

... only those places with more people and cars became the stage for the all-nude ritualistic group "Zero Jigen," where we began to "rape the city." When the naked mass started to run, the entire city in pursuit of high economic growth — cars, people and buildings — gradually stopped its moves like a slow-motion movie, startled at the sight of the beautiful human bodies. My body looked straight into those spectators. When we ran, everything in the city also exposed its naked face. In fact, the truth is, "Zero Jigen" became "naked" because of its urge to see the real side of Tokyo in those very "eyes" of the "city of Tokyo" staring at our bodies. It was the urge to "sightsee" the true side of Tokyo, like watching Ginza being instantly stripped bare of its outer mask. (Kato Yoshihiro)¹

The enormous void in history

It is a well-known fact that Japanese art faced a major turning point from the latter half of the 1950s onwards, and that this change gave the impetus for many avant-garde artist groups to be formed by young artists in various cities around the country. One of the foundations from which these artists emerged was the "Yomiuri Indépendants²," an exhibition that granted artists with the democracy of participation and freedom of expression (at least it was initially based on such philosophy!). It was through this exhibition, which gave unknown artists outside of Tokyo the opportunity to be unearthed by art critics and to be catapulted to the pages of national newspapers, that the "anti-art" trends that had radicalized from around 1960 until its demise, had developed into multifarious experiments of the art of that decade.

However, it seems that ample discussion has not been made in Japanese post-war art history as to where the young artists who had lost their outlet for expression when the Yomiuri Indépendants ended in 1963, directed anew their rambunctious energy. The Jishu Indépendant, which was self-managed by artists and critics, was only partially or temporarily able to replace the role of the Yomuri Indépendants. For example, even in the work³ by Chiba Shigeo, which is considered an epoch-

making elaboration of Japanese post-war art history, or in the exhibition and exhibition catalog by Alexander Munroe⁴, the post-Yomiuri Indépendants movements have been connected to the Hi Red Center, Pop Art trends, Nihon Gainen-Ha (Japanese Conceptual Group), Mono-Ha, or to Hijikata Tatsumi's Butoh, with a certain kind of logical leap. I for one, however, believe that it was the individuals and artist groups in the performance field who inherited in a more direct way the lawlessness that was inherent in the Yomiuri Indépendants.

These artists include "Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension)," which I will elaborate on in this essay, as well as individuals such as Itoi Kanji (aka Dadakan), Akiyama Yutoku-Taishi, Mizukami Jun, and artists of groups who performed on the streets and on stage such as Matsue Kaku of Kurohata (Black Flag Group), Koyama Tetsuo of Vitamin Art, and Suenaga Tamio of Kokuin⁵. Let me refer to these artists as the "ritualistic artist group of the 60s" although there is sufficient reason why it is difficult to recognize this group of artists as successors to the "Post-Yomiuri Indépendants." First of all, as these works were performances, they cannot be jointly shared as research material unless they are documented through media such as photographs, film/video and eyewitness accounts (and publication of such accounts.) (An exception would be the Hi Red Center, of which the extraordinary writer Akasegawa Gempei took part.) Additionally, because of the bad taste, vulgarity, obscenity, incomprehensibility and irrational appearance, these performances are not only deemed unreasonable but rejected simply by matters of taste by art critics who interpret artistic phenomenon in reference to western art history or philosophy, or by art historians who only validate art that is extant and comparable. This sort of reaction is supposable from the following words by Kato Yoshihiro who was the leader of Zero Jigen.

"Asking what a ritual is, is like asking why a woman has a crack. All you can say is, 'you do it cause you want to.' Just like a woman's menstruation, it's an onerous thing that happens, either periodically, or irregularly without prior notice."⁶

As a result, "because of the overly sensational and

tasteless performances, there was nobody left to perform on the same stage as Zero Jigen. One art critic was so horrified, he shouted that they were true lunatics and spread rumors about them."⁷ In fact, there were hardly any art critics, who were indeed influential forces in the media back then, who voiced their support for Zero Jigen. As a result, the "ritualistic artist group of the 60s" has not gained for themselves a secure position in art history, even to this day when progress has more or less been made in studies on Japanese avant-garde art.⁸

Zero Jigen did however, appear in various media including popular magazines with alarming frequency. As far as I have researched, Zero Jigen was taken up in weekly magazines over fifty times between 1965 and 1970, and a maximum twenty times in 1968. It is clear that most of these articles showed neither empathy nor understanding of (nor the effort to understand) the activities of Zero Jigen, and that they were taken up only for the purpose of filling up the visual spread with photographs of visual impact, as manners of the "ero-guro-nansensu (the erotic, grotesque and nonsensical)." Such motives are also apparent in the titles of those articles -- "Orgy under the Tokyo skies / Aggressive salesmanship of today / An avant-garde artist group goes mad in strange naked rituals,"⁹ and "Wild sex party by porno group 'Zero Jigen,'"¹⁰ etc.

