

Escola Superior de Artes e Design de Caldas da Rainha

A State of Mediocrity in Art

Shinji Takehara

Mestrado em Artes Plásticas – Caldas da Rainha 2014

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Abstract

Recently, art works that make trajectories in a situation fragmented by postmodernism as a reaction to modernism, have risen. They show trajectory of travels over different time and different space. Allochronic or multiplicity makes it possible. I will focus on how we are able to be multiple. I assume we are able to take a cue of a methodology from a mechanism of a “teratogenesis” of Japan. It is a passive function, and makes it possible for us to be multiple by staying on an intermediate place between connection and disconnection.

In this thesis I propose myself to analyze the notion of "Bad Place" created by the Japanese art critic Noi Sawaragi (b.1962), works of Takashi Murakami (b.1962), the concept of "Altermodern" suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud (b.1965), thoughts of Existence in Buddhism, affinity and difference between "snobbism" and one of Japanese aesthetic *iki*, works of Koki Tanaka (b.1975), the metaplasticity of the brain and my own projects.

Introduction

I am interested in a state that becomes impossible. It doesn't mean urban collapse or disaster, rather it may be said that it is a "mediocrity state".

For example, we can find in a sight which I often encounter at a travel destination: A man is sitting on a seat outside a restaurant on holiday drinking a cup of coffee and reading a newspaper after breakfast. It's a beautiful sunny day without a cloud in the sky, and it looks like he is in a comfortable situation. However, the wind is blowing very strong and therefore he has to hold the cup and the newspaper firmly, in order to prevent them from falling. It is "the state of mediocrity" I have described above: the man has lost the perfect situation. If he wanted to avoid the disaster, he could have moved indoors; however, he doesn't. In other words, he keeps this state by "arranging" it, in spite of having lost the perfect situation, and he accepts the risk of disaster.

It may be said that the state of "mediocrity" is the state of integration between connection and disconnection. His "arrangement" is like an action of chipping away two pieces of a puzzle not fitting together originally, in order to connect them. In this case, the two pieces are altogether the risk of the disaster and the perfect situation: they are connected by simultaneously losing the perfect situation and accepting the risk of the disaster. Disconnection from the original status is also included.

Such as the methodology of connection accompanies a partial loss, it can evoke a process of "teratogenesis¹" in Japan's culture, with implications on art and imagery. It has appeared in things arranged in Japan because Japan incorporates a foreign culture in spite of losing original meanings. It has been said, in common sense, that *anime* and fashion are a "good part" and that the sight of Japan being a mix of several cultures is an "ugly part".

Is the mind ability of admiring such a state triggered by Japanese identity?

It seems to be a convenient excuse for me, because it is difficult to regard the identity of the framework of Japan in today's society. The Internet, the global economy and the development of technology have enabled us to connect anywhere in the whole world. Therefore, the world may be on the way to standardization. Nonetheless, a unique culture hasn't disappeared completely even if they have changed. In addition, there is a large individual variation in retention of cultural resources, even between people living in the same country. It is complicated to be applied to something.

Nicolas Bourriaud suggested "AlterModern" as the title of the exhibition in 4th Tate Triennial 2009. According to his manifesto, "AlterModernism" is the thought of integration between post-colonialism and modernism. He described "Altermodern" as follows.

¹ *teratogenesis*: The process by which congenital malformations are produced in an embryo or fetus, Oxford Dictionaries, (consulted 18/07/14)
www.OxfordDictionaries.com/definition/.../teratogenesis, (consulted 18/07/14)

“Multiculturalism and identity is being overtaken by creolisation: Artists are now starting from a globalized state of culture. [----] If twentieth-century modernism was above all a western cultural phenomenon, alter modernity arises out of planetary negotiations, discussions between agents from different cultures. Stripped of a center, it can only be polyglot“².

His text is focused on a methodology of creating a cosmos in the fragmented world. I assume we are able to take a cue of the methodology from the mechanism creating the “teratogenesis” of Japan.

In this project, I am going to analyze how the mechanisms laying below the process of “teratogenesis” of Japan have influenced the work and thinking of artists, philosophers and my own, according to the process below.

Chapter 4.1: “Teratogenesis” of Japan

I am going to analyze the mechanism of “teratogenesis” of Japan exploring the notion of “Bad Place” from Japanese art critic Noi Sawaragi and the works of Takashi Murakami.

Chapter 4.2: What is the “spirit of before the opening of Japan”?

I am going to analyze the feature of the “spirit of before the opening of the country” (which, by intuition, is the main reason of the “teratogenesis” of Japan) while focusing on the difference between Japan and the West, by comparing Ink Painting and Minimalism, and exploring the thought of Existence in Buddhism.

Chapter 4.3: Intermediate Place

I am going to analyze the intermediate feature of “the state of mediocrity” by exploring the stay of Bruno Taut (b.1880 – d.1938) in Japan, the point of view of Robert Smithson (b.1938 - d.1973) throughout the concept of "suburb", and comparing affinity and difference between Snobbism and one of the Japanese aesthetics, *iki*.

Chapter 4.4: Postmodern Society

I am going to analyze a feature of Postmodern society while dealing with the two-layer structure suggested by Hiroki Azuma (b.1971), by referring to the notion of Jacques Derrida (b.1930 – d.2004) *Ecriture*, "Altermodern" suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud and works of Koki Tanaka.

Chapter 4.5: How are we able to be multiple?

I am going to analyze a possible methodology for creating cosmos in a fragmented world, while exploring the “metaplasticity of the brain”.

Chapter 5: Projects

I am going to analyze the relationship between the practices and the theory described previously while dealing with my four projects: *Musical Cakes on the Chairs* (2013), *Invisibility Lark* (2013), *Adding a Little Extra and Indeterminacy* (2014), and *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places* (2014).

Hypothesis:

I am going to propose that the state of mediocrity makes it possible for us to be multiple and to find a trajectory in a collection of fragmented information. A feature of “the state of mediocrity” is integration between connection and

² BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. – *Altermodern explained: manifesto*, 2009.

disconnection, and a passive attitude. I will overlap it with the metaplasticity of the brain.

We could describe it as a state of keeping on arranging by staying on intermediate place.

Artistic and theory references

4.1 “Teratogenesis” of Japan

4.1.1. What is the “teratogenesis” of Japan?

I described that the feature of “the state of mediocrity” is integration between connection and disconnection. It evokes a “teratogenesis” of Japan. But what is the “teratogenesis” of Japan?

While Japan has been more likely to be regarded as a modernized nation on a superficial level, it has been said that it hasn't been fully achieved yet. Since the opening of the country in the 18th century, Japan has been westernized at a stretch. However, Japan has held a part of the spirit that hasn't been able to change and it has reached the present. The distortion created by this unchangeable spirit and avant-gardist modernity has sometimes surfaced as a “teratogenesis”.

