

The 3rd International Symposium for Media Art Formation of Culture in the Post-Internet Era: Creation, Production, and Network

Report [PDF ver.]

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Organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)
Specially Supported by NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone East Corporation)

Preface to the Third International Symposium Report

Since 2016, the Japan Foundation Asia Center and Arts Council Tokyo have jointly organized an international “Art and Technology” symposium series with the aim of providing a forum for the creation, dissemination, and networking of art and culture in such fields as new media art and digital creativity. Each year the symposium theme changes in order to engage widely with artistic expression that uses media or digital technology, providing a dynamic introduction to trends and case studies across different nations and regions.

The first symposium in 2016 outlined trends in this field from the 1970s to the present, proposing new platforms for media art in Tokyo and, by extension, Asia as a whole. The second symposium in 2018 discussed the relations between society and the creation, education, and research and development of new media art through activities at leading art centers and festivals in cities across Asia and Europe. The third symposium examined the process of shaping culture in the post-Internet society through the three key notions of creation, production, and network.

Artistic activities today using media technology are forming new kinds of cultural scenes that connect places within Asia through the synthesis of various specialisms and disciplines as well as through exchange and partnerships made possible by social media. In order to showcase these latest situations and conditions, the two-day symposium brought together 16 guest speakers from six nations who are working in a range of fields, from art to design, architecture, and music. From the perspectives of the creativity of artists, the practices of curators and directors who disseminate this, and the editors who are developing new media platforms, the speakers presented the energetic activities as well as future visions of the next generation of talent set to become leading figures in society, industry, and culture in Asia. The symposium attracted significant advance interest and proved an opportunity to share the potential and current changing state of creativity with the many attendees.

In closing, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the generous support and cooperation of the guest speakers and NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] that helped make this symposium possible.

The Japan Foundation Asia Center
Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)

February 2020

The 3rd International Symposium for Media Art

Formation of Culture in the Post-Internet Era: Creation, Production, and Network

Creativity in the Age of Internet: Exploring New Processes in the Formation of Culture

Since the Internet has become an everyday part of our lives, creative practices have prompted the formation of alternative scenes and joint creative processes through the fusing of varying expertise and fields by individuals connecting with each other through social media, namely among the next generation of artist who use media technology. Here we can glimpse of cultural development through new ideas and creative methods that utilize digital technology and influences that transcend borders.

This symposium examined these processes of forming culture through three sequential themes: creation, production, and network. How are creative practices changing in the present-day Internet society, and what needs arise in the cultural environment that supports these practices? Introducing artists who use the medium of the Internet in their work, as well as the work of directors and curators who help produce these new creative formats, and of editors who advance media development in Asia, the symposium considered how culture will be shaped from now on.

Date & Time: Saturday, February 2, 2019, 13:00–17:00; Sunday, February 3, 2019, 13:00–18:00

Venue: NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] (Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo)
(Tokyo 2020 Official Programme)

Free admission (pre-registration required), with English-Japanese simultaneous interpretation

Organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)

Special Support from NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone East Corporation)

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[Session 1]

Defining “Creation” in the Internet Society

Session 1 examined how the Internet and other technologies are deployed as tools or sites of creation for cutting-edge practices in new media art, contemporary art, design, architecture, and music. At a time when the Internet has become a daily presence in our lives, various forms of interdisciplinary artistic expression were introduced.

Moderator



Minoru Hatanaka

Chief Curator of NTT
InterCommunication Center [ICC]
[Japan]

Born in 1968, Minoru Hatanaka graduated from Tama Art University. He joined NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] in 1996, prior to its opening. He has curated such exhibitions at ICC as the group shows “Sound Art – Sound as Media” (2000), “Silent Dialogue” (2007), and “[Internet Art Future]—Reality in Post Internet Era” (2012), and solo shows featuring the work of Dumb Type, Maywa Denki, Laurie Anderson, Kazuhiko Hachiya, Rhizomatiks, Arata Isozaki, Otomo Yoshihide, and John Wood and Paul Harrison.

<http://www.ntticc.or.jp>

Speakers

Ei Wada

Artist, Musician [Japan]

Lu Yang

Artist [China]

Eyedropper Fill

(Wattanapume Laisuwanchai, Nuntawat Jarusruangnil)
Multimedia design team [Thailand]

Keisuke Toyoda

Architect / Co-founder of noiz [Japan]

tomad

Organizer, DJ / Head of Maltine Records [Japan]

Turning Old Home Appliances into Borderless Electromagnetic Native Instruments

Ei Wada Artist, Musician

Active in the fields of music and art, Ei Wada remodels old, worn-out household appliances and turns them into musical instruments, staging live performances and exhibiting installations. In recent years, he has also been producing instruments with the involvement of various experts in their fields and local residents, developing a series of projects that involve musical ensembles and organizing festivals. Wada's "delusions," which began by paying renewed attention to various elements that make up technology, such as electricity, radio waves, electrons, and electromagnetic forces, create original instruments that can be shared or co-created, evolving into events that transcend even national borders.



Ei Wada (right) and Minoru Hatanaka (left)

Salvaging the Voices of Discarded Electrical Appliances

I am an artist and musician who works in the fields of music and art. My practice mainly consists of transforming electrical appliances into instruments, and performing music with them.

Today, I would like to single out a project from these activities that I have been tackling in the past few years: *Electronicos Fantasticos!* Launched in 2015, this project takes electrical appliances that have reached the end of their lifespans and breathes new life into them as musical instruments, having them perform in ensembles at festivals and events while seeking to involve people from all walks of life. The slogan for the project is: "Turn these expired electrical appliances into electrical instruments (*yokai*)!"

The Japanese word *yokai* (supernatural creature) is often associated with Edo-period tales of discarded objects like buckets and umbrellas that turn into monsters. One day, I found myself fantasizing about how modern-day *yokai* might in fact be discarded electrical appliances. When I saw photos of mountains of trash electrical appliances that I found searching for images on Google, they crackled into life and overlapped with paintings of the famous folklore motif known as the Night Parade of 100 Demons. An electrical shock coursed through my brain: Wasn't this basically the same thing? (Fig.1, 2) When I



Fig.1 A trash pile of electrical appliances
Source: Ralph Mirebs Livejournal (<https://ralphmirebs.livejournal.com/165985.html>)

discovered that outdated or obsolete technologies could function as musical instruments and media that give us a glimpse of the charm of these electric currents, electronic waves, electrons, and electromagnetic forces, I thought to myself: Wouldn't it be possible to salvage their voices by picking up on their electric signals? There's life in them yet!

These instruments represented a new type of vernacular music festival born out of urban detritus, and I started to nurse a growing hallucination in which a curious celebration of electricity, electronic waves, electrons, and electromagnetic forces awaited. And so I made some sketches before I began (Fig.3) Electric towers sprout from the ground in the middle of the night, and start to generate a strange current. People with radios prowl the surroundings in order to catch the signals. A different rhythm starts to resound from each electric tower: the electrical appliances that have been discarded there turn into a phalanx of musical instruments, coming together like an orchestra. This is the scene that is depicted in my sketches. Everything began from here.

First, I set up a studio in the Sumida area of Tokyo, and began collecting dis-used items by going around and picking up objects that people no longer wanted. When I stayed up overnight working on my art, local residents who had heard about what I was doing brought me electrical appliances that they no longer had a use for. I opened them up to observe the mechanisms by which these machines operated, and conducted repeated experiments into how I could transform them into instruments. I also held events at my studio explaining what my project hoped to accomplish (Fig.4).

Over the three and a half years that I carried on with these activities, my crew gradually grew: the studio attracted engineers with day jobs at appliance manufacturers, designers, musicians, or people who just liked festivals and music. As the headcount went up, there was a greater sense of community. And so we made all these instruments while exchanging knowledge, techniques, and the visions of madmen.

When someone donated an air conditioner



Fig.2 Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Minamoto no Yorimitsu-ko no yakata tsuchigumo yokai o nasu no zu* (The Earth Spider Conjures up Demons at the Mansion of Minamoto no Yorimitsu) (1843, colored woodblock print) (detail), Waseda University Library Collection



Fig.3 Concept drawing for *Electronicos Fantasticos!* by Ei Wada (2015)



Fig.4 Performance at Wada's studio in Sumida ward, Tokyo



Fig.5 A/C Harp

that had been used for 17 years, for example, we shared ideas about how we might be able to extract sounds from it. A participant in the project made a sketch that showed how the act of cleaning an air conditioner looked like playing the *koto* (Japanese zither), and the engineering team suggested that we pick up on the magnetic field so that we could play it like a *koto*. Then we proceeded to actually modify it, and the “A/C Harp” was born (Fig. 5).

Holding a Concert with Cathode-Ray Tubes and Striped Shirts

Today, our bases of operation have grown to include Hitachi City, Tokyo, and Kyoto. Each base holds its own workshops to make instruments. We have around 70 people who participate, amoeba-like, in our activities.

Allow me to explain in detail what kinds of musical instruments were created, including the process by which they took shape. First, there was the “CRT-TV Gamelan,” which originally evolved out of a solo project that I started in which I play a cathode-ray tube TV as an instrument (Fig. 6).

In the old days, whenever you touched the screen of a cathode-ray tube TV, you would get a prickly sensation from the static electricity. The performer coils the wire connected to a guitar amp around his or her leg, and makes sounds by picking up the static from the screen—in other words, your body becomes the antenna, and sound is produced whenever static is picked up. Different striped patterns are projected onto several cathode-ray tubes: the frequency changes depending on the number of tubes, as does the sound pitch. When it makes a sandstorm-like sound, we call it the “Staticymbal.” The cathode-ray tubes are played like a percussion instrument.

With the shift to digital broadcasting in 2011, a large number of cathode-ray tube TVs came to the end of their useful lifespans. I knew that these tubes were capable of producing sounds, so when I discovered images of heaps of discarded television sets on the Internet, I envisioned them having turned into Indonesian *gamelan* ensembles. Another electrical shock coursed through my brain as I fantasized about the prospect: Wasn’t this basically the same thing? The idea for the CRT-TV Gamelan ensemble orchestra started to take root in my mind, so we decided to take on the challenge of realizing this delusion when we participated in the KENPOKU ART festival in Ibaraki Prefecture in 2016.

The first step was to set up a workshop on a corner of a shopping arcade in Hitachi City, Ibaraki. Day after day, I struck those cathode-ray tubes and kept playing them. Hitachi is the city where the eponymous electrical appliance company has its manufacturing facilities. Local grannies started dancing to the electromagnetic sounds, and boys danced frantically as if possessed by some sort of primal urge. Rumors beget rumors, and soon we became known as a place that hoarded cathode-ray tubes and turned all of them into instruments. After that, local residents who had soaked up too many electromagnetic waves started to donate tubes to me. Even people who didn’t get what I meant when I said “I want to have a *gamelan* performance” understood what I was doing when I performed for them. We accumulated a really incredible number of cathode-ray tubes.

More and more band members also came to us. Whenever we made noises in the studio, DJs who lived nearby and music instructors who taught at universities in Ibaraki would come over and join the band as performers. The music also gradually took shape as we had more and more sessions. In the end, we were able to hold a concert with 22 cathode-ray tubes performed by six members in an underground space beneath the central square in Hitachi.

We also performed this CRT-TV Gamelan at Ars Electronica, the international media arts festival, last year (2018). Electricity is produced whenever you join hands with one of the

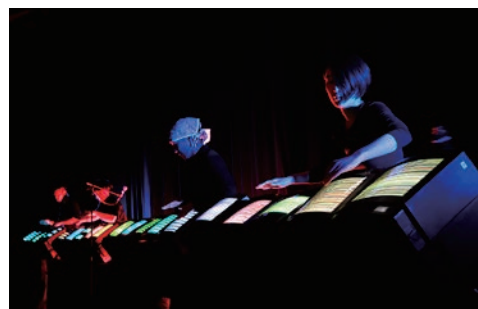


Fig. 6 CRT-TV Gamelan

performers, so basically anyone who joins the band can make those sounds. By turning my body into an instrument, I can have a session with visitors at any time. In the end, we held a concert at night called the Electromagnetic Ceremony. Three hundred viewers joined hands at the same time, creating a primitive sort of electromagnetic music by performing with a coursing electric current. Although the timing was fairly tricky, eventually we managed to get it right, and the ensuing chaos of this festive space was considerable (Fig. 7).

These activities subsequently connected us to the next instrument. I mentioned just now how the sound changes by projecting striped patterns onto a television. So I had this idea for new music instrument: If I could produce sound by converting these stripes into electrical signals, then wouldn't the striped shirt I was wearing also be able to do the same thing? This was the start of the "Striped Shirtsizer" (Fig. 8). By shooting the striped shirt with a video camera and connecting the video terminal of the camera to the sound terminal of a TV, the electrical signal and pitch would change according to the number of stripes projected onto the camera.

We also performed on the stage of the award ceremony at last year's Ars Electronica. We approached locals who were wearing striped shirts, and held improvised jam sessions with them right off the bat. We even invited artists Sputniko! and Yasuhiro Suzuki to appear at one street corner, and discovered people in the audience wearing striped shirts and had them join the band (Fig. 9). By making use of how the pitch varied by moving the camera back and forth while scanning a striped shirt—the world's only mode of performing with a video camera—I played Beethoven's Ninth in the strangest way on the whole planet, which was a real hit with the audience.

Incidentally, apropos of today's international symposium, it occurred to me that we are borderless precisely because we are wearing what we call in Japanese "border" shirts. But shirts with horizontal stripes are called "striped shirts" outside of Japan—so this is something that gets lost in translation.

A Memorial Service for Technology, and a Festival of Rebirth

Allow me to introduce you to one more instrument.

The "Electric Fan Harp" was born while I was thinking about what sort of instrument I could make out of an electric fan that had been donated to us. I started to daydream about what would happen if the god of the electric guitar, Jimi Hendrix, performed with this. I made a collage by cutting out images of electric fans and Hendrix that I found searching on Google, discovering that they were a perfect fit. From that point on, it was an archeology of fantasy and daydreaming. I started to work out how Hendrix would have played it by fantasizing about the prospect: Would he have played around with the number of rotations? Or the fan blades? It took



Fig. 7 Performance at the Electromagnetic Ceremony



Fig. 8 Striped Shirtsizer



Fig. 9 Performance at the award ceremony at Ars Electronica 2018

me two years of thinking about such questions to build this Electric Fan Harp (Fig.10). The basic principle works like this: You put discs with holes in the blade part of an electric fan as well as lightbulbs from the back of the fan, and the light goes on and off when they rotate. When you convert that into electrical waves, the pitch changes according to the number of holes. This instrument was also the result of the knowledge of various people, including Hitachi engineers in Hitachi—something that we definitely could not have produced without exchanging online information and data.

The discussion grew further, and we decided to form an orchestra. We gave a band performance consisting solely of Electric Fan Harps, including engineers who had transformed the fans in their homes into instruments. This orchestra has performed several times, in and outside Japan.

After that, we participated in an event called Iron Island Fes, in the Keihinjima area of Tokyo where many steel mills are located. I spent one month in a studio next to an ironworks, creating new instruments together with our collaborators and iron artisans.

Various miracles happen at *Electronicos Fantasticos!*: musical instruments and music are born out of encounters. And it was the same thing here. As I was in my studio doing a sound check, someone from the ironworks came out to take a cigarette break and see what I was up to, and started dancing. Thus began a process of communication with an octogenarian lathe craftsman, who told me that he had some electric fans in his factory that had been in use for a long time. “If you think they’ll make a good sound I can lend them to you,” he said, and let me have these large electric fans. Using them, we made the “Factory Fan Bass” together with the local steel and iron craftsmen. They were older National models of the kind that you rarely see anymore, but they made some really nice sounds. Eventually, the 80-year-old owner himself even made an appearance as a performer. And so it was that we found ourselves witnessing a moment that gave birth to the “industrial blues.”

All of this culminated in an event called the “Electro-Magnetic Bon Dance,” in which all of these instruments appeared together. The concept behind it was “a memorial service for technology, and a festival of rebirth,” where electrical appliances perform the music that traditionally accompanies a Japanese *matsuri* festival, while participants join the *bon* dance (to welcome the spirits of the dead during the Obon festival in August). Some 70 members from our three bases in Hitachi, Tokyo, and Kyoto as well as many other visitors gathered at the foot of Tokyo Tower, resulting in a *bon* dance event with around 500 people (Fig.11).

At the venue where a giant raised platform had been erected, a monk chanted sutras for a memorial service in honor of the electrical appliances, and then the live performance by the appliances began. Meanwhile, a Japanese folk singer started to sing about shifts in technology, and a curious celebration of people in a frenzied dance took shape. Our original song, “Den Den Ondo,” was littered with obsolete technological terms like “Morse code,” “telegraph,” “A-side/B-side,” and “X3 play,” while the performance ultimately drew to a close with a part called “AI Bushi.” Everyone shouted out while dancing freestyle: “Artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence, even if we lose in terms of intelligence, we won’t in terms of idiocy. The idiot who dances



Fig.10 Electric Fan Harp, made with an electric fan



Fig.11 Performance of *bon* dance event “Electro-Magnetic Bon Dance” at *Electronicos Fantasticos!* (2017, Star Rise Tower STUDIO EARTH)

and the idiot who watches, if we're all idiots then it's your loss if you don't dance."

Openly Sharing How to Make instruments

At *Electronicos Fantásticos!*, people from all walks of life produced musical instruments from multiple perspectives. We used private group pages on Facebook to communicate with each other on a daily basis. Currently, we have 87 members.

When I upload a video of myself doing an experimental performance, for example, I receive lots of comments. Some of them are ideas or suggestions related to technical aspects, which leads to various other discussions. Participants in the project are sharing videos and photos on a daily basis, followed by a flurry of comments. Once in a while, there will be an incredibly talented elementary school boy who has taken apart some speakers and turned them into an instrument, or an engineer involved in the design of a circuit board for a vacuum cleaner who has started remodeling one into an instrument. So we get people who participate that I haven't yet met myself.

We consider electrical appliances to be Electromagnetic Native Instruments. I labor daily under the delusion that there is some kind of what I call "Electromagnetic Native Music" that might emerge from these everyday appliances. In this project, I openly share how I make these instruments and what I think of them online, encouraging people to make copies or improvements as they see fit. I am trying to create a situation whereby each person can make his or her own instruments and music. The community that thus emerges is like an orchestra without a fixed lineup: an orchestra by a kind of new "Electromagnetic Tribe" that reconfigures itself both online and offline. These are just some of the thoughts in my mind as people from all walks of life encounter our instruments wherever we may go, as we start to spread the movement.

As the next step, we are thinking of forming the Electromagnetic Orchestra without Borders. This fantasy of an orchestra from a parallel world that transforms all kinds of disused electrical appliances into musical instruments and nurtures communication through the universal language of electrical signals, sine waves, and music is now coursing through my brain.



Ei Wada | Born in 1987, Ei Wada launched his interdisciplinary music and art practice while still attending university. He founded Open Reel Ensemble and Braun Tube Jazz Band in 2009. He has supervised music for Paris collection shows by the fashion house ISSEY MIYAKE on eleven occasions to date. In 2015, he launched *Electronicos Fantásticos!*, a project dedicated to reviving disused electrical appliances by turning them into musical instruments that are then played in concerts at festivals involving various kinds of people. For this project, he was awarded the 68th New Face Award at the Minister of Education Award for Fine Arts. In 2018, he won the Prix Ars Electronica and a STARTS Prize Honorary Mention.
<https://eiwada.com>

Media Art at a Bold Intersection of Ancient Religion and Cutting-Edge Science

Lu Yang Artist

Chinese artist Lu Yang introduced her extraordinary output of media art that encompasses science, technology, religion, and the body. While often thematically provocative, her practice is always expertly realized and strikingly colorful. Running throughout is a series of ideas deeply rooted in Asian contexts, vividly and freely explored across different media in a way that also feels distinctly Asian and contemporary.



Lu Yang

Early Experiments with Scientific Approaches

Some of the tenets of my practice these past ten years have been the control of electricity, magnetism, and scientific approaches borrowed from fields like neuroscience. Back in 2008, I was still in school but I really wanted to make some big installations. Naturally my budget at the time did not stretch that far, so I made detailed diagrams and plans, and applied to open calls by corporations or to residency programs.

One of my early works, *Reanimation! Underwater Zombie Frog Ballet!* (2012), involved dead frogs (Fig. 1). In this piece, I used electricity to stimulate the nerve systems and make a “zombie music box.” I applied to residencies with this plan and was eventually accepted to one in Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in 2011. I spent three months preparing the work but still didn’t know how it would actually work until it came to making the “frog ballet.” We went to a local school and recycled the frogs that students had already used for an anatomy class. We then set it up but had only one chance to shoot the video. What this work is really about is the boundary between life and death. If something moves, it is animated; it is alive. But what about a zombie frog that is reanimated with electricity?

Another piece in this early series is about brain control. I had this idea for a brain-computer interface back in 2008 and made a detailed diagram as a work *Reverse Monitoring—The Ultimate Learning Terminal* in 2010, but now I think the Chinese government has already realized it (Fig. 2)! In some classrooms, they can monitor students’ attention. It’s surprisingly easy to use brainwaves to monitor people’s brain activities reversely. Once you have that system in place,

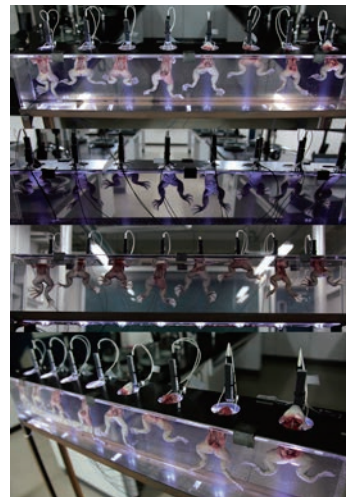


Fig. 1 *Reanimation! Underwater Zombie frog ballet!* (2012) Single-channel HD video

you can then punish students and force them to study. The combined human-machine study method is, I propose, the ultimate learning terminal.

I started to become interested in deep brain stimulation (DBS), a neurological procedure that is used to treat brain disease like Parkinson's. In 2010, I started to work on a new project called *Krafttremor* (the name is inspired by the band Kraftwerk). I found some elderly people who have Parkinson's disease and I started to shoot them (Fig. 3). Talking with doctors about Parkinson's disease, they told me the tremors affect the limbs, jaw, lips, and tongue. You can use an electroencephalogram to scan their brain and find out if their brainwaves are the same frequency as their tremors. People have different tremor frequencies, it seems. As such, we can use a computer to calculate their behavior. I then wondered if we could connect brainwaves to an instrument. As I developed the project, I spoke to actual doctors and researchers.

