during the talk, the term *chiiki art* as previously advocated by Fujita Naoya underlined the recent complicity between regional promotion and art that has lost substance, and functioned critically in the sense that it triggered subsequent debate. And yet on the other hand, what this author and the other co-writers of *Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan*¹ proposed was an apprehension and disquiet about lumping together the urban arts festivals (Yokohama Triennale, Aichi Triennale, etc.), regional arts festivals (Setouchi Triennale, Oku-Noto Triennale, etc.), and the variously sized art projects taking place around the Japan. (At the crosstalk held the previous day, Cross Talk 01, one of the speakers, Hayashi Akio, had a similar response.)

A similar problem seems to face us even with the word *chiiki*. Within the debate over *chiiki art* that was heard in a range of places over the past ten years since around the time that Fujita proposed the issue, the interpretation of *chiiki* was not infrequently very vague. Whenever attempting to describe the locality [*chiikisei*] of an artist's activities, it requires at the very least making a distinction among three layers—the local, the regional, and the site-specific²—though the current state of affairs is one in which, regrettably,

1. Fujita Naoya, ed., *Chiiki ato: Bigaku, seido, Nihon* [Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan], Tokyo: Horinouchi Publishing, 2016.

2. This three-layered classification was suggested by a discussion event that the author previously participated in: "Site Specificity and Regional Specificity: Artist in Residence and International Art Festival" [sic], with Iida Shihoko, Odai Mami, and Hoshino Futoshi (ARCUS Studio, 2015). The event was held at ARCUS Studio, an artist residency in the city of Moriya, Ibaraki Prefecture, and sought to debate the differences between specializing in a site or specializing in a *chiiki* [area/region/community], while also serving as a forum for rethinking approaches to artist residencies and international art festivals. Within the muddled discourse around *chiiki* and art that has continued to this day, as described above, this discussion was one of the few rare and valuable exceptions, as far as this author is aware. The content of the discussion is unfortunately not available in print, but a detailed report was published on ARCUS Project's blog. <http://www.arcus-project.com/jp/>

even these are often thrown pell-mell together during discussions. To overcome this situation, it is important to turn our attention to the practices of individual artists actually working closely with communities.

The work of the two speakers at the crosstalk, 目 [mé] and Fujii Hikaru, would initially seem to possess completely different qualities. Comprising the core members Kojin Haruka, Minamigawa Kenji, and Masui Hirofumi, the “art collective/team project” 目 [mé] creates various kinds of work that respond flexibly to the circumstances. Fujii Hikaru is active internationally as a filmmaker alongside a visual art practice that focuses on video installations exploring actual historical events. The differences in both their styles were apparent in their presentations on the day, but I would like to introduce their respective work here and spotlight the shared issues that emerged (at least in my mind).

To begin, what lay at the heart of both their talks was an awareness that fiction begets reality. Fujii, in particular, placed this topic at the center of his presentation, “The Right to Fiction.” In novels, films, and other examples of fiction, we are able to tell imaginary stories as well as deftly interweave falsehoods while pretending to convey facts. Art too is, of course, nothing less than another form of that fiction. And yet, what is important here is that fiction in the sense aforementioned is not mere fantasy. Rather, fiction is connected to reality and, in certain cases, may even transform that reality. This was most eloquently conveyed by 目 [mé]’s past projects as introduced in the collective’s presentation. According to the team director, Minamigawa, its work is often based on the dreams and memories of the artist Kojin. This kind of imagery, which is ordinarily attributed to one individual, is simply regarded as at times diverging from reality (that is, it is fiction). But as the plan gets underway, it develops into a project gradually involving a large number of people, and begins to intervene in the concrete lives of those with some sort of connection to it. As was the case with *Day with a Man’s Face Floating in the Sky* (Utsunomiya Museum of Art, 2014), the works at times turn into massive projects that attract attention nationally. What these examples show is art’s capability in terms of what Nelson Goodman called “ways of worldmaking,” in which individual dreams and memories intervene in reality and, furthermore, even change the lives of many people.

However, what awaits art that attempts to produce reality is not only such positive things. Indeed, art and other types of fiction have by right the freedom to talk about everything. And yet at the same time, we mustn’t forget that they are de facto deprived of “the freedom to say everything,” as Maurice Blanchot called it. That exposes them to certain (self-)regulation due to various internal and external factors, based on the maxim that

we must not violate public welfare. Whenever an artist deepens their involvement with a particular community [*chiiki*], such regulation becomes apparent through more blatant means. Of course, there is no doubt that consideration of others in its most general sense, as expressed in the term *public welfare*, is important. And yet should we not in principle champion the freedom to say everything, precisely in order to question the very basis for judging what is public welfare? Recognizing the problems of facts and rights, and yet proposing that we should not relinquish the principles of the latter was perhaps the stance that Fujii Hikaru showed.

On the other hand, we may be able to discern yet another aspect that engagement with a community brings about in the projects of 目[mé] and its predecessor, wah document. As the members describe in terms of their own experiences, it is not rare to determine an art project through encounters with others that are unexpected in advance. (In the case of participatory projects involving third parties over the course of the production process, this is something that can often occur.) Though the fact that 目[mé] is a collective may well be a major reason for this, it means that the whereabouts of the engagement that concretely shapes the artwork diffuses, and a situation arises in which the artist (solely) functions simply as the signatory of the work.

Both Fujii and 目[mé] use different means to illuminate the problems that arise when art strengthens connections with other fields or areas, not least communities [*chiiki*]. In any case, what I would like to emphasize is that modernity's fantasy of artistic autonomy is here utterly abandoned. I must hasten to add, though, that adhering to the principles of freedom of expression and the authority of the creator is still fully compatible with a work suffering various constraints in reality (unlike the aforementioned problems of rights and facts). To wit, any work is always already embedded within a mesh of certain relations, and that a pure kind of autonomy exists there is, above all else, just another fiction. (To put it differently, modernity was surely an age in which fiction functioned.) As art deepened its engagement with community, this fiction of modernity came rapidly to expose its own fictitiousness. And yet it can't be denied that that fiction once produced at least a certain reality. In the exact same sense, the idea that art should in some form serve the community or society is blatantly yet another fiction. However, to reiterate, fiction works on reality and often transforms that reality. Needless to say, we are now present at the very site where a new fiction is superseding the formerly prevailing one.

Cross Talk 03

July 28, 2019

Places Outside the Museum Context

The four individuals participating in the crosstalk are each representative of an era, and have engaged in activities in places that lie outside the museum context. While outlining the historical background of the times in which they worked, they respectively discussed their thoughts and the significance of their practice.

Kinoshita Chieko

Art Producer / Associate Professor, Co-creation Bureau, Osaka University

Koike Kazuko

Director, Towada Art Center

Nakamura Masato

Artist / Director, 3331 Arts Chiyoda / Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts

Hibino Katsuhiko

Artist / Dean of Faculty of Fine Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts

[Facilitator]

Kanazawa Kodama

Independent Curator / Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center

Koike: I am pleased that the theme for today's crosstalk is "places outside the museum context," because I had always wanted to engage in art related projects and activities in places that were not museums.

I had been working with text in the field of design since the mid-1960s during the period of economic growth in Japan, yet I began to develop an interest in becoming involved with museums and art that always had a special place in my heart. In 1976, when I was 40 years old, I decided to cut all ties from the world of advertising for a while, so I took a year off to give myself a sabbatical. That year, as a culmination of my career thus far, I gathered together the works of designers from the first half of the twentieth century that I particularly felt were outstanding, and presented them in an exhibition at The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. It was then, when working with the Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in

New York, that I had come to learn of the actual role and work of a curator.

At that time, the word “alternative” had started to come into use overseas. Swinging London of the 1960s for example, was a defining decade in which the city was filled with movements that attempted to change society based on subversive and alternative values. This was observed in the activities of people such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, and the theatrical productions of “Angry Young Men.” In New York, the city was undergoing transformation as a result of spirited discussions and the lively exchange of ideas between various artists. I had received a six-month grant due to being involved in the planning and development of the exhibition “Inventive Clothes 1909-1939” (The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1975), after which I also began to work for the Seibu Museum of Art that opened in 1975.

However, having seen the limits of museums and galleries at the time, I came up with the idea of establishing an alternative art site. Back then the value of real estate was rising steadily in the midst of an economic upturn. Under such circumstances, I finally managed to find the Shokuryo Building in the Sumida district, or Tokyo’s downtown area so to speak. The building was built in 1927 at the brink of Eitai Bridge that is famously depicted in the works of ukiyo-e artist Utagawa Hiroshige. It was a square-shaped three-story building constructed in a caravansary style, and its façade was built with bricks that were fired in the same place as those used in the construction of Tokyo Station. The auditorium on the third floor of the building was available to rent.

The neighborhood in which the building was located was known to have prospered in the Edo period as a rice exchange, and was a place where many grain traders and merchants had gathered. The auditorium with its high ceiling had not been used much, and when we removed the temporary floorboards we discovered the presence of a solid floor. We visited the building’s management with a request to rent the space, and having received permission from its chairperson, started on the pretense that we would begin by holding art-related study groups. This is the beginning of Sagacho Exhibit Space that opened its doors in 1983.

I wish to incorporate the entire space of the building as a medium in its own right. My dream was to work with a place that had a solid floor where lumps of iron could be installed without the need of a platform or pedestal. This building, which was built in 1927 at the peak of an era when Art Deco had taken Europe by storm, also featured many circular windows, which let in light from the outside. It was another dream of mine to view works of art in natural light. 1983 was a postmodern period in the overseas

design industry. Painting the windowpanes pink was the work of an excellent designer named Sugimoto Takashi, who passed away last year.

The great painter René Magritte had actually produced numerous advertisements, and served as an influence to various designers across the world working in the field of advertising. There was an exhibition titled “Ceci n’est pas un Magritte” (This is not a Magritte), which was based on this theme. I met the Belgian scholar who organized the show and we found ourselves in kindred spirits. As I too, like Magritte, had switched my focus from design work to art, I felt that it would be appropriate to present “Magritte & Advertising” as the space’s inaugural exhibition.

I would like to take a moment to introduce some of the exhibitions that were held at Sagacho Exhibit Space. Food, clothing, and housing are something that surrounds us 24 hours a day, and I in particular place importance on projects concerning clothing. I therefore organized a fashion show with Miyake Issey, centering on the *Noragi* (traditional Japanese garments which farmers used to wear to work) items, and other clothing he had designed using Japanese materials. Also observed as a feature of this time was the inclination for fashion designers to extend beyond the body and its surroundings towards larger spaces.

For example, Miyake Issey reached out to Kuramata Shiro (interior designer), while Yamamoto Yohji (fashion designer) had consulted Uchida Shigeru (interior designer). In order to convey this sense, I organized an exhibition on the theme of “body, space, and architecture” titled, “TROIS UNITES: Tadao Ando, Rei Kawakubo, Takashi Sugimoto.” The exhibition featured Ando Tadao’s real-size architectural photographs, and Kawakubo Rei’s first attempt at presenting clothing in the form of film. This received an award, and contributed towards the space becoming more powerful.

Okabe Masao is an artist who reveals the traces of human beings that remain embedded within buildings through frottaging the floor. He has since produced frottage rubbings in Hiroshima, as well as in Europe on the floors of ghettos where Jewish people were persecuted.

Kenmochi Kazuo created a massive installation using scrap wood collected from a building in a process of demolition. It was a work reminiscent of a large snake writhing within the space, yet as he had covered it in tar the entire building reeked with its odor, resulting in many complaints.

The title of Ohtake Shinro’s work is *Tokyo – Puerto Rico*. It is a work that depicts the development of a city and the various dramas that take place there. He also produced another large-scale work using waste materials found in Tokyo, which is now housed in the collection of The Museum of

Contemporary Art Tokyo.

Since I also wanted to properly address expressions that draw influence from graffiti, I invited a Canadian artist called Shelagh Keeley to present an exhibition at Sagacho Exhibit Space. That work that she produced onsite at the time is currently housed in the collection of a museum in Toronto.

At one point the playwright Kara Juro had requested another theater space, so I consulted Ando Tadao and made the Shitamachi Kara-za. This was possible because we were in the midst of a typical bubble economy, but the theater itself was assembled using the building materials of the Seibu Saison Group building that had been exhibited at the Tohoku Expo.

The artist Naito Rei produces highly spiritual and penetrating works that continue to enquire about the origin of life. She assembles things like tiny nuts and minuscule seeds as small as specks of sesame to create a single universe. With the cooperation of architect Hasegawa Itsuko, we created an elliptical tent to protect these small objects. Nakazawa Shinichi (anthropologist) wrote a text about the work, describing the experience of entering the tent as suggestive of venturing inside a woman's body.

A large building belonging to IBM stands on one side of the Sumida River, and Sugimoto Hiroshi exhibited photographs along its exterior, as an experiment of sorts to see how long they would survive in that specific environment. These photographs are now exposed to the light of the Seto Inland Sea, having been installed on the exterior walls of the Benesse House Museum.

Hirose Satoshi's proposal entailed stripping everything away from the space and then laying out a hand-woven rug called *gabbeh* made by nomadic tribes in Iran, on which people were invited to sit down and engage in discussions. We spent time talking about plans for future exhibitions while lying around on this rug and enjoying conversations amongst one another.

Our art related activities spanned around fifteen years, and while focusing on the manifestation of contemporary art from an alternative standpoint, had been introversive and did not give much consideration towards working together with the town and its citizens. This is the reality of how things were in those days.

Hibino: I also started my artistic career in the 1980s. My actual debut was marked by my receipt of the Grand Prix at the 3rd Japan Graphics Exhibition in 1982 that was sponsored by Parco. At that time, "region" or "community" as suggested in the term "chiiki art," for me meant Tokyo's Shibuya district in the 80s. With Parco as a starting point of sorts, I eventually came to produce work for commercial facilities in the Shibuya area such as those along Koen-dori Shopping Street, as well as for various

advertising media. It was also in 1984 that I encountered the works of Keith Haring and Basquiat, who were creating new contexts and trends in New York's Neo-expressionist painting scene.

I engaged in my first ever stage design project in 1984, when I was appointed to work on the theatrical production of "Our Age Comes Riding on a Circus Elephant," held at Parco Space Part 3 as a tribute to Terayama Shuji who had passed away the previous year. By chance I had also come to star in the play. As my first time working for a theatrical production, I made all the sets and props out of cardboard, and my body itself had also existed as part of that space. I feel that this experience had indeed served to expand my scope of expression. At the time the term "performance" was just starting to emerge.

Has anyone heard of a youth talk show called "YOU" that was broadcast on NHK Educational TV from 1982 to 1987? I was the main presenter of the show for two and a half years from October 1985. It aired every Saturday. The program was filmed once a month at a local television station, and I had visited each region from Hokkaido all the way to Kyushu to talk with the local youth on a variety of themes. Looking back on it now, perhaps this may have been the start of my engagement with "chiiki art."

In 1987 I used cranes to create a wall painting on the Ueda Warehouse Building in Tokyo's warehouse district, as I heard it was going to be demolished due to the development of the city's bay area. I also presented works in Roppongi's J TRIP BAR. From stage design and costumes for Noda Hideki's theatrical productions, to collaborating with Teshigawara Saburo and Tachibana Hajime for the opening performance of Shinjuku Lumine Hall, I found myself creating works in theaters, on the street, outdoors, and in department stores, and other places where people gathered, instead of so-called museums.

I also did all kinds of things including store design; product development for everyday consumer goods such as clothing, tableware, and furniture; design work for posters, magazines, and covers for weekly journals; painting motorbikes, buses, and cars as vehicles that transported one out of the humdrums of daily life. In addition, I worked on the menu for the restaurant chain Denny's along with the advent of Japan's fast food scene, as well as commercials for Konica Corporation at a time when video equipment was beginning to undergo dramatic changes. Going into the 1990s, I presented works based on the Great Hanshin Earthquake and the Tokyo subway sarin attack at the Japan Pavilion exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 1995, and in that same year I also started teaching at Tokyo University of the Arts. "HIBINO HOSPITAL," which was a project that I had

started with my students, entailed holding a workshop with local people once a month in Moriya City, Ibaraki Prefecture.

In 2003, I took part in the second installment of Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, and started a project called *Day After Tomorrow Newspaper Cultural Department* in the village of Azamihira. There are four concepts that I created in line with this project.

- 1) Day After Tomorrow Newspaper conveys our message to what lies beyond tomorrow.
- 2) Day After Tomorrow Newspaper cherishes that which cannot yet be seen, but appears somewhat fathomable.
- 3) Day After Tomorrow Newspaper will center its activities in a place where the feeling of something soon approaching coexists with the feeling of not knowing what is to come.
- 4) Day After Tomorrow Newspaper continues to engage with the slight anticipation of wanting to believe that there is someone someplace who feels the same way.