An earthquake on March 11th of 2011 caused the accident of Fukushima Nuclear Power Station. On March 17th of 2011, it degenerated into a dangerous situation because the level of water on pool to cool down the spent-nuclear-fuel-rod, lessened. As result, two helicopters of Japan Ground Self-Defense discharged water from above. As all of Japan watched, the situation at that time was broadcasted live on TV causing a feeling of tension and a sense of anticipation. The water released from the helicopters was scattered and became a white mist in the air over the nuclear power plant. The white mist looked unreliable against the nuclear power plant in the catastrophe, although this strategy was announced that it had an effect in an announcement from the officials. For just then, along with disappointment, I was caught by a strange sensation. I felt Japaneseness from the state made by a large gap between senses of the emancipation and the disappointment. Although it was revealed later, it was a strategy caused by a context that the Japanese government had to make an instantaneous decision by pressure from U.S. government. The Japanese government had two problems in this accident: one was that they couldn't allow that the members of the Self-Defense Forces in Japan would have been incurred the radiation exposure over the average level, and the other was that there was a pressure from the United States that the Self-Defense Forces in Japan had to take an action before the army of the United States, even if they would have been incurred the radiation exposure over the average level. The Japanese government took a gray stance against those problems: they made a decision that the Self-Defense Forces in Japan would take an action without being incurred radiation exposure over the average level, even if it wouldn't have a practical effect.

This issue indicates the “teratogenesis” of Japan: It combined two requirements, proposing a solution that would try to please every force by equalizing efforts and looking towards consensus, but in the end without any practical application nor

solution. It has been said that it is related to the fact Japan hasn't been modernized.

4.1.2 Bad Place

As I described previously, it has been said that Japan hasn't been fully modernized yet because of the "spirit of before the opening of the country".

It also has deeply affected art works of Japan. Japanese art critic, Noi Sawaragi, described Japan as a "Bad Place". It means the practice of Japanese art has been in a vicious cycle, that a conclusion goes back to a premise again by the absence of the history of modern thinking on art. Not having the history of modernity means not having any thoughts to be overcome. Therefore, it means that there aren't any thoughts in this place. In a non-historical place like Japan (from the point of view of western culture) all genres including sculpture, painting, illustration, comics, abstract representation, earthworks, pop art, minimalism, techno, ink painting, etc, has been considered as equivalent. The genre is non-functional in this place. Sawaragi described this situation with a reference to the concept of "schizophrenia / paranoia" proposed by Felix Guattari (b.1930 – d.1992) and Gilles Deleuze (b.1925 – d.1995) ³.

They suggested a wide variety of life without being caught up in a system of a function of a power device, which is symbolized by the family and the nation. They claimed a re-write, from the world that has been simplified by the family and the nation to a world opened to a wide variety - by connecting, transforming indefinitely, and accepting actively the state of a life divided variedly. Sawaragi fitted this theory with the case of Japan.

He suggested that the most important subject is the present cognition of Japan rather than a strategy of escape from the power device. In other words, he mentioned the importance that we must face up to our own unstable state which has already split as difference, inconsistency, contradiction, and friction before we try to discuss an object of the present invention dismantling of the history and the tradition as the West. On that basis, he suggested the re-organization of them. It means two facts: one is the impossibility that Japanese artists share the same challenges and trends of art in Western countries without a conscious awareness. The other is that they can't return to the traditional Japanese culture of "before the opening of the country" by becoming Americanized culture since the defeat in the war. This indication was a counter against some Japanese postmodernist theories which appeared one after another in the 1980s. At that time, Japanese thinkers often regarded Japan as an advanced culture in a postmodernism society. It is a theory that they connect between the postmodern of the West and the fact that Japan hasn't modernized fully. At that time they frequently referred to "snobbism", that is a concept of French philosopher Alexandre Kojève⁴ (b.1902 – d.1968).

He suggested that there are two types of social form predicted in the postmodern: one is the American-style society, supported in the animalization;

³ DELEUZE, Gilles. and GUATTARI, Felix. – *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1972.

⁴ KOJEVE, Alexandre. – *Note to the Second Edition, in Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 1947.

“One can even say that, from a certain point of view, the United States has already attained the final stage of Marxist "communism", seeing that, practically, all the members of a "classless society" can from now on appropriate for themselves everything that seems good to them, without thereby working any more than their heart dictates. [----] I was led to conclude from this that the "American way of life" was the type of life specific to the post-historical period, the actual presence of the United States in the world prefiguring the "eternal present" future of all of humanity. Thus, Man's return to animalism appeared no longer as a possibility that was yet to come, but as a certainty that was already present”.

the other is Japanese society covered with “snobbism”. Then, he foresaw that the world would be Japanize = “snobbism”. Japanese thinker Hiroki Azuma pointed out that the desire of forgetting of the influence of the United States appeared in the backdrop of the thought of them who referred to this theory. It is impossible to connect linearly between the culture “before the opening of the country” and the present, because there is the age of the discontinuity by the defeat of World War II. In fact, the shadow of the United States has existed in Japanese society in spite of a thing that seems to be the feature of Japan. Therefore pure Japanese culture had already disappeared. Sawaragi discussed the *groundlessness* of Japan in this way⁵. Further, he mentioned that Japanese contemporary art of post-war has been running in "Bad Place" for a long time, and that Japanese artists began to face this problem since the 1990s at best.



Fig. 1 – Image of Otaku culture

4.1.3 Takashi Murakami

Japanese artists appearing in the 1990s like Takashi Murakami expressed strong social messages by self-deprecating and cynical denial. “Superflat” as defined by Murakami fits into “Bad Place” defined by Sawaragi. He connected “*Otaku*⁶ culture (Fig. 1)”, as becoming internationally competitive products

⁵ SAWARAGI, Noi. – *Nihon Gendai Bijutsu*, 1998.

⁶ *Otaku*: (In Japan) a young person who is obsessed with computers or particular aspects of popular culture to the detriment of their social skills. Oxford Dictionaries, available at, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/otaku>, (consulted 18/07/14)

created by *anime* creators of Japan, to the genealogy of “conceit⁷ painter”, of the *Edo* period. He expressed in a combination, the flat representation of the *manga* and regarding non-historical society of Japan as “Superflat”, and the *flatness* mentioned as one of the most important keywords of American modern Art⁸ (Fig. 2).

In 2005, he held an exhibition called “Little Boy”⁹ (Fig. 3). There are two meanings in this title: one of the meanings is the code name of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and the other is a name of Japan, symbolizing that the mental age of the nation was “like children”. He pointed the influence came from the national experience of the victim of the atomic bomb in graphics-based subculture in Japan.



Fig. 2 – Takashi Murakami. *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Blue and Death*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas mounted on aluminum frame, 299.7 x 235 cm.

He focused on the point that artists have used *manga* and *anime* in order to deal with the trauma of the nuclear war and the ravages of the defeat in the World War II and the situation of Japan being indifferent to the national politics. In addition, he tried to find out the interpretation of Japanese pop culture in the past thirty years by mentioning the defeat in the Pacific War and the military strategy, the military and the political dependence on the United States, and the transition from the hierarchical Japanese culture to children and youth consumer society as the process of the history having a possibility to characterize *Otaku* culture.

He suggested that the essence of the art in *Otaku* culture had grown in the situation of the infantilized society of the negative thinking of Japan, by enacting the program of the combat demotivation by the USA.

⁷ *conceit*: An ingenious or fanciful comparison or metaphor. Oxford Dictionaries, available at, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conceit?q=conceit>, (consulted 18/07/14)

⁸ MURAKAMI, Takashi. – *Superflat*, 2000.

⁹ MURAKAMI, Takashi. – *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subcultures*, 2003.



Fig. 3 – Takashi Murakami. *Eco Eco Rangers Earth Force*, 2005. Color Screen-print on paper 43.82 x 57.99 cm.