Deep brain stimulation surgery puts a device called a neurostimulator into your brain. A line comes out to connect it with a battery and they hide this battery in your chest. The battery powers the device to send pulses into the brain through implanted electrodes. In this project, I investigated whether we can use different technology to catch the frequencies, like electroencephalography on their brains or eye tracking to monitor eyeball tremors, by connecting a measuring device to monitor muscle tremors on the limbs. In the *Krafttremor* project, I take on the role of a DJ or VJ (Fig. 4). The idea is that you can go to someone to receive the different frequencies he or she plays on the “deep brain stimulation controller” and then the people gathered there at the place form a kind of orchestra.

Intersections of Neurology and Religion

Wrathful King Kong Core (2012) is another work related to brain science but also religion, a subject I frequently return to in my practice, especially Tibetan Buddhism (Fig. 5). Yamantaka is a very important deity in Tibetan Buddhism. This deity has 34 arms, 16 legs, and nine heads. I was thinking about this “wrathful” god in terms of his brain. The brain is the organ that causes all our emotions and movements through signals. It fascinates me because it is so complex and we don't know yet how emotions connect with each other through the brain. Located inside the brain, the amygdala is the most important part in our limbic system and key to producing our emotions.

I decided to focus on the emotion of anger because anger is significant in Tibetan Buddhism as the emotion that can take you to hell. In Buddhism, they say that when people

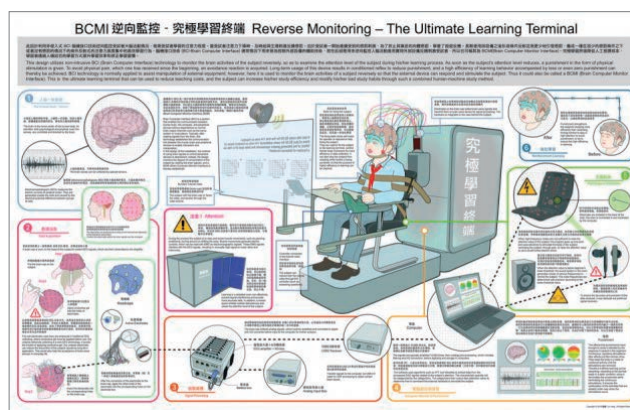


Fig. 2 Diagram of Reverse Monitoring—The Ultimate Learning Terminal (2010)

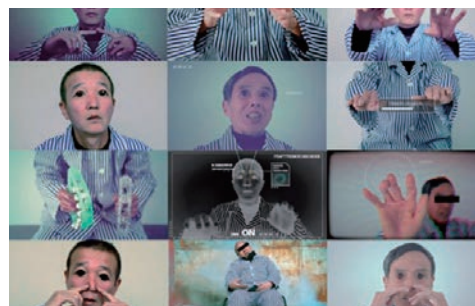


Fig. 3 *Krafttremor* (2010)
HD music video



Fig. 4
Krafttremor—Parkinson's disease orchestra (2010)

cross over to death in a bad emotional state, anger can mean you end up in hell. But because all of our emotions are ultimately caused by our brains, it got me wondering about the truth of this. Initially I just tried to show off the different weapons Yamantaka might hold with his 34 arms. Then I developed things further and attempted to make an image of his brain. As Yamantaka is a very angry deity, I imagined how his anger would come out. I worked with a psychologist, who helped me draw the emotion pathway of anger.

For *Lu Yang Delusional Mandala* (2015), I again continued my exploration of the brain but also went back to a religious theme (Fig. 6). I conceived this special wearable machine, a kind of DBS crown, to track the different parts in your brain, correcting abnormal brain electrical circuits and relieve neural symptoms. By enhancing the brain in this way, we would become a god of sorts. I started thinking about images of gods, whether it is Asuras in Hinduism or Buddhism, Jesus in Christianity, or a Buddhist deity in a *thangka* painting

I scanned myself and created an asexual avatar from 3D digital models based on the scan. I drew on the principles of the stereotactic system, deep brain stimulation, and repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation. In the video made for the project, the avatar is shown receiving treatment and operations in this way, stimulating emotional states like delusion, paranoia, or obsession. The avatar is also shown in various states like seizures and sensory disorders. When the avatar wears the DBS crown, it looks like an Asura. I am very interested in Buddhist ideas of the “rotten body” and the video eventually reduces the avatar down to its internal organs. Finally it ends with me, the avatar, dying and going into a coffin, and then a colorful, high-tech hearse with the avatar’s face displayed on screens on the side of the vehicle. This is what we might call a new media art funeral.

After creating my mandala, I continued the same series with *Delusional Crime and Punishment* (2016) (Fig. 7). In this work, I wanted to think about hell. In Asian cultures and religions, hell is a very rich idea. There are many kinds of hells. In China, they say there are 18 levels of hell. In hell, people suffer lots of pain. Perhaps you are fried in oil or enter a mountain full of knives. Humans envision hell like the human world as a punishment for sin. But we feel pain because of the receptors on our skin, temperature receptors, pressure receptor, and so on. We receive those pain signals into our nerve system, which then goes into our brains and we identify the sensation as pain. But in a real afterlife, would we still have a brain like that? I created my own hell: “Lu Yang Hell.” In terms of methodology, I used a 3D printer this time, unlike the 3D scanner I used for the mandala version. I imagined what it would be like to travel through 18 levels of hell. The sensation of pain in hell is a reflection of the mechanics of the human brain, suggesting hell is based on the systems of human society.

I’ve actually even fantasized about becoming a practitioner of Gong Tau, a type of Chinese witchcraft, and I think you can see that in my work. I once made *Gong Tau Kite*, featuring a large

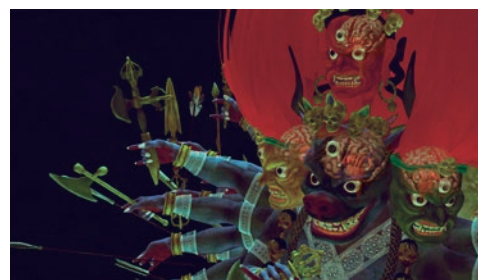


Fig. 5 *Wrathful King Kong Core* (2012)
Single-channel HD video



Fig. 6
Lu Yang Delusional Mandala (2015)
Single-channel HD video



Fig. 7 *Delusional Crime and Punishment* (2016)
Single-channel HD video

3D-scanned version of my face flying in the sky.

A related example is *Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Exorcism*, a kind of modern-day exorcist who employs a TMS machine. I wanted to use the machine to cure Tourette syndrome. If you have ever watched horror movies about exorcism or looked into demonic possession of the human body in a European context, the “victims” will always say dirty words or can’t control themselves. The idea is that you use this TMS machine to stop someone from saying anything. Rather than the crucifix as a weapon against the demon, the exorcist now has a TMS machine.

With all these projects, what I am trying to do is explore notions of death, the body, religion, and science. That being said, they have a specifically Asian quality. It should be quite clear by now that I work across Asia and with very Asian themes. For example, for *God of the Brain*, I went to India to make my own altar for my own religion. I worked with a traditional Indian dancer, who did a special dance with a transcranial magnetic stimulation “magic stick.”

Japanese Collaborations and Influences

I have also worked with various Japanese collaborators in my practice. My relationship with Japanese partners goes back to my work at Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in the early 2010s. It was the first museum in the world to accept my crazy idea about a zombie frog ballet, something that no one else seemed willing to take on. For that, I have a lot to be grateful for to the museum. It also continued to support me, such as with finishing my *Uterus Man* project.

In 2013, I did a residency at 3331 Arts Chiyoda and got to know S-VA-HA, very cool contemporary Buddhist art group. I ended up inviting the group to Shanghai for a solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, where we also did a collaborative performance.

My relationship with Spiral here in Tokyo started in 2016 and resulted first in a show at Zou-no-Hana Terrace in Yokohama. For *Electromagnetic Brainology*, which I exhibited at Spiral from late 2017 to early 2018, I transformed the venue into a temple (Fig. 8). I created four different gods with the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. I integrated certain motifs and details from my previous output, such as the TMS machine and DBS crown. The idea is that these gods use these kinds of weapons to stop the pain when people cross over to the world of death. This comes from a belief in Buddhism that the material world is made up of those four primary elements, which are the sources of pain.

Also at the Spiral show, I exhibited a large face hanging from the ceiling. Like *Gong Tau Kite*, it was actually my own face that I first scanned with a 3D scanner. I partnered with Chanmomo, a music idol, for another installation in the exhibition. She is a “Brain Control Messenger” who wears a “Super DBS Crown” and wields a “Super TMS Wand” to fight an alien enemy (Fig. 9). She is depicted like a giant character in the city. The purported technology was inspired by genuine research by Japanese scientists: a galvanic vestibular stimulation interface that provided an externalized sense of balance.

I think you can see the influence of Japanese *tokusatsu* (special effects) films and TV series here and in my new piece, *Material World Knight*, which was shown at the 12th Shanghai

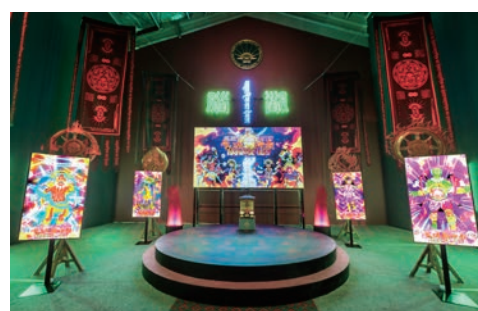


Fig. 8 *Electromagnetic Brainology* (2017) Five-channel HD video. Installation view of “Encephalon Heaven” (2017, M WOODS museum) Courtesy of Lu Yang



Fig. 9
Brain Control Messenger
(2018) Single-channel
HD video

Biennale from 2018 to 2019 (Fig.10). For this project, I partnered with a Japanese exoskeleton company called Skeletonics and a robot idol group from Osaka called nyoROBOTics to make a *tokusatsu*-style video installation with two giant figures engaged in combat in a destroyed city. I shot the video at a *tokusatsu* exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto, which featured a 1/20-scale replica of Kumamoto Castle, but the theme of my piece is again touching on religion, as the title suggests, because it's really dealing with the notion of sin. It's like a container of our consciousness. For the film, the

Contemporary Art Museum Kumamoto's curator Gentaro Sasaki served as the overall producer. The performers in the video are members of nyoROBOTics, along with a Skeletonics exoskeleton suit designed by Hiroto Ikeuchi. The Shanghai Biennale installation itself, featuring a miniature version of Kumamoto, was created by Marbling Fine Arts, which specializes in making models and miniature sets like those used in *tokusatsu*. Finally, the music for *Material World Knight* was by a Tokyo-based group called Satellite Young. My relationship with these Japanese collaborators and partners is reciprocal, so I also invited Satellite Young to Shanghai, where it did a performance at a club called ALL and shot a new music video.



Fig.10
Material World Knight
(2018) Three-channel
HD video



Lu Yang | Born in 1984 and based in Shanghai, Lu Yang uses a variety of media from video to installation, animation, digital painting, and games. Unflinchingly exploring existential issues about the nature of life and where it resides, she is armed with an overlapping mix of strategies taken from science, religion, psychology, neuroscience, medicine, games, pop culture, and music. Her work has been featured in major solo and group exhibitions at the International Digital Art Biennial 2016 in Montreal, Liverpool Biennial 2016, 3rd Istanbul Design Biennial in 2016, China Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, 5th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale in 2014, Shanghai Biennale 2012, UCCA (Beijing), M WOODS Museum (Beijing), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, MOMENTUM Berlin, Tampa Museum of Art, and more.
<http://luyang.asia>

Redefining Media, Educating the Next Generation, and Stimulating Interactions

Eyedropper Fill (Wattanapume Laisuwanchai, Nuntawat Jarusruangnil)

Multimedia design team

Eyedropper Fill is an award-winning multimedia design team based in Bangkok that specializes in moving image production and installation. Two members from Eyedropper Fill showcased case studies of the team's transdisciplinary and experimental approach. The results are playful and fun, yet they also reveal a sincere commitment to collaboration and education for the next generation.



Eyedropper Fill: Nuntawat Jarusruangnil (left),
Wattanapume Laisuwanchai (right)

Transforming Thailand's Resources into Multimedia Design

We are Nuntawat Jarusruangnil, Managing Director of Eyedropper Fill, and Wattanapume Laisuwanchai, Creative Director of Eyedropper Fill. Eyedropper Fill is a multimedia and creative design company based in Bangkok, Thailand. We frame ourselves in terms of multidisciplinary design because a lot of our work is film production, music videos, art installations, and interactive design in the field of media art. But the core of our work deals with experimental design for commercial brands.

Today we're going to talk about how we create our work but it would be good for you first to understand the art and design situation in Thailand. Let's start with an overview of the situation in our country. There was a military coup in 2014 and a junta has ruled the country ever since. The economy is in decline. People are not able to create socially critical art or protest peacefully in public. Art schools also teach in very traditional ways. For example, there aren't specific programs for media art, meaning students teach themselves by going online to read websites or watch video tutorials. The art and design community is actually pretty small. Moreover, it is endangered. Even one of the most important museums in Bangkok has not received any funding now for two years and no one is sure about its future.

As such, we are thinking globally, looking to peers in Japan and elsewhere and seeing what they are doing in terms of media art. That being said, we are surrounded by all kinds of novel "art pieces" in Thailand. For example, we spotted a kind of DIY insect killer machine made with a wooden stick and broken electric fan. We came across a humanoid kinetic dancer that could multiply a dancer three or four times onstage. This was shown at a festival at a temple that also featured a kinetic lighting installation. Or there are more spectacular examples, like a rocket-drone contraption made from wood and gunpowder. I don't know how to describe this even

in Thai, let alone English! But despite its novelty, it is easy and cheap to build. These kinds of DIY design efforts emerge from a feeling of impatience that we can also see in the Thai art scene.

Is there a piece of software that we can use to combine our resources in Thailand with the global art scene? We decoded this question down to the conceptual level and arrived at the idea of “redefining.” This then became a keyword for us, inspiring us to start making experimental videos from around five years ago when we still didn’t know much about coding. We also created physical work, such as one using just a blank CD, electric fan, and laser pointer. The result was a kind of laser show (Fig. 1). Of course, it was simple and didn’t really work, but we have continued to explore the main concept of redefinition in this way. Other examples of the output from this approach were a hologram-like project that formed a smokescreen from incense or a laser show using cheap reflective materials that you can find in a fabric market in Thailand.

Today, we want to share three illustrative case studies of our subsequent work.



Fig. 1 A laser show using reflective fabric

Ghostly Experiments in Media and Education

Krasue 4.0 is ultimately an education project (Fig. 2). *Krasue* is a well-known ghost in Thailand that supposedly roams at night. We started it because Thailand lacks an education platform for media art, meaning we don’t have a way to share our know-how with other people. Our mission is, firstly, to educate everyone; and secondly, to share our knowledge. What was important for this project was that it be understandable to an audience of ordinary Thai people. We also used our own money for the project, so the budget was low. This naturally limited what we could achieve.

The initial ideas for the project were related to coding and ghosts. Why coding and ghosts? Because when you start coding something, it’s quite complicated and the knowledge is hard to find. Sometimes coding is a mysterious process and even a little scary, like ghosts. We started to develop these ideas by researching ghosts in Thailand (Fig. 3).

In Thailand, we have a very spiritual culture that has many types of apparitions. Sometimes this results in curious things, like we found this village that used an image of the Japanese manga character Doraemon. When it’s the farming season, the villagers normally use a cat, putting it in a cage as part of a ritual whereby the cat will hopefully bring rainfall. But one time, the villagers didn’t have a real cat, so they used a model of Doraemon (a fictional cat) instead. This is a creative solution that nonetheless still carries on the original function. Also, when people build a new house in Thailand, they have to build a small house for the spirit so that it brings the owner of the house good luck. There are actually so many ghosts in Thailand and many of them



Fig. 2 Still from a video introducing *Krasue 4.0*

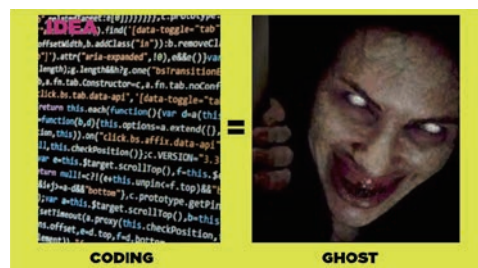


Fig. 3 The inspiration for the project was a comparison between ghosts and the mystical process of coding.

appear in mainstream entertainment. A figure like Mae Nak is a well-known female ghost in Thailand who has featured in movies.

We wanted to take this context of ghosts and combine it with our media art. We chose the famous Thai ghost story of Krasue. Here is the story. In the daytime, Krasue is a pretty girl, but at night her head detaches from her body and flies away to find something to eat. We wanted to recreate this ghost in real life using media art. But how to do this? Well, we used a giant drone that we rented. We struggled with the problem of how to make Krasue for a whole month until we stumbled upon a kind of flexible water tube that you can find in a household sink in Thailand. We combined this with an LED strip light to create an illuminating beam (Fig. 4).

We heard different things about the alleged sightings of Krasue. Some people who claimed to have seen her in real life said there were red lights but others said that the lights were green. So maybe she has the ability to change her color, we wondered. In order to reflect this, we created a mobile app to change her colors remotely by a Bluetooth connection.

We made a video about this project and published it online, along with the code that tells people how to make Krasue and the app (Fig. 5). It was important that this was an open-source project. Afterward, we were contacted by universities and schools asking us to teach students about art and programming. In this way, it linked to our aims to educate people.

Cross-cultural Collaborations Through Music and Cockroaches

The second project we want to introduce is called *Game Over*, which we made in collaboration with Stamp Apiwat, a famous Thai singer, and YMCK, a Japanese 8bit or chiptune music band (Fig. 6). The brief for the project was, firstly, to make a music video for Stamp Apiwat and YMCK; secondly, to retain the different cultures of Thai and Japan; and thirdly, to do it within the constraints of a tight budget.

The idea came from the lyrics of the song, which is about a guy who is fighting against everything for the sake of his lover. If we compare his story to a game, it's about a character who is hard to kill and hard to beat. But from this, we went further and thought of something smaller, like cockroaches. Because, as we know, when you hit a cockroach at night, sometimes it pretends to die but in the morning, it has disappeared and apparently did not die after all!

Anyone who starts doing research about cockroaches in Japan and Thailand will

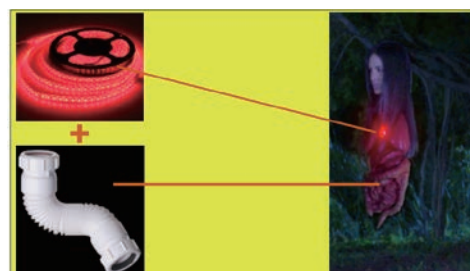


Fig. 4 To make the flying Krasue, Eyedropper Fill used an LED light and tube.



Fig. 5 To make project open source, Eyedropper Fill shared online information about making the Krasue drone and app.

probably soon enough find this funny story from the Japanese news. It's about some people in Hokkaido, in northern Japan, who had never seen a cockroach before and thought it was something cute to be kept as a pet. But in Thailand, the situation is very different and cockroaches are a massive problem. They are everywhere, even on the table of a restaurant. Sometimes if it rains hard, cockroaches might come in from the street and fly around in places where there are people.

In this way, the two contexts of Japan and Thai make for an intriguing contrast, so we wanted the audience to experience this from the point of view of a cockroach. How do you make a cockroach music video that feels like a video game? Initially, our imaginations soared and we contemplated having a fancy camera on a cart-like mount. But then we remembered the budget or lack thereof. This prompted us to seek out an alternative. We arrived at a mop and action camera. It is so simple that pretty much anyone can combine these two items to make the device.

We started shooting on the streets because we wanted to make some kind of contrast between the Thai street and Japanese street. But it's no longer just a film production now; it's an interactive 3D installation. We were collaborating with the locals and one of them even broke the mop-camera. We ended up using three cameras for the project because people kept breaking them!

The final music video demonstrates that local people can relate to an art project, not just one that is displayed in a gallery but also one that takes place with them on the streets. You can see in the music video that they really understood the concept. When we asked them to hurt the imaginary cockroach, they could totally get into it and the resulting music video integrates their contributions into the visual experience.

In addition to being a regular music video on YouTube, we also published it on a separate website so viewers could choose their own storylines and get different endings (Fig. 7). They can “play” the game many times and share it with their friends.

Researching and Sharing the State of Youth in Thailand Today

Our final case study today is *“Voice of Youth.”* This project was part of the Tiger Jams global music platform by Tiger Beer, who wanted us to make an interactive installation in a bar that shared the behavior of people gathered there for a party. Their target group was the younger generation—that is, people in their twenties and thirties (Fig. 8).

We conducted research about the target, which revealed some interesting things about the behavior of people in Thailand. After four years of junta rule since the military coup, people have become more and more addicted to social media. Young people told us about their feelings through posts on social networks like Facebook or Twitter. They explained their own feelings of depression and sadness; their feelings that they want to share about the state of democracy in the country. Politics and loneliness—these were the recurring topics we encountered as we



Fig. 6
Publicity image for the
music video *Game Over*



Fig. 7 Interactive screen from *Game Over*

trawled social media. We looked at a group like Rap Against Dictatorship, which comprises young people who rap and protest about politics in Thailand.

It wasn't only online research, either. We also did research at actual locations in Khaosan Road in central Bangkok, which is famous for its nightlife. This also makes it a great place to observe people. For example, local shops and bars have various kinds of signs and messages that tell us a lot about people and how they present themselves or interact with others. And we would see people texting each other a lot through their phones.

When it came to making the client installation, we wanted to share this pool of observations and information we had accumulated. We were inspired to build a space for free speech. We came up with a kind of colorful ten-meter message screen that displays questions for attendees to answer, either through a mobile app or by speaking directly into a microphone. These are the voices of the youth. This was also not just a one-off installation, but a roaming installation that can now be experienced at many places around Thailand.



Fig. 8 Young attendees at the *Voice of Youth* event



Eyedropper Fill | Bangkok-based Eyedropper Fill is a multimedia design company, specializing in moving image production and installation. It employs a transdisciplinary approach to experiment and collaborate across skills and media such as moving images, interactive design, exhibition design, and installation art. It aims to transform information into experiences that expand from the screen into tangible reality, and to immerse people in the moment. Along with its vision to push forward the realms of new media, it is also committed to educating, motivating, and inspiring young people by sharing the company's experiences and processes through workshops and talks at universities in Thailand.

