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## A Report on Japan's First AICA Congress: Tokyo Hosts Art Critics from Around the World

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Founded in Paris fifty years ago as a UNESCO affiliate, the International Art Critics Association (AICA) held their XXXII annual Congress and General Assembly from September 27--October 1, at Tokyo's Spiral Hall. It was the first time in AICA's history that Japan played host to this global gathering, and only the second time that a congress was held in Asia, following the XXIX Congress which was held in Hong Kong/Macau in 1995. AICA Membership is awarded to those who write about art after the 1880's, and members are often museum curators, university professors and critics for newspapers and magazines.

AICA members came to Tokyo from all over the world, motivated by the unique opportunity to learn about traditional Japanese culture as well as contemporary Japan. Internationally-renowned, Tokyo-based curator Nanjo, Fumio organized the program, which took as its theme, "Transition: Changing Society and Art." Nanjo and his staff put together an excellent, wide-ranging series of receptions and excursions that supplemented the formal program.

There were 50 Japanese AICA members in attendance, led by Homma, Masayoshi, who is the well-respected president of the AICA chapter in Japan. Regarding the home countries of the other critics who participated, the approximately 150 other attendees came from such far-flung locations as Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Belgium, Spain, Australia, Sweden, Puerto Rico, Canada, France, Ireland, Croatia, Norway, Brazil, Colombia, Russia, Netherlands, Germany, Haiti, Italy, Korea, Slovenia, China, Argentina, Taiwan, Denmark, Hong Kong, Barbados, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We were like a mini United Nations, and we felt like celebrities when we were occasionally followed around by a crew from NHK!

As the president of the American Section of AICA, I was obliged to attend an administrative council meeting on Sunday, September 27th. The Congress itself was formally convened the following day, September 28th. The program, which was spread out over a four day period, was subdivided into three Colloquia, and concluded with a symposium. In all, fifty different voices were heard discoursing from the podium, ranging from the Australian Annette Van den Bosch on "Interactions Between Australia and Japan: Artists, Art, and Aesthetics," to Japan's Hyuga Akiko on "'Anime' Icon in Contemporary Art--Japanese Comic Expression as a Medium," to the Netherlands' Paul Groot on "The Difficult Position of the Computer in the Art World."

Those in attendance could preview the presentations by reading summaries of each talk and a resume of the speaker, which Nanjo's staff daily placed on a table just outside the Spiral Hall auditorium. Earphones were freely available for spontaneous translations, which were available in Japanese, French and English. Although I listened to a good many of the papers that were presented during the four days, I must confess that periodically I would slip away from the auditorium to



take a walk in the neighborhood of Spiral Hall, so much do I love the intensity and vitality of Tokyo street life. (This was my third visit to your country, having spent time in Japan in 1991 and 1996.)

The first of the three Colloquia under Nanjo's general theme of "Transition," was titled "Memories and Visions: From Tradition to a New Identity," and it took up all of the day on the 28th, and the morning of the 29th. In turn, it was divided into sessions entitled: "The Dialogue Between East and West," "The Asian Perspective," "General Perspectives," and "Western Identity." The term "identity," which was nowhere in evidence in the art world ten years ago, has become a major topic of international concern in the decade of the nineties. Because Modernization is experienced as a form of "Westernization" in non-Western countries, and because it can be both alien and threatening to traditional identity, it was Nanjo's intention to explore the problematic relationship between Tradition and Modernization outside of the West. In addition, he wanted to examine how artists have responded to the dilemmas of identity and to the complex cultural issues surrounding the impact of modernization and globalization.

In Session 1, "The Dialogue Between East and West," Johnson Chang, the internationally-active curatorial director of Hong Kong's Hanart TZ Gallery, gave a presentation entitled "Cultural Memory for the Future." Chang spoke about the relationship of modernity and tradition in non-Western cultures, and the different solutions found in the politico-geographical domains of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. As an example he cited one Mainland sculptor whose work took the form of venerable Chinese garden rocks, which were fabricated out of cast plastic. The American critic M.A. Greenstein, who lives in Los Angeles, gave a paper called "Down Memory Lane: The Bollywood-Hollywood Connection," in which she explored the influence of the film industry in Bombay and Hollywood on the young artists of India and California.