However, among the artists, filmmakers, film critics and photographers who surrounded the Zero Jigen artists, there are more than a few who see Zero Jigen in retrospect as the most radical artistic group of those times. It is quite shocking even for us today to see the photographs, filmed records and to read the statements by the leader Kato Yoshihiro of those days. Although I cannot afford to elaborate on the details here, it is quite clear that the artistic activities of Zero Jigen are isolated from, and stand above all other performance groups that emerged in the Japanese art scene from the latter half of the 1950s onwards, in their collectivity, exposure of flesh, performances in cities, elaborated settings, pre-modernist vulgarity, and in the surprising number of such performances. Perhaps the only equal match would be Butoh, but it should be noted that while Butoh was supported by many in the cultural circles and was assimilated into a form of

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"art," Zero Jigen remained on the periphery of "culture," let alone "art," regardless of its unique style and methodology. Furthermore, it should be remembered that western influences are hard to find in Zero Jigen, unlike many other experiments in Japanese art, that they are in fact forerunners of the counterculture of the late 60s both in the west and in Japan.

The aim of this essay is to focus particularly on Zero Jigen among the "ritualistic artist group of the 60s" and to outline the logic apparent in the activities of the largest post-war performance group. By doing so, I hope to expose the self-critical inclination Zero Jigen had as a Japanese avant-gardist group, which is clearly differentiated from the "contemporary art system" that was gradually being developed in Japan in the 1960s through the establishment of galleries, art competitions, participation in international exhibitions and the founding of public museums, and also from the anti-establishment youth culture that had evolved from a "revolt into style."¹¹ I also hope to bring to light the possibilities inherent in the physical and corporeal expressions of Zero Jigen that resulted from this inclination, which cannot be measured against the values of "contemporary art" that was (or is said to have been) established in the west.

Aspects of the Zero Jigen Rituals – Concurrently

To avoid overlap, I would suggest that readers refer to my earlier essay¹² with regard to the history of Zero Jigen from its birth to its demise. (However, the developmental stage of Zero Jigen, which is becoming clearer in recent studies is not included here.) The time periods mentioned in this text basically follow those in my earlier essay. Namely, these periods are: Archi-Zero Jigen= 1960-62, Early Period= 1963-64, Middle Period= 1965-68, Anti-Expo (Anti-Osaka Exposition) Period= 1969, Late Period= 1970-72. Here I would like to focus on the performances — or in their terms, "Rituals" — from the Early Period to the Middle Period (1963-68) and to outline the characteristics of their artistic activity by categories of action/posture, costume and props, as well as the places where they performed.

A. Repertory of Characteristic Actions/Postures

A-1 Men and women alike line up in a row (straight or sideways) and walk slowly with one hand raised in the manner of a military salute. This is occasionally used in the introductory part of a "Ritual." This is an action that represents Zero Jigen, but it may have started after the Middle Period.

A-2 The men walk en masse in the "nanba" style¹³, putting the right (left) hand and right (left) foot out together simultaneously, and prance with legs raised high and in tempo with their call "Ho-i, ho-i." Another style is by swinging arms or raising both hands high, and skipping lightly.

A-3 As the men walk in the A-2 style, they bend backwards in an exaggerated manner and fall on top of each other and spread their legs high in the air. In other cases, the men crash into each other, collapse on the ground and do the same moves.

A-4 The men walk on all fours. Or, they line up on all fours with heads lowered, while they tie candles or fireworks to their rears and light them. This is the most famous (or rather, infamous) action that registers the grotesqueness and ribaldry of Zero Jigen in people's minds. Kato named this pose, which is occasionally used at the closing scene of a "Ritual," the '*Ketsu-zo-kai*.' (The word '*Ketsu-zo-kai*,' invented by Kato, is a reference to '*Tai-zo-kai*' [Matrix World, *Garbhadhatū*], one of the two fundamental concepts of the world in esoteric Buddhism, combined with *ketsu* (rear)).

A-5 The men lie on the floor either with clothes on, or naked. Kato called this the '*Ne-tai* (Lying Body).' Occasionally, naked women walk on these men (who change positions, laying flat on their stomachs and then on their backs). This action reminds one of the hare walking on the back of the shark in the Japanese folklore "Inaba no Shiro-usagi (The White Hare of Inaba)," which was used for the title of the compilation film of Zero Jigen's Rituals in the Late Period. However, this is one of the long-lasting acts in Zero Jigen's repertory, which continues from the first nude ritual held in Nagoya Peace Park in the summer of 1963.

A-6 Naked men crouch down and proceed together in the manner of a caterpillar. This action is called '*Imomushi koro-koro* (Roll over caterpillar).' Men

walking upright and bound together with a rope is called "*Densha gokko* (Make-believe train)." Both are popular children's play in Japan. The men who appear in the movie *Cybele*¹⁴ sit in a circle and continuously pass on something in their hands to the next person. This gesture is also reminiscent of a children's game.

B Costumes, Props

B-1 Western clothes

A tailcoat, business suit with tie, round silk hat, mask of a western man (made from a plastic mould of the plaster Agrippa bust, often used as a model for sketching).