Unlike my previous projects, which like advertising had plunged into the very center of where people gathered *Day After Tomorrow Newspaper Cultural Department* unfolded in what one might consider the periphery, that is, places that seem least expecting of such endeavors. Students interact with the local community over the course of a year. Morning glories are grown together with people of the village in a closed-down wooden school building that serves as the base of activities. Our activities here were to take place once every three years in correspondence to the triennale, yet we in fact ended up doing it every year as the general opinion seemed to be, “let’s do it again next year since we’ve managed to gather some more seeds.” We are now in our 16th year of this project. In this way the project started in 2003 in the Niigata Prefecture (Azamihira), and when I decided to present morning glories in the form of a work for my 2005 solo exhibition at Art Tower Mito, various local people from Azamihira had come to Mito bringing morning glory seedlings with them. At the time I didn’t really see morning glories as a project as such, but when they brought morning glory seedlings and handed them to the people of Mito to take care of, I thought to myself, “wait a second, hasn’t this started to create some kind of relationship between people and people, community and community?” Although of course, this wasn’t something that I had necessarily intended at the outset.

In 2007 the project was implemented at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa. By this time morning glories from the village of Azamihira were being grown in 13 regions nationwide, and in May, people came from all over Japan each bringing seedlings from their region in

line with my idea to plant them around the museum building. These people gathered together and cooperated with local junior high school students to set up ropes and plant the morning glory seedlings. It was at this time that the work came to be titled *Day After Tomorrow Morning Glory Project*, and currently as of this year it is taking place in 29 different regions across Japan. This means that every year the people of these regions plant the seeds of morning glories and engage in activities in line with their growth cycle.

The *SHIP of SEED* project had emerged from *Day After Tomorrow Morning Glory Project*. The idea was conceived through my conversations with the various people involved as we came to regard morning glories like a ship of sorts carrying both people and their memories. From Azamihira to Mito, Gifu, and Dazai-fu...since each region had differed in climate, every single seed would look different despite all being of the same species of morning glory plant. I also noticed that the shapes of the seeds were somewhat reminiscent of ships, so for the 2007 project in Kanazawa, we created a ship in the shape of a seed. Then in 2008 we actually set a ship afloat on the sea in Yokohama, and in 2009 in Kagoshima, we let people aboard the ship. Thereafter we kept upgrading the ship, and in 2010 in Maizuru we attached an engine to it in hopes to set it sail. This ship later developed into *Museum of Seabed Inquiry – “Ototoi-maru”*, which was presented in 2010 in the inaugurated installment of Setouchi Triennale.

Nakamura: As a theme I am interested in “the emergent relationship between the part and the whole”, or in other words, the process by which individuals and the city synchronize and become creative.

I had familiarized myself with the art scene through the works of artists like Mr. Hibino who were slightly above my age and had been active from the 1980s, as well as Kawamata Tadashi (artist) who was enrolled in the doctorate program of the same university that I was attending. At the time I had found myself frustrated, with there being little information on how to understand and interpret the context of Japanese art. I studied abroad in Korea for three years from 1989 to 1992, and between the three years in Seoul to around 1997, I had traveled as a backpacker for a distance that equates to almost two times around the earth. While visiting various museums around the world, I kept thinking about what it was that I should do. As a result of such contemplations, immediately after returning to Japan, I self-organized an art project that sought to redefine the relationship between contexts in art and the city, and set off to start my activities.

The group “Small Village Center” that included artists Murakami Takashi, Nakazawa Hideki, Ozawa Tsuyoshi, Ikemiya Nakao, Nishihara

Min, and myself, had presented a performance of Hi-Red Center's work *Street Cleaning Event*, which entailed us to actually do some cleaning up. It was a reenactment of Hi-Red Center's action-based work, but in truth cleaning was simply cleaning, and I felt a significant distance between the city and our meta-level awareness that was overly conscious of its context as art rather than the act of cleaning itself. In any case I had channeled my awareness towards how people would perceive the work when it took place on the streets of the city, as well as the similarities and differences between historical context and what we were doing.

In 1993 we implemented a guerilla art project called "THE GINBURART" in Ginza. In doing this we challenged Ginza, which is recognized as one of Tokyo's gallery districts. At the opening, Ujino Muneteru and a group of youths carried a *mikoshi* (a portable miniature shrine) adorned with various light fixtures. They carried the *mikoshi* along a street that was closed off solely to pedestrians, yet they ended up receiving a cautionary warning from the police that regarded it as a vehicle.

It was also at this time that Ozawa Tsuyoshi's representative work *Nasubi Gallery* was conceived (a mobile 'white cube', created by painting the inside of a wooden milk box white, which mimicked the exhibition space inside a typical art gallery). At first the work had been criticized by one of Ginza's contemporary art galleries, *Nabis Gallery*, as the title was an evident parody of its name. However, eventually *Nasubi Gallery* came to receive attention through increased coverage in the media, and in the end Ozawa and Nabis Gallery reconciled and became good friends (laughs). The program also included Aida Makoto's performance *Art Beggar in Ginza*, in which he put his graduation certificate from Tokyo University of the Arts up on sale for 200,000 yen. For my work, rods made of short pieces of metal each measuring about 10 cm long were welded to an iron panel to look like something reminiscent of a pigeon repellent device, and then attached with double-sided tape to a bulletin board situated on the sidewalk. That's all there is to the work, but when I stopped by the area recently, I saw that it was still there. For over 26 years it remained on the streets of Ginza. In other words, even though it is something that is private, it quietly sits within the concept of public space, and the work continues to be maintained such as being given a fresh coat of paint when the surrounding fixtures are subjected to repainting. Although completely different to the grand collection of works housed in Towada Art Center, there are ways like this in which art can exist within public spaces.

Following this, I presented a guerilla-style art project in Shinjuku's Kabukicho district as well. After a briefing session in Kabukicho's community

hall, around 120 to 130 artists of my generation had come together. Fukuda Miran also took part in the project, and she had distributed her own work in packets of tissues that she handed to passersby. If someone kept this work to this day, it would indeed be of great value.

While I myself engaged in producing work, I was also thinking about the mechanisms that lay beyond things, as well as the environment itself. The experience of creating work alone, working as a group, and doing things for an art project are all quite different. It was from around this time that I began to think that my own message could also be conveyed through assembling the messages of other artists. It is of course great to work independently. However, when inversely taking into account the idea of delivering a message, I think that in some cases it is easier to convey a realistic message by organizing an art project or business venture, which helps to ensure a sense of sustainability as well.

I also visited Ms. Koike Kazuko's Sagacho Exhibit Space, and while being greatly impressed, I contemplated what it was that I myself and other fellow artists should do. Therefore, as part of my alternative activities, I came to establish the team Command N. When we held guerilla projects in Ginza and Shinjuku, everyone was doing things to their own accord, and weren't really listening to each other at all. Far from not listening, above that, the sense of working as a team as had been cultivated up to that point, had been disrupted. After Shinjuku we had actually talked about venturing into Akihabara for our next project, yet constraints due to lack of cooperation had truly been heartfelt, and thus I decided to create a team that would be able to share my vision.

I spoke to people asking them whether or not they wanted to take part in the work *Akihabara TV* that I had wished to implement. I approached various people including Seki Hiroko (art consultant, producer), Sakaguchi Chiaki (art coordinator), and Suzuki Shingo (artist), and set up a base for our activities. I cleared the rent issue by enabling the space to function as a shared office. I regularly organized talk events at night where I served wine and invited people to gather and engage in discussions over drinks, and in doing so, gradually built up a network of the local Tokyo art scene. *Akihabara TV* was a project that consisted of taking over 1,000 or so monitors for sale in electronics stores across the district, and screening video footage on them. The project was implemented on three occasions in the form of an international exhibition. It was not a guerilla project, and through preparations of negotiating and receiving cooperation to use each monitor, I felt that I was able to establish a point of contact with the city and its local community.

After exhibiting at the Venice Biennale, despite my interests in the

art world, I came to develop more of a fascination towards the city that we live in. I therefore organized an art project that would delve deeply into the community. In Himi City, Toyama Prefecture, we have implemented a project that utilizes local resources, embraces the thoughts of the local people, and is in close tandem with the community. Mr. Hibino and Mr. Fuji have taken part in this project on numerous occasions. The *Tenmasen Project* is a project that races miniature Tenmasen boats (modeled after Japanese traditional wooden boats) from the upper reaches of a river. Each of the boats in the race was purchased by registering with a 1,000 yen donation, with part of the proceeds used to cover the production costs of two actual life-size wooden Japanese boats. This project had further given rise to numerous small-scale civic activities.

What I believe important is not the mechanism of things or systems, but the physical culture that is naturally and unknowingly acquired. If one is born in Towada, one acquires the physical culture of having been born in Towada. The presence of Towada Art Center creates a clear difference between those who have grown up with access to it, and those who have not. Including that which is referred to as social capital, I feel that art has the strength to reach into people and cultivate a sense of mutual power and trust between them. Relationships with the local community that is mediated through art, serve to generously facilitate connections between individual people. In order to attain diversity it is necessary to have the openness to embrace and engage with individuals. A deep sense of openness enables the acceptance of sharp criticism, and as a result, freedom of expression is more likely to be respected.

In my hometown of Odate in the Akita Prefecture, I created a citizen's activity group called ZERODATE that engages in the production of art projects. The group has continued its activities since 2007. Every year we manage to come up with a budget to enable civic activities, yet since we have been doing this for over a dozen or so years, local staff who were in their thirties at the onset are now in their forties. I myself was 40 years old when the group was first initiated, but am now over 50 years old. This naturally became cause for a metabolic reaction, giving rise to a change of generations. The activities that were organized and implemented had naturally changed as well, which I also feel is important. The interesting thing about chiiki art is that in a good way, it is possible to pass the baton to others. For example, a movie theater called Onariza was revived. After having spent several years implementing our activities at ZERODATE, this movie theater came to be revived by a business owner who rented it for purposes of using it as company housing. The building was renovated on

a DIY basis and films were also screened, however, later on the landlord suddenly expressed a desire to tear it down. In response to this, the business owner organized crowdfunding in order to put a stop to this, and as a result had managed to raise more than 10 million yen and purchase the movie theater. I feel that relationships between communities and art projects are built according to what one might call an inevitable matter of course.

Communities always harbor certain treasurable genes, to which local citizens respond with various visions to further increase the appeal and interest of that place in question. Moreover, in hopes to realize this vision, numerous small initiatives are repeatedly carried out. It is through this repetition that a sustainable culture and physical culture are conceived within the local community.

Arts Chiyoda 3331 is a cultural facility created by renovating a closed-down school in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward. We launched it as a private business in collaboration with the Chiyoda Ward, as opposed to appointing ourselves as designated administrators. We established commandA, LLC as its operating company and rented the entire school building by paying rent to the Chiyoda Ward under a lease contract. As an art center whose purpose is to encourage creative activities by both the local people of the ward and artists, we are making a solid profit by organizing, producing, and facilitating art programs that are open to the community. Our annual profits amount to approximately 250 million yen. 70 percent of our staff are artists, and we manage to pay them all a bonus while keeping the business in the black. I don't think there is any other alternative space like ours that is operated according to artist initiatives.

So far I have given a general outline of my activities and relationship with cities and communities, spanning from guerilla-like art projects to setting up a company and operating an art center. Individuals come to engage in creative activities through being inspired by the city, and vice versa, the aggregation of individual creative practices serves to build the community, resulting in the city as a whole becoming creative. Although it may still take some time, I am starting to feel confident in our ability to create relationships in which individuals and the whole resonate with one another and come together in sync.

Kinoshita: In 1996 I started working at Kobe Art Village Center. It was here that I first became involved in organizing exhibitions in a complex center. The first exhibition that I worked on outside the facility was a show with artist Shimabuku, which was held as a project in commemoration of Kobe's reconstruction efforts after the Great Hanshin Earthquake. A wallpaper-like

work depicting ten years of his practice was installed inside the art center, while objects related to his past projects were presented in Suma Rikyu Park.

At the time there were many activities to utilize places outside of the museum as museums. Under such circumstances, and based on my various experiences, I ended up working in the so-called *chiiki* art context in the Shinkaichi Art Project. Shinkaichi is a place with multiple attributes. Like Shinsekai in Osaka and Asakusa in Tokyo, it is a city that supported the modernization of Japan. Since the 1950s it became a place that is home to day laborers, and more recently it has seen the addition of new residents as a result of reconstruction efforts in the wake of the earthquake. I felt that it would be necessary to set aside three to five years if we were to engage with the community, and taking into account the local context, organized projects on a stage-by-stage basis. Although it is now a standard method, we spent the first year interviewing local people with extensive and in-depth knowledge of the area. At the same time, we also compiled various people, things, and information related to places such as the shopping streets into a single guidebook, also introducing our research and findings in the form of an exhibition. In the second year we worked with Fuji Hiroshi in setting up a toy exchange project called *Kaekko* and a café in Shinkaichi with intentions of visualizing the presence of women and children in what was recognized as a male-centered area. In the third and fourth years, we asked architect Atelier Bow-Wow to design paper tents that could be used outdoors, as well as Fujimoto Yukio (artist) and others to devise plans and studies for the city's anniversary festival, and in the final year we implemented a diverse range of programs by setting up these tents in locations across Shinkaichi.

In another project, we organized a program in which artists took people around to various parts of the city like a tour conductor. For example, Enoki Chu guided us to his 'secret place' called Kanemasa Inc., which he refers to as his studio. This scrap iron factory is like a hunting ground for him, and the president and employees of the factory would let him know when they come across something good that may be of use to him. This is how one of his representative works of sculptures made by polishing scrap iron, was born. Also, participants in the tour were invited to view old video work of Enoki in Kobe's China Town where he was given free meals back when he was young and still unable to support himself. In this way, the program served to enrich us with creativity while giving a glimpse into the artists' daily lives.

In addition to this, over a period of three years we engaged in screening works concerning themes such as sexuality and gender, in light of the International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific Region being

held in Kobe at the time. Along with related films from around the world, we presented works that included Dumb Type's *S/N* and Takamine Tadasu's *Kimura-san* in order to address the issue of how to convey information within Japan, where the HIV/AIDS infection rate of the younger generation had then been rather high in relation to other developed countries.

As I continued to work on these kinds of projects, I came to be approached on the premise that I was someone who wasn't museum-orientated, and was inclined to do things out of the ordinary, resulting in me implementing a project utilizing a colossal underground space that had been sealed off due to urban development. This was by no means paid work. An executive committee consisting of volunteers such as philosophers, architects, students, and artists was established, and we worked together in devising plans to revisit this underground space as an aesthetic space through the presentation of light and video, with intentions of questioning society the significance or both the presence and meaning of this place.

Furthermore, in *NAMURA ART MEETING '04 - '34*, we are engaged in implementing artistic experiments from 2004 to 2034 at a shipyard that is no longer in use. A shipyard located in Kitakagaya in the southern area of Osaka had restored the land to its original owner, and a real estate company called Chishima Real Estate Co., Ltd. enabled us to use its remains free of charge. Here, we work to explore the possibilities regarding the beauty of function, spatial characteristics, and location that are unique to an industrial area such as this, and which are not usually found in a museum or theater setting. In the first year under the backstory theme of "a nighttime biennale," our aim was to provide places across various parts of the premises where adults can enjoy themselves like a festival of sorts. Over a 36-hour period we invited visitors to the premises, organizing cruising tours on boats, holding a series of symposiums both indoors and outdoors, installing mirror balls to illuminate various places, and used the steel rooftop space as an outdoor living room and as a café. In the second year, we went on a bus tour with Isozaki Arata (architect), Asada Akira (critic), and Karatani Kojin (philosopher) to an ironworks situated on the opposite bank of the shipyard. So for some time we were doing things that were like events and festivals, but in the tenth year we set our theme as "*Rinkai no Geijutsu-ron: 10 nen no Shui-sho*" [Critical Art Theory: A Ten Year Prospectus], and engaged in the production of Morimura Yasumasa's photographs and his first feature-length film in an attempt to transform this place that we fell in love with into the very work. It is a film that envisions The Last Supper of 13 figures, whereby the space of the former shipyard site itself became a part of the work. Furthermore, he created an archive room in a corner of the premises

to complement the project.