4.2 What is the “spirit of before the opening of Japan”?

4.2.1 Minimalism and Ink Painting

As I described previously, it has been said that the “spirit of before the opening of the country” causes the “teratogenesis” of Japan. I will discuss the feature of “the spirit” by focusing on a difference between Japan and the West by referring to a text written by Noi Sawaragi¹⁰. He suggested that there is a huge difference between Ink painting and Minimalism, even if reducing elements makes them both share a similarity. Ink painting was imported from China to Japan around 12th-13th centuries with the thought of *Zen*. *Zen* is one religion school of Buddhism. It was at the height of the prosperity in the 14th century. The typical artist is Sesshu Toyo (b.1420 – d.1506). (Fig. 3). There are three elements forming the human in the world of Buddhism that are the basis of the considering Ink painting: *Yoku-kai* (desire world), *Shiki-kai* (color world) and *Mushiki-kai* (colorless world). The training in Buddhism is a process of achieving the libidinous-sensory to the spiritual dimension, by overcoming from desire to color and from color to colorless. The reason that gorgeous colors haven't been used in Ink painting is because in order to reach the spiritual dimension truly, one must throw desire away. As the state of a mind eliminated the idle thoughts is often compared to colorless. Eliminating the pleasure of color in Ink painting is enriched to the monochrome world, and is expressed in the achievement of the spirit of *Zen*. As it is known well, only the black ink and a brush draw Ink painting. It has been regarded as the infinite extent in tones with the blurring or bleeding. However, there is a contradiction about it. The variation of tones of Ink painting is complex, despite being colorless, and it has a stronger pleasure rather than that of the color image in a sense. By reducing the number of times of brushwork, Ink painting overcomes this contradiction. It has been thought that the painter can get close to the state of the enlightenment by it.

We can find a common feature that elements are reduced as much as possible between Ink painting and Minimalism. However, each thought is diametrically opposed; one hopes a perfect consensus between cause and effect in a work of minimalism by configuring only by deterministic factors, without accepting uncertainties of nature (Fig. 4). However, in the case of Ink painting, it is thought

¹⁰ SAWARAGI, Noi. – *Han ato nyumon*, 2010.

that the state of the enlightenment would be opened only by actively accepting the uncertainties that humans can't control, such as the blurring or the bleeding.



Fig. 4 – Sesshu Toyo. Unknown title, late 15th century. China ink on paper, 47×30 cm.

Fig. 5 – Donald Judd. *Untitled*, 1977. Installation. 10 units in stainless steel, each 15,24×68,58×60,96 cm.

4.2.2 Buddhism

What is the context of the thought of accepting actively the uncertainties?

I will explore the world of Buddhism a little more. Japanese thinker Shinichi Nakazawa (b.1950) mentioned about the thought of Buddhism in his book as follows¹¹.

In Buddhism he mentioned “the gift” based on the premises of the reincarnation. The “pure gift” is very difficult. If someone were aware of “the gift”, when they give something to someone, the act would be incorporated within the ring of the exchange. The exchange is an economic act, and the obligation exists. The relationship holds the duty to return things of the equivalent value against things given. The “pure gift” is a situation which it doesn't occur the distinction of "a place of giving" and "a place of receiving". It is written about a practicing of the gift of Buddha in Buddhist scriptures. In a previous life Buddha was born as Buddha, he gave his own body to a hungry tiger. Buddha threw away his ego without regretting. Throwing his ego away is a situation that doesn't occur at the distinction of others - animals, nature, and of all things (in this case, the distinction of "a place to be eaten" and "a place to eat"). Further, it means that the difference between being alive and being dead would disappear. If we follow this theory, we might make sense of *seppuku*. It is a form of Japanese ritual suicide by the disembowelment.

Alexandre Kojève defined the denying behavior daringly based on the value, such as the formal discipline and the honor, even though there isn't a substantial reason to deny a given environment as “snobbism”¹². He described *seppuku* as its representative examples (Fig. 5).

¹¹ NAKAZAWA, Shinichi. – *Taisyosei Jinruigaku*, 2004.

¹² KOJEVE, Alexandre. – *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 1969.

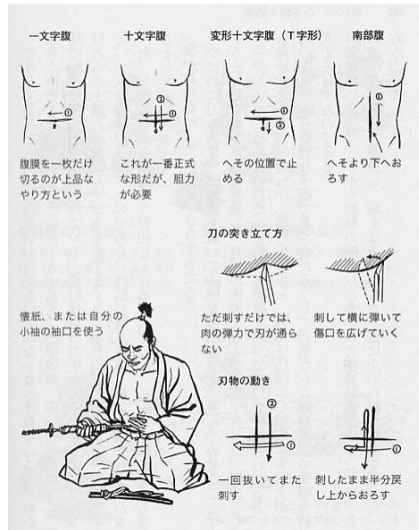


Fig. 6 – Image of *seppuku*.

Seppuku certainly has the feature to counter against the instincts of human. However, as I described before, the form of “the pure gift” is the death in Buddhism; Buddhism is the thought of absence of the difference between being alive and being dead. *Seppuku* is the place prepared for a person who has accepted the death at the end to represent the behavior of the “ultimate gift” rather than the denying behavior daringly against the death, despite knowing that everyone can't throw ego away. It is a suicide snuggling up to the death.

What has been thought about Existence in Buddhism?

It has been thought that everything is in non-self-existence. Moreover, the three instances can exist separately: it is like a knot arising in a flash in a modest node of a link with infinite extent. It has been thought that everything is a delusion like foam among an interaction of a vast relationship¹³.

Of course, if ego doesn't exist, alterity also wouldn't exist. The mind of the desire will appear by an illusion that ego exists, because it is intrigued enough to get attached to a thing, outside of ego, as an object of the desire. Without making a difference of self-existence between each of them, and without a separation of the world according to the concepts, it has been thought that it is the true of the world that all things interact with each other.

¹³ NAKAZAWA, Schinichi. – *Taisyosei Jinruigaku*, 2004.



Fig. 7 – *Ryoan-ji*, The Stone Garden, Kyoto, Japan.

It has been said that the Stone Garden of the temple of *Ryoan-ji* expressed this thought¹⁴ (Fig. 6). Mosses, stones and sands construct it. Those stones are ordinary and don't have a special shape. If we observe it on the spot, the relationship of each stone in the layout, rather than the stone itself, would be projected. In other words, those stones are in non-self-existence.

4.3 Intermediate Place

4.3.1 Intermediate Place

Of course, it is impossible to mention that the spirit remains perfectly as I described previously in Japan now. No one does *seppuku* anymore. It is difficult to imagine a sight of Japan without hamburgers. However, the spirit remains in the root of Japan. It is said that Japan hasn't completed the modernization yet. The “teratogenesis” made by this fact has lurked everywhere as a result in Japan. German architect, Bruno Taut (b.1880 – d.1938), visited Japan in 1933 and marveled at the beauty of *Katsura Detached Palace* (Fig. 7). However, at the same time, he lamented the landscape of Japan changing in the Westernization movement. He described that those sights are constructed by cheesy billboards, the poor flower beds and sculptures of unfitting contemporary artists, and that there are ugly deposition of an odiousness with references of the station square of middle-class city of Japan including: *Odawara*, *Numazu* and *Kamakura*¹⁵ (Fig. 8). The appearance of a station square in Japan now is consisted by those elements. Taut presumed that its result is caused by an absence of a structure of how to design in Japan by importing only appearances of the West without a concept. In other words, it has created a gungy situation by closing the transcendental function that had characterized it before. My interest in “mediocrity” connects to this mechanism.