B-2 Outfit for war and labor

Leggings, gas mask, headband

B-3 Objects to carry on one's back

Life-sized doll, real human infant (Kato's son), Japanese *furoshiki* (wrapping cloth) with *karakusa* designs, and other made objects.

B-4 Things to affix on the body

Poultice or luggage labels. Bandages to wrap around the body like a mummy may also be included in this category.

B-5 *Futon* (Japanese mattress)

An important and frequently used prop, which the performers hold at all four corners and walk, place on the floor of galleries or trains, or roll up and carry on their backs.

B-6 Props related to traditional rituals and performing arts.

Red and white ropes¹⁵ tied to the naked body to tuck up sleeves, or to tie up bodies. Japanese *sensu* (folding fan) with the *hinomaru* (rising sun) motif. Both are reminiscent of Kabuki props, Noh costumes or popular arts such as *rakugo* (comic story-telling) or *manzai* (comedy act). White *tabi* socks. These were worn only with kimono, which were rarely worn even by the Japanese back then, and are therefore reminiscent of popular performers. Candles and fireworks related to Buddhist altars and traditional festivals can also be included in this category as props related to "festivities."

B-7 Organic objects

Hoses, transparent plastic tubes, examination table of a gynecologist. *Futons* curled and tied up with vinyl give a similar impression.

B-8 Others

White gloves, women's panties, corsets, umbrellas, soap bubbles, etc.

C Place

C-1 Space for art exhibitions (museums, galleries). performers.

C-2 Downtown districts (Sakae in Nagoya, Ginza, Shimbashi, Shinjuku, Shibuya etc. in Tokyo).

C-3 Paid entertainment and play facilities such as public baths and cabarets.

C-4 Theater and concert halls.

C-5 Natural spots in and around the urban environment (cemeteries, religious parks, beaches, hot spring resorts, etc.).

C-6 Others (inside trains, film studios, universities under dispute, etc.).

The following characteristics run through the "Rituals" that combine these actions/postures, costumes and props (It is important to understand the differences in places as listed in C in order to grasp the characteristic of the Zero Jigen Rituals, but this will not be touched upon at this time, for purposes of simplification.)

1) Unlike Butoh, there is no special physical training or technique required. For this reason, members could be changed, added or reduced on the spot, and other artists, hippies roaming around the Shinjuku area, and student activists were easy to recruit. The Rituals were less about "acting" or "dancing," and as Kato said, more about "exercise."¹⁶

2) Solo actions were done only occasionally. Several, or several tens of people performed the same gestures in unison and exerted their power as a spatial mass even amid the bustle of the city environment. Especially when Iwata Shin-ichi was participating, he is said to have demanded for more adaptation to rhythm and stylistic unity than Kato did.¹⁷ The flipside of this was that there was the demand for anonymity, in other words, the eradication of the individual's face, physical features and characteristic movements. The use of masks and the '*Ketsu-zo-kai*' pose are both exemplary of this act of depersonalization.

3) In comparison to Matsue Kaku¹⁸ who had a strong theatrical character, or Akiyama Yutoku-Taishi¹⁹ who was politically satirical, there was a

lack of narrative and allegorical nature. The aforementioned performances and props were shown repeatedly under Kato's stage direction using illustrations and time schedule. In this sense, the name "Ritual" was befitting for these performances as they were more symbolical than they were allegorical.

4) The combination of the overwhelming presence of the physical body and the self-assertion as a physical mass as described in (2), with the ataxy and stopping of physical exercise as seen in the *haizuri* (crawling) action as well as in A-3, and the paralysis and objectification as seen in A-4, 5 and B-4. In fact, even with the presence of an unusually big man like Iwata Shin-ichi, the physique of Kato and the others were the exact opposite of the macho and outright wimpy. The western-style formal suit or a westerner's mask as seen in B-1 hide the inner physique particular to the Japanese, but in fact by doing so, all the more reveal it. The attire for war in B-2 protects the vulnerable body from being attacked in the urban battleground. Moreover, B-3 and 4 show the pitiful bodies of the everyday of labor workers or domestic people who go to work carrying babies on their backs. The futon in B-5 connotes the relaxed state of the body in relation to the '*Ne-tai*' pose (A-5), rather than a sexual meaning. The pose '*Ketsu-zo-kai*' which represents Zero Jigen can also be seen as the passive and objectified state of the body that is deprived of its subject (= the face), similar to the '*Ne-tai*' where the men are stepped on by naked women.