This session also included a talk by Yuko Hasegawa, the well-known and highly respected curator of Tokyo's Setagaya Museum. In her paper "Frame and 'Frameless,'" she contrasted the idea of frame, defined as the spatial structure of each art work, according to each artist's personal viewpoint, with the notion of frameless, which covers artworks that "appear hardly substantial." Generally speaking, she thought that framelessness was a distinguishing characteristic of Japanese art and she went on to say that frameless: "is a concept that clarifies the nature of Japanese visual art which is hard to explain theoretically in current terminology. It does not only mean the absence of a frame but, by definition, it contains something that invades, penetrates and, as a vector, tends to disintegrate the frame." She then went on to discuss the idea of frameless in the work of such internationally acclaimed Japanese contemporary artists as On Kawara, Tatsuo Miyajima and Tadashi Kawamata.

In Session 2, "The Asian Perspective," the guest speaker was the distinguished Korean writer Kim, Hong-Hee. Of the five presentations that followed, the most enlightening was entitled "Ideogram Painting:

YU-ICHI," given by Mr. Masaomi Unagami, President of UNAC TOKYO. I was impressed by the variety of images he showed in his slide selection, and I was intrigued to learn about YU-ICHI, whose work was hitherto unfamiliar to me. [AICA delegates had the opportunity to learn more about YU-ICHI the following evening--more about that later.]

This session also included the Australian-based Korean artist Ahn, En Young, who discussed "The Problems in Reconstructing One's Identity in One's Own Art and the Revitalization of One's Own Tradition, for example, Korea." The Hong Kong-based critic Eric Otto Wear spoke about the Taiwanese artists Cheng Tsai Tung and Yu Peng in a talk entitled "Literati Precedent and Contemporary Chinese Aesthetic Strategies and Identities." Unfortunately, Mr. Wear did not use any slides to illustrate his talk. Given the challenges of simultaneous translation, my colleagues and I best appreciated the presentations that included the visual component of slides or videos. During Session 3, "General Perspectives," I left Spiral Hall to explore the city. That evening, the AICA congress delegates attended a gala reception in their honor at Beiso-kaku, hosted by Seiji Tsutsumi, the Chairman of Tokyo's Sezon Museum of Modern Art.

Tuesday, September 28th opened with "Western Identity," the forth and final part of Colloquium I. Chaired by Professor Teresa Beguiristain, from the University of Valencia in Spain, it consisted of 6 papers, including a lively one by the young Irish scholar, Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith, of the Department of Modern Irish, University College Dublin. He covered such soul-searching questions as how many times over the course of a decade, and in how many different ways, can or should a critic from a small country [Ireland] package the art of that country for international consumption?

"Monuments and Icons: New Dimensions of Public Art," the second theme of the congress, was addressed in Colloquium II after the lunch break. Chaired by Liam Kelly, Director of the Orchard Gallery in Derry, North Ireland, the session examined the changing relationship of public art to the environment, urban culture and new definitions of public space. The guest speaker was the well-known Japanese artist, Kawamata, Tadashi, who showed a documentary video that had been recently made about a project in which he build a large temporary structure out of chairs and pews, that was situated in the interior of a French church.

Nanjo, Fumio participated in this Colloquium and he spoke about "Recent Trajectories in Public Art." Using the latest modern technology, he placed a CD Rom in his laptop computer and projected it in a format that was large enough to be visible from every part of the Spiral Hall auditorium. The CD Rom documented his recent project for Shinjuku I-Land. I myself presented a paper in this Colloquium. Entitled "Philadelphia: Urban Laboratory for Public Art," it addressed the question of how Philadelphia, the fifth largest city in the United States, had become the country's mural capital. I talked about the 17th Century Quaker founders of "The City of Brotherly Love," who left a unique heritage of civic consciousness, and pointed out that



Philadelphia is the home of the nation's oldest organization dedicated to public art and urban planning.