¹⁴ NAKAZAWA, Schinichi. – *Taisyosei Jinruigaku*, 2004.

¹⁵ MATSUOKA, Seigo. – *Wasurerareta Nihon*, Bruno Taut, 2009.



Fig. 8 – *Katsura Detached Palace*, suburbs of Kyoto, Japan.

Fig. 9 – *Odawara Station Square*, 1951.

We can find an affinity between my point of view on “mediocrity” and the point of view on “suburbs” of Robert Smithson¹⁶. He took pictures of a fragment of a building of half-built of a mundane suburban of a riverside by regarding them as “monument” in his work *The Monuments of Passaic* in 1967 (Fig. 9). He imagined the future of a destruction of the world in it, further he accepted the constant change and the disappearance in the artwork. He defined “Site (elsewhere)” as a specific location faced on the natural laws outside of the museum, and “Non-site (here)” as a space of an exhibition evoked by photos, maps and some elements. In this case, “here” and “elsewhere” are interchangeable; the network of an experience of “here” and “elsewhere” becomes important rather than the presence of an object in the here and now. He focused on “suburbs” in order to mediate both. He was interested in the uncertainties of what humans can't control. However, it isn't caused by the romantic urge toward the untouched nature because it would manage a disconnection of a relationship between “here” and “elsewhere”.

The aim of Smithson is the state of neither “here” nor “elsewhere”, based on the imagination mediating both. It is important for him to find the circuit of an art like finding “elsewhere” in “here” and finding “here” in “elsewhere”. “Suburbs” is a place shared by both the nature and the artificial unlike, and it is neither the chaos of the city nor the untouched nature. He created a device deployed the connection and the separation in an imagination by focusing on the intermediate position. This intention shares common features with the point of view on “mediocrity”. I have overlapped between the mind of accepting the state of “mediocrity” and one of the Japanese aesthetic *iki*.

¹⁶ SMITHSON, Robert. – *Entropy And The New Monuments*, 1966.

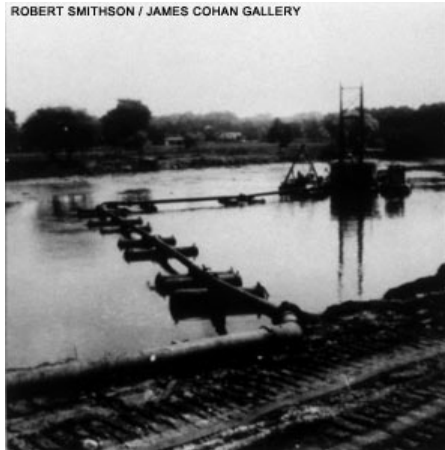


Fig. 10 – Robert Smithson. *Monuments of Passaic / Monument with Pontoons: The Pumping Derrick*, 1967, Six photographs and One cut Photostat map.

4.3.2 *Iki*

What is *iki*? I will discuss *iki* by referring to a book, *Iki no kozo* (1930), written by Japanese writer Shuzo Kuki (b.1888 – d.1941)¹⁷. According to the words of Kuki, the fundamental existence of *iki* is constructed by the relationship between the opposite sexes. Its moments are established by *Bitai* (coquetry), *Ikuji* (courage) and *Akirame* (giving up).

The first moment of *iki* is "coquetry" towards the opposite sex. "Coquetry" is a dualistic attitude that a monogenetic ego posits the opposite sex against its ego, and it consists a possible relationship between the opposite sex and the ego. If both sexes achieve an association fully, "coquetry" would disappear by losing the tension resistance, because its dualistic attitude is the fundamental existence of it. It has the conquest of the opposite sex as a virtual purpose, and has a fate of extinction along with a realization of a purpose.

The second moment of *iki* is "courage" inspired by *Bushi-do* that is the way of the warrior. "Courage" is strength of a mind improved in order to prevent the deterioration of "coquetry", it holds over the tension of "coquetry".

The last moment of *iki* is "giving up". It is an indifferent state based on knowledge towards a fate, having its origin is Buddhism. The function that "coquetry" includes "giving up" against a purpose is determinate the fundamental existence of itself. "Coquetry" is achieved the presence completion by "courage" and "giving up" in the mode of the presence of *iki*.

Iki is to define a mind of an impossible state, as an aesthetic. *Iki* is the attitude of producing the unfeasible state while pretending to deny an obsession, despite holding it, further is the mind accepting the state. I have overlapped between this state and the teratogenesis of Japan.

¹⁷ KUKI, Syuzo. – *Iki no kozo*, 1930.

4.3.3 Difference between “Snobbism” and *Iki*

Does my thought to overlap with the feature of *iki* fit into “snobbism” as the concept of Alexandre Kojève? After Hiroki Azuma mentioned in advance the co-identity of the two theories of “snobbism” of Kojève and “cynicism”¹⁸ of Slavoj Žižek (b.1949)¹⁹. In terms of the entanglement of relationship with the format and the real, he described as following²⁰: after the end of the system called “the grand narratives”, that has appeared as a principle of the *nous*²¹ of human in the ideological discussion, as the ideology of the revolution and the nation-state in the political and as the advantage of the production in the economic, those two theories were important when “the grand narratives” of the *fake* were created in order to compensate the anxiety of the downfall. Azuma described about “cynicism” by taking the obsession of the Stalinism in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) as example. Despite followers of the Stalinism have known that the fierce factional fighting has been going on behind the scenes, they must be maintained the appearance of the unity of the party absolutely. Nobody believes in the dominant ideology anymore, moreover, everybody knows about it by keeping a distance from it. However, that's why everyone can't stop pretending that everybody believes by this obsession. The cynical subject denies the practical value. The structure that “positive” is triggered only by negative moments, like “even if, therefore”, fits into the principle of *iki* in the sense inherent. Because *iki* is to define the mind of the unfeasible state of the purpose, further accepting it as an aesthetic, while pretending to deny an obsession (despite holding it). However, there is a huge difference in each underlying spirit. I am going to explain the difference between them by dealing with “snobbism” and *iki*.

Alexandre Kojève suggested two opposite types of social form: the “American-style” and “snobbism”. The “American-style” is to accept the consuming society without hesitating; it means human is assimilated into the environment. He suggested human must deny the environment in order to establish own identity. If human were assimilated into environment, it would be animal. “Snobbism” is the attitude of denying environment, even if it doesn't have practical value²². Therefore he dealt with *seppuku* as example of pure denying behavior. The structure of “snobbism” is denial of denial. On the other hand, *iki* is the mind of admiring an impossible state. Structure of *iki* is denial of denial. It is similar to “snobbism”. However there is a difference. *Seppuku* is as example also. As I described, in Buddhism, we have to through ego. It means to accept the death, and to assimilate into the environment. However we have known it is impossible. *Iki* is the mind of admiring the state of someone trying to accept an impossible task.

I regard *iki* as intermediate place between Buddhism and “snobbism”, and overlap into the state of “mediocrity”.

¹⁸ ŽIŽEK, Slavoj. – *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, first edition, 1989.