<http://www.eyedropperfill.com>

The Evolution of Computers, and the Future of Architecture and Design

Keisuke Toyoda Architect / Co-founder of noiz

As an architect, Keisuke Toyoda actively incorporates elements of computational design into his design and production, in addition to pursuing research and consulting. The scope of his work traverses many disciplines, straddling not only architecture, but also product design, urbanism, sport, fashion, and art. Thanks to advances in digital technology, architecture has not only allowed us to access new techniques: the very dimensions that it deals with have shifted. Based on this, Toyoda discussed the new role and function of architects, who continue to propose integrated perspectives on the future of our information environments.



Keisuke Toyoda

Information, Object Attributes, and the Relationship Between the Two

My architecture firm, noiz, uses a process in its practice called computational design in order to explore the question of how the design of buildings, construction, and planning shifts when digital technologies enter the equation, as well as how our lifestyles also change in response.

When we use computers to design buildings, however, it is not just a matter of manipulating form: it involves dealing with various objects and relationships. And I feel that it is becoming less and less necessary for the output to take the form of so-called “architecture.” As a result, we have had an increasing number of opportunities to pursue collaborations with people in the fields of art, sound, fashion, and sports. Today, in addition to introducing our activities, I would like to talk about the current and future state of architecture in the context of information environments.

First, I would like to show you what we did for a presentation of new works by the fashion brand ANREALAGE in their 2017 A/W Collection at Paris Fashion Week. The designer proposed using robotic arms for this event, so we were responsible for figuring out how to control these robotic arms, and ideas for how to realize this. As the shape of cloth can be deformed and stretched, you could say that it is incompatible with a robotic arm. Cloth is also a rolled-up mass, however—a trait that led us to the idea of using resin to fix it in place, and then having the robotic arm shave it off. This allowed us to carve out something that resembles a layered map of polar coordinates (Figs. 1, 2). The sculptor Kohei Nawa participated in this project by helping us to create the form. Although what is cut off has the form of a garment, it is heavy and stiff. The resultant object has zero functionality as an article of clothing. In spite of this, is it made of cloth? Absolutely. The form of this piece raises fundamental questions about what fashion is, and what the act of wearing something means. For me, this project allowed us to take a renewed approach to fashion from

a perspective that exists outside of conventional wisdom (Fig. 3).

We were also commissioned by BAO BAO ISSEY MIYAKE to produce their shop windows. One of the client's proposals involved the use of a soft LED screen that could expand and contract, so we devised a program where the shape of the brand logo shifted autonomously on the screen. When wind generated by a fan installed below came into contact with the screen, it fluttered like a Japanese *noren* cloth curtain. At that very instant, a signal from an in-built code was sent, making it look as if the image was flying in the wind (Fig. 4). In other words, although there ought to have been no interaction between things and information, we succeeded in creating a situation where the image catches the wind, and flies up as a result. This project was an experiment in having the visual information of an image design a moment that felt haptic in some way.

Here, I would like to introduce a collaboration we did with the digital sound artist Kazuhiro Jo. Most artists who work with sound use a visual coding software called Max/MSP. At noiz, we also use visual coding when we need to create a certain form. The idea for this project emerged out of a half-joking conversation I had with Mr. Jo: we thought that we could create a form even if we converted sound into shape, and shape into sound. The result was an architectural work called *Flipmata* (2012), which was exhibited in Taipei as a piece of public art (Fig. 5).

The work picks up background noise in the city, gives it some logic using Max/MSP, and then converts these patterns into a physical form. This form consists of an opening and closing board pattern installed on top of the tiled wall of a building. *Flipmata* is a homage to digital technology: its opening and closing board pattern form also applies the logic of the simulation game *Conway's Game of Life*. The opening and closing pattern changes its form autonomously, giving rise to new patterns. In this way, the forms of these patterns are in turn transformed into sounds that are ultimately returned to the city. Through the intervention of technology and programs, sound and architecture, or cities and architecture, suddenly start to interact with each other. The moment that they are put onto a platform, the fellow

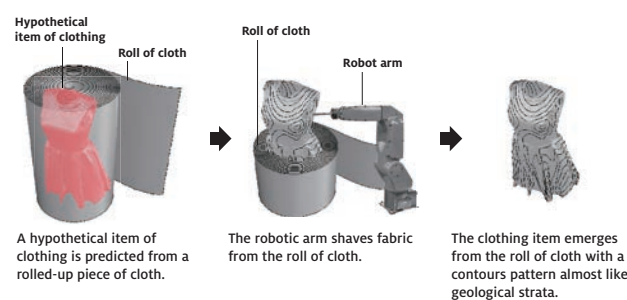


Fig. 1 Diagram showing how a robotic arm is used to shave off fabric from a roll of cloth to form an item of clothing. Courtesy of noiz



Fig. 2 Shaving a roll of cloth with a robot arm. Courtesy of noiz



Fig. 3 Roll from ANREALAGE 2017–18 A/W Paris Collection
Collaborators: ANREALAGE, Kohei Nawa
Photo: VOGUE JAPAN



Fig. 4 Autumn 2016 window display at BAO BAO ISSEY MIYAKE Matsuya Ginza
Collaborator: Teppei Nomoto
Photo: Yasuhiro Takagi

attributes of information and objects that were previously disconnected become linked to one another. In a sense, you could say that this work sought to deliberately accomplish this in an architectural context.

Although the stance that we occupy is more practical than artistic, we have experienced moments where the border between information and objects gradually becomes more ambiguous, the more projects we embark on. It is my hope that this will be something we can achieve in the context of our collaborative projects.



Fig. 5 noiz, *FLIPMATA* (2012) installation at National Taipei College of Business, Taipei, Taiwan
Collaborators: Kazuhiro Jo + Why-ixd
Photo: Kyle Yu

The Higher-Order World That Architects Deal With

Next, I would like to introduce *Morphing Furniture*, a project we undertook in Taipei more than ten years ago, as a concrete example of digital fabrication (Fig. 6). I am sure many of you who are designers may find this slide full of shapes that you recognize (Fig. 7). First up on the left is the *Panton Chair*, with Frank O. Gehry's *Wiggle Side Chair* behind it, and the *Zig-Zag Chair* at the back. In front on the right we have Eero Saarinen's *Tulip Chair*. If we take the cross-sectional profiles of famous chairs from around the world, past and present, and digitize them, we could customize your home by connecting these chairs using your preferred order, combination, quantity, and distance. In terms of the configuration of this project, we wrote a program, after which the computer uses a technology called morphing to extract all the cross sections one by one. This data is then sent to a nearby numerical control router by email. As long as you cut the sections in order and go through the holes in order to connect them, you can make any chair no matter how complicated its form may be. Although the result is a piece of furniture, it is not a mass-produced industrial product. Rather than mass production, you might call this mass customization.



Fig. 6 noiz, *Morphing Furniture* (2009)
Photo: Kyle Yu / Daici Ano



Fig. 7 noiz, *Morphing Furniture* (2009)
Photo: Kyle Yu / Daici Ano

Leaving aside the strict definition of computational design, thanks to the increased performance of computers since the 1990s, strange forms have finally become possible using digital technology, even in the architecture world. The only thing is that we didn't go so far as to realize these bizarre forms as actual objects at the time. Since the 2000s, with the development of digital fabrication, we are moving towards a situation where strange forms can be converted into strange data outputs, which can then be produced as objects.

What is interesting now in the 2010s is this: if your strangely shaped object no longer serves your purposes, it has now become possible to go back and fiddle with the original data, and create a different output all over again. Things that only flowed in one direction, whether due to causal relationships or the flow of time, have now come to constitute a dimension that

we can design. And it's not just the flow of time: the structure of something, its cost, the laws surrounding it, the materials that made it—all of this can be expressed in numbers. These things can now be described on a computer, and dealt with as a single dimension. In other words, while architects were supposed to deal with objects on a three-dimensional XYZ axis, they have had no choice but to become professionals who design composite entities of an overwhelmingly higher order.

That said, architects have probably had to address such causal relationships and higher orders for a long time. In my view, they relied on experience and instinct to deal with extraordinarily complex, muddled things and concepts that were difficult to share with others in an objective fashion. In contrast to this, thanks to digital technology, a feedback loop can be created whereby we describe a higher order of relationships, objectively output that, shape it into something as-is, then return to a causal relationship, and do it all over again. We have reached a point where it is possible to bring these things into the physical world using digital fabrication. The word "architecture" tends to be understood in terms of fixed, stationary, three-dimensional objects. However, as it became rapidly possible to address a higher order of things, the external composite body of causal relationships accompanied by a dynamic flow of information has now come to be considered as architecture. To put it another way: form is only a partial manifestation of all of this, and architects now have to address all of that information. Architecture now has to deal with scanning and sensing, or technologies that control group behavior.

However, the architecture world is a heavy and ponderous industry that is positively averse to the dynamic, the changeable, the ambiguous, and that which cannot be completely calculated. So where do we take our cues from? The movie and game industry.

If you look at a scene from the shoot of a Hollywood computer-animated film, for example, motion capture is used with the actors to produce the movement. In *Toy Story*, from the 1990s, the face patches were created by moving a slider to make angry or troubled facial expressions. Today, however, the capabilities of computer-generated physical simulation programs are astonishing. Adjusting all 10,000 sliders to create a smiling face exceeds the threshold of complexity and becomes impossible. Basically, it is much faster and more logical to use motion capture and get actors to perform. In any case, this is a cheaper input method, even if you were to use famous actors.

In a situation where we have to decide on the product number of the steel frame and each and every measurement on the so-called design drawing, how can we deal with the scale of architecture and cities that exceed this threshold value? If we twist a piece of *konnyaku* jelly, we can preserve a certain physical relationship at any point, and allow it to undergo a bizarre deformation. This task becomes difficult and laborious if you try to go by calculations: but all you have to do is buy some *konnyaku* for ¥50 (about 50 cents) and try twisting it around. In addition, in terms of the human body, we have now reached a point where the use of motion capture and skeletal and muscle simulations can generate movements that the person in question cannot perform by him or herself.

That said, although we pride ourselves on our capacity for technological development and creative problem-solving with respect to a visible object or target, we have a habit of giving up when it comes to the environment. Architecture can't be equipped with that many sensors, and we are not operating in a situation where we can perform scanning, sensing, and simulations with the help of actuators. There is a sense in which we have surrendered to the conventional wisdom that architecture is a stationary, three-dimensional object. But perhaps we don't need to make such a concession.

The Proliferation of Possibilities due to Technology

Recently, the myoelectric prosthesis has come much closer to becoming a practical reality. By wearing these two robotic arms as prostheses, the myoelectric sensors allow you to move a prosthesis just by thinking about it in your mind. With a certain level of training, it is

apparently possible to move the prosthesis by thinking, to have it take up a bottle of water and open the cap, allowing you to drink the water. One of the possibilities that lies beyond this is, for example, to be able to move a third or fourth arm attached somewhere else. There are possibilities that transcend what a normal human body is capable of. Your own arm might be attached to a door far from the body, so that it could open the door whenever someone comes along. In short, situations where the philosophical question of where your body and self, as well as the environment, begins and ends, is gradually becoming an ambiguous one due to the impact of real technologies.

For example, what would happen if I were able to turn off the lights in this room just by thinking about it? In that case, it might not only be me who has access to the lights. Everyone in this room might have that access. If so, it might become necessary for some kind of artificial intelligence to be installed in this building as an OS, so that the AI can assess the situation and automatically decide which person would have priority in each place. If it came to that, however, do architects have the know-how to ascertain which optimal structure, equipment, and system would allow us to control this situation? The answer is: not at all.

Going further, I think it is a real possibility that we will soon see offices where robots that move around by themselves will fetch the coffee. The only thing that will pose some difficulties is the fact that physical objects, for these robots, are dark matter that resist observation. Objects become acknowledged for the first time when digital data about them is provided. The moment the locations of the desks, chairs, and corridors are described to them digitally, these things become visible: the robots become aware of this environment. This digital agent might be the AI installed in the building, or an automated robot or vehicle. In order for this performance to be truly shared in common, however, this physical world first needs to be described and acknowledged from their perspective. That is to say: it is necessary to learn this perspective in the first place.

Today, we perceive the physical world as real, in addition to recognizing digital worlds like the Internet as another, parallel reality. This isn't all, however. Some believe that it may be necessary to create a third world—one in which digital agents recognize the physical world, physical agents like us humans recognize the digital one, and interactions can take place between this shared cluster of overlapping information and objects. I call this "common ground." If we do not create this common ground, this new world, that is neither digital nor physical, I believe that we are headed for a situation where neither recognition nor performance is possible, and which will not support a business platform.

Currently, we are trying to create an interactive *tatami* straw room mat. As opposed to the conventional 1:2 rectangular *tatami* mats laid out in an orthogonal fashion, our idea basically runs like this: if it isn't orthogonal, then it doesn't have to be a four-sided room. If we can obtain data through a 3D scan, we can create the patterns and turn them into a product, which can then be delivered anywhere in the world (Fig. 8).

At the moment, *tatami* mat makers are limited by the fact that they need to be relatively close to the client: the craftsperson actually brings along a tape measure to the site to take measurements in order to ensure accuracy. If all this can be integrated in terms of data, the whole world naturally becomes a potential market. What's more, it becomes possible to create customized solutions for rooms of any shape. Even a traditional industry like *tatami* mats can suddenly start to bring new value to the

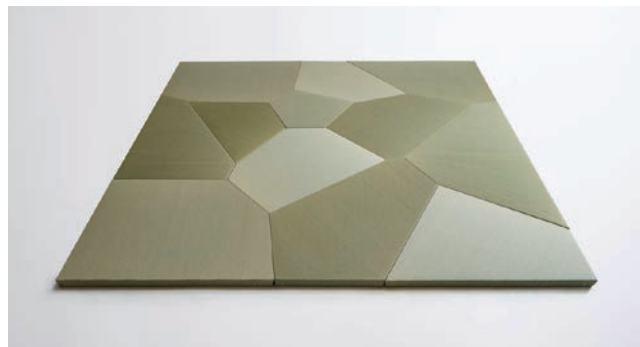


Fig. 8 TESSE (2019), created in collaboration with Kunieda Co., Ltd., a *tatami* mat manufacturer
Photo: Yasuhiro Takagi

table through the power of design and technology.

As these issues begin to unravel—shifts in this kind of structure, and how the environment as a whole will change accordingly—there will be possibilities that allow us to think more freely. This would be a situation in which the “common ground” I just mentioned becomes consolidated. In my view, it ought to be possible to gradually realize an environment that allows for implementation, even if every single environment in our daily life has not been appropriately adjusted.

Finally, I would just like to mention the 2025 World Expo that will take place in Osaka, the venues for which I have been involved in planning for a long time. Let’s say that there is a dispute between countries over the sites where their pavilions are to be located. There may be stronger or weaker countries, some who would prefer not to be next to a certain country, a preference for the three Baltic states to be together, or an increase or decrease in the number of participants. Such issues need to be dealt with in an interactive manner. In addition, if the border between immobile buildings and cars and other means of transport that can be moved to a certain extent becomes ambiguous, then the city as a whole ought to also shift in a dynamic way. The design know-how that can answer the question of what sort of technological implementation is possible, and how the digital, physical, and information worlds can yield a better performance, however, is not something that the architecture world possesses yet. We are at a point where we are working to accomplish further technological progress that will prove indispensable for these tasks.



Keisuke Toyoda | Born in 1972, Keisuke Toyoda holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Tokyo (1996) and a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture (2002). His career has involved stints at Tadao Ando Architect & Associates (Osaka, 1996–2000) and SHoP Architects (New York, 2002–2006). He founded noiz / architects with Jia-Shuan Tsai in 2007, based in both Tokyo and Taipei. Kosuke Sakai joined noiz as a partner from 2016. Toyoda actively incorporates computational design into his blueprints, production, research, and consulting, and implements these methods across various fields, freely shifting between architecture, product design, urban planning, and fashion.
<https://noizarchitects.com>

Arranging Nodes: Forming a Virtual Community

tomad Organizer, DJ / Head of Maltine Records

Founding the netlabel Maltine Records in 2005, tomad has overseen over 170 music releases and attracted attention both at home and abroad. With a particular focus on dance music, he has also worked proactively with overseas artists and organized events in Manila, China, and New York. In his presentation, tomad discussed his interpretation of a label as a node connecting artists, music, and events while responding fluidly to the environments and infrastructures surrounding music that have continued to change ever since the emergence of social media.



tomad

A Netlabel Launched in High School

Being neither an artist nor a critic, I would like to use this opportunity to explore what I have done until now through the record label Maltine Records, including its relationship with the Internet.

To start with the obvious: What is Maltine Records? At its simplest, it is a netlabel where you can download music for free. Moreover, it is a web platform where you can enjoy albums and EPs of tracks by various artists (Fig.1).

I founded Maltine Records back in 2005, 14 years ago. Back then, I was a first grader in high school and had created some music with my friends but, not really having the money to make a CD, I was wondering how I could release what we had done. I then noticed that there was this other, quite simple format available, whereby a record label that I liked was operating as a net-label, allowing people to click a link and download tracks uploaded to the website as a MP3 file. If I were just to rent a server, I realized, I could also start doing this tomorrow, so I straightaway tried it out. I first uploaded and released the music I made with my friends.



Fig.1 Maltine Records website (<http://maltinerecords.cs8.biz/>)

It was at this time that I more or less decided the direction of the music I would handle as a label. It would have the two elements of dance music and pop music. Back then, I was listening to a lot of post-1990s techno and house. But among the music that contained a mixture of this and Japanese pop music—or let's say, dance tracks mixed with the elements of melody and singing—there didn't seem to be anything that matched my tastes. As such, I based the music in principle on a mix of these two “colors” and decided to release as much as I could.

Initially I was releasing my friends' music but then artists who liked what I was doing kept on coming, with the result that today the label has released 170 works and has around 200 artists.

The basic way in which we release music is through MP3 files, though since 2012 and 2013 we have also been making our music available on SoundCloud and YouTube. In addition, we have issued a few physical releases at particular junctures, such as our first CD, *MP3 Killed The CD Star?*, which we put out in 2010 to mark our 50th release (Fig. 2). It included a CD featuring a DJ mix of Maltine Records music as well as an empty CD-R. Anyone who bought the CD release could then download the original tracks from the Maltine Records website and write the data onto the CD-R via their computer to complete the product. Based on our experiences as a netlabel distributing content online, we made this kind of physical release with the aim of demolishing the privileges latent within the format of the CD as well as those of the music industry attendant on that. In 2015 and as our 100th release, we produced a book called *Maltine Book: Maltine Records 2005–2015 10th Anniversary Issue* in partnership with Switch Publishing, bringing together the ten years of the label's activities (Fig. 3).

Our output also includes various items of merchandise as well as regular label events. The biggest to date has been “Tokyo,” which was held at Liquidroom in Ebisu in 2014. It featured a lineup of artists from home and abroad, attracting 1,000 people (Fig. 4). In this way, Maltine Records is involved in making many kinds of things with a focus on music.

Differentiation as a Netlabel

As I have continued to run my netlabel, I have arrived at a definition that seems particularly important for me: a netlabel is not a business. In the first place, my motivation for starting the label was not a commercial one, and I am rather now working with an emphasis on shaping Maltine Records as a brand or as a name.

I would like to quote from *Maltine Book*, in which I wrote briefly about this point.

“Though we are all ‘labels,’ there is nonetheless a difference in terms of direction when compared with the major record labels. The latter invest capital in artists that they think



Fig. 2 CD album cover for *MP3 Killed The CD Star?* (released August 4th, 2010)



Fig. 3 *Maltine Book: Maltine Records 2005–2015 10th Anniversary Issue* (Switch Publishing, 2015)



Fig. 4 Maltine Records event “Tokyo” at LIQUIDROOM in Ebisu (2014)

will sell at some point in time, using their know-how to build buzz, sell CDs, and make profit. On the other hand, Maltine Records affixes itself to artists regardless of whether or not they will bring us profit, based on a consistent attitude and identity. And doing so forms an vague overall image associated with the label's name."

(*Maltine Book*, "Column: She is My Dream Girl," October 2014, "Hotel," 2015, p. 119)

While this hasn't always been the vision from the very beginning up until the present, this way of thinking has nonetheless solidified as I have continued my activities as a netlabel.

To put this a little more concisely and comprehensibly, I arrived at the idea that what I am doing is organizing a kind of "virtual community." It is the image of a zone or territory where various things, from artists to music and audience events, are intersecting. The goal of my activities is that the attitudes and identity of Maltine Records emerges through our releases and events. If the "territory" of Maltine Records then exists within the connections between people and between the different music releases, then it surely follows that other labels also have their own respective territories. As such, I am conscious of the question of through what kinds of releases we can differentiate Maltine Records from other labels. And when, for instance, a scheduled release arrives, we also spend time pondering how we can expand the "color" of the label. This is more or less the way that a netlabel regularly operates.

And it seems to me that these kinds of activities are best described as "arranging a node." A node generally refers to a point at which lines connect, or a point of contact in a network, but I think that humans can also be nodes, as can the things that artists create, and even something like an incident or event. By arranging these "nodes," by intersecting various elements in parallel without giving one or the other any special treatment, the "virtual community" that is a record label emerges.

I am constantly prioritizing the question of what kind of identity the Maltine Records virtual community should maintain in order to build the best position as a label. When running the day-to-day operations of the netlabel, be it deciding the next release, thinking about the content of an event, or considering who to collaborate with, this has become the most important point.

Netlabels Boosted by the Spread of Social Media

At the risk of shifting gears somewhat, I will now talk more generally about the situation for netlabels. The "Japanese Netlabel Map" collects together the activities of the major netlabels in Japan from when the first one appeared in 2001 up until 2015 (Fig. 5). It is organized like a chronology mapping out each of the netlabel's trajectories, categorized according to musical genre like J-Pop, techno, or noise. What is most striking is that the number of netlabels rapidly increases from around 2010.



Fig. 5 Chart mapping changes in netlabel genres and websites across time (Akami Records, "Japanese Netlabel Map," *Maltine Book: Maltine Records 2005–2015 10th Anniversary Issue*, Switch Publishing, 2015, pp. 130–1).