Furthermore, in participating in Chishima Real Estate's plans to create an art foundation within the next ten years, we newly initiated the project MASK (MEGA ART STORAGE KITAKAGAYA), whereby large-scale works that are difficult to transport and store are gathered and exhibited to the public once a year at a steelworks. Yanobe Kenji's *Giant Torayan* had breathed fire, while performances were held on Yanagi Miwa's stage trailer. As part of the project, Ujino Muneteru created a huge house-shaped work from scratch while working here on site. Although humidity and temperature cannot be controlled due to it being a former steelworks, you do not have to worry about the effects of fire, water, smell and sound. To put it conversely, you could say that the project has brought together works that can withstand a tough environment, or in other words, artists who have that mentality.

Furthermore, in Aqua Metropolis Osaka, Yanobe Kenji and I implemented a project that aimed to create a sense of narrative by scattering works across different locations in the city of Osaka. Various works were installed such as *Giant Torayan* were in Osaka City Hall, *Cinema in the Woods* in Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library, *Atom Car* in The National Museum of Art, Osaka, and in the river passing through the city, we invited visitors to take a voyage on board a ship called *Lucky Dragon* which breathed fire and water.

While planning these kinds of things that could be regarded as ultimate experiments and entertainment experiences for adults, at Osaka University where my activities are mainly based, I am involved in an university-community collaboration project called Art Area B1. Designed and implemented through collaboration between businesses, the university, and NPOs, the project is engaged in the development and promotion of cultural activities using a station concourse as its setting. There is a narrow sandbank called Nakanosima in the center of Osaka, which was once recognized as "the nation's kitchen." An urban revitalization project to build four stations across this 3.3 kilometers long sandbank had been initiated, yet in terms of marketing, as there were also stations in the nearby vicinity, it was evident that a large number of passengers could not be expected. Having said that, it is one of Osaka's prime areas, being home to various facilities such as a park, public hall, library, museum, and city hall. There was no way not to utilize this, so three parties from different organizations jointly got involved from the construction stage and tried to open up the possibility of this place in the manner of a social experiment. Here, we implemented programs that took into consideration specific themes and the mechanisms of participation, such as discussion programs concerning various topics such as science, medicine,

and philosophy, as well as fashion shows featuring models selected from the general public. Once the main site was set up after the station had opened, we presented a special exhibition called the Railway Festival, and an exhibition based on the theme of art and science. We also collaborated with specialist researchers to create a 1/150-scale earthen model of Nakanoshima where we kept slime molds in an attempt to explore ways of visualizing a city created by those other than human hands. Last year marked the 10-year anniversary of Art Area B1, and in order to further expand from our role as a the three party joint operation system and become a hub for cooperation and networks with multiple facilities, we are in the process of initiating a project that considers Nakanoshima as a whole as a creative and experimental island.

Kanazawa: The reason for inviting you four individuals on this occasion was because I wanted to consider everyone's activities within the context of a single and continuous passage of time. Ms. Koike Kazuko's opening of Sagacho Exhibit Space as Japan's first alternative space was a major incident of the eighties, back when the museum as a public system had been the prominent majority. Thereafter, Mr. Hibino Katsuhiko and Mr. Nakamura Masato emerged from the 1990s to the 2000s, followed by Ms. Kinoshita Chieko's generation. What kind of impression did all of you have regarding such course of events?

Hibino: There are of course structural issues related to exhibitions and activities. For example, let me talk about Kitazawa Jun's vehicle, where an event was held today. No one takes concern if it is exhibited inside a white cube, yet as soon as it is presented outside, it is subjected to various rules and various people's gaze. It is necessary for one to think about and devise the system by which it is to be implemented or shown within this context. In that respect, I feel that everyone here today had properly engaged with this task.

Kanazawa: You yourself shifted your activities from your own practice as a designer and artist, to working in the field of the community. Were there any conflicts?

Hibino: Before taking part in the 2003 Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, I was involved in a year-long project called *HIBINO HOSPITAL* at ARCUS Project in Moriya City, Ibaraki Prefecture. Looking back on it now, I think this was a groundbreaking event for me. The various things I experienced through this project had greatly trained me. The subtitle of this project was "Hibino Art Seminar Hospital Broadcasting Club", and I had envisioned it as a place

for people to meet and connect with each other right at the time when the internet was emerging. I saw the act of going into a community and that of people suddenly connecting via the internet as progressing in parallel, and having ties to one another.

Ultimately, I feel that when you think about locality and community, it comes down to a matter of the individual. If there are 7 billion people on the planet, there are 7 billion different communities. Therefore, we have to look not only at the overall structure but also at the individuality of each person.

This is also linked to my experience of participating in Terayama Shuji's theatrical production. If I paint a picture on my own in my studio and bring the work to the gallery to exhibit, it doesn't necessarily give me a place in that space. However, in the case of theater, your relationship with the audience can inevitably and strongly be felt in a more live and real-time manner. Come to think of it, I suppose that from around this time I had the desire to meet people, show people, and directly witness their reaction.

Nakamura: I felt a bit nostalgic looking at some of the exhibitions that Ms. Koike had organized. I'd actually seen many of them, so I have a sense of the historical context. At the time I was watching Mr. Hibino on the NHK TV program "YOU", and I remember thinking to myself, "wow, he's really on the show!" (laughs). Thereafter, when we established Arts Chiyoda 3331, I asked him to do the *Day After Tomorrow Morning Glory Project* in hopes to organize a commission project that was not object-based but event-based. This was also born out of an interest in how art projects are established within the community and serve to open up the place, but it also is indeed a reflection of the times. A single space or place is opened out, and becomes creative. Various people connect to this, giving rise to a sense of timeliness.

I also want to talk about the fact that our efforts have been referred to as "chiiki art." To be honest, I truly dislike this word, and I myself never use it. At a stretch, I would use the phrase, "art that takes place within the community." I do realize that it is an easy term to use. There are many scenes in which people working in museums and white cubes within the city have used the term chiiki art in a semi-contemptuous way when they come up to me saying things like, "I heard that recently government officials are trying to do something or another in aims for regional revitalization." I sincerely hope that this goes down in the record in this book, professionals who understand the special context and language in reading the work, and the general public, children and others who experience art without such expertise, are by far considered as being on the opposite ends of the spectrum. In truth, there is a spread of various activities in an almost

gradation-like way between the two. We are now clearly in the transitional period, and we still have a long way to go. Given that, I think it is necessary to proceed with discussions in a well-balanced manner.

Kanazawa: You are also clear about your relationship with the government. You say that rather than regarding the authorities as the enemy, you would like to work together with them. In addition, you have pointed out the importance of subsidies and administration.

Nakamura: It indeed comes down to how you procure the necessary funding. Each time we apply for a subsidy or gather funds ourselves, as well as come up with ways to increase admission income and sales. However, if our course of thinking is out of line from the onset, it becomes difficult to take action. Arts Chiyoda 3331 procures funding from scratch every year, so if something happens, we would be in trouble (laughs). I am thankful to Mr. Hibino and Ms. Koike who both support us by renting spaces in the building.

Koike: The rent is not cheap, but the true asset is having companions around you.

Nakamura: I think you'll find it cheaper compared to the general standard (laughs).

Kinoshita: Having had the opportunity to directly hear Ms. Koike, Mr. Hibino, and Mr. Nakamura talk today, I was able to reaffirm the significance of their various legendary activities that they had engaged in back in the times when I was a high school student. I believe that such activities were fueled by a real sense of urgency, and individual circumstances as well as feelings of "having no choice but to do so" are significant major premises. While it is important to come up with measures that would enable chance opportunities like various people happening to meet one another within a certain community, I above all want to bear in mind wherein lies the initial motive of "doing something simply because you want to do it."

Furthermore, although chiiki art is informatized in various forms in books and magazines, we must seriously think about how people working in this industry actually engage with and view chiiki art in the true sense of the word, and vice versa. Furthermore, we also need to consider the disassociation between the two. If this should be neglected, only irresponsibly published texts and books may be regarded as the truth, or have the potential to become a double-edged sword. Therefore, when talking

about community and art, it is necessary to properly consider and compare "what position of urgency you are thinking and speaking from."

Koike: "To do it because you want to do it." I started Sagacho Exhibit Space while advocating the word "alternative" because museums at the time didn't open their doors to new artists at all. I either kept a distance from or altogether ignored the various commercial galleries concentrated in the Ginza area, as well as critics such as Hariu Ichiro and Nakahara Yusuke who had great power and influence at the time. In any case, an alternative space was another option that was neither a museum nor a gallery, where "we could take the initiative to do what we wanted to do."

Furthermore, as there were no public or private subsidiary systems as there are today at the time, we started everything from scratch. We operated the space by earning as much money as we could ourselves, and putting it into our own fund.

While I still have my frustrations, I feel that Japan today is quite blessed. There are still of course various constraints, but from an economic perspective and thinking about people's understanding, I personally feel that the current situation is like a dream come true. I am still skeptical as to whether or not the government is able to provide each and every artist with actual humanistic support through the guidelines and principles that they outline. That is why I feel it is important to create a true infrastructure for art.

“We” in a Mature Society and Art in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and Beyond

Kinoshita Chieko

Art Producer / Associate Professor, Co-creation Bureau, Osaka University

Though people, capital, resources, and activities are concentrated in Tokyo, “we” who live in a mature society, now a hundred and fifty years since the modernization of Japan began with the Meiji Restoration (1868), feel the need to transform social structures through our own actions as well as the national government’s regional revitalization policies. Cultural policy-based projects aiming to revitalize regional Japan have particularly thrived in recent years, with the expansion of art into something that can commit to all kinds of themes, and do something for society as a medium or media connecting us with different communities and others.

- 1970s
The first world expo in Japan and Asia was held in Osaka, leading to the National Museum of Art, Osaka, which opened at a site originally built as the expo’s art museum, and the subsequent construction of many further national and prefectural public art museums.
- 1980s
Ordinances were enacted on cultural promotional. Local public entities and cultural promotion foundations were established, and a robust discussion over culture in Japan unfolded. There emerged such iconic elements of period of the bubble economy as the trend for increasing corporate identity and above-the-title sponsorship, while many arts and culture foundations were also set up. On the other hand, festivals in agricultural village areas emerged, along with alternative activities utilizing existing architecture and efforts to build new hubs.

- 1990s

The Japan Arts Fund was established (as part of the renamed Japan Arts Council), as was the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts. The Act on Promotion of Specified Nonprofit Activities was enacted and came into force. New structures arrived, such as art museums without permanent collections or competitions for young emerging artists. In the wake of the economic stagnation that followed the collapse of the bubble, art projects appeared around Japan making use of closed shops and schools, or the remnants of industrial modernization. Arts management courses were organized across Japan.

- 2000s

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology was established. The Basic Act for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts was enacted, and a system was introduced with incorporated administrative agencies and designated administrators. International exhibitions started to be held in both regional and urban areas. Creative art center complexes and art museums conceived as part of urban development opened.

- 2010s

The Act for Activating Theaters and Concert Halls, etc. came into force. Art festivals and international exhibitions were held all over Japan. Especially prominent were the utilization and application of existing facilities for creating bases, along with reconstruction projects after the Great East Japan Earthquake, which took place at the start of the decade.

Many other practices and bases too numerous to mention had, needless to say, individual aims and challenges, but the following is an attempt to consider points of view and causes in regard to the theme of this essay, drawing on the activities undertaken from the 1970s until the present by my fellow guest speakers at the crosstalk event “Places Outside the Museum Context”: Koike Kazuko, Hibino Katsuhiko, and Nakamura Masato.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Koike witnessed how art, music, and theater with antiestablishment ideas as well as their practitioners’ spirited discourse became the “power of art” that shaped the culture and very cities of London and New York. Based on that sense of reality, she became involved with

fostering the so-called “Saison culture” that embodied the use of both economics and culture in a Japan that was still growing economically. On the other hand, she also established and led Japan’s first alternative space in an area that, Koike said, was then still discriminatory within the cultural sphere, and would introduce the work of many contemporary artists nationally and internationally who were at the time almost unknown, to say nothing of her achievements in contributing to invalidating cultural hierarchies through exhibiting the work of architects and designers. That foresight on “other possibilities” different from those offered by existing works of art or museums has ushered in immense benefits for us as well as expanded the concept of art through the fusion and new interaction of subcultures and media, attesting to how this forms the foundation of the sensibilities and values we now take for granted.

Since making his debut while a college student in the 1980s with his work using cardboard, Hibino has worked widely across various fields. Such a borderless practice creates nimble, sustainable conditions through the subtleties of encounters with the unique philosophy of, as Hibino has previously described and as also indicated in the title of his *Day After Tomorrow Newspaper* project ongoing since 2003, “sharing around the day after tomorrow what we can’t yet see but will be able to soon.” In order to find the future in possibilities that continue to exist without reaching completion, in pressing relationships and new connections instead of anticipated results, many artists make a sharp distinction between environments like museums and theaters where artistic expression is guaranteed, and other places. It is rather those with high levels of experience in existing cultural environments who find creative imagination in different communities and in others, who intentionally head to sites that are imperfect as the environments to work and exhibit, and who seek out encounters that torch a chord.

In the 1990s, upon returning to Japan after studying overseas, Nakamura employed various approaches to create and present art that was committed to the city, before shifting gears in the 2000s to launch and run an alternative space, and publish collections of interviews, and now continues his endeavors to bring the whole aspect of individual art out into the open. At the base of this lies a focus primarily on establishing the ambiguity of the “returns” (earnings) for maintaining an organization or base, rather than through the circulation of artworks, and “public good” premised on the participation and enjoyment of many others. It surely may then be hard to tell what is “art.” What is integral here, however, is recognizing physically through activities the imaging of an “austere form of society through politics

and economics” that apparently symbolizes such invisible structures, and that public and private are one and the same. As such, Nakamura’s activities suggest just how difficult it is to always be alternative in terms of artistic values and everyday existing values.

This essay has examined the shifts in art specific to Japan, which continue to derive from contexts different from the reflection of art history, across the half-century since the arrival of contemporary art, its framework formed by conceptual art through the dematerialization of art that took place in the 1960s and 1970s.

Since the goal at the numerous government-initiated art festivals and international exhibitions is ultimately to contribute to building connections with communities and to foster an abundance of beauty, fun, diversity, individuality, and leeway, they lack tolerance or permissiveness in terms of other values, emotions, and perceptions. And yet it is not only such positive aspects that act on the gaps in our sensibility, but rather it is the things that are hard to understand, the strange, misshapen, and frustrating that awaken our dulled sensibility. Because of the similarities to your own ideas and sensibility, consent and agreement do not tend to lead to new realizations or improvement, even if stockpiled as your reserve of discourse and vocabulary. It is critique and criticism from viewpoints different from your own that provide various effects, since you can learn their arguments and reasons, and after asking yourself questions, can pursue a new path toward solutions and the choice to understand or forget.

As mirrors reflecting the society in which we live today, artists are always to a greater or lesser extent seeking out a basis for their practice or activities, and acutely sensitive to experience and vague aspects of existence. On the other hand, along with freedom of expression, the freedom to feel things or the world as you like should be guaranteed, and it goes without saying that this differs from person to person. And yet vague views are perhaps being directed at and forced upon us without us realizing it by various pieces of information, social conventions, and numerous unknown others. With the recent prominence of experiential opportunities due to the unprecedented expansion of the function of art, it is now necessary to probe that essence. Just like how, though the conditions differ, the countercultural spirited discourse of various artists in the 1960s and 1970s caused the city to transform, and led to a social change. What is important is an aesthetic structure (aesthetics) for living and cultivating a future, one in which art abandons existing values and, based on your own ethics, is not constrained by anything, but also without forgetting tolerance of others. In the state of crisis right “now,” where

freedom of expression is no longer fulfilled according to the arm's length principle by government policy since August 2019, we are considering the present circumstances from the various perspectives of thought, philosophy, and ethics, sociology, science and technology, information theory, and law, calling into question critical thinking and faith as “our” consensus with refined individual aesthetic faculties.

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Cross Talk 04

August 17, 2019

Expanding the City

How is it possible to liberate the “city” from fixed ideas and concepts to expand it into becoming a space that is appealing for the people who live there? We asked participants to each share their activities and approaches that attempt to put this into practice.

Ogawa Nozomu

Director, Art Center Ongoing / Director, TERATOTERA

Takasu Sakie

Artist / Director, SIDE CORE

Yamaide Jun'ya

Representative, NPO BEPPU PROJECT / Artist

[Facilitator]

Miyata Yuki

Community Education and Outreach Manager, Towada Art Center

Yamaide: I run BEPPU PROJECT, a non-profit organization based in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture that attempts to find solutions for local issues and develop further interest and appeal towards the local community. I believe that our goal is to share with everyone the way in which diverse values simultaneously coexist in the local community and region.