5) Regardless of the stage direction that shows the extraordinary such as religious rituals by naked bodies in unfamiliar attire and in groups, there is occasional coexistence of the ordinary living environment in Japan. This is related to the above category (4). The B-5 futon, mentioned in (4) is a typical prop that expresses the pitiful and shabby aspects of the home environment in Japan. This is a feature that is apparent from the Early Period, for example, in Kato's solo exhibition²⁰ held in June 1963 where viewers lounged on the floor and read *manga* in the tea house installed in the gallery, fully equipped with authentic tea ceremony utensils, or the installation at Naika Gallery²¹ in November 1964

using *futons* and *kotatsu*. In the performance at Geijutsu-za in May 1966 also, the four-and-a-half-mat room where Kato's wife sits and "lives her ordinary everyday life," coexisted with a grotesque act of a man, fully wrapped in bandage inserting a rubber hose into a woman's vagina and blowing into it.²² As I will elaborate later in my text, the fact that several unrelated scenes and actions took place simultaneously according to different time schedules, is an important factor that is hard to decipher just by looking at photographs.

6) Contrary to the view of popular tabloid magazines that simplistically concluded that "nude"=sex, there were hardly any performances or stage directions that directly showed men and women having sex.²³ The only apparent sexual motifs are the object in a 1964 performance, the "Automatic Masturbation Machine" which shows a man masturbating, and the obsessive number of scenes showing women giving birth. These include the ritual of a woman giving birth performed on May Day of 1966 (a red candle comes out from the female genitalia)²⁴, the ritualistic group that is born from between a woman's legs in *Mujin Retto (Uninhabited Archipelago)*,²⁵ although this was directed by a filmmaker, or the inspection table of a gynecologist in the aforementioned *Sex Ryoki Chitai (Bizarre Sex Zone)*.²⁶ Polar ideas such as the "(male) pleasure without the female presence" and "childbearing without the male presence," which were expressed without showing the actual sex act, characterize Zero Jigen's sexuality performed under Kato's direction. Although the image of the masochistic male harassed by a woman stands out conspicuously, in the end, it was the male-oriented sexuality that controlled the Zero Jigen Rituals, which was a view of women that infringed on essentialism.²⁷

What Zero Jigen meant to Kato Yoshihiro 1 – Synchronized Events

What then, was the driving force behind Zero Jigen, a group that left behind such a unique and prolific body of works? A number of factors can be raised such as the artistic, cultural and urban situation of Nagoya in and around 1960, along with the artistic,

cultural and religious studies by the earlier members, and the ideas and aesthetics of Iwata Shin-ichi who led the active group Zero Jigen with Kato. The circumstances surrounding the urban space and mass media of Tokyo during its high-growth period, as well as the political climate deadlocked by the campaigns against the Japan-US Security Treaty may also have fueled the group's motivation. Here, I shall go ahead and simplify by interpreting the word Zero Jigen through Kato's words.

When commenting on the name "Zero Jigen," we must first take into consideration the rather complex situation surrounding the group during its formative period. This is because the name "Zero Jigen" was devised neither by Kato nor Iwata who were tractive forces of this ritualistic group, but by Kawaguchi Kotaro who had bestowed the name on a young artist group formed in Nagoya in June 1960. In fact the initial group name was "0 (zero)-Ji (next)-Gen (appearance)," meaning "the next thing that appears after zero."²⁸ Kato and Hageshita Iwao, the corps d'elite of the "Nagoya Seinen Bijutsu (Nagoya Youth Arts Association)," and Ito Takao joined with Koiwa Takayoshi and Iwata Shin-ichi who were members of the Kawaguchi group that had changed its name along the way to "Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension)" and radicalized the group. Most probably, it was after 1964 when Kawaguchi left the group²⁹ that the "ritualistic group" finally became true to its name "Zero Jigen." In other words, there was reserve until the term "Zero Jigen" could be used for over the next ten years, to fully express the concept of the radical ritualistic group.

Nonetheless, the very ritual that took place in January of 1963, the year Zero Jigen made its debut, was the *haizuri* act that was employed to express the idea of bringing back a human being back to "zero," in other words, to its infant stage. From Ito Takao's account³⁰, and from the words by Koiwa Takayoshi who was an important member back then — "When we were kids we all crawled on all fours, we're just showing that grown-ups can do it too."³¹ — it is evident that the group had lived up to its name from the onset. Furthermore, the initial idea of bringing the human being back to zero is incorporated in the actions described earlier in A-6,

the child's play where the idiotic men play like children. We also cannot deny the relation between this and Kato's obsession with scenes of women giving birth.

The very idea of "zeroing," of completely denying existing forms of expression, can be seen in the artistic trends in 20th century Europe, particularly in Dadaism, or in John Cage and the artists who were influenced by him. But Zero Jigen was unique in the way that it combined the denial of the "self" as the subject of expression, with the "zeroing" of man as a physical being. Nonetheless, it was a different kind of necessity inherent in the individual artist such as Kato or Iwata that brought such a naïve idea to develop into an expansive and long-lasting practice.

Since Iwata Shin-ichi was a misologist who would hardly speak about his ideas,³² I will refer to Kato's words that remain in his writings and interviews in numerous magazines. Although it is said that the *haizuri* of January 1963 was the first ritual by Zero Jigen, in November of the previous year, the group had in fact attempted a performance titled "Mixed Group Ritual."³³ The following comment, made by Kato with regard to this ritual, is already predictive of the directional characteristics of Zero Jigen's Rituals in the Middle Period I mentioned earlier.