Why did this happen? I tried to think about this in my own way as someone who has been running a netlabel since 2005. From the 1990s through to around the start of the 2000s, we shared music among our close circle of friends or when fans of a certain type of music came together, or through online forums and bulletin boards. But from around 2010, social media became more widespread and used by a greater variety of people. Take Twitter, for instance. I

can announce some information about a music release and it will gradually spread, retweeted by friends and then friends of friends. This kind of infrastructure in which music can be disseminated online by people who are not essentially well-known figures was basically not available until about 2010. To me, then, it makes sense that netlabels in Japan would increase so much from around then.

Going back to the term I proposed earlier, I think that the spread of social media has suddenly made visible the networks formed by nodes. Of course, with a physical release, we were always able to view the relationship that exists between artists and music. But it's also different: you had to go to a record store and spend time looking for things, and it was often hard to find the connections between certain artists or where certain music figured within a label's lineup. But to take Twitter again, the relationship between artists and listeners is visible and you can immediately check how many followers an artist has, and so on. Listeners can share recommendations and impressions about music with each other; artists, too, can share information about how to make music. Increasing numbers of artists are directly communicating with listeners in this way. Thanks to the spread of social media, these kinds of small, individual networks previously difficult to see have become visible. Accordingly, the networks have grown and the number of netlabels risen, leading to an increase in the number of people who actually make and introduce music.

However, this sudden visualization of social relations also led to a kind of congestion of networks in around 2015, whereby people seemed to feel like it was now a little hard to breathe. It was like we had stopped seeking out new kinds of encounters online, as if we were isolated in a so-called "filter bubble" where we only consume information that we already like and increasingly found it harder to come into contact with people, ideas, or tastes different from our own.

Here is a concrete example of the influence social media has had on music. On SoundCloud, individual artists can release their music, which listeners can then follow and fellow artists or listeners can "like" or add comments. The system works by clicking the "like" button to show your appreciation of the music, so good tracks see their number of "likes" grow and grow. But at a certain point, we reach the stage where everyone is just making music in order to acquire "likes." This then means that more individual elements or sounds that are very new don't attract a positive response. The end result is that only music that is easy to understand and which has a kind of pop sound gets noticed. It feels like the young people who want to make new music are right now all aspiring toward similar trends. What I sense from running my netlabel and being involved with various kinds of artists is that while the Internet has certainly made it much easier for people to release and disseminate music, we are also in situation where music and expression has become more homogeneous.

It is these circumstances that led the online music magazine *Pitchfork* to publish an article in 2015 called "PC Music, Hipster Runoff and the Year of the Internet Hangover."* "These concepts felt sexy and vital in the early 2010s," the writer Meaghan Garvey asserts, "but in 2015, 'digital maximalism' isn't so much a limitless frontier as our exhausting day-to-day reality." So does that mean that we all got social media fatigue around 2015?

In fact, it was around 2015 that the Maltine Records scene started to see its listeners increase as more and more people heard about the label through social media. Other netlabels also increased their releases and listeners, leading to a rise in the number of artists involved in this output. This is also the time when Maltine Records held its event "Tokyo" simultaneously across two venues and attracting 1,000 people. The event felt very liberated, as if the lines between artists and listeners or fans have melted away, where lots of artists gathered and came onstage together. Being a "virtual community," unlike the regular music industry, it seems as if Maltine Records could get past the issue of social media fatigue and expand a new "node" by holding an event in the actual, offline world.

Linking up with Cities in Asia

As various nodes appear, Maltine Records unconsciously and arbitrarily makes connections with other countries, such as by holding events in London in 2015 and New York in 2016. It was incredibly fun to see our fan base spreading like this, though being so heavily based online also meant it seemed like listeners and fans were increasing without it feeling real. With expansion premised on social media connections, you can almost predict how things will develop next and so I began to lose interest on a personal level.

It was at this point that I was contacted by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, asking me if I wanted to do research on artists in Asia. At that time I had no clue about the music scene in other Asian countries, but I felt like I would find something if I went precisely because I was so ignorant. By coincidence, I was just then curious about a Beijing-based label called Do Hits, around which there seemed to be kind of hybrid scene that was neither global nor local. As such, I decided to take part in the research survey.

After the survey, I was also involved in organizing an actual event. I held an event in Manila with the local netlabel Buwan Buwan Collective, which was then followed by another event at Shibuya's WWW X that brought together people from Indonesia, Manila, and Taiwan, and even further afield from America and Canada (Figs. 6, 7). Having learned that there are like-minded labels in Manila and Jakarta, I now want to arrange nodes between the cities and stay connected and aware of one another. I think this will lead to new kinds of encounters that will stimulate the imaginations of artists. At this stage, I still don't know if we can actually do it or not, but this is the sort of modest activity I hope to continue in the future.

In March 2019, I will go to Jakarta and work with artists from Manila, Jakarta, and Tokyo to create a piece of music collaboratively. I am also hoping to hold more events in Southeast Asia as well as maintain a state of constant communication whereby we can remain in touch and regularly engage in dialogue while nonetheless retaining each group's individual autonomy.

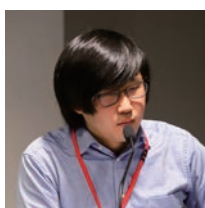
*Meaghan Garvey, "PC Music, Hipster Runoff and the Year of the Internet Hangover," *Pitchfork*, May 26, 2015 (<https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/773-pc-music-hipster-runoff-and-the-year-of-the-internet-hangover/>)



Fig. 6 "x-pol: Buwan Buwan x Maltine" (XX:XX, Manila), organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 2017
Photo: Tamio Iwaya (GraphersRock)



Fig. 7 "BORDERING PRACTICE" (WWW X, Tokyo), organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 2018
Photo: Jun Yokoyama



tomad | Launching the online record label Maltine Records in 2005 when he was just 15 years old, tomad has 170 releases to his name. Maltine Records has gained attention as a leading symbol of the new dance-pop music scene and as an icon of tomad's generation in Tokyo. He has held events in Manila, Shenzhen, and New York, and has also produced songs for foreign artists. In 2015, he published *Maltine Book* (Switch Publishing), bringing together the activities of the label to commemorate the tenth anniversary of its founding.
<http://maltinerecords.cs8.biz>

Discussion and Q&A

Ei Wada + Lu Yang + Eyedropper Fill + Keisuke Toyoda + tomad | Minoru Hatanaka (moderator)

Redefining Technology

Minoru Hatanaka: We will now have a discussion and Q&A session with today's speakers. The first part of our program focused on the theme of creativity in the age of the Internet. In the speakers' presentations, we saw how the Internet is directly implicated in each of their activities as a matter of course. We were also introduced to individual examples where technology has expanded the scope of their activities, as well as modes of thinking premised on the advancement of network technologies.

While Marshall McLuhan said that "the medium is the message," the technology and media that we deploy can also draw out new forms of content and meaning. The question of what "medium" means is already implicit in everyone's practices, and we also saw examples of discovering a sense of festivity or religious values through the act of redefining technology. What does each of you think it means to redefine technology in terms of the fields that you are active in?

Eyedropper Fill: For us, the act of redefining things that one is accustomed to using on a regular basis is a matter of making something new from what already exists, or else making use of these things in a different fashion so that something better can emerge. We create new media through the act of redefining technology. In that sense, you could say that we are building new visions and artworks in this way.

Keisuke Toyoda: For me, it is definitely not a straightforward case of technology worship, where one can leave all decisions to so-called artificial superintelligence. These days, when you get into a taxi, advertisements appear on the small monitor in front of the seat. It's probably performing some kind of facial recognition: whenever I get in, all I see are ads for recruiting and job sites. Just like TV ads, though, I also want to see some advertising images that aren't targeting me. I think we are currently in a situation where our experiences differ even if we occupy the same space, and where a diversity of choice is disappearing before we even realize it as a result of technology. This is why I believe that the value of things that demonstrate a particular worldview in a concrete way by being based on a certain judgment, even though its foundations are unclear—such as you find in the activities of everyone here today—will in fact increase.

Ei Wada: As for me, I use technology in ways that deviate from what you find in instructions and user manuals, or technologies that have outlived their original role and function—which is, I suppose, in itself a kind of redefinition. I call this "shedding," in the sense of a snake shedding its skin. When you have shed your original function and become stark naked, the essential interest and charm of that technology becomes apparent. I'm talking about things like electricity, radio waves, electrons, and electromagnetic forces. Ultimately, you could say that working with these technologies is a matter of reverse engineering. Or rather, the question of how things come into this universe, through what sort of mechanisms, and how they unfold, is really the result of a repeated process of grasping these things through human hands. Then the next stage becomes a matter of understanding why something exists where it does: of fantasizing about an Earth that transcends a particular region, a universe that transcends the Earth, invisible worlds. This is a worldview that could also be found in Lu Yang's presentation, I believe. In my case, the mood is festive, whereas hers is a vision of hell.

Lu Yang: For me, technology is merely a tool. It is something that has always been present, as a response to a particular era, but I think the contemporary age has assigned it overdue

importance. Technology exists for the sake of humanity: it is nothing more than that. On the other hand, I believe it is possible to establish and redefine ghosts, spirits, and religious worldviews on the basis of various influences, operations, and relationships. As Wada mentioned, there are characters and things in my work that go back and forth between different worldviews. We are too locked into a three-dimensional state. For an artist, it is a relatively straightforward matter to re-examine reality by breaking free of the three-dimensional world.



From left: Minoru Hatanata, Ei Wada, Lu Yang, Eyedropper Fill, Keisuke Toyoda, tomad

Creativity in the Internet Age, and “Locality” in This Context

Hatanaka: Some of you mentioned how the act of redefining technology serves to expand the world, and create a new worldview. In his presentation, tomad also talked about how he aspired toward a musical practice that transcends the local or regional so as not to be confined to a fixed place and environment. Electronic music, in particular, is said to be a genre of music with scant regard for national attributes, for instance. On the other hand, because electronic music exists in a global context, the activities of its musicians also demonstrate the local and regional disparities and the sense of individuality that unintentionally arise from this music.

For me, the computational design in Toyoda’s practices is using computers to break through the limits of human thinking. Is it possible, however, to incorporate unique local elements?

tomad: In terms of the music scene, the quality of songs has definitely improved as a result of technological advancements on the production side. On the other hand, the enhanced level of the technology that we can deploy means that everyone now sounds more or less the same. So where do these artists differ from one another? I would say that the differences come from things like individual fantasies and trivial, insignificant memories—perhaps you can call this a kind of locality or a regional character. We are in a situation where differences in individual character become apparent precisely because the Internet environment has made technology flat.

Toyoda: I grew up in an area that had the feel of an archetypal planned “new town,” where there was nothing but right-angled, man-made structures. Just on the opposite side of the national highway was an old fishing village, where I really sensed the accumulated layers of history, and an atmosphere suffused with the thoughts and memories of all sorts of people. Even if you were able to create an architectural copy of that village, an individual designer wouldn’t be able to design these collective accumulations. This was also one of the motivations that led me to start working with computational design. Artists have talents and abilities that cannot be fully explained, and the results might be sloppy. That said, this situation is not reproducible. If there was the possibility of an approach that could take a more technical direction, I feel that it would lie in digital technology. If we could use computational design to realize things with a sense of locality—by which I mean a strong sense of an accumulation of old vestiges, so to speak—this would be an approach that can be calculated. And I feel it would be interesting in terms of how this could be shared with society.

The Relationship Between Artistic Creativity and Politics

Hatanaka: Let's now take some questions from the audience.

Q1 Eyedropper Fill talked about art education in Thailand. What sort of education do you think will be important in the future?

Eyedropper Fill: We operate on the premise that Thai culture itself, not just our art education, is extremely closed and parochial. If you teach Asian culture, for example, it's only about Asian culture, with no exchange with or input from anything else. If it's technology, then you only teach technology. What we try to do is to close that gap. We get scientific fields to try to understand art, to share knowledge, to collaborate. In all these things I think it is important to make use of the Internet.

Our dynamism comes from demonstrating our adaptability more than ever before. In the future, media art will take on the status of a tradition. Then the things used in media art will be nothing more than tools that need renewing. Our practice is based on this important message: that creativity ought to be constantly renewed and rejuvenated.

Q2 Whereas Eyedropper Fill and Lu Yang spoke about topics related to the politics in their own countries, the three Japanese artists did not address political issues at all. Does politics influence artistic production?

Wada: Although I don't address current affairs directly, I do think that there is a political significance embedded in my own mental state, or in the act of creating virtual hometowns and places. Strange parallel worlds appear where tradition and the digital collide with each other. I fantasize that this situation might become a political experiment. In the meantime, I delude myself into thinking that we might see the emergence of communities based on a concept other than the nation-state and the citizen, like nations that exist online.

Toyoda: One of the indices that we have in our practice centers on the cultivation of a terrain, so to speak, that emerges out of a set of relationships or mechanics different from what came before. In Japan today, for instance, we are seeing a situation where people don't trust the national system—or rather, they are quietly resisting it.

tomad: For me, I tend to want to create spaces through music where politics doesn't become an issue. I think it's also important to have spaces where you can escape. Bringing politics into music is something that you can do to convey a message, but for me, the politics in my mind has to do with a certain reversal, which allows you to intentionally opt to maintain a certain distance from it.

Hatanaka: Up until now, there was a certain brand of art that also constituted a means of articulating resistance against politics. Even if an openly political position wasn't apparent, the act of proposing alternative designs for systems could be said to constitute a kind of political approach.

Q3 I would like to pose the next question to Mr. Toyoda. Famous designers have a certain authorial identity. With the development of AI technology, however, when the optimization of things in accordance with mass production and the popular tastes of the masses becomes a given, will we see a dwindling necessity for designers? How do you think this situation will pan out in the future?

Toyoda: Previously, design was a matter of demonstrating something through objects. For instance, in addition to designing the form of things, computational design can also be deployed to think about models of logic or the processes themselves that generate these forms, while also allowing us to think in parallel about the aesthetics of why they are beautiful. The scope of these meta-attributes gradually expands, along with the domains that can deal with these

things, and the corresponding choices. Many people often ask the question: “Will the use of AI lead to a dwindling number of occupations?” That number will probably decrease—at least in terms of “occupations” corresponding to the value systems in the world as we know it today. If we create AI while also educating people about it at the same time, it also ought to lead to an explosion of professions involved in new creative pursuits around this phenomenon. It’s just that we can’t see this happening yet. I am quite certain that a new wave of professional skills and values is coming.

Q4 The speakers at this discussion taught me a lot about the idea of diversity as a result of the digital. Could you perhaps each mention one keyword that connects the idea of digital technology to creativity? Personally, words like “chaos” and “complex systems” come to mind. What does everyone think?

tomad: The field I deal with is music, so rather than the rational elements, I think that it is important for individual beliefs and fantasies, or worldviews espoused by a certain person, to continue to exist, even as the digital intervenes.

Toyoda: For me, digital technology transforms values. When these values completely leave the realm of the world we know, we are no longer able to even acknowledge those values as such, and neither are we able to read them. I think it is important to forge some sort of shared narrative while effecting a gradual transformation of these values through a measured departure—halfway outside our zone of familiarity, for example. The overly technical fails to hold one’s interest, I think.

Eyedropper Fill: To us, digital technology is merely a medium for discovering creativity. The most vital thing is human sensibility. What we would like the audience to take away from our work is a feeling of inspiration, and a sense of taste.

Lu: Our generation is incredibly blessed. Those who make digital artworks, in particular, live in a well-equipped environment right from the start, and are very lucky in that sense. Take myself, for instance: when one painting is finished, that isn’t the end. Thanks to computers, you can do all sorts of processing and manipulation really quickly, and at a low cost. Even as a beginner, regardless of whether you have money or not, you can easily make art that uses computers, and show it online right away.

It’s not just the environment in which we create—it’s the same with our human networks. Twenty years ago, a social network of personal connections was extremely important. One hundred years ago, it was necessary to spend a month building up your connections, learning the methods used to create your work, and coming and going from the place where you were creating. Today, though, you can establish your own networks just through social media.

Wada: For me, “digital” used to refer to an approach that allowed you to describe everything that existed in the physical world using only two numbers, 0 and 1. On the other hand, if you wanted to convey those 0s and 1s, you also had to describe them in the physical world. There was always a sense of wavering, and two layers—a digital one and a physical one—were necessary. This is something totally fascinating to me.

Hatanaka: I took Wada’s last remark to mean that the digital and physical worlds are always giving feedback to each other. Accordingly, one cannot just rely on digital technology moving forward: feedback from or to the physical world is going to be necessary whatever the case. For me, this is perhaps where the “digital” really comes into existence.

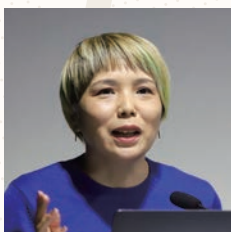
We’ve just about run out of time, so I will close the discussion here.

[Session 2]

Producing New Forms of Expression

The phenomenon of “international production” continues to expand, thanks to collaborations and the formation of networks between various specialists that transcend nations, languages, and artistic categories. Session 2 looked at the situation in Japan and abroad in terms of how exhibitions and music-related projects are disseminating new forms of artistic expression.

Moderator & Speaker



Kodama Kanazawa

Independent curator /
Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial
Affairs, Towada Art Center [Japan]

After working for 12 years in public art museums in Japan such as Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Kodama Kanazawa began working independently in 2013. From 2017, she has also served as Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at Towada Art Center in Aomori, Japan. Her recent curatorial projects include “Yuko Mohri: Assume That There Is Friction and Resistance” (Towada Art Center, 2018), “CHILDHOOD: Another banana day for the dream-fish” (Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2018), “Rafaël Rozendaal: GENEROSITY” (Towada Art Center, 2018), and KENPOKU ART 2016 (multiple sites, Ibaraki Prefecture, 2016).

<https://kodamakanazawa.com>

Speakers

dj sniff

Turntablist, DJ, Curator [Japan]

Riar Rizaldi

Artist, Researcher [Indonesia]

Resisting the Mainstream: The Internet, Experience, and Reproduction

Kodama Kanazawa Independent curator / Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center

In the second part of the symposium, Shanghai-based independent curator Kodama Kanazawa assumed the role of moderator, and introduced a number of exhibitions that she curated featuring new media art or reproducible works of art. In her presentation, Kanazawa discussed a kind of art that departs from the trends and movements of modern and contemporary art history in Japan, the creativity that emerges from the relationship between art and technology, and the potential they possess.



Kodama Kanazawa

What One Has Seen, and What One Has Not

I am a freelance contemporary art curator as well as, since 2017, the Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at Towada Art Center. I was originally an assistant curator at the Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto before moving to the Kawasaki City Museum as curator in 2006, and became independent in 2013. I am currently based in Shanghai while also working in Japan. I have also curated exhibitions of works related to new media art and the Internet.



Fig.1 Installation view of "Yuichi Yokoyama—I am depicting time: Complete Records of Neo Manga" (2010, Kawasaki City Museum)

Today, I would like to speak briefly about my previous experiences as well as my interests and concerns as a curator, based on my time spent living and working abroad, and the exhibitions I have curated of artists who work with Internet-related themes.

In 2010, I curated an exhibition by Yuichi Yokoyama called "Yuichi Yokoyama—I am depicting time: Complete Records of Neo Manga" at the Kawasaki City Museum (Fig.1). Yokoyama depicts the visions he sees through the format of manga. He is interested less in exhibiting his work than in publishing it as manga: this is how his work can take the form of a book that costs only something like ¥1,000 (about \$10), and thus reach a wider audience. Yokoyama also makes paintings, but he sees this as a hobby. "I find it such a shame when a work becomes the property

of a collector and fails to see the light of day,” Yokoyama has said. “It’s much more exciting for me when my work is published in the form of manga and becomes circulated.”

This exhibition was a collaboration with Torafu Architects. We installed tables to create two circuit-like structures so that visitors would be able to read the story in a certain order. Visitors moved horizontally one step at a time while looking at the original illustrations on the tables. As they walked around the perimeter of the circular table, the surrounding scenery changed. For this exhibition, an effort was made to produce an experience while simultaneously creating a device that would immerse the viewer in an artistic world.

Subsequently, I pursued graduate studies at the Royal College of Art, London. For our final assignment, my classmates and I were divided into teams and asked to produce an exhibition. Although these teams were formed with people with whom you got along, all the Asians stuck together: my team consisted of a Singaporean, a Chinese, and a Korean-Brazilian whose parents had moved from South Korea to Brazil.

The resultant exhibition, “Whose Game Is It?,” was a very playful affair. As our budget was insufficient to ship Lee Wen’s *Ping-Pong Go Round*, a work that allows you to play table tennis from multiple directions, we created a version ourselves by hand with the permission and direction of the artist, making for an extremely memorable experience (Fig.2). As there were also many other works based on the theme of audience participation, our exhibition felt completely different from those of the other teams.

After that, I returned to Japan, and co-curated “Spectrum: Examining Today, Searching for the Future” (2015) with Yoshie Ota, a curator of at Spiral, an exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Spiral in Aoyama, Tokyo. Four artists participated, one of whom was Yuko Mohri. Although Mohri’s practice is what you might call “new media art,” by deploying a number of devices to transform invisible energies such as electricity or electromagnetism, her work demonstrates the various forms of energy that exist around us (Fig.3).

Takashi Kuribayashi’s chandelier work was also excellent. Seemingly beautiful at first glance, it was actually made up of glass words: these words are drawn from the text of the letter that Einstein had written to then-President Roosevelt, seeking permission to develop the atomic bomb—extremely political content (Fig.4). As the words are inverted, one has to turn around and read the shadows that they cast. In this way, we curated an exhibition related to what is visible and invisible, what one has seen, and what one has not.

In 2016, I worked as the curator for KENPOKU ART 2016, a sprawling art festival in Ibaraki,



Fig.2 Lee Wen, *Ping-Pong Go Round* (1998/2015). Installation view of “Whose Game Is It?” (2015, Royal College of Art, London), co-curated by Jennifer KY Lam, Hena Lee, Yingting Xie, and Kodama Kanazawa
Photo: Marcos Sebastián

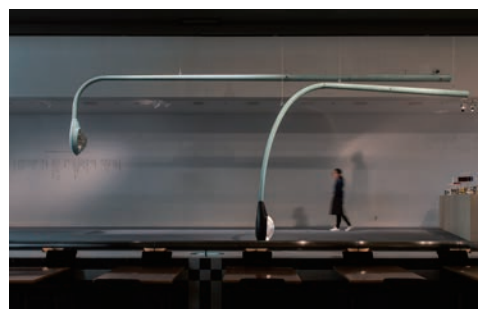


Fig.3 Yuko Mohri, *Urban Mining: Sea* (2015). Installation view of “Spectrum: Examining Today, Searching for the Future” (2015, Spiral)
Photo: Nobutada Omote. Courtesy of SPIRAL/Wacoal Art Center



Fig.4 Takashi Kuribayashi, *Vortex* (2015). Installation view of “Spectrum: Examining Today, Searching for the Future” (2015, Spiral)
Photo: Nobutada Omote. Courtesy of SPIRAL/Wacoal Art Center

Japan. Although the scope of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale is also fairly considerable, KENPOKU ART was held over an area twice as large. Fumio Nanjo, director of the Mori Art Museum, served as director, while the curation was handled by Yukiko Shikata and myself.