In 1959, Philadelphia became the first city in the United States to enact a "one-percent law," mandating that large construction projects allocate 1% of building costs for public art. I showed slides of various "1%" sculptures including Isamu Noguchi's Bolt of Lightning, 1984, inspired by Benjamin Franklin's discovery of electricity. Primarily, I talked about the special city program by which community murals are executed free of charge. This is a highly unusual idea in the United States, namely art as a city service, like filling pot holes and clearing snow. I showed examples of some of the nearly 1700 documented murals that today dot the cityscape of Philadelphia. I also addressed two private mural initiatives, including one by Chinese-American artist Lily Yeh, who created Angel Alley, a strikingly beautiful mosaic of stately Ethiopian angels that serve as community guardians in an impoverished neighborhood.

That evening Congress participants attended a special party celebration, hosted by Okuyama, Sumio, Mayor of Sumida-ku, Tokyo, and Unagami, Masaomi, President of the YU-ICHI Vivant Society. After the question and answer period that concluded Colloquium II, we all assembled at the entrance to Spiral Hall and boarded buses which took us to Hinode Wharf. There we encountered a Sumida River water bus that was bedecked with festive lights and strung with miniature flags representing countries from all over the globe. A long banner with attractive calligraphy proclaimed "Welcome AICA Members." As we entered the boat we were given a warm welcome of applause. This gesture astonished many of my colleagues who were unaccustomed to this manifestation of Japanese hospitality.

While some people took seats on the inside of the boat, I preferred to sit outside, closer to the water, the better to see the fascinating sights of the harbor at night along the route to the Sumida Riverside Hall. It was a mild evening with a gentle breeze, and we marveled at everything we saw. Tokyo is such a rich treasury of modern architecture, and we learned about the buildings we saw by asking our Japanese friends aboard. We docked right near a Super Dry Hall of Asahi Breweries Ltd., designed by Phillippe Stark. Upon arriving at Sumida Riverside Hall, we were treated to a concert by the young musician Hikaru, Sawai, who is skilled in both rock music and Japanese traditional instruments. By turns, he played the shamisen and the 13-stringed koto, and his melodies included both up-to-the-minute rock tunes as well as traditional favorites.

The concert was held in the gallery that housed a special exhibition entitled "Revelation in Black on White: The Spiritual Austerity of YU-ICHI," a show that had been installed expressly for the AICA Congress. Here were some of the very images that Mr. Unagami had shown us in slide form the day before! What I found so compelling about YU-ICHI's work was the muscular, balletic quality of the ideograms he depicted, which seemed to me to be a cross between writing, drawing and dance notation. As I understand the ancient origin of Chinese characters,

many were originally based on the human form. What interested me particularly about YU-ICHI's images, is that he artfully re-introduced a body identification into the form of the ideogram.

YU-ICHI's images can be read as having heads, torsos and legs. They seem to convey a definite masculine presence and energy, and can be visually associated with the male generative organ. It's interesting to compare the figurative implications of YU-ICHI's work with sculpture by the contemporary American Joel Shapiro, who creates abstract configurations of simple forms that have an evocative figurative appearance. Alternatively, one can also see in many of YU-ICHI's forms an archetypal house shape. As such, it is interesting to compare this suggestion of a domicile with the famous femme-maison (woman-house) images created by the French-American artist Louise Bourgeois.

We then proceeded upstairs where a delectable array of buffet foods awaited us. Before dining, there were speeches of welcome from our hosts Mr. Okuyama and Mr. Unagami, and from the AICA International President Kim Levin, my American colleague. Ms. Levin joined her hosts in the traditional ceremony of breaking open a large keg of Fukumasamune brand sake, which had come all the way from Kanazawa, in the north of Japan. It was a delicious drink, all the more so for those of us lucky enough to drink it from one of the traditional square wooden cups that imparted an unusual fragrance to the liquid. The meal that followed thoughtfully included western types of food, but I gravitated to the Japanese selections, which was both tasty and plentiful. Upon leaving, to return by bus to our hotels, each of us received a catalogue of the YU-ICHI show, which had been especially printed for the occasion.