¹⁹ SMITHSON, Robert. - *Entropy And The New Monuments*, 1966.

²⁰ AZUMA, Hiroki. – *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, first edition, 2001.

²¹ *Nous*: (Greek, mind) Reason, and especially the faculty of intellectual apprehension, as distinct from mere empirical knowledge. Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, available at <http://www.oxfordreference.com/search> (consulted 18/07/14)

²² AZUMA, Hiroki. – *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, first edition, 2001.

4.4 Postmodern Society

4.4.1 Two-layer structure

I assume the feature of “the state of mediocrity” like the intermediate place that creates a diversity of cosmoses in today's society. How can we read a feature of today's society?

I will discuss about the trends of postmodern society in current by following a book written by Hiroki Azuma again²³. He explained in detail about the postmodern society by taking the structure of the Internet as example. There is a two-layer structure in the Internet: it is composed by a deep-layer and a surface-layer, the first being a collection of information that is encoded and the second is an individual web page created in accordance with the reading of a user.

Users receive the surface-layer by making infinitely combination of fragments. When contents of a different hierarchy are displayed on the interface, everything is aligned all on the same layer. It means a complete separation of the surface layer and the deep layer. The deep layer isn't visualized absolutely, if it is visualized once, it would be screened on the same surface layer. Even we try to repeat it, we cannot achieve to the deep layer.

A new generation growing up in postmodern society doesn't need the point of view overlooking the whole. In other words, they don't have a desire to go back to the deep layer from the surface layer, in process of a conception of the subject, therefore it isn't necessary to create the deep layer of the fake like “snobbism”. Therefore this situation doesn't fit into the state of Japanize = “snobbism” foreseen by Kojève. It is caused by animalization, it fits into the global trends including Japan.

Azuma suggested that the notion of *écriture* by Jack Derrida makes possible this discussion²⁴. According to Azuma, the view of the 19th century was a conflict between visible and invisible. It may be said a conflict between images and symbols. In that time, the work of image wasn't replicable, and the work of symbols were replicable. It is the reason why *écriture* was regarded as inferior to “parole”, it doesn't have *aura*²⁵.

Derrida thought “aura” appears in *écriture*, that is replicable. It is possible to explain by comparing the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan (b.1901 – d.1981): he described that a difference between animal and human is to establish own independence. The later is possible to be achieved by verbalizing what we cannot see. In other words, it is possible to achieve independence by transforming from the image to the symbol. It was said impossible to achieve the deep layer from replicable work without *aura*.

In the idea of Lacan, the character belongs to the imaginary, it is strictly distinguished from the (significant) language belonging to the symbolic. Animals or infants also are able to perceive the character, but they cannot read a meaning of the language.

However, in the idea of Derrida, it is impossible to separate the philosophy of language from the materiality of the character. In the preliterate society, there is the fact that the materiality of the sound supports the language, therefore the

²³ AZUMA, Hiroki. – *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, 2001.

²⁴ AZUMA, Hiroki. – *Mierumono / Mienaimono no Tairitsujiku deha mohaya sekai ha mienakunatteiru*, 2000.

²⁵ AZUMA, Hiroki. – *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, first edition, 2001.

He referred to the phrase of Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

materiality exists likewise the character. We can separate the philosophy of the language from the materiality of the character; on the other hand, the latter always accompanies the former. The character is a transparent medium (symbol) taking up language, at the same time, being also the image, moreover, it departs from the rigor of the symbol. Derrida extended the existential ambiguity of the character, named it *écriture* as a stage of decision which doesn't follow a distinction between the symbol and the image. Not following a distinction between the symbol and the image means not following a distinction between the language and the non-language, human and animal.

Écriture is a stage of a decision of reciprocating motion from the image to the symbol or from the symbol to the image. In other words, the materiality of the character makes possible to establish the philosophy of the language. It means a boundary of the image and the symbol become obscurity. *Écriture* is neither the image nor the symbol, or it is both.

The development of replication technology makes this discussion clearer. It makes possible to duplicate the image. For example, the film is a device that provides us illusions that convert photos (space) to movement (time) via the cinema projector. It connects between space and time, and defeats the notion of the psychoanalysis to achieve the truth in linear time. In the psychoanalysis, it was thought the truth is generated in terms of linear time. Medical analysis made transference²⁶ relationships before patient's face all at the same time. In the film, it is possible to make the transference relationship with an objective of different time and space. Azuma overlapped the concept of Derrida "postal". It isn't always true that postcards would reach to someone, if somebody sent it to someone. There's the possibility that it doesn't reach or that a reply will only come back after taking a long time. This discussion makes it easier for us to understand the two-layer structure suggested by Azuma.

It becomes difficult to distinguish between the image and the symbol, *simulacra* and original, by the development of replication technology. It defeats the system that to achieve from visible (surface layer) to invisible (deep layer) is to establish own independence. We consume *simulacra* of the surface layer without connecting the surface layer to the deep layer, like animals. There are collections of fragmented information in the deep layer that aren't visualized absolutely. We hold two perspectives to the surface layer and to the deep layer without having antinomy. To such as situation Azuma named "multiple personality".

At the present day, attention is focused on how to read or combine collections of fragmented information.

4.4.2 Altermodern

This perspective has affinity with "Altermodern", suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud as the title of the exhibition in 4th Tate Triennial 2009. According to his manifesto, "Altermodernism" is the thought of integration between post-colonialism and modernism. It comes up from global negotiations, discussions

²⁶ *transference*: (Psychoanalysis) The redirection to a substitute, usually a therapist, of emotions that were originally felt in childhood (in a phase of analysis called transference neurosis). Oxford Dictionary, available at http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/transference (consulted 18/07/14)

between agents from different cultures. He described features of traditional modernism that occurred in Europe in a teleological view. The teleological view is to reduce to "progressive view of history". It was a movement to try to achieve the truth by exercising an excess of everything. Postmodernism, as a theory, has been developed as a reaction to the teleological view: the history lost directional property and reading comprehension, everything has been fragmented. He described about "Altermodern" as follows.

"Altermodernism can be defined as that moment when it became possible for us to produce something that made sense starting from an assumed heterochrony, that is, from a vision of human history as constituted of multiple temporalities, disdaining the nostalgia for the avant-garde and indeed for any era - a positive vision of chaos and complexity" ²⁷.

Setting heterochronic and heterotopic as keyword, it is focused attention on a methodology of creating a cosmos (heterogenic time-space relation) in the fragmented world. It is distinguished from neither a petrified kind of time advancing in loops (postmodernism) nor a liner vision of history (modernism). The artists turning to cultural nomads while tracing lines in all directions of time and space, and creating a circuit of a progression in time and space they control. No longer it is possible to be reduced to the presence of an object in the here and now in a work. Works of Japanese Artist Koki Tanaka indicates this situation in his installation at 55th Venice Biennale.



Fig. 11 – Koki Tanaka. *A piano played by 5 pianist at once (first attempt)*, 2012, HD video, 57min.

4.4.3 Koki Tanaka

His works are mainly video. However his installation consisted of several media like used materials, photos, sculptures, and texts, etc., in his early work he focused on the relationship between things or the relationship between people and things. He does a simple act toward the daily necessities and shoots this situation as a video. We can find affinities with "Altermodern" in his installation at 55th Venice

²⁷ BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. – *Altermodern*, Tate Triennial, 2009.