This art festival was filled with an experimental spirit. There were works produced by teams selected via an art hackathon, which brought together 60 people chosen through an open call. First, improvised teams were formed, with various experts in them. Ideas for works were considered over four days, presentations were given, and three teams were then chosen to actually show their work. So this was a test of one's physical ability to come up with ideas. One example was a work involving soap bubbles suspended for a long time in the air inside a glass bowl, which was produced collaboratively by a glass artisan, a physics researcher, and artists working with video, space, and music (Fig. 5).

KENPOKU ART 2016 also featured the work of Internet artist Rafaël Rozendaal, who creates websites as artworks—or rather, makes moving paintings. On his website are many works, which he then takes out into the streets of the city during events. With Nissan as a sponsor, Rozendaal loaded a projector onto one of their electric cars and, using it as a power source, went out into the streets to make projections on buildings.

One of the speakers yesterday, Ei Wada, also participated in KENPOKU ART, as he mentioned in his presentation. Hitachi City, where Wada has a workshop, is home to the headquarters of the eponymous home appliance manufacturer. Hitachi's former researchers as well as the general public gathered at Wada's workshop to develop musical instruments using home appliances for the duration of the festival, practicing on them, and even giving performances during the closing party. This concert was something quite special, with a performance of Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" using instruments made out of electric fans.

In February 2018, we held the "Rafaël Rozendaal: Generosity" exhibition at Towada Art Center. I was surprised to hear that this was his first solo exhibition at a museum, and came to the conclusion that Rozendaal, who exhibits his work online, had not generally been seen as an artist who shows in museums. At this exhibition, by projecting so-called "moving images" using eight projectors, Rozendaal's website artworks gave the audience the impression of having entered into a website (Fig. 6).

Currently on view is a solo exhibition by Yuko Mohri, "Assume That There Is Friction and Resistance." This is also Mohri's first solo exhibition at a museum. Within the installation are moving sculptures and a spiral staircase that goes round and round (Fig. 7). These works are made to show how invisible energies envelop the spaces that surround us.



Fig. 5 Shogo Abiru (sculptor), Sakura Kai (designer), Jiro Hashimoto (musician), Mafumi Hishida (scientist), Masaru Mizuochi (engineer), and Yuma Yanagisawa (programmer), *Interfering Floating Bodies* (2016).

Installation view of KENPOKU ART 2016.
Photo: Keizo Kioku. Courtesy of KENPOKU ART 2016

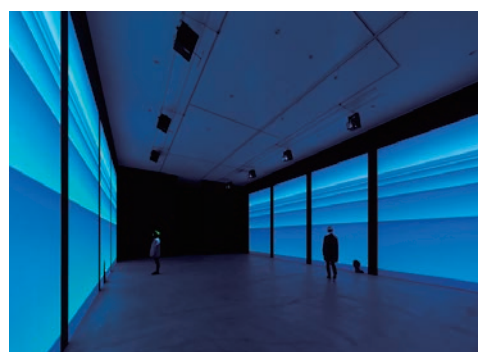


Fig. 6 Installation view of "Rafaël Rozendaal: GENEROSITY" (2018, Towada Art Center) Photo: Kuniya Oyamada



Fig. 7 Installation view of "Yuko Mohri: Assume That There Is Friction and Resistance" (2018, Towada Art Center) Photo: Kuniya Oyamada

For September 2019, we are planning a solo exhibition by AKI INOMATA, who is known for her hermit crab works with shells made using a 3D printer.

The Internet as Absolutely Necessary for Realizing Exhibitions

If we think about the relationship between ourselves and the Internet, which is also the theme of this symposium, I would say that it is obviously a very important tool. This situation whereby I can live in Shanghai while also being able to direct curatorial affairs at a museum in Aomori has been made possible by the Internet. Basically, I work using email and Skype, in addition to Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Line, WhatsApp, and Slack. We communicate using a variety of platforms and can create a single workplace, so it is clear that the Internet is vital as a tool.

When we work with an Internet artist like Rafaël Rozendaal, I also think that there is an extremely intimate relationship between the Internet and ourselves, in the sense that we are supporting the creation of an artist who is inspired by the technologies of a new era.

There is another thing that has occurred to me. Even if I work with new media artists, my professional expertise does not become deeper, nor do I become better versed in that particular field. And it is not the case that I want to somehow showcase these new media artists in an art context, either. Rather, I observe various practices that I think really need to be shown, at this present moment, from various perspectives, and then offer these artists the opportunity to exhibit with us. For instance, the next exhibition at Towada Art Center, based on the theme of community art, will feature works that are different from new media art and Internet-related practices.

In view of all this, I feel that I have always been conscious of resisting the mainstream. The things that have been deemed to be part of the mainstream in the history of modern and contemporary Japanese art have all been Western. Japan's modernization, and its self-imposed cultural imperialism, continue to be major themes in my own work and research.

This mainstream has placed an emphasis on the inimitable originality and one-off nature of artworks produced by a single artist. As a rule, collectors place value on this one-off quality and purchase works based on it. Artworks enter the vaults of these collectors, and the opportunities for these works to be seen dwindle to nothing—or else to an extremely small number.

My interest has always been not in the world of such artworks, but rather in a more democratic vision of what art can and might be. With art that reaches its fullest realization by being reproduced and circulated, many people can sense its value and share this kind of art. Here, we can see the emergence of technology in the Internet age that is not simply a tool, or rather creativity through the Internet and art.

In a previous age where the one-off quality of the artwork was privileged, the mainstream was deemed to consist of a handful of mostly Western cities. Creativity in the age of the Internet, however, fiercely resists this mainstream in a geographical sense, too.



Kodama Kanazawa | (p. 36)

How Can We Play Together?: Improvising as a Way to Establish a Relationship Between Artists

dj sniff Turntablist, DJ, curator

Based in Europe and Asia, dj sniff has established himself as a prolific artist in experimental, improvised, and electronic music with turntables and his own original instruments, while also working as a curator for music projects in and outside Japan. He has pursued a collaborative approach through organizing a festival with other Asian artists, seeking out the new kinds of music that emerge when musicians and audiences with different contexts and languages come together.



dj sniff (right) and Kodama Kanazawa (left)

From an Artist's Perspective

Usually when I give presentations, it's about my own work as an artist, but today I would like to talk about something I rarely have the chance to discuss in public: my curatorial work. My talk will focus on Asian Meeting Festival (AMF), which was organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center between 2014 to 2017 with Otomo Yoshihide as artistic director and Yuen Chee Wai and myself as project directors. AMF consists of a series of concerts and workshops that brings together independent artists throughout Asia who are active in the field of experimental, improvised, and noise music (Fig.1).



Fig.1 Performance at Asian Meeting Festival 2016 (Otomo Yoshihide in front)

As a musician I work independently, but as a curator I have worked for art and educational institutions in The Netherlands and Hong Kong. However, these activities also developed out of independently organizing DJ events with friends in the late 1990s in Tokyo. Although I never received a formal music education, my musical roots lie in club culture and hip hop taught me that I could become a musician through listening to music. There was film called *Juice* (1992, USA), in particular, that made me want to be a DJ in 1994. I lived in San Francisco between 1997 and 1998, and I experienced the open atmosphere of rave parties and the solidarity of the Bay Area hip hop community. This inspired me to start organizing my own events when I later returned to Japan.

It also really brings back memories from my youth whenever I come to ICC. During college, I was an art history and aesthetics major and, although I was quite skeptical about new media art, I still often came to ICC to see exhibitions. It was here where I saw Danny Rozin's

Wooden Mirror (1999), which led me to go to graduate school in New York and eventually become completely immersed in this new field of art.

I specialized in building electronic instruments and developing interfaces for computer music. After my education in New York, I moved to The Netherlands to work at Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM), which was established in 1969 in Amsterdam. I started out first as an intern in the lab building hardware and later became the artistic director in 2007 and held the position until 2012. It was a small organization, so I also led the research groups and coordinated the artist residency program while living in the guesthouse (Fig. 2).

Whenever curating or organizing events I try to maintain my perspective as an artist. I actually don't like the description of "curator." During my time in The Netherlands, I worked with cultural subsidy systems and, more often than not, decisions over funding were made by people who had no involvement in art practice. Themes were set based on funding opportunities and artists were asked to make something that could fit that agenda. It really bothered me that I was working within this system. Since then my desire has been to create spaces where artists have autonomy and can explore freely on their own terms.

Featuring the "Other"

After I arrived to Amsterdam, I became active in the free improvisation music scene. I participated as a musician, but also through STEIM supported many artists out of an interest in how technology can help one's musical expression in this field. I initially thought of free improvisation as something completely open, where you can play freely with anyone that you had just met. Similarly, I thought of my field of music that was driven by technology as something democratizing, helping people like myself who didn't have training in music become musicians. However, I started to gradually realize that even in these fields there are traditions, conventions, and unspoken rules that function as a language. How you succeed in these fields depends on how fluent you are in its language, and you are constantly examined and tested as you navigate the scenes.

The Future Sound of Folk 2011 that I organized with Singaporean artist One Man Nation (OMN) was one of the moments that I became aware of this (Fig. 3). For three months, we supported OMN's research activities in Indonesia collaborating with exceptional musicians, who then later came to Europe for an artist residency at STEIM and concert tour in multiple cities. Wukir Suryadi—one half of the now world-renowned band Senyawa—from Yogyakarta and Iman Jimbot from Bandung were chosen to participate in this project. Their music was exceptional but initially I really couldn't understand it at all. They played what seemed like traditional instruments but the sounds were anything but traditional: they were very distorted and noisy, making it hard to decipher what the musical roots were. I couldn't really have in-depth conversations about their music either, because at the time they didn't speak much English. I later realized that even between the two Indonesians they had difficulty communicating with each other because they came from different regions and cultural backgrounds.



Fig. 2 Music studio at STEIM



Fig. 3 Performance at Future Sounds of Folk 2011

Despite all of my linguistic tools, including the language of free improvisation and technology, failing to communicate meant that they truly felt like the “other.” Nevertheless, their music touched me and made me reconsider my own judgments of music. Since then, I have consciously tried to include musicians who are outside of the usual contexts and not reject any simply because they didn’t speak my “language.”

The guesthouse played a significant role when communication was difficult. STEIM had its studios on the first floor and workshop and labs on the second floor, while the third, fourth, and fifth floors were used as the guesthouse. I lived at the rear of the second floor and another staff member lived on the third floor: we were truly embedded. The fourth and fifth floors had a constant flow of artists visiting from around the world (Fig. 4). English was generally the common language, but of course some couldn’t speak it. I witnessed here on numerous occasions how people can form a common understanding between each other through sharing a living space, eating together, and conversing on a daily basis. This made me realize how important it was to communicate not only through music but in other aspects of life too. However, this was also a time that I became discouraged by the fact that when I made an effort to present things from other contexts in ways that people could nonetheless understand or accept, they were still consumed as something exotic. I didn’t feel like Europe was the place for me anymore and I decided to move to Hong Kong.



Fig. 4 Guesthouse at STEIM

Improvising as a Way to Establish a Relationship Between Artists

As a visiting assistant professor at City University of Hong Kong, I was teaching physical computing and sound art. There were two things that left a strong impression on me during my time in Hong Kong. One was the screening of documentary film *BISING: Noise & Experimental Music in Indonesia* (2014), which is actually co-directed by my fellow presenter today, Riar Rizaldi. From meeting Wukir and Jimbot, I knew that there was something exciting happening in Indonesia, and seeing this film made me really want to go to there and see it for myself. By coincidence, I received a phone call from Otomo Yoshihide soon after I saw the documentary, asking me if I wanted to join AMF, which he was rebooting with the help of the Japan Foundation Asia Center. The other was that several months later, the Umbrella Movement happened. Many of my students were on the frontlines of the protests and it was very inspiring to see such solidarity and hope from them. These were turning points that shifted my work toward an Asian context and I soon completely forgot about Europe and new media art.

AMF originally started in 2005, when Otomo self-funded a series of concerts to create more exchange between Chinese, Korean, and Japanese artists and audiences. He felt an urge to encourage more direct communication between people in Asia at a time when the media was playing up political tension and hate speech was starting spread online.

Otomo, Chee Wai, and myself all met through our activities in the European free improvisation and noise music scene. As we started to work together on AMF we came to agree on certain programming criteria for the festival based on our musical backgrounds and experiences. Some of these are “unique musical style,” “a critical view towards historical, political, and cultural contexts,” “diversity in nationality, ethnicity, social class, and musical instruments,” and “active in a role in an artist network.” The last one points to artists who are organizing events or running spaces. These artists often play roles as a node in the artist network where participants of AMF can reunite after the festival and continue their collaboration. Our first AMF together was in 2015 with three concerts that took place in Tokyo and Kyoto (Fig. 5).

We invited eleven artists from all over Asia and there was a large audience turnout. The program was diverse and included musicians that were outside the typical field of improvised and experimental music. Most artists met for the first time and were asked to improvise together on stage. The resulting music was engaging but also messy, reflecting the different musical backgrounds and fitting a certain stereotype of Asia as chaotic. The concerts didn't follow a model of improvisation seen in Europe, and the disjointed mo-



Fig. 5 Performance at Tokyo concert, Asian Meeting Festival 2015

ments and noisy sounds could be seen as conversations between different languages trying to find common ground. From the perspective of cultural exchange, the festival aligned with narratives of Asia and multiculturalism and seemed to be a success, but from a musical point of view, I was unsure if it really served its purpose and couldn't help but think that the musicians were frustrated at some level. They came to Japan for the first time and had a chance to play in front of a large audience, but they were asked to do something different from what they usually do. It is difficult to express yourself in a new environment with people that you just met.

For the next edition in 2016, we organized a total of seven concerts that took place in three different cities of Japan. Three of these concerts followed the format of the previous year where everyone played together, but with the other four we wanted to make sure that every artist felt like he or she was able to express themselves fully, so we mixed it up with concerts in smaller venues and had them play solo sets during an online streaming concert at Red Bull Studios Tokyo. As a result, the last concert, which was held at a former elementary school gymnasium in Kyoto, was fantastic. There was something wonderfully organic about how everyone communicated with each other and played together freely. It was a performance that truly left an impression. Afterwards, when I thought about what made the difference, the fact that everyone had three days, off in Kyoto prior to the concert and spent time together getting to know each other better was probably a key factor behind how well they played at the concert. Some of the members in the group hadn't talked at all until then, partially due to the language barrier. But during those three days, they became like a family where each one assumed roles. Pete TR from Thailand became the youngest brother who was always getting himself into trouble. SonX from Vietnam became the quiet father who rarely spoke but was always generous. There was also the responsible sister, the drunken uncle, and so on. Somehow these relationships had a positive effect on how they then conversed on stage and improvised together. It was similar to what I experienced at the STEIM guesthouse, where the time you spent outside of music became the most valuable experience.

Pleasant Noise

The success in Kyoto made us think: What kind of process and experience do we need to provide for musicians coming from different backgrounds and different languages to play together and make new music?

With this in mind, when programming AMF 2017, which was held in Fukuoka, Kyoto, Sendai, and Sapporo, we included a walking tour for the musicians led by sound artist Akio Suzuki (Fig. 6). Akio took us to his favorite local listening spots in the Kyotango region, which had inspired many of his sound works. This was a really good experience for everyone to take a break

from playing and spend time together just listening to sounds in nature. The festival ended with two shows in Sapporo that we felt were among the best concerts we had ever done (Fig.7). The steps we took to build relationships between the artists created an awareness in the group of consciously listening together. It also helped that we had been working with the same production staff for the last three years. Although the Asia Center announced a few months prior to the event that this was going to be the final year it would serve as the main organizers of AMF, Chee Wai and myself felt confident that we had found a working model for the festival where we carefully think about the time the artists spend together prior to the concerts (Fig.8).

What was also unique about this edition was that we coordinated a series of sound workshops for members of the public a few weeks before the event took place in Sapporo (Fig.9). Over the course of two weeks, we conducted “noise” instrument-building workshops with artists and gave lectures on the history of improvised and experimental music. We wanted to convey that even though noise may generally have a negative connotation because it tends to come from other people, when it becomes “your” noise it can be something pleasant. The music coming from your neighbors, for instance, may be just noise to you, but when you are playing music in your house it is for your own pleasure. Therefore, the act of embodying noise relates to notions of tolerance and acceptance of the “other.” By making your own noise instrument or learning how to produce unusual sounds, even if it’s just a sine wave, it becomes precious and, more importantly, yours. After these workshops, people were more invested in sound, and became interested in how others were making their sounds. Since Sapporo, we have tried to organize these kinds of workshop in conjunction with the concert programs in each location that the festival takes place. We took this model to Taiwan the following year for AMF 2018.

Today my talk was titled “How can we play together?” This simple question has been at the core my activities with AMF and in building a network in Asia. It has expanded to thinking about how both audiences and musicians can experience music not through stereotypes of experimental or improvisational music, but as a unique musical experience. As I think about how



Fig. 6 Sound tour by performers from Asian Meeting Festival 2017



Fig. 7 Performers at Sapporo concert, Asian Meeting Festival 2017: dj sniff (second from right in front row), Otomo Yoshihide (second from right in back row), Yuen Chee Wai (far left in back row)



Fig. 8 Sapporo concert at Asian Meeting Festival 2017



Fig. 9 Workshop at Asian Meeting Festival 2017

we will move forward, I have come to believe that the question we are really asking is: How can we listen together?



dj sniff (Takuro Mizuta Lippit) | Born in 1978, dj sniff obtained his master's degree from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University. He was artistic director of STEIM in Amsterdam until 2012, where he organized several projects. As a performer, he combines the turntable with various original tools, and works in the fields of experimental music, improvisations, and electronic music. He was a visiting assistant professor at the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong until 2017. He is currently based in Tokyo.
<http://www.djsniff.com>

Liberating the Internet from Universality and Globalization

Riar Rizaldi Artist, Researcher

Riar Rizaldi is an artist originally from Indonesia and now based in Hong Kong. In his presentation, he discussed the concepts behind an exhibition he curated featuring artists from Japan and Indonesia. He expanded on this to challenge our notions of a universal Internet and post-Internet condition, arguing for more locally informed, freer engagement with digital culture.



Riar Rizaldi (right) and Kodama Kanazawa (left)

The Dream of Decentralization

The “Dildo for Indonesia” meme, showing a doctored image of a fictional presidential candidate meeting Donald Trump, was a response to the then-upcoming presidential election in Indonesia. In an interview, the viral meme’s creator stated that what he did was a form of education to make the public address electoral politics more critically. Dildo for Indonesia has become a catharsis for Indonesia’s electoral politics, which is plagued by post-truth, hoaxes, and the Internet culture war.

The polarization of two major political ideologies, namely the “central/liberal figure” and “right/military figure,” formed a new visual culture that was used as a weapon to attack each side. When the Internet is politically weaponized and user-generated content utilized as adversarial tactics, it results in the duality of real-life-shaped Internet and Internet-shaped real life. If we take out its aesthetic-driven meaning and incorporate the term as it is into our daily lives, are we really in the “post-Internet” condition? And as an artist, what can I learn and show from this so-called post-Internet condition, which supposes we are living through an epochal transformation of networked culture and the Internet?

Internet networks in Indonesia were first publicly accessible at the same time as the dotcom bubble in the West. Though the dotcom bubble did not have much direct influence on Indonesia, since the Reformasi (the political reformation) and the Asian financial crisis were then taking place, the infrastructure of the Internet was formed by the digital companies that survived the bubble. This then accelerated when Nokia decided to launch their latest E90 Communicator in Indonesia in 2007, opening a fresh range of markets for business and executives as well as new opportunities for mobile Internet. This was followed by the rise of broadband connection that made access to Internet cheaper than dial-up. The cultural formation of a pre-social-media Internet promised a utopia of a decentralized virtual world for the post-Reformasi Indonesia. Under the Suharto regime (the military dictatorship that ruled the archipelago

for more than 30 years), information was produced or made available only by the central government through the Ministry of Information (Departemen Penerangan). The Internet rather provided a platform for artists, musician, cultural producers, and the public to exercise freedom of expression.

Unfortunately, the dream did not last long. The notion of decentralization was eventually co-opted by the Web 2.0 approach of building a networked society. With all of its faux ideas that sound good on paper, such as the participatory network and collaborative consumption, Web 2.0 is filled with centralized companies and the involvement of authority. Platform capitalist organizations like Google and Facebook invest in Indonesia. With more than 100 million users, at least half of the total population in Indonesia has access to the Internet and places the country among the top ten for Internet users in the world. In this respect, it is no wonder that Indonesia has produced four unicorn startup companies.

We have gone backward in time to when information was organized and managed by the center, resulting in online persecution, constant surveillance, censorship, heavily copyrighted cultural artifacts, and right-wing online groups. The sharing culture promoted by the cultural producers in the mid-2000s through netlabels and free video-sharing platforms is now being eroded by corporations that exploit the notion of sharing and the commons.

This is what forced me, as an artist, to rethink and reconfigure the notion of the Internet as a decentralized platform. Most of us take for granted the basic essence of the Internet, in which it functions as a network or networking process, whereas the exchange of information is fostered. The Internet opens up new possibilities for global kinship solidarity, non-monetary cooperative, collective survival, and sharing cultures. At a time when the Internet is controlled and increasingly monetized, how do we create our own global village? What kind of collective survival do we need? What kind of aesthetic form and artistic practices are required?

The Significance of Internet of (No)Things

“Internet of (No)Things: Ubiquitous Networking and Artistic Intervention” was an exhibition organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center that I curated as part of the Indonesia Netaudio Festival in 2018 (Fig.1). Inviting Indonesian and Japanese artists to present their work as well as exchange ideas and culture through creativity, the exhibition formed a critical assessment of the Internet, whether in Indonesia or globally, and explored new forms of artistic practice generated, critically commented, and expressed through and with the Internet for the public in Indonesia. I took the role of curatorship as an artistic endeavor to map the global implications of network technology.