"...the 20th century idea of eliminating the self-ego is the only way by which the 'other existing inside the self' can be taken far away."³⁴

"in one hall, as much as possible, blend in all together (i.e., synchronize) 'homosexuality, lesbianism, the butchering of objects, dancing cult, tea ceremony, poetry reading, eating competition, wedding ceremony, jazz, etc.' In this parallel synchronicity (indefinite time dimension, zeroing the time), we must spill out chaotically and condense everything all together. When one tries to liberate his self in the anti-human emotion of a meaningless act, we realize that the indelible human smell (ego consciousness) all the more oozes out from within. We can aim for a mixed schematic representation where we, as vulgar beings, throw in the vulgar (human smell) into the vulgar. The effect of such a stage direction where everything is compressed (vulgar+vulgar+vulgar+) allows vulgarity to become collectively objectified (metaphysics of the vulgar)."³⁵

Next are the words by Kato during the Middle and Late Periods of Zero Jigen.

"...in contrast to the linear, vertical history of the arts (avant-garde and arrière-garde from the past to the present), the '*Ketsu-zo-kai Mancharakai*' is a richly colored world that extends sideways in a homogeneous direction."³⁶ (1967)

"History proceeds in a vertical direction, right? There's the past, present and future. What we're trying to do is to make a horizontal universe that is unaffected by this line of history. We want to open up a universe in a space that is remote from the history of mankind."³⁷ (1971)

From these words, it is presumed that for Kato the term "Zero Jigen" meant first and foremost, the renunciation of one's "ego," which is, as I mentioned earlier, the expressing self. Secondly, it was the simultaneous coexistence of the past and future in the present, multiple subjects and multiple events, this world and that world, the ordinary and extraordinary, reality and dreams, as well as various media of expression, states of mind, and behaviors. Thirdly, it can be said that Zero Jigen was a very clear rejection of the progressive, modernist view of history. For Kato, it was an inclination to cut off the linear development of things, and to simultaneously observe multiple cultures and actions in the present; an idea that was used both for the stage direction of the Rituals, and as a way to perceive history.

Seen in this light, it is possible to explain to a certain extent, the "unrefined aspect"³⁸ that characterizes Zero Jigen, the carnival-like, marginal kind of physical expression where polar ideas such as the sacred and the vulgar meet as in religious rituals or pre-modern festivities. In the late 1960s, when the "*angura* (underground) culture" was commonized into Japan's popular culture, there were films, Butoh and theater plays that rebelled against post-war values. Stage direction, stage settings and motifs like those seen in pre-modern, vulgar street performers appeared frequently in such forms of art, and Kato was indeed considered the flag-bearer of this "*angura* culture." Moreover, in the 1970s, the idea of goddess worshipping, studies of tantra and dream analysis that were inherent in the stage direction of Zero Jigen until then, began to

dominate Kato's statements. There was danger that this change would get caught in the idea of Orientalism which assumes that there is truth in the dualistic theory of "the modern west" versus "the premodern Asia" (the theory in fact depended on the former), shared among the western hippies who were roaming around countries like India and Nepal. Nonetheless, it is difficult to see dualistic and essentialist inclinations in Zero Jigen, at least in its Early and Middle Periods. I will examine this in the following section.

What Zero Jigen meant to Kato Yoshihiro 2 – The Self-Reflection of Things Vulgar

I shall now return to Kato's words mentioned at the beginning of this text, regarding the idea of performing rituals in the center of urban spaces, which was for Zero Jigen, the most important and signature place to perform.

After the success of their large group *haizuri* Rituals in downtown Nagoya — an almost impossible act in Japan today — from their performances in 1964 around the Shimbashi area mainly based in the Naika Gallery and thereafter, Zero Jigen was forced to face the inconvenience of the city of Tokyo, compared to Nagoya. Yet even so, they boldly continued to present their works in urban spaces. In order to create a temporary "extraordinary" time-space right in the middle of urban daily living space, through the Rituals by naked bodies in unfamiliar attire and in groups, careful preparations and strategy were devised to elude police intervention. This was not simply about seeking for a place with a large audience, but was about Kato strongly adhering to the physical and emotional condition as the actor is objectified and materialized through the "eyes" of the "entire city in pursuit of high economic growth — cars, people and buildings." "The more we transform into objects, the more the reality transforms into another object, and even more, the audiences transform into another object and compel us. (...) We will tenaciously cling onto and open up bit by bit, the vacuumed dimension that denies the existence of dangerous creatures, and continue to expand the unexplored land of mankind

that can survive there."³⁹ This "vacuumed dimension" that requires a gas mask is created when "fictitious bills between reality (economy) and fiction (arts) are overissued in a balanced manner,"⁴⁰ in "the gap where the eccentric performance group and the spectator group meet."⁴¹ This was not really about the dualism I mentioned earlier, but to use Kato's words which I referred to earlier, it was the non-hierarchical self-reflection of vulgarism ("vulgarism+vulgarism+vulgarism+"), where multiple events and worlds nonetheless looked strange when reflected against each other. There, the sacred seemed vulgar to others, while the vulgar transformed into something sacred. The time-space created through this endless cycle⁴² was, I believe, the true meaning of "Zero Jigen" for Kato and for the actual Rituals.