Biennale²⁸. The theme of this installation is the earthquake in 2011 in Japan. I will describe two important aspects about his work.

One aspect consists on all pieces were indicated the earthquake abstractly. He imposed a specific group on a certain task, and shot this situation. For example, *A piano played by 5 pianists at once* (2012) (Fig. 10), *A pottery produced by five potters at once* (2013), etc. Those works consisted of putting several people to collaborate and evoked the mind of teamwork after the earthquake. In *A behavioral statement (or an unconscious protest)* (2013), one of the video works, people went up and down the stairs; he suggested that this action becomes more intense in contexts since the earthquake in Japan. This action evokes diet, people or ecology. On the other hand, it reminds the experience of escape, or it also may feel like an attitude of antinuclear. He extracted "the daily behavior going up and down the stairs", and redefined it. By doing so, he generalized a particular kind of problem in a particular area. In another work, *Architecture biennale - Recycling The Japan Pavilion* (2012-2013), he reused the materials of the Japan pavilion of previous architecture biennale (Fig. 11). The theme of the Japan pavilion was "Architecture. Possible here? ", and they focused on a situation of post the earthquake in Japan. This project consisted in trying to erect a building in the city of *Rikuzentakata* (one of the worst-affected areas by the earthquake and *tsunami*). They exhibited a cluster of architectural models showing the interplay of multiple idea, interviews with participants, and enclosing the exhibition, photographs of the *Rikuzentakata* landscape in dotted pattern consisted by salt-damaged logs. He reused physically leaving things, and took over the concept of the Japan Pavilion of Architecture Biennale more abstractly. His reuse of Architecture Biennale is looking at the earthquake from outside of this direct involvement ²⁹.

Second aspect is that every piece was exhibited without isolating. He set a TV monitor, screened his video work against used materials, or materials used in previous Architecture Biennale were used as platforms or walls to various works, and this statement is also left. In the exhibition hall, the staffs of venue management were working at the desk, and large amounts of text and distributions were exhibited. Thus, his piece of video, which should occupy a place central as "work", was treated as equivalent with the staff or daily necessities or furniture (Fig. 12).

²⁸ TANAKA, Koki. and KURAYA, Mika. – *Statement for abstract speaking · sharing uncertainty and collective acts by Mika Kuraya and Koki Tanaka*, 2013.

²⁹ TANAKA, Koki. – *Artist's notes / Recycling The Japan Pavilion*, 2013.



Fig. 12 – Koki Tanaka. *Recycling the Japan Pavilion*, 2012-2013
Recycle, Installation, Document Photograph.

These two features have an effect of obscuring the framework of an art works. Every elements and contexts were regarded as fragments. It is impossible to enact this experience because of presence of an object. In his installation, images and texts and different space and different time were intertwined in his installation, and it became the device of inviting spectator to look for a relationship or a trajectory in this fragments.



Fig. 13 – Koki Tanaka. 2013, Installation View at 55th Venice Biennale

4.5 How are we able to be multiple?

As I described, "multiple personality" holds heterochronic and heterotopic perspectives making it possible to create a cosmos in a fragmented world. So it leads us to ask how are we able to be multiple?

I assume we are able to take a cue of the methodology from the state of "mediocrity". The feature of it is integration between connection and disconnection. It is an intermediate place between the intent based on the pure gift and the thought caused by denying like "snobbism". Its attitude is always

passive against a force from outside. I overlap it into the metaplasticity of the brain described by Japanese Brain Scientist Tatsuya Mima³⁰(b.1966).

The metaplasticity of the brain³¹ explains such a situation. The plasticity of the brain is a function of the brain like the repair and the adjustment against a stimulus from the environment. He described the plasticity as an ability of receiving a shape and an ability of creating a shape. We are nowadays pushed to the plasticity by today's global society stimuli increasing the cross-border distribution of the investment and the capital. (in past times we were desired the quality of rigidity when the "grand narratives" were working.)

Mima thinks plasticity is not satisfying enough in today's society. As a premise for that it leads us having the diversity of life that allows us to continue to transform the individuality, as referred by Gilles Deleuze. We don't have an ability of constant flexibility because we have to take rests. To push the plasticity would be to interfere with a natural function of the brain.

The metaplasticity of the brain is a passive function; it is a function of the brain towards an adjustment against a situation determined by the environment and the history, in addition to the principle of distribution, which is expressed by the flexibility of plastic or the rigidity of non-plastic.

It includes the plasticity and the quality of rigidity in a synapse. Mima described the metaplasticity as the fusion of an ability of receiving a shape and an ability to forget a shape. The author is therefore focused on the point of how are we are to be multiple. The metaplasticity of the brain is an intermediate state between connection and disconnection in a synapse. I overlapped it into the mechanism of the teratogenesis of Japan.

Metaplasticity of the brain is the natural function of keeping on arranging by staying on the intermediate place. Therefore "the state of mediocrity" makes it possible for us to be multiple and to create a trajectory in a collection of fragmented information.

³⁰ MIMA, Tatsuya. - *Kasosei to sono bunshin*, 2009.

³¹ Mima described by referring to below books.

ABRAHAM, W.C. and BEAR, M.F. - *Metaplasticity: the plasticity of synaptic plasticity*
BIENENSTOCK, E.L. and COOPER, L.N. and MUNRO, P.W. - *Theory for the development of neuron selectivity: Orientation specificity and binocular interaction in visual*

BEAR, M.F. - *Bidirectional synaptic plasticity: from theory to reality*

Projects

In the following chapter I am going to describe how my art project contains within itself the theme of this essay and how practical work helps to conclude something about the proposed hypothesis.

In *Musical Cakes on the Chairs* (2013) and *Invisibility Lark* (2013), I focus on the mechanism of the teratogenesis of Japan while overlapping into Japanese aesthetic *Iki*. In *Adding a Little Extra and Indeterminacy* (2014), I focus on a situation of indeterminacy by adding a little extra in this project. In *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places* (2014), I intend to create integration between connection and disconnection, achieving features of the so called “state of mediocrity”.

5.1 Musical Cakes on the Chairs

In this project, I hold the game of musical chairs while putting cakes on them. I focus my attention on "the positive formed by the negative". Georges Bataille (b.1897 – d.1962) wrote in *Le Langage des Fleurs* (1927)³² that the flowers have not only a beauty part, but also an ugly part. For instance, stamen is covered by pollen. Moreover it makes it much more beautiful and seductive³³.

This structure can also be seen in his description about of Salvador Dali's (b.1904 – d.1989) painting, "*Jeu Lugubre*"³⁴. A man is painted with his pants polluted by “shit” (Fig. 13): Bataille said that the desire can make the release of the provocative behavior that leads to punishment against castration, and the pleasure obtained by its desire is cut off... the masculinity cannot be achieved by breaking down all restraints, rather, it can be achieved by punishment. In this discussion, we can see the structure of "a negation of the negation"³⁵.

³² BATAILLE, Georges. – *The Language of Flowers, in Visions of Excess Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Allan Stoekl, ed., Translated by STOEKI, Allan. with LOVITT, Carl, R. and LESLIE, Donald, M , Jr. Minneapolis: Minneapolis, 1985.