I think art can function as a means for exposing the limits of technology. Overcoming the limits of the network society and reflecting on Internet infrastructures was the conceptual framework behind the development of “Internet of (No)Things.” Through the practices of nine artists, I attempted to restore the fundamental function of aesthetic as a vessel for sensibility. The aim was to confront the public’s definition of Internet culture and allow them to discuss the capabilities of the network society. Some of the presented works emphasized the potential for audiences to position themselves critically within the discourse of the Internet, to think beyond the framework of a passive user.



Fig.1 Preview of the exhibition “Internet of (No)Things: Ubiquitous Networking and Artistic Intervention” (2018, Jogja National Museum) Photo: Swandi Ranadila

From Essence to Embodiment

The approaches on display in this exhibition were diverse, from a work that live-streamed CCTV to a forgotten Indonesian artist who utilized YouTube as a platform to share his early 3D animation work. In addition, this exhibition provided a novel perception on the chaotic and equilibrium nature of today's virtual world. Apart from artworks derived or generated from digital technology, the exhibition included artworks that questioned the physicality of the network. Artists working with physical objects were invited to conceptually rethink the physical aspect of the network and Internet. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger famously stresses that the essence of modern technology is far from the *techne* (technique); rather, it is purely what he called "en-framed" (*das Gestell*). Every being is reduced as a "standing-reserve" that can be measured, calculated, and mined. Writing in the age of the atomic bomb, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of anamnesis; to recall the origin, the essence of modern technology, in order to move on. Drawing from this concept, it was necessary to present in the exhibition the physical representations of the essence of the network as an exploration of the genesis of the Internet. The site-specific, physically structured works such as Mira Rizki's *Networks of Whispers* provided an understanding of modern network technology that differed from its generic portrayal as a digital-data-based formula through employing physical and "primitive" components (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Mira Rizki, *Network of Whispers* (2018). Installation view of "Internet of (No)Things" (2018, Jogja National Museum) Photo: Swandi Ranadila

The exhibition subverted the jargon of the Internet of Things (IoT) to provide a critical suggestion that the Internet is already embodied in any activities we experience. IoT is increasingly popular as many companies push the term as an apparent solution to our future needs. This is a future where objects—or any being—are interconnected with the network in order to generate hyper-efficient task management. Regardless of my personal captological and technophobia stance, humans or objects have always been cybernetic at a transcendental level, meaning that the circular causality and the self-regulation system is incorporated into our daily mechanism since the presence of the network (or media) is becoming more mobile and embedded in our gestures. In fact, we are living in a hyper-mediated world. The obvious example is the use of vernacular language determined by the mode of screen-based visual communication. In the contemporary condition, we tend to communicate with each other in a visual form. This transformation was expressed by Arief Budiman, Igor Tamerlan, and exonemo in their work for the exhibition. They investigated the method of our contemporary communication apparatuses that are filled with visual codes. They acknowledged that our knowledge of informatics is not exclusively obtained through verbal and textual means, but also avatars and digital representation. The distinction between online and offline is blurred as the geographically intimate conversation in the physical space is not much more real than the stickers and emojis exchanged on WhatsApp or LINE.

On the Multiplicity of the Internet

Working together with Japanese artists in this exhibition challenged my assumption that technological thinking is universal. In our globalized world, we use the same type of technology. But the concept of technology is experienced and articulated differently in different cultures. The notion of the universality of technology is something that I tried to contest through the practice of Indonesian and Japanese artists involved in this exhibition. Globalization forces us to see

Internet culture monolithically, when it is not. Though the Internet revolutionized information technology worldwide, network technology should not necessarily be understood as a single form. The circulation of political memes in Indonesia is similar to what is happening in the West—predominantly in the US—and if genealogically traced, the culture of memes on the Internet originates from a popular imageboard site in Japan in the early 2000s. However, when contextualized to particular cases and cultures, the circulation and techniques are distorted and appropriated to local customs.

In this exhibition, I invited Ai Hasegawa as well as Kazuki Saita and Soichiro Mihara to present their work. The Indonesian visitors responded with great interest to Ai Hasegawa's speculative *(Im)possible Baby*, which imagines what the children of a same-sex mixed-race couple would look like (Fig. 3). They saw the work as a form of dialogue in the sense that the concept is being discussed anonymously by many people through adding their opinions onto the wall, mimicking the comments thread of a website. This speculation as well as the questions surrounding bioethics provoked by this work challenged our understanding of bioengineering and social norms established for hundreds of years. Suggesting that social norms are constructed, rather than essential, is similar to the suggestion that technology is non-universal.

If we were to speculate that colonialism, monotheistic religion, and capitalism never happened in Indonesia, the idea of biological children born to a same-sex couple might not seem so alien. This is because indigenous people already had nonbinary concepts of gender and sexual orientation. For example, the Bugis people recognized the existence of five genders (Fig. 4). If this belief system can evolve simultaneously with technological innovation that is determined by the norms of the community, then the demand to develop a certain kind of technological approach is accustomed by the cultural code of one community. If we see the possibility of technological multiplicity through this framework, then things become very intriguing when we place Hasegawa's work within the context of the non-universal Internet.

Kazuki Saita and Soichiro Mihara brought the "2.2.2" version of their seminal work *moids—acoustic emergence* into a space at Jogja National Museum (Fig. 5). Similar to the work of Mira Rizki, which filled the physical space with structural objects, *moids* is a visual reenactment of what Deleuze and Guattari call rhizome, or ramified multiplicities. It also works as an automaton that plays on the division between culture and nature. Culture (technology) synthesizes organic sound taken from the natural (world), and the synthesized sound is then projected back into the acoustic space. This notion of automata is also conceived as a non-universal concept via a media-archeological excavation of Arab-Islamic views from the 9th century: that technology is built to glorify God, rather than focusing on the functionality of expanding the capabilities



Fig. 3 Ai Hasegawa, *(Im)possible Baby* (2015–16). Installation view of "Internet of (No)Things" (2018, Jogja National Museum) Photo: Swandi Ranadila



Fig. 4 Bugis people living in Indonesia
Courtesy of Al Jazeera



Fig. 5 Kazuki Saita and Soichiro Mihara's presentation inside the installation *moids 2.2.2—acoustic emergence* (2009–) at "Internet of (No)Things" (2018, Jogja National Museum) Photo: Swandi Ranadila

of the human body. However, as observed through many spatial perspectives, *moids* could also be imagined as the neuro-networks inside our brain. It transmits signals to ignite a reaction—in this sense, a reaction between the acoustic space where the work is installed and the synthetic sound it creates. This work engages with viewers by staging reciprocity through causal interaction. This was important for the exhibition's conceptual framework that restored the notion of aesthetic as sensibility. Moreover, this work structurally represents the idea of a decentralized network in that connections are engaged in a more rhizomatic manner, rather than vertically.

What the Internet Represents

Another crucial point that I tried to develop in this exhibition was the mode of representation that occurs within new forms of expression. The Internet offers an inclusive space for novel ways to express our thoughts, images, and ideals. Representation, then, becomes an important discourse to discuss when we talk about Internet practices. In this exhibition, I attempted to build a conversation on representation and abstraction through the visual language presented by the artist collective Tromarama and artist Ayano Sudo (Fig. 6). Tromarama's *Soliloquy* transformed representation into a form of abstraction by utilizing social media mechanisms, intriguingly shifting



Fig. 6 Tromarama, *Soliloquy* (2018). Installation view of "Internet of (No)Things" (2018, Jogja National Museum)
Photo: Tromarama

tweets through the mode of representing that is a hashtag into a switch and relay (which is fundamental in any contemporary technology). The hashtag #kinship in this work echoes the idea of collaborative survival. The lights they used as a device to represent the tweets are a fragile apparatus, showing the transformation of complex representation into abstraction. The interaction between technology and non-technology then becomes a fascinating black box to be observed.

In contrast to Tromarama, Ayano Sudo employed a mode of representation with a familiar and ubiquitous visual tactic. Her series *Metamorphose* appropriated the common denominator of memetic imagery, a visuality that has the potential to easily circulate in the virtual domain. This potential is also what makes Sudo's work accessible to the public. It generates as a space for taking selfies. The public then becomes a visual producer on the network as the selfie is uploaded to social media platforms. This image produced by the public through performative action sets their most ideal representation. In this case, the public is represented in two different worlds—in the network and real world, with both involving Sudo's work. From Tromarama and Sudo's contributions to the exhibition, the intersection between representation and abstraction emerged within and outside the network.

Now, in the Post-Internet

Can we answer that big question that I started with: Are we really in the post-Internet era? I would like to propose an answer: no, we have never been in the post-Internet. We will never pass the notion of Internet. We are still trying to figure out how we deal with it.

In the precarious conditions under which we are now living, the question we should ask is not about the production of cultural practices and the terminology of "post-Internet," but rather the more crucial one of how the Internet can aesthetically (through sensibility) and practically (through creativity) form a new approach to developing global solidarity. How can cultural production initiated by art institutions be an intersection for developing critical and radical sustainability? Before the Internet becomes "post," we must figure out how to decolonize the Internet itself from its centralized state. After all, it is supposed to be a platform for people, for

sharing. This is the role of aesthetics: to bring back our dream of an inclusive Internet.

Rethinking the origin of the Internet, the universality of the Internet, the intersectionality of network, and modes of representation, and exposing the limits of technological development are important starting points for media art to reflect our contemporary condition. Media art should be our answer in these desperate times. To all artists, art institutions, and cultural producers who still believe in the power of the network society, creative commons, and sharing culture, thank you for your hard work. Let's make our Internet more liberated!



Riar Rizaldi | Riar Rizaldi is an artist from Indonesia and currently based in Hong Kong. His work mainly focuses on the relationship between humans and technology, consumer electronics, theory-fiction, image circulation, and network intervention. Through his work, he questions the notion of (a) temporality, image politics, digital materiality, media archeology, and the unanticipated consequences of technologies in human life. He is also actively composing and performing sonic fiction using the methods of field recording and foley through programming languages. He has also curated ARKIPEL Penal Colony – Jakarta International Documentary & Experimental Film Festival 2017 and “Internet of (No)Things: Ubiquitous Networking and Artistic Intervention,” organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center at Jogja National Museum in 2018. He is currently a PhD candidate at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong.
<http://rizaldiriar.com>

[Session 3]

Creating a Cultural Scene in Asia

Session 3 looked at several case studies where culture scenes were created through media partnerships. The session offered the audience and participants an opportunity to learn more about reciprocal interactions in post-Internet culture as well as the future of the Asian youth cultures that emerge from this.

Moderator



Kei Wakabayashi
Editor [Japan]

Born in 1971, Kei Wakabayashi spent his childhood in London and New York. After majoring in French literature at Waseda University, he started his publishing career at Heibonsha and was in charge of *Taiyo*, the legendary Japanese cultural magazine. In 2000, he became a freelance editor and produced numerous publications from magazines and books to exhibition catalogues across a broad range of fields. He was appointed editor in chief of *WIRED Japan* in 2012, before leaving the publication in 2017. He is also a music journalist and founder of blkswn publishers.

<https://blkswn.tokyo>

Speakers

Yohei Kawada

Editor [Japan]

Marvin Conanan

Founder, Editor in Chief of PURVEYR [Philippines]

Tetsuro Wada

Editor in Chief of FNMNL [Japan]

Choi Jang-min + Kwon Hyuk-in

Founders, Editors in Chief of VISLA Magazine [South Korea]

The Importance of Building Sustainable Relationships: Publishing a Special Issue on Asian Music

Yohei Kawada Editor

Yohei Kawada was at the time of the symposium the director of *STUDIO VOICE*, the influential Japanese magazine that relaunched after closing ten years ago. With each issue focusing on a different main theme, it has recently covered the music scene in Asia. Preparing this series of issues involved confronting the impossibility of seeing Asia as a single, unified cultural sphere and, as an editor, the difficult process of considering how best to convey information about complex and varied contexts. Kawada discussed the cultural scenes in Asia that his team could only discover through on-site research and interviews as well as the necessity today, when sharing things easily and quickly online has become the norm, for more careful, long-term dialogue and collaboration.



Yohei Kawada (center), *STUDIO VOICE* editor Shunta Ishigami (right), Kei Wakabayashi (left)

Thinking of Asia as an Immense Cultural Sphere

I am a freelance editor and work as a director for the magazine *STUDIO VOICE*. In September 2018, I put together a special issue of the magazine about music in Asia called “Flood of Sounds from Asia: Music Emerging in Asia Today” (Fig. 1). While I don’t know the exact numbers, the issue sold well and became quite a talking point, and I have since frequently received invitations to talk at events like this. I recently often see coverage of so-called “Asian music” in the media, so it would appear as if people are paying attention to this theme.

This symposium explores the formation of culture in the post-Internet era, though *STUDIO VOICE* is a print media and thus an example of old media. It is published only in Japanese and comes out just twice a year. I would like today to share some insights based on the experience of the editors in dealing with the question of what *STUDIO VOICE* should do as a magazine facing various challenges. I think what I will talk about will be most relevant to people working in the media, especially editors, in Japan.

When lumping everything together under the label of “Asian music,” we were certainly aware that this kind of naming or framing was in itself very brutal. In the grip of a sense of guilt or despondency attendant on this, we arrived at the question of how can we grasp or interpret



Fig. 1 *STUDIO VOICE* issue 413, “Flood of Sounds from Asia: Music Emerging in Asia Today” (INFAS PUBLICATIONS, September 2018)

the immense cultural sphere that is Asia, where so many nations of varying geography and history are found, and then input this into our bodies? And is it possible ultimately to take what we absorbed and then, based on our accumulated, highly personal experiences, somehow integrate it into the pages of a magazine? It is inevitably difficult to generalize about the media today, so I would like to focus specifically on our thinking that led up to the special issue we published last year.

STUDIO VOICE

STUDIO VOICE is a culture magazine published by INFAS PUBLICATIONS, INC. It was launched in Japan in 1976 as a spin-off from *Interview*, the magazine started by Andy Warhol in New York in 1969. It closed down in 2009 but relaunched in April 2015, since when it has been published twice a year. With the September 2018 issue, it launched a three-part series focusing on culture in Asia.
<http://www.studiovoice.jp/>

Localizing European and American Magazines for the Asian Market

Before that, though, I should explain how *STUDIO VOICE* itself came about. As one of only a few comprehensive magazines about culture in Japan, it launched in 1976 as a spin-off from *Interview*, the magazine started by Andy Warhol in New York in 1969. Notwithstanding a circulation that is a mere fraction of the big commercial magazines put out by the major publishers, it has continued for over 40 years as a magazine able to extract aspects of contemporary culture and subcultures through hands-on coverage and issues highlighting one main theme each time, in the process establishing a prominent reputation in Japan among magazines of this type. And even outside Japan, in Asia, whenever we work with creatives from Thailand, China, or South Korea, *STUDIO VOICE* seems to be a magazine with which people in the creative industries of certain ages are familiar to some extent.

The magazine closed down in 2009 but relaunched in 2015, with external directors like myself becoming involved from the September 2017 to September 2019 issues. I put together the “Alternative Eroticism: Shifting Eros” issue through trial and error, but the insight I could gain from this was that an editor should absorb and be stimulated by subjects that are constantly in flux, and then record those changes from the inside (Fig. 2). I arrived at an image of an editor as like a single moving body that continues while physically and mentally moving such elements as much as possible. From this time I started to believe that editors should always be versatile and variable in order to engage with different topics. I subsequently oversaw the “Documentary/Non-Fiction: Can we see if we try?” issue and then the “Flood of Sounds from Asia: Music Emerging in Asia Today” issue.

When we were growing up, magazines served a significant function as ways to learn about culture in Japan and overseas, from fashion to music and art. But today, in the so-called post-Internet present, it seems in general that fewer people now obtain their information from print magazines.

Among magazines that belong to culture and fashion categories similarly to *STUDIO VOICE*, I think many are essentially published as localized versions of American or European magazines. This is the strong impression you get if you walk into bookstores in other Asian countries. It is certainly the case with *Vogue* or *GQ*, for instance, or even with *WIRED*, where this symposium’s moderator, Kei Wakabayashi, used to work. There are many such global magazines, particularly those originating in the Anglosphere. But when these are localized for Asian countries, the local publisher contracted to produce the new version has to deal with many restrictions regarding what they can do. There are all kinds of stipulations and constraints, from sharing concepts and reusing content to photographs, the tone and manner of text, and even



Fig. 2 *STUDIO VOICE* issue 411, “Alternative Eroticism: Shifting Eros” (INFAS PUBLICATIONS, September 2017)

font, layout, and other design aspects. And it is hard to imagine the inverse situation of an Asian magazine being localized for European or American countries.

When we write about our own country's culture in our own language, based on what experiences are the cultural values determined, and on what basis do we then talk about other countries' circumstances? These are questions that I recently ponder. Whenever a magazine talks about "Asia," we as editors surely always need to pay attention to the position from which that statement is being made.

The Problem of "Asia" as a Grouping

When it came to putting together our special issue, there wasn't anyone well versed in Asian music on the editorial team and, moreover, we faced practical problems in terms of economics that forced us to limit the area that we could cover, arguably complicating our original motives for making the issue in the first place. In regard to moving around Asia, it is possible to do this relatively cheaply with flights by low-cost carriers and sometimes it is even cheaper than using the Shinkansen bullet train to travel within Japan. On the other hand, while K-pop and Asian

hip hop has attracted global attention of late through the likes of music platform 88rising (Fig. 3), a sense of unease quickly emerged during the comparatively early stages of preparing the issue due to the realization that rather than this "Asia" enjoying attention from the global market, there is a not inconsiderable number of artists and so on doing something quite different in their practices.

Conceptually speaking, we fixed a theme of "music and place" from the start and planned to do interviews on a per-city basis. But when we actually started to do this, we ended up not including Japan or Tokyo. We hadn't originally intended to narrow things down to only Asian countries other than Japan, though we ultimately could not figure out how we should integrate Japan and Tokyo into "Asian music." While we did explore other cities in Japan beyond Tokyo, when it came to grasping things within the larger framework of Asia, the position of our own country of Japan was vague and not concrete. And that has seemed to remain the case even now.

For deciding the interviewees, we listened to as much we could by musicians from Asia while still in Japan. We spent some one or two months searching widely regardless of genre or rating using the same means as people normally use to find and play music—namely, iTunes, Spotify, SoundCloud, YouTube, and so on. In this way, it took us around two months to attempt an understanding of how the various musicians are interrelated and gain an overview. And then we started doing interviews locally.

The editorial team shared some rules such as only interviewing artists who are based in their own countries, impartiality in terms of musical genre, directly visiting all sites, not relying on writers in Japan, not fixating on traditions and "native" elements, and bringing out some kind of sense of the contemporary in the music. These were not stated explicitly but were rules that became shared hazily as we internally discussed the process of continuing the research.

We eventually divided the issue into three main chapters. The first dealt with the music scene in Shanghai and China; the second with the indie music scene that is emerging in Manila, the Philippines; and the third on the present state of hip hop culture in Thailand. In addition, we did interviews on the situation in other countries and introduced this elsewhere in the issue.

After doing careful preliminary research as much as we could from Japan, we went to take a tentative look and do interviews in the local areas. Inevitably, of course, many aspects were different to how we had anticipated and our awareness of things continued to evolve while we

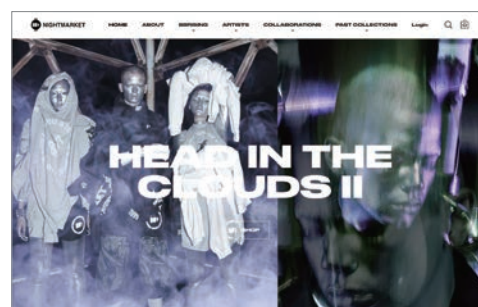


Fig. 3 88NIGHTMARKET, a fashion ecommerce platform by 88rising

were there.

Howie Lee, a major presence on the Chinese electronic music scene, for instance, has effectively put his own label Do Hits on hiatus and is exploring new possibilities while devoting himself to Chinese folk music (Fig. 4). At the Shanghai club ALL, the previously central figure and resident DJ Tzusing has left and now a younger generation of talent is emerging in the local scene (Fig. 5). In Manila, while the local indie scene has extended on a concrete level, several artists complained that the inner mentality of the scene has become somewhat closed and is one of the reasons that things are stagnating.

This may well be self-evident, but while Asian music is today achieving attention and acclaim on the global stage, this is ultimately just one side of things, and the actual local circumstances are developing more complexly and fluidly depending on the country, city, and area. This is what we covered from our very narrow perspective when doing our interviews and so on in 2018, and then collected together as one issue. As the things we understood after doing interviews increased, so too did the things we didn't understand many times over. This was a task in which we directly experienced the impossibility of a definition of Asia and also, simultaneously, a process by which we felt very strongly the potential for countries in Asia with different cultures, histories, and languages to connect with one another and with the rest of the world.

From this experience, we decided not to stop after just one special issue on Asia but rather to continue thinking about this topic across a more medium-term span. We are planning an issue on fashion in Asia for March 2019, followed by one on art in Asia in September (Fig. 6).

Changing Your Own Awareness and Body

I'd like now to share some insights we gained from doing this issue in relation to this session's theme of creating cultural scenes in Asia.

In the issue, the hip hop scene in Thailand was covered by Young-G and MMM (Triple M) of the Yamanashi-based hip hop group stillichimiya, and the Japanese DJ unit Soi48, which mostly makes Thai music. Since first meeting to work on *Bangkok Nites* (2016) by the filmmaking collective Kuzoku, they have frequently traveled to Thailand and developed sustained links to its hip hop scene, continuing to conduct interviews with various local music figures by way of doing a survey. Grouping these activities together as the One Mekong Project, or OMK Project, they are excavating the rich music of the Mekong region from its relationships with the historical past, culture, and old popular songs. Our coverage of the Thai scene in the issue was based on these activities and approaches by the Japanese musicians. Within this, the exchange between Young-G



Fig. 4 Interview with Howie Lee (STUDIO VOICE issue 413)



Fig. 5 Interview with Tzusing (STUDIO VOICE issue 413)



Fig. 6 STUDIO VOICE issue 414, "Self-Fashioning from Asia: Undetermined Style" (INFAS PUBLICATIONS, March 2019)

and JUU, a rapper based in the Thai regions of Isan and Khon Kaen, in particular feels like one ideal model when it comes to considering how we can form networks in Asia in the future.