For instance, it can be difficult on a child if they were to be excluded or considered an outsider by their peers because their thoughts and opinions deviate or are deemed “different” from what is considered common sense within their group. It would be hard to be innovative and think about new things as an adult unless you are able to cherish the slightly interesting, strange, and unusual. I believe that art could serve as a foothold in valuing these things.

BEPPU PROJECT was founded in 2005 and is now in its 14th year, and currently has around 15 staff members.

While we are an organization that focuses on art, we are involved

in various kinds of work. As projects related to culture and art, we plan exhibitions and workshops, but we also send artists to local schools. We organize artist visits to around forty schools a year, which accounts for more than one tenth of the elementary schools in the Oita Prefecture. Our aim is to create a situation in which people in the Oita Prefecture have the opportunity to encounter strange and interesting people called artists as a child.

Since 2009 we have operated apartments in order to provide living and working environments for artists, and have continued to aid them in relocating. So far, about 140 creators have moved to Beppu, which is 0.1% of its overall population. Since they also participate in community activities and have become a familiar presence within the local community, it is now possible for us to organize artist visits to welfare facilities and facilities for the elderly. In relation to this, for around four years I served as a director for developing exhibitions that considered the creative activities of people with disabilities in the Oita Prefecture.

I am also involved in making the publication *tabitecho beppu*, which introduces not only art, but also the appeal of Beppu as a hot-spring area. Although it is a 200 pages long full-color publication that is distributed free of charge and does not contain any sponsored advertisements, we established a special mechanism that enables us to recover around 70 percent of the production costs. We basically issue cash vouchers and retrieve a commission charge from the shops that are featured in the publication.

Due to engaging in such ventures, we came to receive requests from struggling local municipalities, especially in the mountainous areas, to think about tourism plans and settlement plans. As we got to know the region and community, we realized that the various goods made by farmers and forestry workers could not be produced unless these areas were protected. I started to consider how wonderful landscapes are preserved though means of supporting such people. In 2013, we launched the brand Oita Made, working in partnership with people that make products using resources from the Oita Prefecture. Last year, Oita Bank invested in creating a local trading company, to which we voluntarily transferred the business without charge. We have also sent staff from BEPPU PROJECT to set up and operate a store in Oita City.

When a bank becomes involved, it results in building deeper relationships with businesses. There have recently been more and more inquiries from small and medium-sized businesses that come to us asking, “the importance of creativity is often talked about these days, but how should we approach it?” Sixty, or at times over seventy businesses a year come to consult us.

Introducing art is not our main purpose. Our hope is for this region and community to become further enriched and full of possibility. The objective of the NPO is to achieve autonomy of the region. We are an organization that considers ways of improving this region and developing interesting ideas.

We also place great importance on creating presentation opportunities for members of the public. The first and foremost foundation of our activities is the local people. In the fall of every year since 2010, we have hosted the civic cultural festival Beppu Art Month. For example, there is group of local ladies with some in their seventies who perform the hula dance, and their costumes seem to be getting more and more revealing. There are also Rakugo (traditional Japanese art of comic storytelling) performances held in vacant store spaces, while strange concerts, food events, and yoga sessions were hosted in the community center.

Anyone is welcome to take part in Beppu Art Month so long as they do not go against public policy. This is not a subsidiary-aided project. If it were to be funded, its purpose would change. Basically, our intention is to make this region and community a more fun and enjoyable place together through culture, while hoping to create further friends and companions who resonate with us.

We also held an international art festival called “Mixed Bathing World” on three occasions, in 2009, 2012, and 2015. In the art festival, works were installed in various parts of the town, and people would visit these sites with a map in hand. In the final year the art festival was held in a reservation-required tour format so that visitors would be able to experience art in special places. Even if a visitor suddenly turns up on the day, they won’t be able to see the works if they don’t take part in the tour.

Asides from this, we held an art festival in the Kunisaki Peninsula, in the Northern region of the (Oita) prefecture. For this art festival we exhibited the works of various artists. When we installed Anthony Gormley’s work on a mountaintop, we were highly reprimanded as it was a sacred site for *Shugendo* (a highly syncretic religion said to have originated in Heian-era Japan, which evolved from an amalgamation of beliefs, philosophies, doctrines and ritual systems drawn from local folk-religious practices, Shinto Mountain worship, and Buddhism. Practitioners conduct religious training while treading through steep mountain ranges). However, we now find money offerings in various currencies placed at the foot of the work. Local people go and take care of the work in times of a typhoon, and a hat is placed on top of it whenever it snows. The local people refer to this work by the nickname “Mr. Gormley.”

As I continue to be involved in such projects, I started thinking that perhaps it was necessary to reconsider the very concept and nature of the art festival, and I therefore became more motivated to try out a format different to those previously employed. When you invite around fifty artists each time, it is not possible to spend that much money on each, and it becomes difficult to spend a long time working with one artist. For this reason, in 2016 the art festival was changed to a solo exhibition format. This is what we now call “in BEPPU.” For the first installment, we invited 目[mé] to present their work. Using the city hall as its venue, the work entailed creating a temporary space outside and filling it with fog. The viewers don’t really know to what extent what they are looking at is the work. One old woman had said, “I don’t have my umbrella with me today, but it seems like it’s started to rain” while another person looked at the staff working at the city hall with the suspicion that they might in fact be performers. In this way, it was a work that encouraged viewers to actively view and engage with the things they encountered. In 2017 we held an exhibition with Tatzu Nishi, and in 2018 with Anish Kapoor.

Ogawa: Art Center Ongoing, which I run, was established in 2008 and is now in its twelfth year. We renovated a house in Tokyo’s Kichijoji district by ourselves in order to create a space where artists can freely exhibit their works. At the time I had just completed my graduate studies and had no backing or any money, but since I myself had worked as an artist for a long time, I did have many fellow artist friends and acquaintances. I’d often talked about creating an art center someday, so when I finally got around to doing so, they were all willing to provide support in building the space. A friend who is a licensed architect had drawn up the plans for the space, and a total of 100 artists spent three months working in turns to renovate an old house. I consider it as an art complex, with a café on the first floor, exhibition space on the second floor, and also a small library where visitors can read materials related to the artist. The exhibitions we hold center on the works of young artists.

What distinguishes it from a so-called “café gallery” is that main space is the gallery on the second floor, and the café simply serves as a place where artists and visitors can meet and communicate with one another. Another reason why I made the café was that I felt it was the only way in which the space could make money. I had no experience at all in the food and drink industry, but I was able to come up with a menu thanks to the help of various people. The entrance fee for the gallery is 400 yen, and the system is that visitors are served a drink after viewing the exhibition. On the weekend

we host various events such as talks and performances, and their entrance fee is also a source of income for us.

Since our motto is to present exhibitions unlike anywhere else, we select to exhibit artists who make experimental works, rather than aesthetically pleasing works that are perhaps more likely to sell. We do not charge any rental fees from the artists. There was no other place like this in Tokyo back in 2008, so news spread via word-of-mouth that “there’s an interesting new place in Kichijoji.” Eventually we had various artists coming and going. Most of the artists that gather here may be described as social misfits (laughs) of sorts, who in general continue to pursue and develop their expressions while working part-time jobs. There aren’t really many places in Tokyo where artists can freely present experimental works of art. I feel that we have managed to keep this space running for over ten years as lots of struggling artists come here and order a glass of beer and so on in hopes to contribute to preserving it.

Art Center Ongoing has never received a major subsidy. If we were to receive one, we would not be able to do things that did not adhere to the preferences and standards of those who provide us with funding. We want make sure that it continues to be a place that values the autonomy of artists.

For example, the artist Shibata Yusuke presented an exhibition with the concept of “the surface removing the history and context of what lies inside.” Specifically, the first floor of Ongoing was made to look like a dry cleaner’s, while the second floor took on the appearance of a shop called “Salon Silk,” reminiscent of a sex establishment of sorts. Such a decision was made despite being fully aware that Ongoing uses its income from the café in order to operate. As expected, we no longer had customers coming to the café, and instead local residents started bringing piles of shirts under the assumption that “a cheap dry cleaner’s had newly opened in the neighborhood.” Each time we apologize to those people, and both the staff and I were reproached. Perhaps Ongoing is doing the exact opposite of what Japanese (regional) art should be, that is, to be supported by creating very good relationships with the local people. However in my case, by region I don’t only mean it in the literal sense of it referring to that specific place, but also an artist community in Tokyo. I think we have acquired a certain degree of regionality that is needed in order to maintain this community of artists.

Furthermore, we are actively engaged in organizing events and guest talks not only in relation to contemporary art, but also music, film and theater. For the talks we try to set up a discussion between young artists and people who are forerunners in other genres in hopes to facilitate opportunities for new encounters. We have had some highly renowned

individuals to come and give talks like the sociologist Miyadai Shinji, and the author Nishi Kanako. On one occasion politician and former Prime Minister Kan Naoto visited us. We were acquainted with an artist who was making a film on Kan Naoto, and when we had invited him through this connection, he had come to visit. It was a very memorable experience, and I remember him talking about the accident at the nuclear power plant (caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake).

A while after I started this space, a person in charge of the cultural department at the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture proposed that I expand what I am doing a bit further to the community, and with that in mind, I initiated the project TERATOTERA. In this project, artists are invited to present experimental works in various locations around the city. Rather than art lovers visiting places for art in order to enjoy art, I think it's more interesting for people who aren't necessarily interested in art to come across it by chance and finding their values to change.

At TERATOTERA, contemporary art, dance, video, talk events, etc. are held in various places located in and around 10 stations along the Chuo Line. Another distinctive feature of this project is that local volunteer staff is responsible for on-site management and operations. They too enjoy bearing witness to innovative and daring approaches to expression, and aid us partly out of curiosity.

Also, since 2013, we have been running a residency program called Ongoing AIR, in which artists from overseas come to stay in Japan for two months to produce work towards a final exhibition. Since starting this, our activities at Ongoing have become international, and we are able to connect with various overseas groups of our generation who like us are engaged in young and experimental things.

Miyata: From where did you gain the desire to create an art center?

Ogawa: My older brother is a painter, and for a while he had lived in Antwerp, Belgium. When I was in high school, during the spring holidays I stayed at my brother's home and from there I had traveled around various parts of Europe. During my travels I found that even in small towns there was always an art center where there would hold live performances and workshops on the weekends... There was more or less an environment where art served as a central hub for people of the town to come together. When I saw this, I wondered why there wasn't this kind of rich environment in Japan. I thought, if there isn't one, then why not make one myself? So since I was a high school student it has always been my dream to create an

art center. Having said that, a major misunderstanding was that the art centers I saw were in fact run by the government. You know, it all makes sense if I were to take a moment and think about it (laughs). For some reason I had started this kind of space independently!

Miyata: So even though you found out that these spaces were run by government administrations, Ongoing intentionally insisted on not receiving any subsidies.

Ogawa: Many of the artists who come to me are very poor and have the financial ability to manage maybe one exhibit a year with a part-time job. I have always run the space from the same perspective as these artists. I of course don't think that it's a bad thing to establish a good relationship with the government, but I want our activities at Art Center Ongoing to be independent and maintain a little distance from things like subsidies.

Takasu: I make works as an artist, but I am also involved in a curation group called SIDE CORE. We work under the theme of "expanding expressions into the street and within the city," and therefore we often deal with artworks that directly transform the urban landscape like graffiti and street art. Banksy is famous in this area, and is often introduced on television. In considering what the word "chiiki" means in the context of "chiiki art," I feel that in terms of street culture and graffiti, it's about engaging in expression while representing the place that serves as one's own base and hub. I think that the definition of chiiki art is going from the place where we usually work to a different place to engage in activities. I would like to show you a work that we made in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture in 2017.

At the Reborn Art Festival in Ishinomaki, there were plans for us to produce work in Onepark, which is the largest indoor skate park in the Tohoku region. Before the earthquake it used to be a factory for the manufacturing of seafood products, yet it could no longer be used since the destruction had caused a large hole in its wall. Local skaters came to use the building, having transformed it by themselves into a skateboarding park.

However, the fire department conducted an inspection of the premises just before the opening of the art festival, and they stated that we would not be allowed to exhibit work or skateboard in this space. So, as a solution, we made a video work in which a one-night-only skateboard park was created outdoors, where junior high school skateboarders who are users of Onepark, can be seen skateboarding. At first glance, the skateboard park illuminated with outdoor construction lights looked like a construction site, making it

seem as if a new road was being built.

The reason why we made it resemble a construction site is because the area where Onepark is located is along the coast in a region called Uomachi, where they forever seem to be working on building a long seawall. The other artists we were exhibiting with included the skaters Morita Takahiro and BABU, and we were inspired to create this work when we saw them casually starting play along the seawall.

Another reason is that I really like looking at construction sites. You always find people at a construction site no matter how late or early in the morning it is, and you also get the sense that they're secretly working on making something. I realized that since the earthquake in 2011, all the cone lights at construction sites that had used to blink out of sync, had started to all shine at the same timing. The earthquake led to a drastic increase in the number of construction sites, resulting in the rapid growth of Sendai Meiban, a company specializing in producing construction lights and construction safety supplies. The reason why the lights started to shine at the same time was that due to the company's rapid growth, many Sendai Meiban products also came to be seen in Tokyo, leading to the development of new products. Inside the cone lights is a system similar to a radio clock. Fukushima is the base from which the radio waves are transmitted. All the lights catch these radio waves, making the lights in eastern Japan shine together all at once. When we discovered that all of eastern Japan including Ishinomaki, Tokyo, and here in Towada were all illuminated at the same time, the landscape seemed connected. We therefore made that work with the impression that it is a landscape that connects Tokyo, where we live, and the city of Ishinomaki.

The other is a work that we presented at the Reborn Art Festival in 2019. Titled, *Lonely Museum of Wall Art*, or abbreviated as MoWA, the work entailed creating a museum on the seawall. At first we thought it would be interesting if we could paint on the actual seawall itself, but we were not given permission as the authorities didn't want us to do so since it had just been newly built. That's why we created a museum on top of the wall.

The reason why this particular seawall was new was because the decision to build it had only recently been made. The people of the Momonoura were against the seawall, but last year the local and national government had suddenly decided to build it for purposes of protecting the road that passes through the district. We were requested not to do anything with the seawall since it had just been completed that year, and tests still needed to be made to ensure that it functioned properly.

Artworks concerning walls were presented inside MoWA, from Trump's wall to the wall in Palestine, the long graffiti wall under the

elevated railway track of Yokohama's Sakuragicho district, and photographs and materials on wall-related works that we had been involved in. The museum was also made as a place where people could once again see the landscape beyond the seawall, since it was built on top of the wall and was situated at the same height. Also talking about the other three artists who took part in the exhibition, Riva Christophe built a small hut as an annex to MoWA, in which he presented video, photographs, and drawings of the "unauthorized mural, or graffiti-like work that he had produced over a two-year period during his stay in China." BIEN made a wall that was the same height as the seawall, upon which he engraved a drawing of the landscape observed beyond the seawall. People were invited to experience the work by walking between these two walls. Moriyama Taichi created an elevated stage that was the same height of the seawall right in front of it, facing the ocean. During the exhibition period he presented performances that were based on the Suijin (the Shinto god of water in Japanese mythology). Before the earthquake, there were nearly thirty miniature shrines situated along the coastline of Momonoura, but many of them were lost due to the tsunami. The performances and stage were related to these shrines.

Yamaide: Art Center Ongoing, by now has quite a history. In the past there used to be a space called P-House that was frequented by various interesting artists, yet Ongoing is more independent. There was also mention of "autonomy," but I think it means a place where the rights of artists whose reputation has not yet been determined, are protected. That is, the right to express themselves.

On the other hand, our projects are not centered on artists. Since we engage in activities that have ties to the place, art is not always the sole focus. Our purpose is to socialize the potential of art and create a society in which diverse values coexist.

Having said that, we want the artists to do what they want to do without worrying much about anything. Our role is therefore to adjust and negotiate between the various parties concerned so as to enable the artists and directors to work and express themselves more easily within the local community. In fact, in 2009, we received criticism for an artist's work from an overseas animal welfare organization. At that time as well, as a producer, I took the brunt of the negotiations.

Takasu: I think that artists often have a desire to engage with things that local people distance themselves from, or intentionally avoid being involved in. That's why local people may become upset with artists, resulting in

conflicts, but even then I feel that one of the roles of art is to perhaps make what was hidden visible.

Yamaide: The question that arises is why we as organizers decided to accept this work and present it. That's why we have been holding talks and other events for months before the exhibition starts, in order to all sit down and think together. It is important to facilitate these kinds of platforms and opportunities.

However recently, I've come to think more about the sharing and understanding of concerns. For example, attempting to share the problems of a person affected by a natural disaster, could at times result in enforcing something upon them. That's why we must not forget to stand in the same place as them when we think. Nevertheless, personally, I don't think it's good for artists to get too caught up with this.