³³ BOIS, Yve-Alain. and Krauss, Rosalind E. – *Jeu Lugubre, in FORMLESS : A User's Guide*, 1997.

³⁴ BATAILLE, Georges. – *The "Lugubrious Game", in Visions of Excess Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Allan Stoekl, ed., Translated by STOEKI, Allan. with LOVITT, Carl, R. and LESLIE, Donald, M , Jr. Minneapolis: Minneapolis, 1985.

³⁵ BOIS, Yve-Alain. and Krauss, Rosalind E. – *Jeu Lugubre, in FORMLESS : A User's Guide*, 1997.



Fig. 14 – Salvador Dali. *Le Jeu Lugubre*, 1929, Oil and collage on cardboard, 44.4 x 30.3 cm.

This structure is similar to *Akirame*. *Akirame* is one key element in the Japanese aesthetic *iki*, and it is a mind dropped the desire and its origin is Buddhist thinking. □ *Akirame* has the function to achieve *iki* □ in other words, *Akirame* has the function of achievement becoming impossible. □



Fig. 15 – Joseph Beuys. *Stuhl mit fett*, 1963, Chair, Fat.

Another example is Joseph Beuys (b.1921 – d.1986) work *Stuhl mit fett* (1963) where he put fat in a chair, □ in order to emphasize the notion that *Stuhl* in German language has two meanings: "chair" and "shit" (Fig. 14). He found an affinity in chaotic features between the lateral face of the fat and “shit”³⁶. I shifted from the use of fat to cakes (Fig. 15). A cake is regarded, in general, as a seductive, beautiful thing - along with flowers - by decoration, but its constituent is fat, and it appears by missing out the appearance. If it is crushed, it would be just fat. Therefore the work consists on creating a system where the more a

³⁶ BOIS, Yve-Alain. and Krauss, Rosalind E. – *No to ... Joseph Beuys*, in *FORMLESS : A User's Guide*, 1997.

person wins, the dirtier they become. This system leads someone to achieve his hidden desire for dirt (Fig. 16 and 17).



Fig. 16, 17 and 18 – Shinji Takehara. *Musical Cakes on the Chairs*, 2013, DVD video 3”08.

5.2 Invisibility Lark

I think the Japanese mind is generally deconstructive: Japanese artists have to think about their work through the structural western thinking, when practicing art. The resultant works can usually be described within a process of teratogenesis. They are expressed as "the point of no return"³⁷. I focus on this strange situation, writing a narrative where a man tries to be invisible by referring to certain contexts.

A man hoped to be an invisible-man. He thought if he returns to being a child younger than eighteen months, he would be invisible. His idea was to do the same things as a child in order to return to being a child. He referred to the logic of Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage", that children under eighteen months cannot recognize their own body in a mirror³⁸.

³⁷ SAWARAGI, Noi. – *Nihon Gendai Bijutsu*, 1998.

³⁸ LACAN, Jacques. – *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the / Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*, in *ECRITS, THE FIRST COMPLETE EDITION IN ENGLISH*, 1999.

At first, he tried to wear clothes for children. However, he couldn't wear it because it was too small for him. His breakthrough was to cut the clothes.

In this piece I am referring to the work of Robert Morris (b.1931) by using immense felt (Fig. 18). Robert Morris spread felt onto the floor of his studio and cut a liner pattern; then he raised the felt onto the wall, suspending it from hooks, so that gravity would pull apart the surfaces into gaps of confusing, disturbing irregularity. Rosalind E. Krauss (b.1941) said that this piece expressed an index of horizontal³⁹. Horizontality is point of view of animal with four legs walking. It doesn't have a wholeness perspective. On the other hand, modernism is vertical, masculine, bipedal walking human being.

The man thought if he cuts the cloth, he could wear it; moreover he could create confusion, a camouflage. Then, he would finally "be" invisible-man.

What happened in the end? It looks like a perfect form of bipedal walking human being with a strange costume. I tried to make a situation of the teratogenesis of Japan. To make something formless is a reaction to modernism. However, it is impossible for Japanese to overcome modernism because Japan hasn't achieved it fully. This work indicates an impossible situation (Fig. 19 and 20).



Fig. 19 – Robert Morris. *Untitled*, 1967, Felt, 296.7 x 269.3 x 147.4 cm.

³⁹ BOIS, Yve-Alain. and Krauss, Rosalind E. – *Horizontality*, in *FORMLESS: A User's Guide*, 1997.

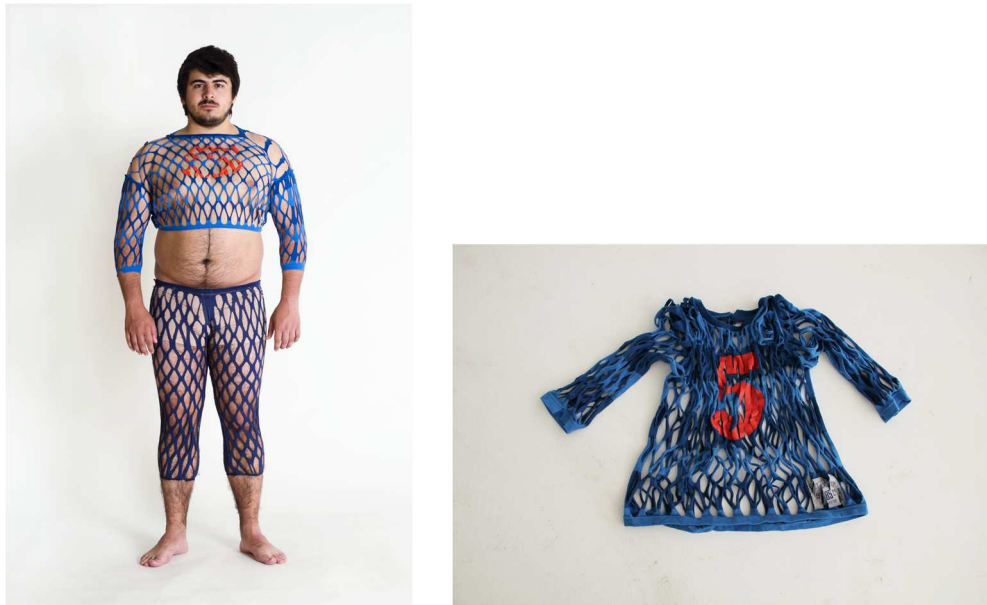


Fig. 20 and 21 – Shinji Takehara. *Invisibility Lark*, 2013, Photo, clothes for children.

5.3 Adding a Little Extra and Indeterminacy

I focus on a situation of indeterminacy by adding a little extra in this project. For instance, in *This is a Stone, but This is Not a Stone* (2014), I combined a real stone and a stone pattern sheet. Stone pattern sheets are used in order to show the materiality of real stones. However, it also means an index of denial of being “stone” because we usually don't use this material on real stones. Therefore, it is a situation combining opposite things with *This is a Stone, but This is Not a Stone*. I therefore created indeterminacy by adding a little extra (Fig. 21); then I copied this anonymous state (Fig. 22).

In another piece *This is a Kakuzai and This is a Geba-bo* (2014), I gave two names to two timbers that each look the same. One is *Kakuzai*, the other is *Geba-bo*. *Kakuzai* is a Japanese word that means “timber”. *Geba-bo* is a coined word in the student revolution era 1960-70 in Japan, and a clipped form between *Gewalt* and *Bo*. *Gewalt* is a Germany word that means “violence”, and *Bo* is a Japanese word that means “stick”. Timbers were used as a weapon in the student movement activist, and called *Geba-bo*. I created a state of no decision by giving both of them two names (Fig. 23); then I copied this anonymous state (Fig. 24).