Like other countries, hip hop has become mainstream in Thailand and young rappers experimenting with a range of styles continue to appear. Among them, JUU is quite distinct in that he takes old Thai words and essences of traditional Thai music like *mor lam* and *luk thung*, and integrates them into current sounds in highly idiosyncratic ways (Fig. 7). Young-G was extremely impressed by this approach and has traveled to Thailand on numerous occasions to gradually develop his exchange with JUU.

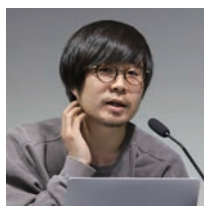
When Japanese artists work in some way with artists overseas, I think it often takes the form of releasing music created collaboratively. But in the case of JUU and Young-G, ever since first meeting several years ago they have avoided just doing easy joint projects and have rather focused on spending time engaged in careful dialogue. First visiting each other's respective bases and there understanding what music is like within local lifestyles and the kind of thinking behind how they approach their music, only then have they started to invite one another to take part in events and gradually share things with audiences. While they have been working together actively as OMK for just one year, their renown is steadily rising at home and abroad as they attract new fans.

As time is limited, I will refrain from going into detail at this juncture, but suffice to say they launched two events called Jyoto ("Shanghai and Tokyo") and In & Out at the Shibuya live music venue WWW last year, and are building an ambitious and sustained platform where Asian artists can perform together. That a venue as large as WWW engages with long-term collaborations like this also greatly inspired us while researching and preparing the issue.

By someone who is involved in all aspects of content, we might mean an editor in the case of the media, or a director in the case of a record label, or someone in the PR or similar department for a regular corporation. Regardless, continuing to effect change on our own body and perception seems absolutely key for changing conditions permeated by a sense of stagnation or confinement.



Fig. 7 Interview with JUU (STUDIO VOICE issue 413)



Yohei Kawada | Yohei Kawada joined an editing company after graduating from university. In 2013, he established *TOmagazine*, a culture guide for the 23 wards in Tokyo that introduced very local sites. He was the editor in chief until the sixth issue. In 2015, he became a freelance editor, working mostly on editing and direction for publications and advertisements. Prominent examples of his output include *YELLOW MAGAZINE* with Gen Hoshino, *jozo2050* by Hakuodo's WHERE ART and SCIENCE FALL IN LOVE lab, *GO Journal*, a para-sports graphic magazine supervised by Mika Ninagawa, and the culture magazine *STUDIO VOICE* (issues 411–415).

Reaching Young Asian Cultural Creatives Across Multiple Platforms

Marvin Conan Founder, Editor in Chief of PURVEYR

Marvin Conan runs PURVEYR, an online magazine that also has an annual print version as well as events, stores, and more. He spoke about the local contexts in the Philippines from which the project started and the challenges and necessity for operating across multiple platforms in the digital era, when a young creative audience in Asia is hungry for content about cultural scenes.



Marvin Conan

Growing Cultural and Creative Cities in the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago of around 7,641 islands and, at 300,000 square kilometers, a little smaller than Japan but with a population of 107 million. We're mostly known for our nature and beaches, and a lot of tourists inevitably go straight to the resorts. They tend to overlook Manila or our cities, which I feel is actually a big part of the Philippines. And this is what PURVEYR focuses on.

PURVEYR looks at culture in terms of urban culture and creative culture. When we started in 2012, there was no media platform or media title with a focus on local culture, or at least the way we wanted, which was to look at certain subcultures in fashion and music. These areas are growing in the Philippines, with many new collaborations and artists emerging. There is an exciting mixture of both contemporary and traditional practitioners.

This session is framed around "creating a cultural scene in Asia." Personally, I don't feel like we can create culture itself. Instead, we can be an instrument to forge growth and changes. And this is precisely what PURVEYR is trying to do (Fig. 1).

PURVEYR operates on a small scale. The management team is just my partner, Sara Martinez, and myself, and then the only other full-time people are the ones in the store. We recently added a part-time online editor to help me in terms of putting out more content, but all our contributors are working on a per-project basis. It's really self-funded. The good thing with starting with a website is that you don't need a lot of money. And since this is not something people are doing in the Philippines yet at this time, some writers are willing to work pro bono

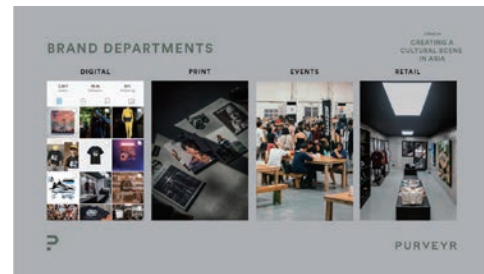


Fig. 1 As a brand, PURVEYR has different departments: digital, print, events, and retail.

because there are no channels to write something like the kind of content we put out.

PURVEYR started as a digital media through a website and then, after three years, we produced a print magazine (Fig.2). We felt that there wasn't any magazine that was catering to what we like. Of course, there were a lot of glossies like the monthly magazines, but they didn't cover what was available locally or produced locally. Our vision is to be at the center of a society that's creative and cultural. The way we look at our media is a little different to a traditional media. We envision our media as a brand that can affect and engage audiences across different platforms. Our mission is to foster the creative spirit through stories, objects, and experiences. The stories appear digitally, through the magazine; the objects are the results of collaborations with some brands and artists; the experiences are events and art stores.

Paul H. Ray is a sociologist who has been following a subculture of America that he feels is now present worldwide. He calls the people in this subculture the "cultural creatives." These are creatives who care deeply about ecology and saving the planet. They care about relationships, social justice, self-actualization, spirituality, and self-expression. They might comprise tens of millions of people in America and Europe. It is the middle ground between the traditional and the modern. If we regard the "traditionalist" thinking today as dominant among baby boomers and "modern" attitudes among more recent generations, cultural creatives are balancing both worlds. And these people seem to be the best way to define our target for PURVEYR.

Working Simultaneously Across Different Platforms

As we have heard today about Thailand and Indonesia, social media is very important to the way young people in Asia consume content and media, and engage in political and social issues. According to a recent study, the Philippines is the top nation in terms of daily Internet usage. The population is online for ten hours and 30 minutes a day, followed by Brazil at nine hours and 30 minutes.

Since print is only really popular with older generations, we have to engage as a media and brand across different platforms. PURVEYR.com launched in 2012. We also use social media because it taps our market in the easiest and most convenient way possible (Fig.3). Our social media output is more constant and comprises fast, aesthetic content, but our website features more long-form content and editorials. The reality today is that many people don't spend much time actually reading online. As such, we produce a range of content, from fashion shoots to interviews and podcasts. When we started in

PURVEYR

Based in Manila, the Philippines, PURVEYR is a brand that aspires to foster the creative spirit through Filipino stories, objects, and experiences. It launched in 2012 as a culture and lifestyle website, but has since developed into an all-encompassing brand across various facets—digital (PURVEYR.com), print (PURVEYR magazine), events and retail (PURVEYR Post)—that each reflects its philosophy. The PURVEYR brand continuously evolves to engage deeper with the local creative community while also establishing a platform that cultivates creativity and culture as a whole.

<http://purveyr.com>

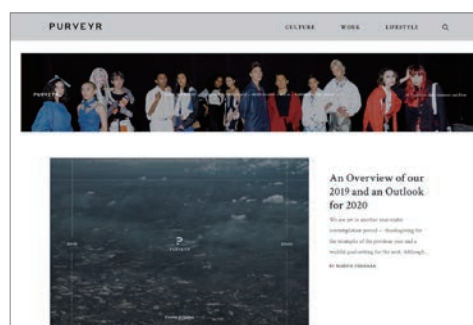


Fig.2 PURVEYR.com was PURVEYR's first project when it launched in 2012. It currently curates content according to three categories: "culture," "work," and "lifestyle."

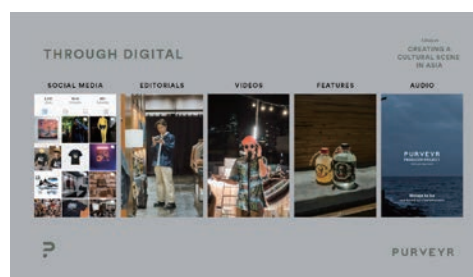


Fig.3 PURVEYR's digital output includes not only feature-length articles, videos, and other content, but also a robust social media presence.

2012, our pillars were the usual ones: music, art, fashion, and so on. Now we have changed our approach, since we can't compete with the big magazines for advertisers. Our three pillars of culture, lifestyle, and work define every aspect of the life of cultural creatives: how they live; how they perceive culture; and how they work and pursue things. The content on PURVEYR.com is filtered through these three categories.

We started our print platform in 2016 (Fig.4). It was initially biannual, but this year we're switching to annual because it's really expensive to produce a magazine. People often ask why we expanded to a print format when all print magazines are doing the opposite—that is, switching to web. It's because we look at it in a different manner. Our print magazine is a marketing tool, another medium to engage with different audiences. Digital is very young; print is older, but there is a physical aspect to it that digital can't have. A lot of our readers come from Brooklyn or elsewhere in the United States because *PURVEYR* is available in places like New York and London. There are also Filipinos who yearn for a connection with Filipino culture and see and relate to things in the magazine that they won't be able to find online, simply because there is so much out there online. It's the focused quality of print that we really like.

In terms of the kinds of events that we create, examples include a magazine launch or launching something in a store. An event like Pursuit Fair (Fig. 5), a bazaar featuring 50–70 local brands selling things, is intended to create certain values with our audience: commerce, creativity, and community. The participants can engage with their consumers and our audience as well, who are all interested in Filipino culture and creative culture. Pursuit Fair is a one-day, twice-yearly event with brands you can't normally see anywhere else because they are only online and don't usually take part in bazaars. In this way, it's a special one-day event that allows people to directly meet the owners of these online brands.

We started our retail platform in 2017, because we felt like we needed to do something else after launching the print magazine. We were looking for further opportunities where we can grow the brand. Pursuit Fair is only a one-day event, so many people will miss it. After organizing a few of the bazaars, we felt that we needed an actual store to have an avenue for people who can't always go to the event but want to support local talent or check out local brands and art. The store is very small, just 20 square meters, but we have a patio outside (Fig. 6). A lot of people hang out there and it becomes somewhere for people, including kids, to interact and discover likeminded people. We now have two stores that offer local products and services: one that is focused on street culture and another on contemporary creative culture (Fig. 7).

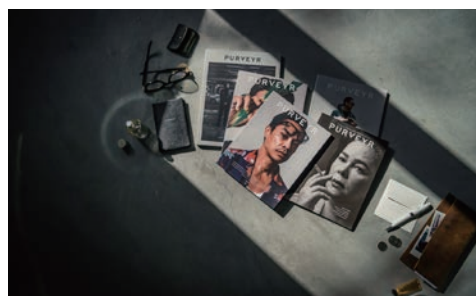


Fig. 4 Browsing the print edition of *PURVEYR*



Fig. 5 The brand bazaar event Pursuit Fair

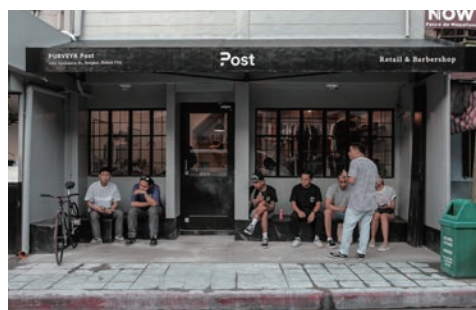


Fig. 6 Post Store Bankgai, one of *PURVEYR*'s physical stores

Sound Fiesta is a concept that we created last year with Cosmic Sonic Arts, an electronic music school and production studio run by Jorge Juan B. Wieneke V (aka similarobjects). We wanted to promote Filipino music on YouTube because we see a lot of music on YouTube that's foreign. As such, we put together a live music event for Filipino music that's diverse, not shy about including mainstream music but also looking at other genres (Fig. 8). As realists, we also try to monetize content, hence our tie-ups with sponsors like Johnnie Walker or adidas Originals for events.

That being said, we approach and deal with brands in a different way to a mainstream magazine, who might just go after any sponsor. It can be hard to explain what we are doing and why, but when brands really understand it kind of clicks in a way that they relate to and it's then easier to create content that fits to both their brand and ours. We organize branded events, for example, hiring aspiring fashion photographers to take the photos and then publishing them online.

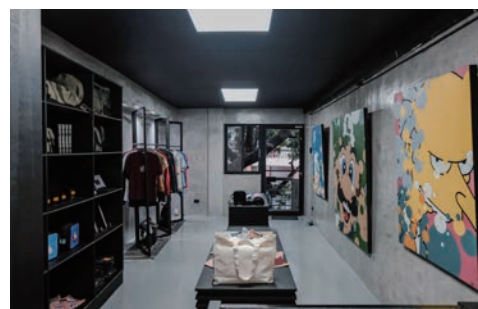


Fig. 7 Inside Post Store Pablacion, another PURVEYR store



Fig. 8 Sound Fiesta music event featuring the hip hop artist Peaceful Gemini

Tips for Affecting Culture

My first tip for how to affect culture and build a scene is to create your vision and believe in it, even if others won't. In 2012, not a lot of people understood what we do. But we stuck with it and for many years we were not earning a lot or even anything. However, we were passionate about it and we stuck to our vision, and people eventually resonated with it.

Number two: build a brand to strengthen your message and communication. Consistency is key in terms of making yourself more influential. Take big brands like CNN, Vice, or GQ, they focus on something. Sometimes being too general really waters down your message. Knowing about how your brand affects every aspect of your audience or how you engage with it is a big part in becoming more influential or powerful as a media title.

My third tip: shine a light on stories that are in harmony with your vision. This is why we shifted our direction as a media brand. If you just make content in order to build a readership, it might not follow your vision and that taints what you're trying to do. Always think about your work within the framework of your vision.

Next: be present. That is, attend events, converse, and always connect. I feel like a lot of editors or would-be editors are stuck at home or the office. I feel like if you want to know more, know more stories, engage more people, you have to go outside and converse with others. And that links to my final tip: collaborate and work with others in your community.

Staying in the Philippines but Looking Beyond

We look toward Japan as the kind of level or audience we want to reach. The language barrier is still a serious obstacle to this, though. We cannot afford to invest in translation, like some American and European magazines do. Nonetheless, Japan is a culture—whether it is in Tokyo, Osaka, or Kyoto—that we really look up to in the Philippines.

While we focus our efforts on promoting things taking place in Philippines, whenever an outside group or organization comes to us, as long as there is a certain element that relates to the Philippines, we are open to partnerships and collaborations. For example, a cultural festival

happening in Singapore might invite us to cover its events. If there is some sort of connection to Filipino artists, then we are excited to feature it and share this content with our audience. We are always searching for new ways to relate things to our vision and the Philippines.



Marvin Conan | Marvin Conan is a passionate advocate of the Philippines and its creative culture, firmly believing that its talent and creativity is worth celebrating and cultivating. Before founding PURVEYR in 2012, Conan worked for various companies in addition to launching a few small businesses of his own. In 2015, however, he focused all his energies on PURVEYR as his full-time endeavor. In six years, the project has grown to become a multidimensional brand producing digital content and an annual print magazine, running two retail stores, and hosting several events each year. All of these are done to make PURVEYR into an all-encompassing media/social brand that engages with the creative community at different levels and in various aspects of people's lives.

An Online Media Collaboration Sharing Local Culture Across National Borders

Tetsuro Wada Editor in Chief of FNMNL

Choi Jang-min + Kwon Hyuk-in Founders, Editors in Chief of VISLA Magazine

Japanese online platform FNMNL (pronounced “phenomenal”) has recently launched a partnership with VISLA Magazine, a web media in South Korea. In this presentation, FNMNL’s Tetsuro Wada joined VISLA’s Jang-min Choi and Hyuk-in Kwon to discuss their attitudes toward their own and each other’s cultural scenes as well as the respective media circumstances in the two countries that led to this transnational digital collaboration.



Tetsuro Wada (left), Choi Jang-min (center), Kwon Hyuk-in (right)

Launching Online Media Platforms, Inspired by Music

Tetsuro Wada: In December 2018, FNMNL and VISLA Magazine started sharing content as a form of collaboration. Regarding concrete examples of the new collaboration, we don’t have much to present yet because our efforts have only just begun. Instead, we would like to talk about the process behind launching this collaboration and, more generally, to share information about the media circumstances in Japan and South Korea.

Choi Jang-min: To start with a brief introduction to VISLA, the magazine was started almost six years ago by Kwon Hyuk-in and myself. We’ve been friends since we were 12 years old and we launched VISLA as a web media as an extension of that partnership we have built up over the years (Fig.1). Since we have no money, doing it online was the most realistic approach at first, though two years ago we started publishing a print magazine, too, which comes out every three months. In terms of the format, the print version is actually a pretty large size (Fig.2).

As a media we mainly publish content online or in the print version but we also do a lot of agency work, since money is always an issue.

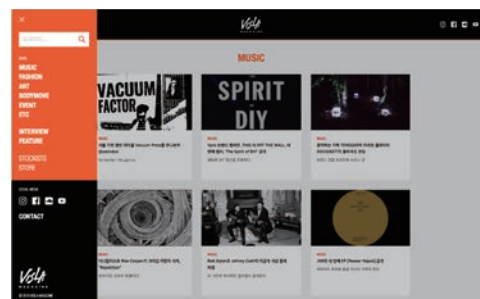


Fig.1 VISLA Magazine website, featuring various categories like “music,” “fashion,” “art,” “bodymove,” and “event”



Fig.2 Print edition of VISLA Magazine (dimensions: 310 × 460 mm)

That being said, we focus efforts also on our own branding for reasons I will discuss later. We are a media platform but we're also concerned about our brand. As such, we make our own merchandise and we do our own events. I met Tetsuro Wada almost a year ago at my friend's brand pop-up event in Tokyo. And since then, Hyuk-in and Tetsuro talked a lot about collaborating and this is how we got where we are today.

I was born in Seoul but I moved to America when I was 17 years old. The one thing that I really liked doing was sharing content. So what you read in our magazine is all the stuff I like. I had a kind of epiphany while I was a student in America and it led me to start the magazine with my best friend, with whom I share very similar tastes, back in Korea after I graduated. There were already some online magazines in Korea but mostly about fashion, so I really wanted to do something else. We're both big fans of music, so that got us thinking if we could do something related to music, skateboarding, street art, and so on.

Wada: I would now like to give an overview about FNMNL. It wasn't started by a media company. We were actually working in music distribution. As you know, digital downloads is now making it very tough for the Japanese music industry, so we expanded and launched FNMNL in 2016 as an extension of our music activities (Fig. 3). However, we were worried that it would be too restrictive and small in scale if it was only music news, which led us to take on content about fashion related to music and culture more generally. The online content is one thing but, as you heard for VISLA, we also do agency work and some client projects within our business remit. In the end, those activities bring us the most profit, so we have to utilize that and invest it back in the platform to create content.

Different Scenes and Situations in Korea and Japan

Wada: Starting from 2011, I took an interest in K-pop and South Korean music. Right now, South Korean artists often come to Japan, perhaps as many as one or more groups a month, but back then not so many underground musicians or artists came here. A label or artist possibly organized something once per year, but that was about it. I thought I might be able to make a contribution to this.

Choi: Korea is experiencing a rise in street fashion. Unlike in Japan, where this kind of street culture happened a long time ago, it was really only a subculture in Korea until recently, when it has become much more established. In fact, it's more or less part of the mainstream. The market for sneakers has also really jumped. There is a lot of demand and hype about certain footwear, and you can see long lines outside stores as people wait to pick up the latest sneakers. In terms of music, Korean hip hop is really strong at the moment and I think one of the biggest reasons is

FNMNL

FNMNL (pronounced "phenomenal") is a news website launched in 2016. The team behind it range from people with experience directing a music website to photographers working domestically and internationally. Together they bring their expertise to bear on introducing the latest trends in music, fashion, and art. Using their networks with local artists, the team's aim is to create a new culture scene alongside the next generation of creative talent who are quick to consume information via the Internet. In 2018, it began partnering on projects with VISLA Magazine in South Korea.
<http://fnmnl.tv>

VISLA Magazine

VISLA Magazine is an independent web magazine launched in Seoul, South Korea, in 2013. In addition to fashion, art, and music subcultures in Korea, it also introduces culture scenes in Japan, the United States, and Europe. Online since 2012, the platform launched a free print edition, *VISLA Magazine*, in 2017, published four times per year. Working closely with the street culture scene in Seoul, VISLA Magazine's team plans events, creates products, and engages with audiences in ways that go beyond the bounds of conventional media.
<http://visla.kr>



Fig. 3 FNMNL website, featuring categories like "music," "fashion," and "culture"

a TV show called *Show Me the Money*. The result is a lot of rappers are making money while retaining their originality. Hyuk-in and I grew up with hip hop music but back then people thought we were kind of weird because we listened to it. Ironically, every young kid today wants to be a rapper! In our magazine, though, we cover not only hip hop but also other genres of music. The scene is changing a lot and there is plenty of potential for crossovers and expansion.

With respect to the infrastructure, Korean Internet speed has become really fast, meaning content has shifted to online. Instagram is incredibly important in Korea, much more so than print magazines. We are living in an age when the most significant platforms are Instagram and YouTube. A lot of high-quality content is uploaded onto YouTube channels. And it's no longer the case that this content is made by a company; it might be just one guy. I believe things are a little slower in Japan but the trend cycle in Korea is super fast. I think this is because so much of content is now online and so easy to check and consume (Fig. 4).

Wada: Many people overseas with an interest in Japanese street culture are focused on the street fashion (Fig. 5). But when I became interested in Korean street culture, my focus was much more on music than fashion. In Japan, hip hop and other types of music are popular particularly with young people, but this has not resulted in attention from consumers outside the country. Though there are various reasons for this, Japan has continued to develop businesses whose revenues come exclusively from the domestic market and, as such, it is only looking inward—at the consumers and opportunities locally.

Views on the Scenes in Each Other's Countries

Wada: In Korea, there is a large and structured K-pop industry and hip hop exists as one part of this. *Show Me the Money*, as Choi said, is now serving as a gateway to mainstream success. They have established mechanisms to produce stars and built a solid growth model. There is a negative side to this, of course. Originality may end up sacrificed in the face of satisfying trends. If you look at the playlist for Spotify in Korea, there is certainly plenty of quality music but it all sounds very similar. The quality, though, makes it appear quite international. As such, the artists are closer to the global scene than in Japan. Alongside this growth in music, street fashion is developing. The brand MISCHIEF, for instance, has already gained a lot of fans in Japan (Fig. 6). We can also see significant growth outside hip hop in the club music scene.