Miyata: I think that involvement is a keyword that often appears when discussing about communities and art. On another note, there are more risks working outside than in a museum. With that being the case, what is the value in doing things outdoors?

Yamaide: When I returned from overseas in the fall of 2004 and started working as a producer, I was in a state in which I had no space, clients, and people working with me. The only choice I had was to take on a guerilla-style, presenting exhibitions by using various locations as venues. Having continued to do this however, I eventually became unsatisfied. There are only a limited number of art lovers residing in the Oita prefecture, and eventually I ended up further developing projects with a desire for more local people to view art and find it interesting.

What I found particularly interesting was my experience of joining a committee that was working towards revitalizing a shopping district. Everyone wanted to newly rebuild all the stores in the town, and it thus seemed better to make things that weren't already there but instead were unprecedented. Eventually the decision was made to create a gallery, and as a preliminary step we invited artist Nakazaki Tohru to produce works while residing on site. Initially I myself had envisioned creating work, but one day Nakazaki told us that he would do a performance every day. At first the people from the neighborhood simply looked on from a distance, yet when this continues for over a month it essentially becomes a part of everyday life. It seemed nothing out of the ordinary to do "flowing noodles" and pour noodles from the second floor of a two-story ceiling building.

At the time we bore witness to how an artist working in the town could bring about changes to the local region and community. I think this experience became the foundation for launching subsequent projects. We cause trouble for various people and get reproached, but the town becomes more and more tolerant with us. Furthermore, as we came to see tourists gathering to view the art, strolling around the town looking like they were having fun, we started receiving comments from the shopping district and local community that “Art may in fact be a good thing.” I indeed believe that herein lies the powers of the artist.

Takasu: Do artists from Beppu also take part in the project?

Yamaide: Besides from artists, since we’ve been doing this project for fourteen years, junior high school students who had been involved at the outset are now adults, and some have opened their own gallery space. There are also those that have started pursuing a career as an artist.

Takasu: It’s interesting for the region and community one lives in to become a place for expression. In other words, it is the sense that “this is our space” and not just for people who have come from the outside.

Yamaide: Our activities range diversely. We hold exhibitions with artists like Anish Kapoor, while we also support the creative activities of people who don’t necessarily work within the so-called framework of art, such as an old man from the neighborhood who enjoys making things and seems to be leisurely pursuing his own means of expression. We organize R-18 projects or formal study groups for urban policies as well. What is important is that it is a place in which local people are able to present things themselves. Soon after returning to Japan I had hoped to organize exhibitions like the ones that were featured in overseas ventures like documenta, but the people of the town have the same awareness of problems and urgency as the artists. In addition, many people who live in Beppu have moved there from elsewhere, so if we were to continue these activities for fifty years, I think there will be more interesting developments. That’s why it’s important to keep it going.

Takasu: For example, in hip-hop and rap culture, one’s identity of where they were born and raised is extremely important. Hip-hop artists and rappers have the sense that they represent their own region and community, and thus grow together with it. What is the case for chiiki art?

Yamaide: It's interesting. It's quite difficult to reach the point where art goes beyond mere value and hierarchy within the art world to become something that is necessary for the region and the pride of the community. Well, I feel that we have most likely arrived at the point, but no proper discussions have been made in this area. It's a shame.

We are in part also to blame (laughs bitterly). People in the art world try to close it off from other things. Art has been critiqued by people who were knowledgeable about various different contexts, and it has thus developed within this cycle. If importance is placed on things like whether or not it properly fits within the context of art, and how innovative it is within that framework, it gradually comes to be shut off and distanced from everyday life.

Ogawa: I feel that Tokyo, where Ongoing is located, is far too big to be referred to as a single region or community. It is very difficult to develop a sense of regionality there. Many artists often only have the chance to meet each other once a year. It's not like they live in the same area and can casually go out for drinks together at the weekends.

Takasu: I have the impression that Kichijoji and Koenji are both towns where many artists live...

Ogawa: There is a punk rocker community in Koenji, but it's difficult for contemporary artists to live in Kichijoji because the rent is too expensive. The reason I established Ongoing in Kichijoji was because there are many artists who live to the west of the area. There are several private universities like Musashino Art University, Tokyo Zokei University, and Tama Art University located in Tokyo's west area. Many students continue to have their studios in that area after they graduate, and Kichijoji is pretty much the limit of how far these artists can venture out towards central Tokyo. However, if I were to create a base further to the west, general people who are interested in art would no longer be able to come. I chose Kichijoji as if it were a greatest common divisor.

As for movements between artists, we launched an artist group called Ongoing Collective in 2016. As one of its activities, we established the Ongoing School where artists can serve as teachers. It is an ambitious project in which teachers who are social misfits work to build the future for children who eventually would lead the times to come (laughs). It is a social experiment of sorts, of attempting to create an operation in this vast city of Tokyo that would enrich our region and communities, while sharing one's values.

Yamaide: You mentioned that the café's sales is supported by the artists. Does Ongoing cover the production costs for its exhibitions?

Ogawa: No it doesn't. It's not even possible for me to pay the labor costs of part-time workers and other utility costs simply through the earnings of the café. I make money from one-off curation and other outside projects, and use it to cover Ongoing's negative earnings. I do a tremendous amount of work because besides from Ongoing's operational costs, I also need to make money to live.

Takasu: If you were to close Ongoing, you would be in the black wouldn't you (laughs)?

Ogawa: After the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, I am thinking about closing down its current location and going overseas for around a year. I am planning to startup a new version of Ongoing after I return to Japan, in a place where the rent is a bit cheaper. Over the past twelve years I have become fully aware that we would definitely not be able to keep things if we were to continue with our current business style. So my realistic future is to move the location slightly further to the west, and build a new kind of art center that is a bit different to what it is now. The biggest challenge for me is to maintain a sense of sustainability that would enable the space to be completely free.

Yamaide: I hope we can share our knowledge and wisdom that is necessary to keep things running. We are also doing things that are not related to art in order to secure enough profits that would allow us to continue the organization. Having said that, looking at each project, there are those with planned deficits from the beginning. For example, Kiyoshima apartment is not profitable at all, and neither are small shops. But it is indeed these kinds of projects that we essentially wish to do. So we manage to keep things going by earning profits from other ventures and using it to cover those that are in the red.

Miyata: I see you as being involved in all possible areas that come to mind when we think of the word community. Do you ever receive funding from the national government in the process of working on your projects? It is an issue that is often debated, but what is your opinion on doing this using subsidies and financial aid?

Yamaide: We do occasionally receive subsidies and financial aid from the national government, but only for a few of our projects. Whether or not to utilize these funds should be switched around according to the purpose of the projects. Of course, there are times in which they should be used. The fact that such funds are issued by the government is evidence that art in some way or another is needed in society, so I feel it is important to convey this.

Ways to Utilize the City from Extremely Personal Perspectives

Takasu Sakie

Artist / Director, SIDE CORE

SIDE CORE is based in Tokyo. The spaces we are involved with are located around Tokyo, and we lack an awareness of being based in a particular *chiiki* [area/community]. After all, we have been living on the roof of a multi-tenant building in an office district for seven years, and with no neighbors: it's not so much a question of whether or not we have a relationship with the *chiiki*, since no one even knew of our existence. For us, there is only this ambiguous state called "Tokyo," and the communities and culture cultivated and connecting through a process of acting or moving within or without that form the foundation upon which we develop. Aiming each time to be a place for experimentation, SIDE CORE's activities began in a fluid state in terms of location and the artists. Though there are economic reasons for this, our experiential sense that artistic expression cannot be organized led us to an awareness of nomadic forms over having a base. Our *chiiki* is the city where we can witness artistic practices like street art and graffiti as we actually wander the streets: forms of culture that aspire to diverge from *chiiki* and its concept of showing the identity of a particular community through a partitioned-off place. In this way, I would like to discuss our practices from the viewpoint of de-*chiiki*-fying street culture, and consider the topic of *chiiki* art from a perspective not restricted to contemporary art.

Starting in 2003, buildings in Shibuya were decorated with lots of murals through the Legal Wall project, devised by a nonprofit called KOMPOSITION. The results were truly worthy of the epithet "Tokyo monuments," each and every wall replete in originality, transforming the cityscape with the Japanese street art long nurtured on the underground scene. From around 2008, however, the murals began one by one to disappear, and are almost all now gone. And if you speak to the respective

organizers behind the murals, you hear an array of stories, the likes of which could only have happened in 2005, when there was less awareness of graffiti. It is next to impossible to graffiti a commercial building in the middle of Shibuya today. Supposing you were able to get permission from a building owner, you would ultimately never be allowed to proceed in the current circumstances, where regulations against graffiti are so strict due to the Landscape Act and commerce and industry associations. So if *that* was possible only back then, what can we in the present do? Or can we use this adversity to our advantage? Or convert these bad conditions in Tokyo into ideas for new culture that doesn't exist even outside Japan? That is one of the motivations for the ideas behind SIDE CORE's activities.

I would next like to introduce Legal Shutter Tokyo (LST), which is run by SIDE CORE member Nishihiro Taishi. As the name suggests, this project paints pictures on shutters. Japan is seeing initiatives now to revitalize communities by paintings pictures onto shutters in shopping streets. Though many building owners hesitate to accept proposals to paint on their walls, for some reason they are pleased when people want to paint something on the shutters. That said, Japanese artists themselves tend to have a simplistic image of community revitalization and don't like to paint on shutters. So who is painting the pictures through LST's programs? It's artists from overseas. They jump at the chance to paint something on a shutter. Many artists who visited Japan on vacation find out about LST through Instagram. Though the project started with just one shutter, it has since developed links with residents, with the result that over twenty shutters have now been made available to LST. The project introduces the artists to owners with the condition that while the latter don't necessarily have to compensate the artist, they must let the artist do whatever they want. For the artists, they don't have a problem with compensation as long as they have a free hand to create whatever they want. LST gets contacted by a vast number of artists, from whom Nishihiro selects candidates and carefully and gradually curates the project. The project came about precisely because the current situation in Tokyo has made it so difficult to paint murals, and in that sense, has taken a different direction than KOMPOSITION's Legal Wall. While KOMPOSITION restricted itself to Shibuya, LST is spread out across several areas in Tokyo and, as such, *de-chiiki*-fying in terms of how it has departed from the schema of Shibuya as the field of street culture.

We gained recognition as artists originally through our participation in Reborn-Art Festival 2017, which is held in the tsunami-hit city of Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture. The festival's curators were Watari Koichi and Etsuko of Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, two of the few curators in Japan

with an understanding of street culture, and also rare examples of members of the art industry with an interest in our activities. I served as an assistant curator at the festival, while SIDE CORE was one of the participating artists. I curated the work of five artists as an exhibition and the activities we had until then organized only by ourselves began little by little to attract attention. The exhibits featured the work of leading Japanese street skateboarder Morita Takahiro and graffiti writer STANG. Other participants included artists not usually involved in contemporary art, like Akaki Nampei and BABU, who works in Japan's underground street culture scene. Through the residency in Ishinomaki, I experienced how street-culture perspectives can transcend locality.

At the crosstalk (Cross Talk 04), for Yamaide Jun'ya and Ogawa Nozomu, *chiiki* meant the place where their respective activities are based. Likewise located in Tokyo, Art Center Ongoing's activities seem to create a hub while blending freely into the *chiiki* without fixing on a specific place. Contriving ways for people to engage at length with a work through food or a café may seem simple, but it's a methodology distinct from those employed by galleries and so on. Like ours, Ogawa's activities build up an original methodology in terms of assessing the behavioral principles of people living in the city, and then setting up art. TERATOTERA and such initiatives go plainly beyond the frameworks conceivable through the activities of galleries and alternative spaces. With Yamaide, activities are defined as things done not for the sake of art, but for the sake of the *chiiki*, though this doesn't entail merely holding art festivals as a form of community revitalization. Undertaking curation that treats an art festival like a solo exhibition and makes effective use of public space produces results where art intervenes further into a *chiiki*. Tatzu Nishi's solo exhibition in Beppu is surely the exemplar of this. I could gain significant insights from the way in which both Yamaide and Ogawa, in an art scene that is shaped to a certain extent by formats, be those galleries and museums or art festivals, are redefining the relationship between *chiiki* and art, and searching for approaches more effectively. Though their activities are more "public" than ours, reinterpreting *chiiki* art from "personal perspectives" means they achieve flexibility in their projects, resulting not in art used for the *chiiki*, but art that is born out of the *chiiki*. Their dissatisfaction with artistic expression that accommodates a *chiiki* or specific place, and their search for things that redefine even their own personal perspectives also match what SIDE CORE does. When SIDE CORE took part in Reborn-Art Festival, for instance, Morita Takahiro made "the thinnest, longest skateboarding course in Japan" at a long, narrow site less than a meter wide right beside a temporarily shut skatepark.

An undulating skateboarding course painted bright blue ran along the outside wall damaged by the tsunami: this transformed the usual concept of a skateboarding course, and also breathed new life into the disaster-hit landscape. (And Tohoku skaters all flocked there to try it out.) This is what I consider to be *de-chiiki*-fying art. As SIDE CORE diverges from notions of *chiiki*, so too do Yamaide and Ogawa diverge from notions of *chiiki* art and public *chiiki*.

Cross Talk 05

August 31, 2019

Devising Together with the Community

An artist who creates work while engaging with local people of communities both in Japan and abroad, a designer who employs design as a means to introduce updates to communities and provide solutions for the issues that they face, and a manager who works to connect the museum and the community in Towada, come together to discuss ways for building relationships with local citizens as well as facilitating means for involvement and participation.

Kitazawa Jun

Artist

Miyata Yuki

Community Education and Outreach Manager, Towada Art Center

Yamazaki Ryo

Director, studio-L / Community Designer / Certified Social Worker

[Facilitator]

Kanazawa Kodama

Independent Curator / Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center

Kitazawa: I currently live in a town called Yogyakarta in Indonesia. Today I will focus on talking about several projects that I worked on in Japan before moving to Indonesia, as well as the things that I felt after relocating there.

Since around 2008 I have been doing projects in various parts of Japan, and also in Taiwan, Nepal, Bhutan, and New Zealand. I am from Tokyo. I believe that this vague sense of oddness or another that I felt while growing up in Tokyo had led me to pursue a career as an artist. If I were to put this feeling into words it would be the realization that “our everyday lives are what makes us who we are.” I began to wonder where my identity and the things that I express are actually coming from. In contemplating this, I arrived at the notion that it is who we meet in our everyday lives, where we go, and the kinds of things that we do in these places that constitute our expression, and even our very own person. For example, since

I am the second oldest son, when with my family I engaged with them as the second oldest son. At school I engaged with my teachers as a student, and at hospital I engaged with doctors from the perspective of a patient. I therefore subconsciously played a different role that coincided with each circumstance. We express, or are made to express ourselves according to the rules within a certain community. I could not help but feel that we are “inevitably created” by the things that we constantly accumulate. What I came up with in order to overcome this was the phrase, “an alternative daily life.” I thought that creating “an alternative daily life” and delving into it would enable me to devise a new self. This is what led me to start my projects.

Living Room is a project that I started during my third year at university. I laid out a carpet inside an empty store situated within a shopping street, collected furniture and various household appliances from people in the neighborhood, and created an “open-to-public living room.” This living room functioned as a place for people to barter, allowing them to exchange items that they brought from their homes with those that they found here. A piano was brought in, followed by a karaoke set, which were used to hold a concert. Cooking utensils were brought, resulting in the creation of a makeshift restaurant of sorts. I implemented this project in seven regions including Japan and Nepal.

My Town Market was a project that I held in the town of Shinchi in the Fukushima Prefecture, which had been affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. I started making colorful handmade mats in a temporary housing area built on top of a hill, eventually creating around 20 mats in total with various residents who had joined me in my endeavors. These mats were joined together and laid out along the street within the temporary housing area, giving rise to a “handmade town” reminiscent of a marketplace. Things like a planetarium based on the ideas of a fisherman, and a museum thought up by children, were created. The project was implemented a total of 11 times over the course of four years in this temporary housing area, and ultimately became somewhat of a local event.