The very Japanese day-to-dayness (the domesticated feeling which the Japanese prefer to eliminate from the "arts," which is at the same time what appears to be Japanese exoticism in the Westerners' eyes) that was incorporated in the stage direction of the Rituals, was necessary to allow oneself to temporarily leave his own body, to look back, and then return to the everyday world once again. Kato's yearning for this roundtrip exercise was first and foremost based on this real world that was the place for the body to perform as an object. In this case, *haizuri* should no longer be considered the return to the infant self, nor the longing for the maternal affection of an earth goddess. Zero Jigen's characteristic (4), in other words, "the ataxy and stopping of physical exercise, paralysis and objectification" may have been the suffering one had to go through in order to regenerate the self; a penance that was required each time one went through the "vacuumed dimension," as one departs from the banal and unchanging day-to-dayness, flies into another world and then once again returns to everyday life.

This roundtrip exercise from this world to that world can be seen in *The White Hare of Inaba*, and has shaped the framework of Kato's thinking in later years, from his experience with drugs, participation in rock band sessions, to his dream analysis studies that continue to this day. During the Zero Jigen days, Kato was in fact an ordinary

businessman, working as a president of an electric appliance maker with a secured income. He was also leading an ordinary social life as a domestic person. Therefore, the criticism that Zero Jigen was "ordinary enough so as not to erode the ordinary,"⁴³ does in fact hit the mark about the characteristic of Zero Jigen's perception of the world. Kato was commonly acknowledged as the "cult leader," but the activities of Zero Jigen did not enforce upon others a way of living that was isolated from general society like the religious cults we have seen in Japan in recent years, nor did they attempt to destruct social order on the whole. Rather, it was a pursuit of remodeling the body and conscience through the practice of rituals in daily life (as a so-called "layman"). With this in mind, one can perhaps understand that rather than aiming to gain the understanding of the audience or to achieve a reciprocal communication with them, Zero Jigen chose to maintain itself as an organization and group in order to achieve the physical and mental condition that can be jointly shared by those who participate in the action (Kato compares such a state with the act of a "Buddhist monk standing under a waterfall").⁴⁴ And inherent in this thinking was the danger of "drifting towards the kind of ecstasy that is typical to mysticism, without looking back on daily life,"⁴⁵ or to become like "a happy believer in the physical body."⁴⁶

Zero Jigen infused the popular, carnival-like physical rhythm that burst out during the various turning points in Japanese history, such as the *odori-nenbutsu* (Buddhist invocation offered with ritualistic dances) of the Kamakura Period, the festivities of the Momoyama Period, or the "eējanaika (never mind) dance" of the Edo Period, into the Japanese urban space during the high-growth period, and in the daily living space that was rapidly urbanizing in the 1960s. This act, no matter how indecent or incomprehensible it may appear to be, may indeed have been a daring attempt that suggests the possibility that postwar Japanese society could have developed into something different from what Japan is for us today.

Research assisted by Shishio and Peran
(Translated by Kohno Haruko)