The third and final Colloquium, "Into the Internet?: New Technologies and De-Materialization of Art," took place on Wednesday, September 30th. As Chairman of the session, the Austrian critic Angelica Baumer chose papers that explored the new opportunities for artistic and cultural expression provided by recent rapid developments in technology. As Nanjo had pointed out in his original plans for the AICA Congress, with these technological changes, it is now possible for artists to express ideas and concepts through computer-generated visualizations rather than through the physical realization or concrete materialization of works. Nine participants each looked at the new possibilities afforded by network communication and communication technology, and addressed such issues as their affect on society, and the dialogue between art and these new fields. They also considered how these technological advances became integrated into or challenged by contemporary art. Speakers included two AICA Japan members: Mori, Tsukasa, on "Internet as Media," and Nakamura, Hideki on "The Spectator's Moving Gaze: Art as a Visual Realm of Experience." That evening, AICA delegates were the guests of the Sogetsu-Kai Foundation, which sponsored a visit to the exhibition "JUNGLE 4," and a gracious buffet reception at the Sogetsu Kaikan.

On Thursday, October 1, the final day of the official Congress, delegates took bus excursions to various museums and galleries in the



greater Tokyo area. They could choose between three different itineraries: the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, the Ginza Graphic Gallery, and the Museum of Contemporary Art; the Yokohama Museum of Art, the Setagaya Art Museum, and the NTT Inter Communication Center (ICC); Art Tower Mito, Contemporary Art Center; and the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. I chose the second option, and enjoyed viewing the large and impressive "Art and Comedy: From Diaghilev to Russian Avant-Garde" exhibition at the Yokohama Museum of Art. Curator Amano, Taro also took a few of us in to see a small but unusual show documenting the performance works of the Taiwanese artist Lee, Ming Sheng. The James Turrell exhibition at the Setagaya was likewise engaging, and "The Library of Babel, Characters/ Books/ Media" show at the ICC included the work of Zu, Bing, who set out brushes and ink and encouraged visitors to try their hands at the new form of calligraphy he has perfected with the help of a computer.

After a rather strenuous day of looking at art, each of the three tours returned to Spiral Hall for a closing symposium, which was co-organized by The Japan Foundation. Moderated by Nanjo, Fumio and Ramon Tio Bellido, AICA's Secretary General, the panel consisted of: Kim Levin, USA, Kim, Hong-Hee, Korea, Jean Charles Massera, France, Li Xianting, China, Hydee Venegas Avila, Puerto Rico, Professor Takashina, Shuji, Director of The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, and Minemura, Toshiaki, Japan. At the close of the symposium, the delegates all adjourned to the Spiral Cafe, where they bid goodbye to each other at a reception hosted by Philip Morris K.K., and the Japanese section of AICA. Bright and early the following morning, most of the delegates who had come from abroad went on a post-congress trip to Kyoto and Naoshima Island. From the comments I overheard, my colleagues had a marvelous time in Japan. They keenly appreciated the well-run sessions, the diversity of the art experiences they were offered, and the lavish and gracious receptions held in their honor. Most said they planned to return to Japan at the first opportunity.

Judith E. Stein, Ph.D.  
Philadelphia, PA  
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Judith Stein is an art historian, art critic, and curator. As curator of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1981-94, she organized over eighty exhibitions of contemporary art, as well as such shows as "I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin," which was shown at the New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. A frequent catalogue essayist and contributor to Art in America, she is president of the International Art Critics Association (AICA), American Section. A 1994 recipient of the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, for her writings on art, Dr. Stein was awarded a 1999 residency at the Rockefeller Foundation's Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy.