Sun Self Hotel, which could be regarded as a culmination of my efforts, is a project that entails transforming a vacant room within a housing estate in Toride city, Ibaraki Prefecture, into hotel accommodation once or twice a year. The residence within the estate become a guest room, with a team of local volunteers serving as hotel staff spending half a year organizing and preparing the welcoming plans. Only up to two groups of guests can stay at this hotel that opens once a year. There is indeed an alarming amount of pressure that these several guests confront as they are welcomed by a large number of hotel staff all at once (laughs). The *okami* (landlady of the

hotel) also awaits guests in their room when they arrive. It is a hotel that takes on a fairly bold approach, charging guests an accommodation fee of 12,000 yen per night, while making them go on a tour of the surroundings to collect electricity through solar panels which will power the lighting fixtures and appliances in their room. After sunset this electricity is used to illuminate the “Sun-In-The-Night” (a balloon) hung in the sky. As a result, what was conceived was a housing estate whose room from time to time would be transformed into a hotel, next to which the sun would shine in the night’s sky.

10 years or so after having continued to engage in activities involving communities, I traveled to Indonesia as a fellow of the Japan Foundation Asia Center, where I currently still live and work. I thought that it was necessary for me to take a break from projects that were based on daily life in Japan as I had focused on up to that point, and instead channel my attention towards a different daily life. I therefore researched various regions of Indonesia while immersing myself in the local life. For instance, embankments are in development along the slums situated on both sides of a river that runs through Jakarta, and the houses where people live are being downsized in correspondence to construction plans. It’s really quite awful. That being said, many people have built new walls to cover up the areas that have been demolished so as to transform them into rooms, or built their own set of stairs providing access them to the new embankment. I found myself fascinated by the tough and unflinching creativity that was present among these harsh circumstances. Elsewhere, in the village of Kampung Akuarium in Jakarta, a mere eleven days after an announcement by the government, the entire village was demolished and its residents forced into eviction due to tourism development. What the villagers then did was collect the rubble from their own homes that had been destroyed and exchanged it for money, thereafter which they built a series of simple houses and occupied the area again. They built a “village” again in no time. Having witnessed with my own eyes the way in which these people had rebuilt their daily life from scratch once more amidst these excruciating circumstances, I came to think about what it was that I myself could do. As much as the sheer ferocity of this site of political conflict, I was deeply shocked by the power and energy that drove these people to create. After much contemplation, around about the time that my fellowship was coming to an end, I decided to voluntarily launch a project in Kampung Akuarium. The title of the project is *Lomba Rumah Ideal*, which means “Ideal Home Contest.” It was a contest based on the residents’ independent methods of fast and small house building, inviting them to compete against one another with their ideas and

techniques. Once started, people had gathered one by one, resulting in seven teams taking part. They all spent day after day coming together after work to build their homes until three in the morning. I watched on, fascinated by the remarkable bricolages that were being made...and on the day of the contest, seven houses of various shapes and forms had been conceived. One of them, referred to as “House in the Sky” based on an idea that a child of the village had come up with, was created on the concept of being exempt from eviction if one lives in the sky. Since the election voting in Indonesia is fraught with corruption, I also purposefully adopted a voting system for this contest. Regardless of my concerns, everyone seemed to be voting in positive spirits. There was a line of around 300 people, and all seemed excited and high in spirits when the ballots were being counted. “The power to create the everyday” so as to survive in the midst of a chaotic society—this energy that the people subconsciously use to their advantage serves as the central role of the project, which is ultimately constituted by the time in which the contestants express praise and respect for one another. This was the answer of sorts that I had arrived at during that time.

After completing this project in Indonesia, I once again returned to Japan. Around this time when my solo exhibition at YCC Yokohama was approaching, I had felt that two senses of awareness were present within me, that is, one of Japan and the other of Indonesia. For example, in Indonesia I would casually sit on street steps or in alleyways, but when in Japan I refrained from doing so, telling myself, “No, you can’t do that here!” I’m constantly confronted by a small dilemma. I can’t act as if I’m in Indonesia, but then again, I am no longer accustomed to the “Japanese” way of life either. I thought I might be able to share this feeling with foreign nationals living in Japan, as well as those who are inherently accustomed to the lifestyle of two different countries. What I therefore did was interview around 30 people living in Yokohama who had moved from various countries, then made a series of booths that recreated the daily life of each person and the ties to their respective countries. I arranged these booths like a street, and titled the project “NEIGHBOR’S LAND.” For instance, there was a woman who recreated a store that she used to run back in her home country, and visited it on a daily basis. In this way, I created a place that could be described as a fictional patchworked country where people with multiple national sensibilities could lead their other way of life.

For the special exhibition at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum I created the project *FRAGMENTS PASSAGE – Osusowake Yokocho* which replicated an Indonesian marketplace. The things in the marketplace change day by day as visitors engage in indirect acts of *osusowake*—sharing what

they have brought, and taking things away with them in exchange. It is a work that reconnects the cultural bodies of the two countries, while also touching upon the history of Ameya Yokochō, a street market that was founded during Japan's post-war reconstruction period. This work had also lead to the project *LOST TERMINAL*, which is presented on this occasion (*Stranger Than Fiction: Taking creation beyond location* at Towada Art Center).

Kanazawa: How do you perceive the local people?

Kitazawa: I want to create new means of daily life or community without being bound to the framework of art. I feel the same way both when in Japan and in Indonesia. I create things with people who express an interest in the ideas that I propose. There are also people from local communities who in the same way work together with me in developing my projects. I like to consider them more as friends or companions rather than mere participants.

Yamazaki: I don't often have the chance to speak in this context, so I am thrilled with this opportunity. I work in the field of landscape design, and have been involved in the design and planning of parks. However, I eventually came to think that it didn't seem quite right for designers to create public spaces like some artistic creation of sorts, with the local people simply using it without question. I felt that such spaces should be designed while engaging in a dialogue with the local people—an approach that I refer to as community design.

For example, from 2012 to 2017 I was involved in a project, which entailed utilizing the former site of the Kusatsu River located in the Shiga Prefecture. The Kusatsu River was replaced by a new river since it was prone to flooding, thus its former site had dried up and a narrow space remained. The Kusatsu City Hall reached out to us with a request to transform that space into a park. As the first step, we asked people from the local community to come together and tell us what they would like to do at the new park once it was completed. People had told us how they wanted to go on outings and picnics to view the cherry blossoms or take walks, but we kept stimulating and questioning them “is that really all?” We got a landscape designer to draw and map out all the ideas that the residents wanted to do, and then we conducted numerous social experiments before it ultimately became a park. Among the participants there were those who expressed a desire for a dog park and others who wanted to build a farm, so we got them to do that once the park was completed. This is the kind of

work that I do.

Now I move on to the main issue that I would like to discuss today. I find myself in a real dilemma as to how to communicate the reality and feeling of excitement surrounding the project to those who weren't physically there.

I thought perhaps an artist could create a project book through interesting ideas, so I came to buy art books straight away if I came across something that caught my attention during a visit to a museum or library.

Among the various artists that I read up on, I in particular became very fond of a group called SUPERFLEX comprising three male Danish artists, who I actually had the chance to meet. They do all kinds of really interesting stuff. For instance, they have presented a workshop called *Copy Light/Factory* where visitors are invited to produce cube-shaped lamps featuring photographs of famous lamp designs printed onto square sheets of translucent paper. In doing so, everyone is able to make numerous "reproductions" of famous lamp designs. The title is also interesting, being a play on words between "Copy Light" and "Copyright."

I did some research to see if there were people in Japan who were engaged in such kinds of interesting activities, and as a result I came across various groups and individuals like Kawamata Tadashi, Nakamura Masato, Fuji Hiroshi, Mr. Kitazawa Jun, and Nadegata Instant Party.

There were many things that I learned today, when I had the chance to view Fuji's works at Towada Art Center. It seemed implicative of how he had extended his activities outside of the museum from as early as 1983, and encountered the term "network." The text written on the wall of the exhibition room mentioned the importance of drawing out the interest and concerns of participants rather than expressing oneself. We are also making great efforts to draw things out rather than us expressing something, and we often use the term "intervention." Nothing happens if all is simply left as it is, which is why tools and platforms are also necessary. Instead of we ourselves being expressing subjects (as is the case with Fuji), we try to value the circumstances that arise through our introduction of certain "tools," "systems" and "devices." When placing value on things like relationships, which essentially are not visible to the eye, tools that serve to generate them become important.

In terms of archive, I must mention the "formal letter of apology"¹ which Fuji was urged to write for installing a series of *Koinobori* (carp streamers) in the Kamo River. It was written on a piece of paper issued by

1. The letter of apology that Fuji Hiroshi submitted to Kyoto City when he installed his work consisting of a series of carp streamers in Kamo River. Fuji kept the version of the letter which he had scrapped due to having mistaken one kanji character, and eventually presented it in the exhibition *Stranger Than Fiction*.

a civil engineering office based in the city of Kyoto. The word “apology” is written entirely in hiragana, and what should be “deeply” reads as “exploring” (note: the character for “deep” = 深 is similar in form to the character for “explore” = 探). Of course he doesn’t have the official document on hand as he submitted it, but he has still kept this mistaken version with him to this day. It’s this kind of vast and extensive documentation that is important, and I acknowledged the fact that it was necessary to have this amount of stock material. I was also deeply interested in the exhibited works of Nadegata Instant Party. I felt that artists have a great sense of wit in their ways of expression.

Kanazawa: The thoughts and perspectives of those working upon commission or request appear to be completely different. I sense a difference in the way things are applied. I’m pleased that we had the chance to speak with Mr. Yamazaki today.

Yamazaki: I believe it is very different, which is why I am envious of art. In the case of art, all manner of expression is well and accepted if people are happy and you yourself are pleased with it. When we are asked to create parks and such, we need to organize everything in the form of a written plan since we reach out to people in the local community to also take part in the project.

Miyata: I engage in activities while being conscious of the various positions I could take, which may not just be limited to the museum, or more specifically, even art. I have developed my own projects as an artist, and in other instances have been involved in museum work, art festivals, art events, and other nameless ventures from large to small through taking on the role of coordinator, director, educator and so forth. I also design souvenirs and products, make illustrations, and work as a community advisor.

I am from the city of Mito in the Ibaraki Prefecture, and grew up near Art Tower Mito. Art Tower Mito is an arts center for music, theater and contemporary art. As far back as I can remember, I used to play there as if it were my own backyard, and most of my childhood memories and traumas are related to the artworks I encountered. One of Art Tower Mito’s educational programs includes that which is referred to as “High School Students’ Weeks.” I think it has been around 25 years since it was initiated, but I myself used to take part in it back when I was in high school. During this period high school students are invited to enjoy the facility free of charge. The workshop room in the exhibition gallery is opened

and is transformed into a café mainly for use by high school students. It is not an ordinary café, but is a place for facilitating new relationships. The students work together and engage in activities with adults such as artists, photographers, designers, and curators, and various workshops and events are also held. When I was in high school it wasn't a café but a room equipped with rows of computers, so I used to stop by every day on my way home from school and make flash animation movies. At that time as well, there were many adults working in the professions I just mentioned, and I think I found myself exposed to values that I would never have encountered just by going back and forth between home and school. I also started a project with a group of several people including college students, and visited the city hall to engage in direct negotiations. This was a part of my daily life, and has served as a significant foundation for my current activities. I eventually went on to study at an art university, but when I first enrolled I felt somewhat constricted, as all people seemed to talk about was what cram school they attended or about art. I soon developed a kind of resistance to go to school (laughs).

After graduating I spent three years working at the Mori Art Museum Shop in Roppongi Hills. All kinds of people came to visit, as it is also a tourist location. Many people expressed confusion or at times even rejection since the most cutting-edge works of contemporary art were exhibited there. Those who were confused would complain to us staff that they had no idea what it all meant. I was interested in such incidents and had often spent much time speaking with these people. After doing so, most had left in more positive spirits. It was then that this obscure and hazy feeling I had felt towards the constrictive nature of art appeared slightly alleviated. I sensed a certain possibility in suddenly connecting with people who were completely unrelated to me, as well as the way in which my feelings and thoughts could rapidly expand. Thereafter the Great East Japan earthquake occurred, and I returned to Ibaraki in 2011. There I came to work as a director for a tourism program, which had been a part of measures against reputational damage. As one of the projects of this program, I was involved in organizing one or two monthly sightseeing tours with two other main members of staff. The prefecture had commissioned an advertising agency for the project, and the tours were developed in a unique way due to the producer having been a former museum curator. Breaking down a half-day period into several scenes, we improvised together with various local people of interest in creating stories that were specific to each location, which essentially became the sightseeing tour itself. Come to think of it now, there were certain theatrical elements. It was a project in which everything from the location

to the food and the people taking part had come together miraculously one after the next like no other. For instance, organized in collaboration with the local shopping district, there was a tour where participants could purchase things by complimenting instead of using money. Other tours invited people to go on a boat ride down a river while grazing cows bathed in its waters, and on another occasion we set up a tent on the former site of an inn that had been washed away by the tsunami, thereby restoring its operations for the day. After being involved in such activities for about a year and a half, I gradually started to consider how this very system itself could become art. In 2013, I entered the graduate school of Tokyo University of the Arts. Later, due to various turn of events I undertook an artist residency as part of a framework developed by the community-reactivating cooperator squad, eventually moving to the city of Hitachiota in Ibaraki Prefecture where I started working as a director and artist. I decided to take part as I had felt the term “community-reactivating” as well as the ideas and concepts tied to it as somewhat questionable. I would often get into disputes with the city’s authorities, but the citizens were extremely patient with me in engaging in ongoing discussions. I actively took part in such activities during the two years I attended graduate school, and have been living there as a resident ever since for six years now.

I live in the Suifu District of Hitachiota City. It is a so-called depopulated area, with a total population of around 4,000. Hitachiota is also the place where Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *The Umbrellas* was carried out in 1991, which I have fragmentary memories of. I would like to take a moment to introduce some of the projects we are doing here. *The Hitachiota Art Meeting* started as an event that invited one artist for the day, and then evolved into an exhibition that equally showcased the works of several artists and local citizens, also giving rise to a series of roundtable discussions and informal conversations. The aim was to create a platform not simply consisting of art fans and people specializing in art, but which could also be shared with those who have never even mentioned the word art before. For the project I exhibited a hanging decoration made by an elderly woman who by then had passed away. When seeing it, my neighbor Eiko had told me that she wanted to try making one herself. Along with Masako who was the owner of the house where I exhibited, I searched for a person who could make these hanging decorations that were popular in this area over 30 years ago. Eventually we became acquainted with Katsue, who was in her mid-80s at the time, and started the *Idobata Art Circle*. The project has since been continued for six years with Eiko taking on a central role, inviting people to come together to make things every week. The things made there have been

exhibited in various places, and on occasion we have received interviews, as well as site visits from Tokyo and Tochigi. Then there is also a project called *Suifu Coinobori Project (SCOI)* that is run by around 10 to 15 central members. At the Ryujin Suspension Bridge in Suifu, a "Koinobori Festival" is held every year, where 1,000 or so carp streamers (like fish-shaped flags) are exhibited. Each year we salvage about 200 carp streamers that have been thrashed around by the wind and rain through repeated use, and are thus to be disposed of. We repurpose these carp streamers to develop products and use them in workshops. We have collaborated with the local special needs school in producing items and also washing the carp streamers. To date, a total of over 5,000 people have taken part in the various workshops and events, which is more than the population of Suifu. Our efforts were also featured in a high school art textbook. Our intention is to systemize the project, and we are now in our sixth year having started in hopes to experiment with it in the long-term for at least 10 years. The project members by now are like an extended family, and we share everything. We are self-sufficient, and don't take any subsidies or grants. We sell our products, pool the money, and use it for our own activities. Our entire focus is channeled towards our free thoughts and ideas, instead of having to meet someone's request.

Since the summer of 2015, Rokurokurin, which is also my home, has been the base for such activities. While of course hosting project-related activities, it also functions as an artist in residence, and until now seven overseas artists and around 20 Japanese artists have stayed and worked here. There are some artists who come every month. The place is home to a diverse mixture of generations, nationalities, and standpoints, which has now become everyone's new daily life.

Kanazawa: You could say that art is an activity without purpose. On the other hand, work has a purpose. What are some of your thoughts and feelings having been engaged in both?

Miyata: I think this certain "meaninglessness" of art is important, but I don't necessarily feel that it has no purpose. It's still not quite a language that we all can understand, and I think my somewhat sensing this is the reason for me doing the things that I do.

On the other hand, when it comes to activities I do as "work" money factors into the equation in various ways. For example, at times taxes are used to fund a project, which necessitates accountability on my part. In such instances I have to somehow replace this obscure and ambiguous

language of sorts that I just mentioned, into another language that could be understood. I do often experience conflicts here.

One thing I can say is that there is not really a significant difference between who I am and what I do when working on a project with others as an artist, and when working as a coordinator in the midst of issues such as money and various people's motives. What motivates me is thinking about how I can comment in response to the things that are currently happening in society, as well as how to enjoy discussing all kinds of ideas. Therefore, I don't think that everything needs to be strictly separated.