- (1) Kato Yoshihiro, "The all-nude artistic terrorist group 'Zero Jigen' was born in Sakae in my hometown Nagoya," *Ragan (Naked Eye)*, No.3, Bijutsu Tokuhon Shuppan, Nagoya, December 1986, p.7.
- (2) Officially entitled "Nihon Independants Exhibition," the no-jury/no-prize exhibition sponsored by the Yomiuri Newspapers began in 1949. To differentiate it with another exhibition by the Nihon Bijutsu Kai (Japan Art Association) with the same title, the exhibition has been informally called the "Yomiuri Independants."
- (3) Chiba Shigeo, *Nihon GendaiBijutsu Itsudatsu-shi 1945-1985 (A History of Deviations in Japanese Contemporary Art 1945-1985)*, Shobunsha, Tokyo, 1986.
- (4) Alexandra Munroe and Yokohama Museum of Art curatorial department, eds., *Sengo Nihon no Zen-ei Bijutsu*, Yomiuri Newspapers, Tokyo, 1994, and Alexander Munroe, *Scream Against the Sky: Japanese Art after 1945*, Abrams, New York, 1994.
- (5) "The Play" by Ikemizu Kei-ichi, of which Mizukami also took part, will be excluded here, as it was more a large-scale project by a group with a sense of a commune, than it was a performance. Yet it is certain even to us today, that it was a highly original and pioneering achievement. Refer to *PLAY 1967-1980*, The PLAY, 1981.
- (6) Kato Yoshihiro, "A ritual has a crack" from the pamphlet for *Nihon Cho-Geijutsu Mihan Ichi (Japan Sur-Art Fair)*, Zero Jigen Shokai, Nagoya, August, 1964, p.19. The original text reads "it's there cause you want to do it," but many of Kato's words in publications are misprinted, and it is unclear if this was intentional or not. Therefore, minimal corrections have been made for this quote and will be for quotes hereafter.
- (7) Kato Yoshihiro, "Zero Jigen Gishiki Seiron Monogatari 6 (Authentic History of the Zero Jigen's Rituals 6)," *Eiga Hyoron*, Eiga Shuppansha, pp.80-81.
- (8) Sawaragi Noi, *Nihon/Gendai/Bijutsu (Japan/Contemporary/Art)*, Shincho-sha, Tokyo, 1988. It is interesting to note that Sawaragi took up the "ritualistic artist group of the 60s" in a serious manner as a criticism towards the written history of Japanese contemporary art up until then.
- (9) *Shukan Wadai (Weekly Gossip)*, Nihon Bunkasha, October 5, 1967, unpaginated.
- (10) *Bessatsu Doyo Manga (Saturday Manga Special)*, Doyo Shuppansha, May 12, 1972, unpaginated.
- (11) From the title of the book by George Melley, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts*, Doubleday, London, 1971, Mitsui Toru, trans., (Ongaku-no-Tomo-sha, 1973).
- (12) Kuroda Raji (=KuroDalaJee), "Studies of Japanese Performance in the 1960s I, *Zero Jigen* as Culture, Notes for the Introductory Chapter," *The Kajima Foundation for the Arts Annual Report*, The Kajima Foundation for the Arts, 2001, pp.362-376.
- (13) Iwata Shin-ichi, "Rokku Kabuki to Osu Opera, Su-pa- Ichiza no Oitachi (Rock Kabuki and Osu Opera: The History of the Super Troupe)," *Engeki (Theater)*, Vol. 43, November 1996, Misonoza, Nagoya, p. 27.
- (14) Directed by Donald Richie. The scenario with illustrations by Kato remains. Filmed in August 1968.
- (15) Originally used for the backdrop of Iwata Shin-ichi's "Running Man."
- (16) "Adachi Masao Interview 3 with Kato Yoshihiro: Hakuji no tokai gishiki (Gorgeous Ritual of Dodging in Broad Daylight)," *Bijutsu Techo*, Bijutsu Shuppansha, March 1971, p. 155. The word "art exercise" was also used by Matsue Kaku of "Kurohata."
- (17) From the interview with Kato on May 28, 2001.
- (18) For information on Matsue Kaku and his group "Kurohata," refer to the following. Takahara Hiroharu, *Showa no Ekin Chinkon (Requiem for Showa's Ekin)*, Kindai Bungeisha, 1996.
- (19) Akiyama Yutoku-Taisi, *Tsuzokuteki Geijutsu-ron Poppu A-to no Tatakai (Discussion on Art in Plain Language: The Challenge of Pop Art)*, Doyo Bijutsusha, 1985.
- (20) From the photographic documents owned by Kato.
- (21) According to Miyata Yuka's documents, this was the "Hakubutsukan Keikaku Dai-ichiji Yokokuhen, Suito Hornu-ten (First Preview of the Museum Plan: Sweet Home Exhibition)," the consecutive solo exhibitions of Kato and Iwata. Also refer to the following article with Hirata Minoru's text and photographs. "Oretachi no jigen, Tokajin no dogimo no naita kiko shuudan (Our Dimension, The appalling strange group)," *Suiri*, Fusosha, March 1, 1965, unpaginated.
- (22) "Chinki na 'Zero Jigen' no gishiki ni sennyu suru (Sneaking into the ritual by the queer group 'Zero Jigen')." *News Sokuho*, Fusosha, Tokyo, February 22, 1967, p.20. For photographs refer to p.21 and the following. "Korega eiga senden? (This is cinema advertisement?)," *Weekly Shincho*, Shinchosha, June 11, 1966, unpaginated.
- (23) A rare documented example that suggests a man and woman having sex is the scene in Kato's apartment in *Inaba no Shiro-usagi (The White Hare of Inaba)*, March 1970.