Choi: The way I view Japanese culture is firstly affected by its long history. The Japanese know their roots well. They know history. But Korea is more about what is trending right now. Secondly, Japan has a strong domestic market. This has its pros and cons, for sure, but whether it is



Fig. 4 “FORCE BY ME—RUDY LIM & KUSTOOL,” a video from VISLA Magazine's YouTube channel, featuring an interview with Korean artist RUDY LIM & KUSTOOL, who took apart a Nike sneaker and made it into an artwork



Fig. 5 Example of an article on the FNMNL website about a fashion and music collaboration project: t-shirts jointly created by Tokyo and Swiss skateboard brands, with Japanese rappers in the lookbook



Fig. 6 Website of the fashion brand MISCHIEF

fashion or music, Japanese producers know how to make money from the local consumers. Thirdly, when Japan adopts something from another country, you use your creativity to make new Japanese stars. Hyuk-in and I were born in 1986 as part of a generation that grew up watching anime and playing video games. We are all very familiar with Japanese culture.

Online Media Contexts in the Two Countries

Wada: In Japan, it's tough to run an online media platform in terms of the business side of things. If you're a media outlet that focuses on culture, it's especially difficult to be independent and profitable as a standalone business. We are trying to transition magazines from print to web but the business model is radically different. As such, the transition has seemed slow so far. In the case of culture-related web media, we have to produce content for clients to survive but many brands and clients now create their own media, with the end result that there are just too many platforms out there. Many media accordingly shutter in less than a year because they can't adequately monetize their content. Advertising revenue is increasing, though, and changing in relation to the way digital media works. Clients are approaching and investing directly in Instagrammers and YouTubers to promote their business. Just being an online media platform alone is pretty hard if you want to make a living and sustain your content.

Choi: Japanese used to have a strong print magazine market but the Korean print media market has already been dead for a while. The growth rate for print magazine advertising from 2015 until 2018 decreased but for online magazine increased. There are still many paper magazines in Korea, of course, but most of them are globally licensed magazines with an established name. The actual power of print media is really weak now. Being a print magazine has become merely a matter of status and making money with a print title is really hard because people in Korea don't spend money on content anymore. Instead, we have to figure out other ways to make money. What's different today is that brands have started to spend money on promoting things online or making online content. There are lots of platforms today, each with different pros and cons. One major drawback, though, is that if you put too much effort into a certain online platform and it suddenly changes its system or shuts down, you might lose everything. Increasingly we are seeing a new casual breed of media that does not even call itself "media." They're just like a Facebook page or Instagram account. After all, the social media influencers and YouTubers make a lot of money these days. On the other hand, there is potential here for a new title because of the decline in print media in Korea if you have the right approach.

A Transnational Collaboration

Wada: Though I have been following Korean culture, I was never able to find an appropriate partner to work with until now. When I looked at Korean web media and online magazines related to music, they were already strong with regard to content. What could a Japanese partner like me offer them? When I actually met the team from VISLA, however, I realized that they were interested in Japanese fashion and art, and that the Japanese and Korean music scenes were also quite close. We each had the information that the other wanted. As such, before we started any concrete collaborations and monetizing anything, we prioritized the content, which ensured that our discussions proceeded smoothly.

Choi: VISLA is working with FNMNL primarily because of content and shared tastes. It's also about the perspective. FNMNL is talking about the local scene in Japan in a way that VISLA never could. You can also tell that FNMNL really cares about what it features, which is important because it means the shared content will showcase precisely curated examples of local and underground culture to a different audience.

Of course, there is the issue of translation and the language barrier, but digital tools make that much less of a challenge, and we can be in contact so much faster and more easily today due to the Internet. We will pick out articles that we want to share or produce together, translate the

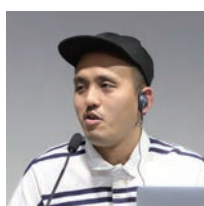
content, and then publish it on our respective platforms. This might be an interview with an interesting artist but it's also lots of news content. This is a matter of efficiency, too, since it's tough on your resources to make daily news content (Fig. 7).

Wada: Moving beyond just sharing, our future plans include collaboratively creating new content from scratch. For example, utilizing each other's networks to make content about local scenes in Japan or Korea. FNMNL might, for instance, go to Seoul to cover an artist with the help of VISLA, and vice versa. Gradually this may build into a platform and network between the two countries. Likewise for client work, we might be able to find further ways to collaborate.

Choi: I have high hopes for the future in terms of not only making good content but also developing ways to share it better. And this may go further than just Japan and Korea, but also involve China and other parts of Asia. The collaboration might result in pop-ups, merchandise, events, concerts, and more. In the end, I hope what we can do is build a bridge connecting our two countries and cultures.



Fig. 7 FNMNL-VISLA content collaboration: an article (top) in Japanese by the FNMNL editors about a Ray Kunimoto release; translated into Korean and published quickly on VISLA (bottom)



Tetsuro Wada | Tetsuro Wada was formerly the director of club music download website WASABEAT, where he wrote articles and planned content. Since 2016, he has run and served as chief editor of the online magazine FNMNL, which features content about cutting-edge culture with a focus on music and fashion in Japan and abroad. As a writer, he has contributed to numerous magazines, including *EYESCREAM*, *Cyzo*, and *STUDIO VOICE*. In addition to working as a DJ, he is also a music event organizer.



Choi Jang-min + Kwon Hyuk-in | Choi Jang-min (left) and Kwon Hyuk-in (right) were born in Seoul, South Korea, in 1986. Choi was brought up in Seoul and San Francisco, returning to Korea after he graduated college. The long-time friends founded VISLA Magazine together in 2013. Though started as an online magazine with a strong focus on hip hop and street culture, it now features a wide range of content across multiple formats including a quarterly print edition.

[Wrap-up Session]

Post-Internet and Simultaneity in Asia

Moderator
Discussion and Q&A



To wrap up the symposium, a discussion was held between the moderators for each session. While attempting to redefine what “post-Internet” might entail, the scope of the conversation extended to the relationship between informatization and globalization as well as cultural trends and ways of doing business in our globalized society.

Speakers

Minoru Hatanaka	Chief Curator of NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] [Japan] (p. 04)
Kodama Kanazawa	Independent curator / Senior Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, Towada Art Center [Japan] (p. 36)
Kei Wakabayashi	Editor [Japan] (p. 53)

What the Post-Internet Shows Us

Minoru Hatanaka: We have just come to the end of a two-day symposium on the theme of the “Formation of Culture in the Post-Internet Era.” Yesterday during the first session, we heard from individuals in various fields talking about creativity in the age of the Internet. In today’s two sessions, various speakers also shared their thoughts on how we can produce new forms of expression as well as creating a cultural scene in Asia.

Kodama Kanazawa, what were some of your impressions over the past two days?

Kodama Kanazawa: While we concluded that the Internet and technology are just tools, we also pondered a range of other issues that could not be covered by this particular theme. During Riar Rizaldi’s presentation today, he mentioned that the Internet environment is completely different depending on which country you are in.

I currently live in China, where you cannot use Gmail and Facebook without connecting to a VPN. When you are in a situation where a different infrastructure leads to different sorts of information being conveyed to you, your ideas are bound to be different as well. Even before we start talking about the Internet environment, however, there are also differences in religion and culture depending on the society in question. We are at a point where these divergent situations are colliding with each other in both directions: my impression is that the level of creativity and the nature of diversity has also changed.

Hatanaka: During Riar Rizaldi’s presentation, he mentioned that the “post-Internet” hasn’t arrived yet, which made me think about the question of what sort of situation the “post-Internet” is really referring to. The society depicted in Philip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which formed the basis for the film *Blade Runner*, is one where people are surveilled by a so-called Internet religion, something that was not clearly fleshed out in the film. In this world, God becomes omnipresent thanks to network circuits. Moreover, a society that has been

completely permeated by the Internet ends up as a total surveillance society, such as the one found in George Orwell's *1984*. In reality, however, even if one strives to act freely online, there will always be a degree of intervention by capital or influencers, for example: the Internet is being used with certain biases in place, and it is dubious whether this can really be considered a state of freedom. Whatever the situation in question, we cannot help but think about the issue of how significant the Internet really is in terms of its independence. A completely post-Internet world, then, is very likely not going to be free. Kei Wakabayashi, what do you think?

Kei Wakabayashi: In the beginning, the Internet was really based on the idea of creating a decentralized world. However, what we have seen is the emergence of the Big Four tech companies of Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple, without this decentralized vision being realized. Around 2016 and 2017, the view that the Internet itself had ended in failure reached something of a fever pitch, particularly in Europe.

The reason for this is that the Internet was originally conceived as something of an asylum: a space where one could become someone different from one's real self. In this respect, there was a lot of talk about being able to conduct a truly free peer-to-peer exchange of values. When money was deployed into this situation, however, it became necessary to have contractors that functioned as intermediaries. The strict deployment of money entailed the problem of currencies, which led in turn to the question of nation-states. Subsequently, there was the problem of being unable to make a payment to a party that could not be identified, which led to a call for these identities to be made to conform. So it became necessary to verify that the "self" in virtual cyberspace and the real world was identical, and this is where the issue of national jurisdiction came into the picture.

This is why the vision of connecting the world through the Internet becomes harder to achieve, the more ambiguous the borders between the real and virtual worlds become. A new phenomenon that is now taking shape is the splitting of the Internet according to spheres and regions. China segregated itself from the very beginning, and Europe recently implemented its General Data Protection Regulation, which has in effect created a kind of wall. The dream of a decentralized world, on the other hand, still remains to be achieved: you might say that we have returned to the starting line once again. Instead of the post-Internet, I think the discussion will return to the question of what ought to be done about the Internet in the first place.

The biggest difference between then and now is the fact that virtually everyone today has a smartphone in his or her hands. Moving forward, the significance of how the Internet has evolved will become evident. We will need to think properly about what sort of governance will be necessary in this respect.

Hatanaka: In our daily lives, technology functions as something that manages us, whereas the Internet appeared as a sort of utopia in contrast to that. The idea itself of using technology in art, however, has been around since the 1950s or '60s. The reason for using technology was partially due to anti-technology ideas. My own reading of the situation is that the use of technology in art moving forward is going to diverge into two extremes: using technology with an anti-technology stance, or riding on the wave behind technology itself. As a global trend, you could also say that it is something of a truism that large corporations and countries flatter technologists and put them on a pedestal.

Reorganizing the Global

Hatanaka: The theme of my session in part one was creation. For Kanazawa's session in part two, the themes were production and curation, while Wakabayashi's session in part three focused on the question of how to understand, introduce, and disseminate these terms.

When we understand these three elements in terms of a single movement, we tend to think of the capital involved, or the fact that influencers are making the most money out of

this—at least in terms of what we just heard today during part three.

Roughly 20 years have already passed since the Internet became widespread and ubiquitous. For this reason, I think it is necessary to think about what this world that has become decentralized as a result, at least to some extent, ought to look like moving forward, and how we might go about reorganizing it. Due to recent developments in information society, there have also been certain reconfigurations in the Asian region. Something about the relationship between Japan and Asia has clearly changed.

Kanazawa: In my opinion, the changes in the contemporary art world in Asia have been particularly evident. About 150 years ago, various Asian countries imported the notion of contemporary art—“Western art,” so to speak. Despite a time lag, these Asian countries are going through the same process. Everyone is experiencing this incredible turbulence that comes in the wake of so-called cultural colonialism. Takashi Murakami sees this phenomenon in terms of a complex. It’s an extremely complicated situation. What is the truth about the past? What should we pursue? What was really interesting about the past? All these questions start to become rather opaque. Under these circumstances, a particular coterie of people will continue to insist that Europe represents the gold standard, while others will be opposed to this position. However, there are certain points of confusion where these two positions become mixed. And I think that other ways of looking at this situation have emerged, ever since we started to gain access to the Internet. Even without looking to Europe, we discovered that there were many outstanding artists in various places, whether it was Western Europe or Asia. In that sense, we might say that a certain kind of geographical disparity has disappeared.

Hatanaka: It is tempting to think that this sense of simultaneity found in Asia has emerged as a result of geographical and temporal disparities becoming nullified with the advent of the Internet. If you visit the contemporary art museums in each of these countries, however, you find that they all have avant-garde forms of artistic expression, for instance, in spite of the fact that they emerged in different eras. There is a certain synchronicity to the shifts and changes in art that occurred in Asia. At the same time, locality also naturally comes into play here, so if research into Asian art starts to flourish, the avant-garde art in each country is certainly going to become the object of that research.

Wakabayashi: When I was at *WIRED*, we did a special issue on Africa. The things I heard then were the same as what I heard from my friends in Southeast Asia. There are wealthy people in both Africa and Southeast Asia, and the sons of these families study abroad in Europe. Up until now, almost none of them were able to return to their home countries. Or rather, even if they did, there was apparently no work for them. Someone from Ghana I know called them “creative refugees.” For example, there were many of these sons of wealthy families who worked in ateliers in Europe after studying architecture in London. But my Ghanaian friend also said that for the first time a generation that is able to come back has emerged. I feel that this could actually be quite a significant development.

Choi Jang-min from *VISLA Magazine* grew up in America, but these kinds of people have been returning to South Korea of late and creating new kinds of media. In other words, they already have a network in place: they can connect the Korean music scene with the American scene. An incredibly dynamic shift is underway.

There is also this phenomenon where major American rappers can hook Nigerian artists up thanks to a network of Nigerian immigrants who were raised in the US. I think it’s not so much that everyone is now connected thanks to the Internet, but rather that there is now another layer that gives rise to situations where people can return to their home countries and find work because of the Internet. We are seeing the emergence of an interesting situation where people are reorganizing the “global” in the realms of both media and fashion.

Hatanaka: Music is an art form where a certain longing or aspiration for different countries and ethnicities is particularly strong, isn’t it? It keeps evolving through exchanges with a diverse range of different cultures. It’s not so much a desire to become someone from another country, but rather a longing for a connection to that country.

Wakabayashi: The phenomenon of a disappearing center has manifested itself in the field of music in a way that is easily understood, in terms of both the music industry and from a cultural perspective.

Post-Internet Movements

Wakabayashi: Allow me to share some of my thoughts.

I think what dj sniff said was really interesting. It's the same in music or anything else. If the relationship between those who produce art and those who receive it becomes decided, it soon devolves into a relationship divided into those who consume and those who are consumed, even if money doesn't enter the equation. Take the example of musical improvisation: despite the fact that not much money intervenes, if there is a customer and a performer involved, you will always see a dynamic in which the performer seeks to make the customer more satisfied. We face the same difficulty as well: as Yohei Kawada mentioned during the third session, editors used to be the ones who held all the information, and this information was supposed to be transmitted to those who were unaware of it. Naturally, monetary exchanges take place, and a relationship of consumption emerges. I am wondering if it would be possible to break free of this persistent relationship.

That's when I realized that thinking about the acts of listening or reading was an interesting issue. Listening and reading are not things that you actually learn from people, but everyone does them. People who are good writers are definitely also good readers. By the same token, good musicians are also good listeners. When it comes to musical improvisation, I think it's crucial to be able to "listen" to the space. If those who produce art and those who receive it are occupying the same position, I think something will emerge from that—something that isn't a relationship based on consumption. There is a certain fundamental nature to these passive acts like listening or reading: my sense was that they might be able to generate some kind of new value.

Hatanaka: We were just talking about a time lag in terms of information. The value of being able to introduce something earlier than anyone else has largely been leveled by the Internet. In order to generate value out of information, then, it becomes a matter of how to create movements and trends using this information, whether it's through a combination of approaches, or creating a particular scene around something.

Kanazawa: Creating something together through collaborations, for instance.

Wakabayashi: That's definitely true. This is particularly evident in the fashion industry: even though there is a complete saturation of information, there are still trends, just like before. In Japan, though, I have the impression that we are continuing to see an absence of trends.

Kanazawa: In art, there are certain trends when it comes to the market. But otherwise, I really wonder: perhaps it all depends on what the prevailing mood is. I think it might be rather difficult to launch a major movement, in a post-Internet context.

Wakabayashi: I think we are seeing two things happening at once: on the one hand, you have specific trends that repeat themselves, while on the other hand you have underlying value systems that are undergoing major shifts. The act of lifting something up in terms of a grassroots movement, as seen in social media, and the act of manipulating popular opinion in the style of the mass media in order to create movements—these are the two main modalities. The circumstances that are able to produce a shift in values, it seems to me, are not going to occur easily in Japan. Of late, my feeling is that what is also required is a certain ability to rally young talent together who can embody these new values, and turn this demographic into a movement.

When thinking about the post-Internet, there are also people who can create bona fide movements that further the discourse, as it were. A liberal contingent that can make this happen, however, has not been formed, in terms of either a historical phenomenon or a global movement. My sense is that there must be a better way of making this happen.

Hatanaka: Since, in a sense, radicalism is individualism, it isn't really suitable for mobilizing people or agitating. It is fundamentally difficult to mobilize for something. There was a certain eager anticipation that creating major movements would help to disseminate discourses that were anti-ideological, thanks to the way in which the Internet tolerated and cultivated a culture of diversity. This potential is still present, however. Now, the most important consideration in the context of this Internet environment is what sort of mentality to have, and what sort of technology should be deployed.



From left: Minoru Hatanaka, Kodama Kanazawa, Kei Wakabayashi

Also in this vein, I think that the past two days have been quite meaningful in terms of the diversity of practices we have seen that operate within this Internet environment.

The State of Culture in an Era of Globalization

Hatanaka: Unfortunately, we are almost out of time, so perhaps we can take just one question from the audience.

Q1 Today, we are seeing various conflicts between countries erupt as a result of nationalism. At the moment, I am wondering if culture can serve as an intermediary channel between such countries. What do the speakers think about this sort of approach?

Kanazawa: Personally, I have been approaching my work with this constant expectation of what culture can accomplish. The state of contemporary art in the past several years has been rather fragmented. The Documenta from two years ago (2017), for instance, was held in Kassel in Germany and Athens, and there were almost no Asian artists. This isn't to say that it was therefore to be condemned: this particular edition of Documenta seems to have been conceived to address the refugee question, and various other issues that Europe is urgently confronting. One of the themes was that Europe's spiritual roots lay with Greece, so this Documenta did not encompass Asia.

For a time, globalization reached an incredibly advanced stage in London, as well. My sense is that it embodied how optimistically the world could become interconnected. That quality, however, has gradually dissipated. As you might expect, people are now focusing rather on issues that are more imminent and pressing.

Different people have different issues that they consider to be urgent, and I think regional disparities are undeniable. If I decided to exhibit works dealing with the European refugee question in Japan, I think that a few steps would need to be taken first. In that sense, the situation in which topics become divided and segregated has also manifested itself in the realm of art.

So how can culture serve as an intermediary channel? We cannot rely on the optimistic globalization of the 1990s and early 2000s, so it may be necessary to deploy an entirely different scheme. This is the tentative conclusion I reached through a process of trial and error, as I was worrying about this question.

Hatanaka: Just to go back to the presentations that we just heard, we have things like Japanese

hip hop and Korean hip hop, which are basically created by digesting an art form in one's own way, in the context of one's home culture. In the same way, variations on all sorts of music, or other art forms, can also emerge. On the other hand, I think the very act of labelling something a "national culture" verges on the dangerous. The culture of one's own country is no longer something that emerges purely out of that one country. I think that understanding "culture" in a wider sense ought to be an important premise.

Wakabayashi: As for me, my sense is that it would be important to make proper economic connections. It's not that collaborations between Korean and Japanese media would be beneficial from a humanistic perspective or something like that: it's because they would yield good business possibilities. Conversely, it's quite unfortunate that we don't really regard China and Asia as markets when we talk about "connecting" with them. In short, Japan only sees these countries as places to sell goods that we make. That's only half of the equation, isn't it? More vital is the notion that we might have things to sell to each other if we produced things together. In that sense, this is a kind of nationalism on the part of Japan. There are certain limits to attempting to complete the cycle of production only within one's own national borders.

I often have the chance to speak with developers. They say things like "We'd like to give this redevelopment project a truly international character," or "Diversity is important." But I'll often be thinking, "Isn't this whole meeting just full of old Japanese men?" This is a huge problem. It will be disastrous if we don't create an environment, even coercively, in which non-Japanese can actively participate. We should start by creating a situation where we can exchange opinions in a casual way, and then move on to an environment where we can produce things collaboratively.

Kanazawa: In his presentation today, dj sniff mentioned that it's important to do things like gather in the guest room and have meals together. Human connections are essential. During the 1990s and early 2000s, it seems to me that the notion of connection was based on this ideology that building economic links was essential. If you really feel that someone is doing something fascinating, will that mean that you will want to establish some visceral connection with them? That's easier said than done. It would take a steady, cumulative series of efforts, I think.

Wakabayashi: I don't think we will see any long-term value emerge from short-term solutions. Personally, I feel that Japan only makes a half-baked effort when it comes to thinking about issues that don't necessarily have a final goal, in an unstructured or undirected context. When there is some objective that needs to be purposefully attained within a short period of time, we also don't proceed very rationally. We will say, "Let's achieve something purposefully," while some other emotional consideration will subtly creep into the mix somewhere. So I think that it's important to have some kind of strategy that will help to define the scope of the domain in question. All this is rather abstract, but recently I've been thinking that this is something that always muddles things up.

Hatanaka: We've gone considerably past the time limit, so I'm going to close the discussion here. Thank you to everyone for participating.

Symposium Organizer Profiles

The Japan Foundation Asia Center

The Japan Foundation is Japan's principal independent administrative institution dedicated to carrying out cultural exchange initiatives throughout the world. The Asia Center, established in April 2014, is a division within the Foundation that conducts and supports collaborative initiatives with its Asian—primarily ASEAN—counterparts. Through interacting and working together in Japanese-language education, arts and culture, sports, and grassroots and intellectual exchange, the Asia Center aspires to develop the sense of kinship and coexistence as neighboring inhabitants of Asia.
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The 3rd International symposium for Media Art
Formation of Culture in the Post-Internet Era:
Creation, Production, and Network
Report [PDF ver.]

Published: February 20, 2020

Publisher

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Takuro Mizuta Lippit (pp. 41–46)

Design

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Cover Image

STUDIO PT. (Yosuke Nakanishi, Kohei Nakazawa, Koharu Nezu)