Kitazawa: An artist I have been most influenced by in Indonesia is the art collective ruangrupa, who were selected for the first time from Asia to serve as artistic director of Documenta 15 in 2022.

They previously renovated two large warehouses that belonged to Jakarta's first ever department store to be built, and named it the Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem (GSE). Sarinah is the name of the department store, and Gudang is a word that refers to a place for storage. It is a space jointly run by a number of art collectives in Jakarta, and has also served as the main venue for the Jakarta Biennale. Going far beyond the scale of an artist-run space or alternative space, it became a cultural hub that was visited by people from all across Indonesia and the rest of the world, indeed generating a single ecosystem.

Drawing connections to Ms. Miyata's relationship with art and work, ruangrupa don't' make artworks that could essentially be described or recognized as art (laughs). After the lease contract ended on the warehouse, they purchased a futsal court in South Jakarta together with the land to create a new space called GUDSKUL, where several art collectives exhibit and sell various items. Also housing a radio station, and serving as a venue for various live performances and events, it operates as a public learning space that is yet again in the process of creating a new ecosystem.

The members aren't limited to artists and curators, and it's not quite possible to tell who is an expert on what expert anymore. Perhaps they themselves don't really know how many members there are in ruangrupa (laughs). I say this because I get the impression that the boundaries between the fields of expression and expertise, the members and other people, the works and the things that are not, are more or less vague and fluid. Rather than a focused pursuit, it feels like an ongoing process of expanding and mixing together. In that sense, I felt that Ms. Miyata's activities were similar to that of Indonesian collectives.

Kanazawa: How about you Mr. Yamazaki? What is your take on the difference between community design and art?

Yamazaki: I studied architecture and landscape design, but there were often things that I felt at odds with. Architects refer to buildings that have been built at the request of clients as their “creation.” If such is the case, does this mean that the client pays to be granted the opportunity to live in an architect’s creation? When I thought about this, it didn’t quite seem right. If we’re talking about public architecture like a city hall or a museum as opposed to a private house, this issue of artistic license becomes even more questionable. Public architecture should not succumb to simply becoming an architect’s creative endeavor. Public architecture is built for citizens using money that is sourced from citizen’s taxes. It didn’t seem right to create a place for local residents to use without listening to the opinions of local residents. That’s why I started engaging in community design.

If something were to be built here I believe it is the architect’s job to ask what the citizens want to do here, and incorporate those opinions and ideas into the space. Meanwhile you could say that our job is to effectively draw out these opinions. If you vaguely ask people “what kind of space would you like?” you’re only going to get responses like, “a place to have picnics to view cherry blossoms.” So we make it our task to engage in discussions and try and dig deeper into finding out what people really want.

When starting to look at art from this kind of perspective, I came to realize that artists aren’t all painters and sculptors. There are those who create things like ecosystems and rules, and refer to the very situations that arise as result of them as their work. I feel that this is extremely close to what I am doing. Let me take a moment to draw a diagram. There are people standing in the middle, and to their right is an engineer, and further to the right is a scientist. Scientists are only interested in mathematical formulas and symbols, and not so much about whether they are useful to people. Engineers apply these to technologies that could be useful. In the same way, let’s put a designer to the left of the people, and an artist further to the left. Similar to the scientist, the artist only pursues what they are interested in. Whether or not it could be of use to people, designers act as an intermediary between them and artists. From the viewpoint of us designers, we want artists to be remarkably outrageous, and we hope to gain lots of clues from them. We in fact gain many clues from the work of artists (laughs).

Kitazawa: Just around the time when Mr. Yamazaki had published his book *Community Design*, I myself was engaged in projects across various

communities in Japan. So everywhere I went people would ask me “is this community design?” and to be honest, I was kind of at odds with this (laughs). I never thought the frustration I felt at the time would be resolved by none other than Mr. Yamazaki himself...Having said that, I think there’s one pitfall in the picture that you drew. Designers, scientists, and engineers are also people. Likewise, art is something that is born from the people. Therefore, it feels strange for art to be distanced from people to be rendered only as a personal signature of sorts. I myself feel that I should always be a part of the people.

However, recently, I have come to think that in order for people to be in good condition, they need individuals who are willing to think outside of the box. As I said earlier, people are constituted by the rules, common sense, and the overall atmosphere of the community in which they live. In order to reconsider the community itself, you need someone who is outside of it. So here in lies my personal dilemma. I want to be a part of “the people,” but at the same time I also need to be an “artist” for the people. I’ve constantly been going back and forth between the two.

Miyata: I would also like to hear Mr. Fuji’s opinion, as he is fortunately with us today.

Fuji: Well, if I may further add, there is the issue of a timeline. This is precisely the reason behind the sense of oddness or incongruity that people like Ms. Miyata and myself had confronted upon entering art university. Since art is that which has already been evaluated in the past, we find ourselves somewhat bewildered by this fixed regulation. On the other hand, Mr. Yamazaki and Mr. Kitazawa are trying to create activities for the future that is yet to be seen, and these include many things that may not necessarily be referred to as art. So far as my feelings go, I think that both Shima Takeshi² and myself have intended to do the same thing, but when you’ve been doing it for around 20 years, it becomes positioned as “art” upon the timeline. There has always been a battle between the timeline you are trying to incorporate into your work, and how you can escape from it as a creator.

Kitazawa: I think *LOST TERMINAL* is also an attempt to create activities for the future, but on the other hand, it also reflects an awareness of the

2. Shima Takeshi is a character in the novel *Shima Takeshi: A Novel and Its Surroundings*, co-written by Fuji Hiroshi and Kanazawa Kodama for the exhibition *Stranger Than Fiction*. Shima Takeshi is modeled after Fuji himself from his student days.

past. Actually, *becaks* were made illegal in Jakarta 30 years ago. In light of an international conference being held, opinions were raised that it would look bad for such things to be running on the streets. Thus the vehicles were collected in the north by the order of the government and dumped into the sea as a fishing reef. This is the story behind *becaks*. Of course, there are things in the past that weren't considered valuable or have been discarded, and I truly feel that we are able to find ways to create something yet to be seen by unearthing these things.

Also, I think there is a reason why what is referred to as "chiiki art" is an easy target for criticism. For example, when a government or a large company commissions an artist, I believe it causes a conflict between the methods that art had taken up to that point ... that is, how oneself becomes one's own client. When I started *Living Room*, it was interesting to see people's reactions like, "what are you doing?" or "who are you?" and so on. However, when everything gradually comes to be defined and incorporated into the community, and money is further introduced into the equation, the types of artists become more subdivided. There are some people who gained an increasing impression that artists are given money (paid for by taxes) to do what they do. I in part moved to Indonesia in hopes to escape from being "consumed" in this way.

Kanazawa: Speaking in terms of Mr. Yamazaki's diagram, the client in this case is not people, but the government. I often find myself working as a facilitator between the government and artists. The ideas and imagination that come out of government authorities tend to be fixed. Take for instance, the functions of a park as was mentioned earlier. The government only has perfunctory visions for a park's use such as viewing cherry blossoms or taking walks, and naturally expect artists to respond to it. This seemed a bit strange to me, and when I asked, "who is it that wants this?" they had replied, "the citizens." However, when I actually talk to some of the local people in the town, I am met with a completely different response. Everyone is smart, and comes up with a lot of interesting ideas. Whenever I come across such a situation, I gain the desire to meet and work with real people, not people who are part of the government.

Yamazaki: The content of requests from the government often tends to lack substance and can be a mere formality. At the same time, when I hold workshops that invited local citizens to take part, the opinions that are raised also often tend to be bland or innocuous. However, should there be a certain trigger for ignition, there is a possibility for both government officials

and residents to come up with ideas outside of the box. Since questionnaires are conducted without preparing an appropriate trigger for ignition, you end up only getting answers like, "I want a large sculpture" and so on.

In that sense, I feel that what is important is how you ask for people's opinions. How do you ask questions in a way that makes citizens want to come up with creative ideas? What kind of setting is required? What kind of stimulation is necessary? I believe both Mr. Kitazawa and Mr. Fuji know how to go about doing these things.

Kitazawa: Perhaps we must move in the direction of reversing the relationship of people to the government, and the government to artists. I think that an artist is a person who speaks for what is really important to everyone through his or her individual reality. It's like, they engage in activities for society and humankind freely to their own accord. A world where people who connect with such artists create a spark, launch projects together, and eventually create a system. A structure that serves to change the surroundings through means of reversing the existing vectors. I think that this in itself is the ecosystem that art creates.

The Spontaneity and Complicity of Participatory Art

Yamazaki Ryo

Director, studio-L / Community Designer / Certified Social Worker

Resident Participation in Design

At university, I studied architecture and landscape design. At graduate school, I studied urban planning and community planning. In all of these, a specialist plans and designs. And because a specialist has a perspective far wider and deeper than a nonprofessional, they are able to formulate far-sighted plans and produce spaces that are beautiful and easy to use. Or so I believed.

At the design firm I joined, I was involved with workshops that incorporated the opinions of nonprofessionals into formulating plans and designing spaces. But this workshop approach somehow wasn't to my liking. In the venue would gather a group of nonprofessionals comprising a few residents. I didn't think we would get a great plan or design just by collecting their opinions. Take comprehensive conditions into consideration and then the optimum solution would come from the mind of a top planner or designer. After all, this is what the Bauhaus and Secessionists recommend. Or so I thought.

As I experienced more of the workshops, however, my thinking began gradually to change. Participatory design involving residents has several advantages. I'll try to list them up as they come to me.

- (1) A designer can learn information about the community.
- (2) It forms an opportunity for residents to think about their lifestyles and lives.
- (3) Participants learn and grow.
- (4) The changed residents connect.
- (5) Participants disseminate information themselves.

Around the time I became able to experientially understand the advantages of the participatory design whose merits I had doubted, I left the company to set up my own communication design firm, studio-L. This was in 2005.

Community Design and Resident Participation in Art

Art also frequently conceives things in terms of “professional” and “amateur.” With paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and so on, it is the specialists who can create superb works of art. Unlike architecture or urban planning, the presence of many amateurs in these fields means we cannot avoid an awareness of what distinguishes a pro from an amateur. But in actual fact, a very able amateur is incredibly close to a pro.

Within this tension, participatory art involving residents—participatory art for amateurs, so to speak—has been difficult to accept for many artists. And yet, artists engaged in it have indeed appeared. They don’t want to make works that fit neatly in galleries and museums. They don’t want to make works that can be sold and delivered to a buyer. No, they want to transform the impact and awareness felt by the viewer when facing the work. In which case, we should treat the overall process of viewers participating, talking and creating together, and changing their awareness as “art.” Little wonder that there are artists who think like this.

One of my fellow guest speakers at the crosstalk (Cross Talk 05), Kitazawa Jun, creates art projects with members of a community. He thinks of these residents who take part in the art projects not as participants so much as “accomplices.” At the sites where community design takes place, there also comes a point when residents seem like accomplices. On the other hand, in some ways they are not recognized as accomplices from start to finish.

In the case of residents taking part in community design, the residents initially feel like participants when the project has just begun. The motivations for participating are frequently passive: along the lines of “It looked like fun, so I came to take a look at the workshop” or “I took part because I was asked to.” But as participants do more workshops, they learn about various examples, engage in dialogue with other participants, change their awareness, and produce new actions. And it is around then that the residents shift from participants to accomplices.

We can see how the response to the project from the community members and the government that is the commissioning entity gradually changes through this process. In the early stages of the project, the residents

view the community designer who has come to their area as effectively part of the government. The government who has contracted the designer perceives them as their “ally.” But when the project reaches its intermediary stage, the relationship between the community designer and residents grows stronger. And then the residents become closer to the designer, so much so that the latter thinks of them as accomplices, while the government sees them now as an ally of the residents.

To wit, the community designer is someone distant from the residents at the start of the project, but becomes distant from the government midway through. We might think of this as particular to resident participation in a job that has a commissioning entity.

As my other fellow guest speaker at the crosstalk, Miyata Yuki, pointed out, the distinction between an art project (without a fixed goal) that is based on personal enthusiasm and an art project (with a fixed goal) that is undertaken as a job is related to whether or not the residents can act from the start as accomplices. In the case of an art project or community design undertaken as a job, residents begin as participants and then gradually shift to being accomplices. In terms of the personal feelings of the artist or community designer, there is little difference between the two, though the attitudes of the people involved surely changes according to the format of the project commission. At such a time, how should a project that seems to transform participants into accomplices proceed? If you guide the residents indefinitely, then the participants will remain participants forever. In a participatory project involving residents, the question of how to design the process for changing participants into accomplices is an important one.

Projects with or without Goals

Another important thing that Miyata pointed out related to whether or not a project has a goal. In the discussion, I noted that the relationship between science and technology parallels that between art and design. This is premised on an awareness of whether or not the project has a goal. In how both science and art further themselves, there is no officially determined goal. In science, research is advanced according to the scientist’s intellectual spirit of inquiry. Similarly, art is continually made according to the artist’s creative aspiration.

And then there are the people observing such pure activities from the side. These are the engineers and designers. Engineers take the beneficial discoveries of science and integrate them into technology. By scientific

knowledge being integrated into technology, people become able to use it. Similarly, designers take the ideas that emerge from art and apply them to spaces and products, enabling people to use them.

To wit, as opposed to science and art, which can be done even without a goal, technology and design often cannot keep going unless they have goal. They are structured in such a way that they cannot continue economically. Accordingly, community designers often run participatory projects for residents with a goal. When artists run participatory projects for residents, on the other hand, notwithstanding curiosity, enthusiasm, creativity, and the like, they are not doing the project with the intention of achieving something useful. More often than not, there isn't a clear-cut goal.

However, due to recent subsidies and commissions from governments, opportunities to undertake art projects are increasing. We might say that this means artists' participatory projects for residents are becoming more similar to community design. Care is required here with those cases where the content of the commission has lost substance. That is, when the goal itself holds no appeal, how should we develop participatory projects for residents?

By developing projects while building a complicit relationship with residents, Kitazawa refines them into projects based firmly on the feelings of the residents who are accomplices, even if there is a commissioning entity. And he strives to show just how insubstantial the commissioning entity's request is. This is the same as what takes place with community design.

But this is possible only if the residents become accomplices. All while they remain participants just partially invested in the project, it is difficult for them to form the complicit relationship that can convey the true needs of residents to the government.

With "spontaneous" participatory projects for residents without a specific goal, it is easier to build a complicit relationship with residents. With "commissioned" participatory projects for residents with a specific goal, we must carefully design the process whereby residents shift from participants to accomplices. When this is achieved, the accomplices relativize the ideas that have lost substance, and obtain the ability to inspire.

Cross Talk 06

September 1, 2019

Where is Chiiki Art?

What lies in the future for this project? This final installment in the series of cross talks aims to summarize the exhibition and the issues discussed thus far, while considering prospects for the future.

Kanazawa Kodama

Independent Curator / Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center

Hoshino Futoshi

Lecturer, Kanazawa College of Art

Various Terminology and “Chiiki Art”

Kanazawa: As directly suggested in the question “Where is Chiiki Art?” which in itself became the name of this project, the major issue of concern here was to consider the definition and meaning of the term “chiiki art.” This was something that was also discussed and debated numerous times throughout the past five talks. First of all, various terms and concepts that should be distinguished from one another, are currently in a state of intermix.

Hoshino: Fujita Naoya’s book (hereinafter referred to as *Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan*) started from his essay, “Zombies of the Avant-Garde: the Problems of Locality Art” that was published in *Subaru* magazine in 2014. In it, he defines chiiki art as “art festivals that take place within local regions.” Such examples include, Yokohama Triennale, Setouchi Triennale, Aichi Triennale, and so on. On the other hand, he further mentions that the term is almost synonymous with the word “art project,” as defined in *Aāto Purojekuto: Geijutsu to Kyousou Suru Shakai* [Art Project: Society that Co-creates with Art], a condensation of a collaborative research project directed by Kumakura Sumiko. In that case, the question arises whether or not the

word Art Project should simply be used, and above all, the blurring of such definitions is an issue of concern.

Kanazawa: Since art projects are led by artists, their concept is more or less similar to an artwork. On the other hand, art festivals are places for presentation. In the book *Locality Art*, Kajiya Kenji wrote about the history of an outdoor sculpture exhibition spanning from the 1950s to the present, but this too is a place for presentation. In addition, alternative spaces, urban spaces, and the street as has been mentioned in this talk series, are also places for presentation since they are expansions of the exhibition space.

Hoshino: Per contra, the phrase “Community-Engaged Art Project” is written in English on the cover of *Locality Art*.