In *A Paper With a Memory of Some Kind* (2014), I scratched while following information of postcard printed famous place. We usually buy post cards as a memory of a famous place or a famous thing. I removed this memory by overwriting the post card with same information (Fig. 25); then I copied this anonymous state (Fig. 26).

I took a hint from three aspects in this project to produce my next work: *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places* (2014). The first is integration among an opposite situation; the second is the transmission of an

anonymous situation and the third is to focus on physical action made by reflection of accumulation of my hand moves.



Fig. 22 and 23 – Shinji Takehara. *This is a Stone, but This is Not a Stone*, 2014, Stone pattern sheets, Stone, Pencil on Paper, Clay.



Fig. 24 and 25 – Shinji Takehara. *This is a Kakuzai and This is a Geba-bo*, 2014, Timbers, Pencil on Paper, Clay.



Fig. 26 and 27 – Shinji Takehara. *A Paper With a Memory of Some Kind*, 2014, Post card, Pencil on Paper.

5.4 Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places

This work consists of installing of a video, five small stones and two sculptures together in the same room.

It is described as follows: I picked up five stones in five famous places. We can't read anything from those stones, they are anonymous. I tried to create the state of integration between connection and disconnection by two ways.

One is that I copied the surface of stone mountains with clay over polyurethane, and by hand, with a small knife. This method is referred to the Japanese stone garden⁴⁰. The producers follow the condition of ground like walking, then they take signs and put the stones. I regarded the stones as the ground, and followed only a partial view. Differences will arise between the original form of stones and the one of copies, because I follow just the relief on the surface. Moreover, it means that there are differences between mass and detail, without collectiveness.

In addition, the quantity of stones changes all the time because I don't focus on the boundary of each stone. Moreover, since I'm a human being, I can't continue to work forever. I always hold the forgetting and the interrupting. In other words, those stones picked up by me are transformed while crossing over the boundaries, and this function makes it possible by the forgetting and the interrupting. Those pieces reflect altogether the surface of stones as sites and my physical condition (Fig. 27, 28 and 29).

⁴⁰ NAKAZAWA, Schinichi. – *Taisyosei Jinruigaku*, 2004.



Fig. 28 and 29 – Shinji Takehara. *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places*, 2014, Clay, Polyurethane, DVD video 13”05, Stones.

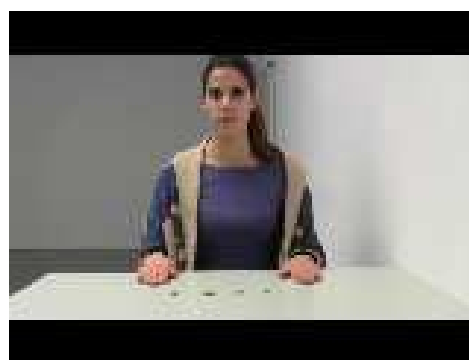


Fig. 30 and 31 – Shinji Takehara. *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places*, 2014, Clay, Polyurethane, DVD video 13”05, Stones.

The other way is that I perform a magic trick for another person by using those small stones, and I record this in a video. Then I teach them how to do it. Then they try to do the same magic trick for another person, then they teach them how to do it and so on. There are two requirements to enact this magic trick. One is that a recipient of magic has to pretend that they don't know that this temporary magician have something trick despite they have known (Fig. 30). In other words, it makes possible to enact the magic trick by denial structure like “snobbism”. “Snobbism” is a vertical view overlooking the whole. It is a process of establishing ones own identity, and means denying the environment. I regard it as a disconnection. The other requirement is that those stones continue to be anonymous, because it is necessary to replace a stone with another one in the trick. If it is exposed, it would be impossible to enact. This idea is referred to Japanese stone garden.⁴¹ It is thought that every element exists only in the relationship of the whole. It means that every element must be anonymous. It has a view of an assimilating environment and I regard it as connecting (Fig. 31).

⁴¹NAKAZAWA, Schinichi. – *Taisyosei Jinruigaku*, 2004.

In this context I managed to create a paradoxical system by blending views that are opposites.



Fig. 32 – Shinji Takehara. *Five Anonymous Stones Picked Up at Five Famous Places*, 2014. Clay, Polyurethane, DVD video 13'05, Stones.

Conclusion

I am interested in a state that becomes impossible. This means a state of mediocrity rather than catastrophe. This “state of mediocrity” - the main theme of my written essay - required expressions like “teratogenesis”, the “spirit of before the opening of the country”, “the gift”, “snobbism” (according to Alexandre Kojève), *iki* and “metaplasticity of the brain” (according to Tatsuya Mima) in order to be explained as idea about my work. So I used the following methodology:

- In chapter 4.1: I could understand that Japanese contemporary art of post-war has been running in "Bad Place" for a long time, it has sometimes surfaced as a “teratogenesis”.

-In chapter 4.2: I could understand that the “spirit of before the opening of the country” causes the “teratogenesis” of Japan. This spirit is based on “the pure gift” in Buddhism.

-In chapter 4.3: I could understand that one of the Japanese aesthetic *iki* is the mind of admiring the state of someone trying to accept an impossible task of “the pure gift”, it is an intermediate place between Buddhism and “snobbism”.

-In chapter 4.4: I could understand that a feature of postmodern society is the two-layer structure that is composed by a deep-layer and a surface-layer. There are collections of fragmented information in the deep layer. At the present day, attention is focused on how to read or combine collections of fragmented information. “Multiple personality” holds heterochronic and heterotopic perspectives making it possible to create a cosmos in a fragmented world.

-In chapter 4.5: I could understand that the metaplasticity of the brain makes it possible for us to be multiple, it has affinities with “the state of mediocrity”.

Mediocrity, in this context, represents an absence of a rigid structure, a kind of deviation and mutability that is similar to the mechanism of the “teratogenesis”, although without a negative sense of “malformation”, as we could find in medicine. Instead, it appears to be a creative and source full state towards new features in culture and art.

The feeling of “deviation” has its roots on a common expression used nowadays in Japan, the so-called “spirit of before the opening of the country”. The underlying “spirit” consists of the intent based on “the ultimate gift” - which means to throw ego away - rather than the denial thought caused by snobbism. I regard “the state of mediocrity” as the intermediate place between Buddhism and “snobbism” - as characterized by Alexandre Kojève - where it overlaps into *iki* (as explained in Chapter 4.3).

I propose, and try to show in this essay, that “ a state of mediocrity” makes it possible for us to be multiple and to find a trajectory in a collection of fragmented information in postmodern society. A feature of postmodern society is the two-layer structure, where we can hold two perspectives without having antinomy, like a "multiple personality", as well described by Azuma (Chapter 4.4). It means we are able to create a cosmos in the fragmented world by holding of heterochronic and heterotopic perspectives.

Later on I focused on how we are able to be multiple, by referring to the metaplasticity of the brain, which is a passive function that makes it possible for us to be multiple, by staying on an intermediate place between connection and disconnection in a synapse.

And I found that the practical works built, not only but also, show themselves as strong metaphors for this idea.

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