されたように、作品を物理的に現実化したり具体的に実現するよりも、今はコンピュータによる視覚化を通して考えや構想を表現する方が、アーティストにとって有効である。九人の参加者はそれぞれネットワークコミュニケーションとコミュニケーション技術によって与えられた新しい可能性を考察し、それらが社会に与える影響、そしてまた美術とこれら新分野の間の対話のような問題を議論した。彼らはまたこれらの技術の進歩がどのように現代美術に統合されたかあるいは挑戦されたかを考察した。発表者の中には二人のAICA日本会員がおり、森司は「インターネットをメディアに」を、中村英樹は「観客の眼は動く—アーティストは視覚的実験装置」を発表した。その晩AICA参加者たちはジャングル4展への訪問と草月会館での丁寧なビューフェレブションを主催した財団法人草月会客となった。公式大会最後の日の十月一日木曜日には会員たちは、広い東京の中にある各種美術館やギャラリーへバス見学に出かけた。会員たちは三つの異なるコースの中で選択することができた。

かなり奮闘的に美術を見てまわった一日が終ると、三つのツアーは国際交流基金と日本財団共催の閉会のシンポジウムに参加するためそれぞれスパイラルホールに帰って来た。南條史生と、AICA書記長のラモン・ティオ・ペリドが議長を務め、パネリストは、キム・レヴィン（合衆国）、キム・ホンヒー（韓国）、ジャン・シャルル・マッセラ（フランス）、栗憲庭（中国）、ハイディ・ヴェネガス・アヴィラ（プエルトリコ）、東京国立西洋美術館館長高階秀爾、そして峯村敏明（日本）で構成されていた。シンポジウム閉会に際し会員たちは全員スパイラルカフェへ席を移し、フィリップ・モリスの提供するレセプションでお互いにお別れを述べ合った。次の朝早く外国から参加したほとんどの会員たちは、大会後の旅行で、京都と直島コンテンポラリーアートミュージアムへ行った。小耳にはさんだところから察すると私の仲間たちは日本ですばらしい時を過ごしたようだ。彼らはみな上手に運営されたセッション、提供された種々様々な美術経験、そして彼らのために催された豪華で丁寧なレセプションに対し深く感謝していた。大方の人たちはできるだけ早い機会に日本に戻って来る計画を立てたいと言っていた。

——一九九八年十一月二日記

ジュディス・スタイン 美術史家、美術評論家。ペンシルバニア・アカデミー・オブ・ファイン・アートのキュレーターとして一九八一年から一九九四年までの間に、ニューヨークのメトロポリタン美術館をはじめ、現代美術の展覧会を八十以上も組織した。AICAアメリカ支部会長。



墨田リバーサイドホール・イベントホールでの祝宴



二階ホールへ上っていった。食べる前に主催者である奥山氏と海上氏の歓迎の挨拶があり、AICA国際会長であり私の同僚でもあるキム・レヴィン氏の挨拶があった。レヴィン氏は本間正義氏と一緒に、福正宗という名酒の鏡割りの伝統的儀式に加わった。それは金沢からはるばるやって来たものだった。おいしい飲み物だった。この液体にすばらしい香りを添える伝統ある四角い木製の枺から飲むという幸運な機会をもった私たちにとって、それはなおいっそうそうであった。その後の食事には西洋風の食べ物も心をこめて用意されていたが、私はおいしくて豊富な日本料理の方に自然に引き寄せられた。バスでホテルに戻るために出発する際、私たちははめいめい作品集「井上有一貧」を頂戴したが、それはこの日にあわせて特別に出版されたものだった。

### コンピュータリゼーションとアート

三番目で最後のテーマ「インターネットに向かって——新しいテクノロジーと美術の非物質化」は九月三〇日水曜日に行われた。セッションの議長をつとめるオーストリアの美術評論家アンジェリカ・パウマーは、最近の急速な技術の発達によってもたらされた芸術的文化的表現のための新しい機会を探究したいいくつかの論文を選んだ。AICA大会のための最初の計画の中でこの技術変化に関して指摘