Kanazawa: “community-engaged art project” appears to be an amalgam of several words. The terms and concepts of socially engaged art or relational art, from which this phrase seems to have been derived, are also often raised when talking about issues related to the area of community and art. They refer to certain properties or tendencies in art.

Hoshino: A concept can be likened to a ladder. There are things that newly come to light as a result of giving a name to something that hadn’t yet been named. I think a similar thing can be said for both relational art and socially engaged art. Nicolas Bourriaud began using the term relational art in the 1990s, in a time that saw the emergence of artists who employed the relationship between people or people and things as the medium for their work. There was a certain meaning in naming it relational art. On the other hand, the term socially engaged art came to be widely recognized due to being used by the New York-based nonprofit arts organization Creative Time, which had brought together and cataloged various artists involved in political issues and social welfare around the world. Of course, there were artists who deeply engaged with society prior to this, so what Creative Time did was nothing but point out that such activities and practices indeed existed. Then again, when a term comes to be widely used, there is a concern that the various activities of individual artists will be unrightfully consolidated into one category.

I believe that there are similar problems when it comes to “chiiki art.” With the advent of the term “chiiki art,” many people for the first time had become aware of this strange cycle in which new works are produced one after another according to the various motives and intentions of artists, local

authorities, and people of the community. That being said, I feel that there are individual efforts of the artist that become obscured when the term chiiki art starts taking on its own momentum.

Kanazawa: Yes, I agree wholeheartedly. However, and by no means am I in active opposition, but I feel that it also conversely gives rise to a kind of reluctance against using the word chiiki art. It's almost like people in general feel that it's safer to not talk about or touch upon this area. What are your opinions on this?

Hoshino: Is it not possible to search for the right words to describe the activities of each artist? From your perspective as a curator who to some extent is required to bring together multiple artists under a single cohesive terminology, do you feel that the term chiiki art is at all useful or convenient?

Kanazawa: Certainly, since the term “chiiki art” itself seems to be largely abstracted, I am indeed aware of its limitations. Having said that, I still have a desire to continue thinking about the questions that this word evokes. Fujita stated that he used this term in order to explain the paradigm shift from the otaku culture (while fandom such as manga and pop idols are typical examples, here it refers to all hobby culture that is enjoyed amongst small groups of people) era of the 2000s, to the 2010s that saw a rise in cultural sensibilities including the relationship between art and local communities, nature, and people. Having reached the stage where we to some extent have fulfilled the need to indicate and define such phenomena, I feel the next step is to consider its contents and properties. The phrase “technology & art” has a different meaning to the phrase “technology art” in the sense that it suggests potential frontiers in art that certain technologies can serve to open up. I feel that this is what I want to think about in the case of “chiiki & art.”

The Definition of “Chiiki”

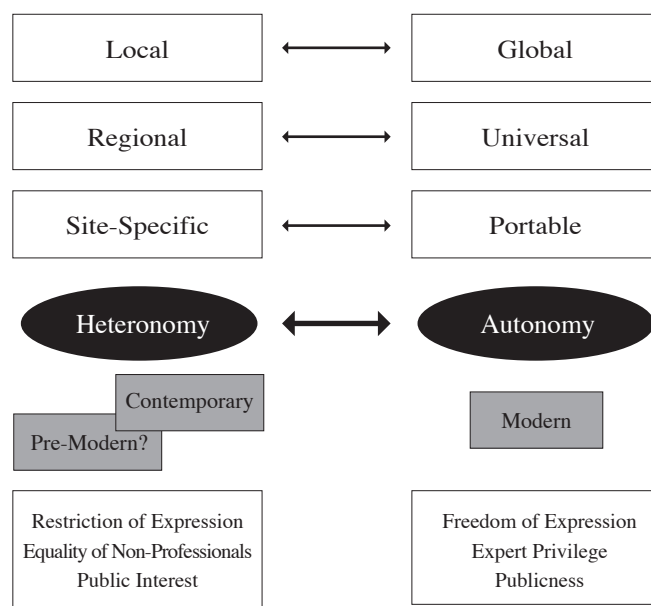
Hoshino: Let us put the term “chiiki art” aside for a moment, and move on to the next topic. I constantly find myself discontent with the way in which the word “chiiki” is used in this term. Please take a look at this diagram.

When we talk about “chiiki” we must at least distinguish between the three standards of “Local,” “Regional” and “Site Specific,” or else discussions

would only result in confusion.

Allow me to present a few examples. The first term “Local” bears in mind a community of sorts, like the artist colony “Monte Verità” established by Henri Oedenkoven and Ida Hofmann about a century ago (psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the writer Hermann Hesse are also known to have visited the colony). Around the same time in Japan, author, artist, and philosopher Mushanokoji Saneatsu founded “Atarashiki-mura” (New Village). Today there is the art group “Mitsunoki” (tree with sap) in Shimagahara village, Mie Prefecture, which leads various activities deeply rooted in its local history, climate, and culture.

Secondly, “Regional” encompasses various things, one of which for instance, is the famous documenta. The reason why this international art exhibition is held in the German country town of Kassel was originally due to the event’s intention being to restore the honor and appreciation of works that were banished and deemed *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) under the Nazi regime. Such efforts had happened to take place in a specific region, which in this case was Kassel.



When we hear the word site-specific, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*. This is a work that was constructed in a “specific place (site)” on the northeastern shore of the Great Salt Lake in the State of Utah.

By the way, I think that three different terms can each be juxtaposed with these three distinguished interpretations of “chiiki.” That is, “Local” and “Global,” “Regional” and “Universal,” and “Site-Specific” and “Portable.”

What we can observe through these comparisons is that the adjectives on the right (“Global,” “Universal,” “Portable”) are in themselves essentially concepts of modern art. Modern art had aimed for global distribution as opposed to within a local area of a certain country, a universal expression that is ubiquitous and open to all rather than being rooted in a particular region, and portable works that could be transported to anywhere in the world instead of site-specific things that could only be viewed in that location such as within the walls of palaces and churches.

Thinking in this way, perhaps one could say that the recent proximity between *chiiki* and art is in a sense an antithesis or an alternative to the idea of modern art. I feel that the element of “*chiiki*” harbors this potential, yet should there be a mistake in its implementation, it simply relapses to the pre-modern.

The title of Fujita’s essay, “Zombies of the Avant-Garde,” reflects how what had once been considered avant-garde never entirely disappears, but continues to wander around here and there like lifeless zombies. Local, regional, or site-specific things that had the possibility of overcoming modernity have been transformed into public ventures through art festivals and art projects. It’s exactly the same structure.

Kanazawa: That’s a brilliant contrast, and is very easy to understand. I’d like to ask a simple question. What do you mean by the “equality of non-professionals?”

Hoshino: In the past, there were experts who meticulously studied the background and context of the work prior to attempts at written discourse or tying it to certain terminology. Such is the case with critics and researchers. Yet as we are all aware, today anyone can easily “evaluate” and share their opinion online. One of the central issues in Fujita’s essay was the abasement of criticism. As a critic, Fujita believes that there are grave consequences that could be brought about by the current situation whereby the position once occupied by “artists” and “critics” is replaced by “citizens” and “parties concerned.” I am one of such people who share this concern, but on the other hand I believe that this is indeed the inescapable consequence of the “democratization of art” that we pursued. As art becomes more democratized, it is inevitable that restrictions on expression will be tightened under the mantra of “public welfare.”

Kanazawa: I see. Yes, I agree that there is that tendency. Having said that, like Fujita, you also seem to regard the pre-modern as something negative.

I still don't quite understand that. The reason is that in my own research I studied the issues that occurred after the import of Western Art into Japan during the modern era. I am well aware of how important culture like *manga*, which was taken down from the center stage during Japan's efforts towards modernization, was to those who were born and raised in this country. I feel that some of the leading artists working today are strongly conscious of things like this.

Hoshino: I believe you're right. In the diagram I introduced you can see that I put a question mark (?) next to pre-modern, and these are also things that modernity had suppressed.

Kanazawa: I agree. For example, the participating artists of the *Stranger Than Fiction* exhibition, rather than realizing works according to their own initial plans and ideas, work together in creating them with the people who have gathered there, while letting things take their course. Although the autonomy of art has been abandoned in the modern sense and is being overwhelmingly democratized, that does not mean that it gives rise to what could be felt as a restriction of expression. Rather, I believe that a new type of freedom has been brought about.

Hoshino: Indeed. This diagram is just one rough sketch, so I don't think it illustrates everything. However, I also feel that the universal values that have been acquired through modern times are rapidly disappearing under various circumstances these days. I'm not speaking about art, but on a wider scale like society and politics as a whole.

Kanazawa: I suppose you could say that for society and the world of politics... On the other hand, I feel that the conflict between modern and pre-modern times in the art world is a more positive exchange. As Fujii Hikaru had also mentioned in his talk, art and fiction both have the function of temporarily putting on hold and reconsidering general values such as good and evil. So I feel there's a possibility of it becoming something different from what is observed in the real world.

Hoshino: The Japanese title of this exhibition is *Usu Kara Deta Makoto* (lit. "Truth comes out of falsehood"). On this occasion it has been translated into English as *Stranger Than Fiction*. I feel that artworks, whether or not they have a story, give rise to a certain "fiction." As the saying "Truth comes out of falsehood" clearly conveys, there is unquestionably a realm that can only be

secured through fiction. What was the reason for adopting the word “fiction” in the English title?

Kanazawa: The title *Uso Kara Deta Makoto* is something that came to mind when thinking about the work and practices of the three artists who were invited to take part in the exhibition. All three artists create a system or platform, and as such are implemented, they become true or come to harbor a sense of reality for those taking part. I thought that was interesting, and while I had been contemplating how best to translate the title into English, the translator had suggested *Stranger Than Fiction* as a possible candidate. I had envisioned the presence of an imaginary world right next to the world in which we live in. I felt that it was possible to realize what we want to do and the world we want to see through imagining and creating things—that this was the very function of art, and we are in the scene in which this takes place.

Hoshino: For example, the French political philosopher Jacques Rancière, doesn’t put fiction and reality in binary opposition in the first place. He considers that some kind of fiction of sorts is constantly giving birth to reality. To put it in the extreme, each of the values and perspectives that we possess are also fiction. It is to regard fiction not as a place to escape from reality, but rather as something that has an effect on reality has the power to transform it.

Kanazawa: Through engaging in various research on this occasion, I found that theater as a mode of expression is deeply involved in this realm of “chiiki and art.” Fuji Hiroshi’s current activities have spurred from his experiences in theater, and there are many other performative works in this area as well. The same can be said for Kitazawa Jun and Nadegata Instant Party. They create a particular form of expression through a process of inviting everyone to perform together along a certain time axis, with each person taking part fulfilling a role in the project. In these instances, what becomes apparent is the presence of fiction that serves to overcome reality. Perhaps *Stranger Than Fiction* is an exhibition for illustrating the possibilities of such means of creation.

Hoshino: According to what we have just talked about, the term performance is also important. These days there has been a significant change in the field of performing arts as well, for instance, we have seen a remarkable increase in the style of performance that is referred to as

“lecture performance.” Such are lectures that are associated with a certain content, and at the same time are performance works. I think there are various factors behind the rise of lecture performances, yet in a sense, they could also be regarded as a radical means of reconsidering “education.” The reason being, that education in itself is a kind of performance. In everyday social life, teachers perform the role of teachers, and students perform the role of students. This goes back to what was previously discussed, but we are not performing something in a realm that is detached from reality. Instead, we find ourselves performing within reality in the first place. This is also something that links to that sensation we talked about, of us living in a reality that has been woven by fiction.

Kanazawa: We’ve been thinking about it in connection to expressions in contemporary art, but in other words, it is a natural function of human beings to be able to do various things with their imagination. Perhaps what is important is to think about how to secure places in which such imagination is not restricted.

Afterword

This book is a documentation of the Where is Chiiki Art? Project, held from 2018 to 2019 at Towada Art Center. As described by the planning team in the preface, since the project started as a reaction to *Locality Art: Aesthetics, Institution, Japan*, edited by Fujita Naoya, this publication inevitably forms an attempt to provide the first truly comprehensive response to Fujita's assertions since the publication of the book.

In his book, Fujita warns of the danger of art losing substance in regional art festivals and participatory art projects. This is something that rings true to me too. During my experience of working at a regional art museum, my role included making art more familiar for people who had until then shied away from it. Though it is a fact that the initiative was welcomed by both residents and the local government, I suddenly realized that my gaze was prioritizing artists who could do such participatory events. And from around then, I started to become aware of a situation in which we were mistaking the means for the end.

Behind the popularity of participatory events lies a situation—let's tentatively call it a “public money ecosystem”—in which specific kinds of art become abundant: there is a mission to spread art, there is public money pouring into that, and then this art appears downstream of that current. Unless we take care, policies will surely recede so far that we accept any artist (regardless of the quality of their work) just as long as they do a participatory event. Art will lose its substance. And something without substance doesn't mean anything to anyone.

We shared an awareness of that problem raised by Fujita. We have no wish to see vacuous art, and the tendency to mistake art as an easy means of achieving regional revitalization will greatly advance this loss of substance, requiring us to take due caution.

That being said, it was now necessary to look again at the things collectively labeled as “lacking substance.”

An awareness of the following questions run throughout this book: Should we lump everything together when viewing art activities related to communities [*chiiki*]? (Is explaining everything in terms of the public money ecosystem the appropriate discourse?)

Is the very definition of “art without substance” old? (Art is continuously evolving. Are values updating?)

Where did this mission to spread art come from in the first place? (Where does “art” come from? Where was the art that is side by side with people?)

To answer these questions, this project paid attention to the motivations of artists and practitioners. From this emerges the flow of time and historical contexts as primary themes. In the first crosstalk (Cross Talk 01), I touched on trends since the Meiji period (1868–1912), while Fujita Naoya spoke about the post-1990s paradigm shift. The third crosstalk (Cross Talk 03) featured Koike Kazuko, who launched Japan’s first alternative space, followed by Hibino Katsuhiko, Nakamura Masato, and Kinoshita Chieko, whose contributions formed a kind of relay discussion on the past forty years since the 1980s. Fujii Hiroshi’s and my novel *Shima Takeshi* offered a portrayal from the end of the 1970s to the 1980s, capturing the initial movements of the currents leading to the present. In it, we can see aspects of the social background and the movements that accompanied those shifts. Harada Yuki’s remarks based on his research into Lassen as well as the sixth crosstalk (Cross Talk 06), where Hoshino Futoshi and I examined various terms and concepts, inspected this context from other angles.

The presentations from the practitioners Hayashi Akio, Fujii Hikaru, 目[mé], Yamaide Jun’ya, Ogawa Nozomu, Takasu Sakie, Miyata Yuki, and Kitazawa Jun, meanwhile, vividly revealed their motivations. Though we can detect a wide range of formats—from things brought about regardless of the public money ecosystem or which consciously distance themselves from it, to things planned in such a way as to piggyback on that system or which otherwise make use of it—they are all meaningful practices that are completely distinct from the projects without substance. At the same time, Nadegata Instant Party and Kitazawa carried out actual art projects in Towada during the exhibition. From beginning to end, these form valuable statements of the energy and creativity that this field elicits. In addition, Yamazaki Ryo discussed the relationship with art activities from the position of community design.

The residents’ round-table discussion (not included in this English translation) was held at the suggestion of editor Kobayashi Emi to provide perspectives not covered by Fujita’s book. I was concerned it might seem too predetermined, but regardless of the content of the discussion, it felt absolutely essential to hear from participants, the other protagonists in participatory art. Reading the discussion, points of view indeed emerge that are never described

by those who do the initiating (i.e., the artists or museums) or those who critique the art. They are the joy of dialogue, of making, or mutual inspiration, or the profundity or getting involved and connecting, and furthermore, the importance for each person in terms of finding the respective place where they belong. In the end, I believe that art activities are undertaken to ensure the quality of these things, while history and concepts come later.

* * *

In bringing this project to a close, I would first like to express my gratitude to Fujita Naoya. When I contacted him, I was worried that he would shun the project, forming as it does an antithesis to his book, but he supported its objective and readily agreed to appear as a guest speaker at one of the talks. And no one was more pleased than him at the development of the discussion. Raising issues, discussing, and taking ideas forward together: Fujita truly demonstrated that kind of dignified attitude. I hope that this book too can inspire subsequent discussions in this vein and serve as an intermediary.

I would also like to express my gratitude here to the participating artists, the guest speakers, the project members and Towada residents who helped create the artworks and run things, and the corporations who gave us their support. And to the many people who came to see the exhibition and talks, thank you for sharing this valuable opportunity with us.

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Kanazawa Kodama, on behalf of the planning team
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Where is Chiiki Art?

Editors: Toyama Aruma and Nakagawa Chieko

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