- (24) Kato Yoshihiro, "Zero Jigen Gishiki Seiron Monogatari 3 (Authentic History of the Zero Jigen's Rituals 3)," *Eiga Hyoron*, Eiga Shuppansha, August 1968, p.102. Also, "Tokubetsu Rupo zenra no danjo ga depaato wo hashiru himitsu dantai 'Zero Jigen' wo tettei tsuikyū (Special Report, Naked men and women run around a department store, A thorough investigation of the secretive group 'Zero Jigen')." *Doyo Manga (Saturday Manga)*, Doyo Shuppansha, February 2, 1968, pp.39-40.
- (25) Directed by Kanai Katsu. Filmed in February 1969.
- (26) The original title is *Nippon '69 SEX Ryoki Chitai (Bizarre Sex Zone, Japan '69)*, directed by Nakajima Sadao. Filmed from July to September, 1968. Kuroda has not seen the movie but has confirmed the 8mm film and photographs.
- (27) The headless woman in the pose of delivering a child in Kato's sketch, who has a cylindrical object stuffed up between her legs is reminiscent of the earth goddess which celebrates reproductivity. By the *Inaba no Shiro-usagi* in the Late Period, many places related to water such as public baths in the city, natural hot springs, oceans begin to appear frequently. As these images suggest blood or amniotic fluid, these may be related to the obsession with scenes of women giving birth. Although there is another obsession with men's buttocks, there are no postures and stage directions related to homosexuality.
- (28) "The direct idea for the name came from a book I owned then, titled *Daiyōjigen no Shosetsu (Fantasia Mathematica)*, edited by Clifton Fadiman and translated by Miura Shumon, and published by Arechi Shuppansha (note by Kuroda: published in 1959). We will start from scratch. We have no authority to rebel against. No group worthy of joining. There is no position for us to attain through our artistic movements or activities. There are no restrictions imposed upon those who aim for new ways of expression. The name expressed our hope to make this a place where individuals collide with each other. It was in a sense, a hope for an active nothingness. The basis for this kind of thinking may have come from my personal interest in the Zen idea of nothingness." From "Zero Jigen Zenshi: Kawaguchi Kotaro ni Kiku (Early History of Zero Jigen – Interview with Kawaguchi Kotaro)," (Interviewer: Mizutani Takashi), *Ragan (Naked Eye) Note*, Art Magazine *Ragan* Editorial Department, Nagoya, September 1, 1994, unpaginated.
- (29) Kawaguchi is still contributing to the pamphlet for *Nihon Cho-Geijutsu Mihan Ichi (Japan Sur-Art Fair)*, held from August to September 1964; hence, it is assumed that he left the group after this time.
- (30) From the interview with Ito Takao (August 25, 2002).
- (31) Koiba Takayoshi, "Zero Jigen," *Nihon Cho-Geijutsu Mihan Ichi (Japan Sur-Art Fair)*, Zero Jigen Shokai, Nagoya, August 1964, p.4.
- (32) For Iwata's valuable words, refer to the following. Iwata Shin-ichi, "Zero Jigen: hassei, katsudo, pawaa no minamoto (*Zero Jigen's* beginning, activities and source of power)," *Ragan(Naked Eye)*, Bijutsu Tokuhon Shuppan, Nagoya, pp.10-19, and the interview by Mizutani Takashi in Iwata Shin-ichi, *Gendai bijutsu shu-en no yocho – 1970, 80 nendai no Nagoya bijutsukai (Signs of demise of contemporary art – The artistic circle in Nagoya in the 1970s and 80s)*, Super Kikaku, Nagoya, 1995.
- (33) In 99 (Suzuki Takashi, Usami Akira, Murase Kunimori eds., *Fubosha*, Nagoya, August 25, 1963, p.11), the term is "Shudan Kongo Danshoku Gishiki (Mixed Group Homosexual Ritual). In the invitation for Kato's solo exhibition (June 1963), the term is "Ritual of Sound (Mixed Group Ritual)."
- (34) Kato Yoshihiro, "The Story of Zero Jigen also known as *Kyokiteki Nansensu (Insane Nonsense) Musho-kai-In*," *Kikan* (new version), vol.9, Keishosha, 1963, p.20.
- (35) *ibid.*, p.21.
- (36) "Taufu no me no otoko tachi 0(zero) jigen ni so-kekki seyo! (Stand up for Zero Jigen, the Eye of the Storm!)," *News Sokuho*, Fusosha, February 9, 1967, p.69.
- (37) "Chinki na 'Zero Jigen' no gishiki ni sennyu suru (Sneaking into the ritual by the queer group 'Zero Jigen')." *News Sokuho*, Fusosha, Tokyo, February 22, 1967, p.68.
- (38) "I think there is something much more intense in the awkward and unrefined thinking of the simple and honest ordinary man as presented by Zero Jigen, than there is in the smart-ass thinking behind the logic of the Hi Red Center. If Hi Red Center is the avant-garde aristocrats, Zero Jigen is the arrière-garde commoner," T.S. (unidentified), "Zero Jigen to sono shui (Zero Jigen and its surroundings)," Asai Masuo, pub., ed., *Andromeda*, No.8, September 1964, unpaginated.
- (39) Kato Yoshihiro, "Zero Jigen Gishiki Seiron Monogatari 1 (Authentic History of the Zero Jigen's Rituals 1)," *Eiga Hyoron*, Eiga Shuppansha, June 1968, p.69.
- (40) *ibid.*, p.68.
- (41) *ibid.*, p.68.
- (42) "Open one door and continue onto the next room with doors on all four sides," "If you proceed through one door of this room, you face another four walls that each have doors. All four doors each open up to another room and creates an endless psychedelic (psychological expansion and unfolding)," Kato Yoshihiro, "Zero Jigen Gishiki Seiron Monogatari 2 (Authentic History of the Zero Jigen's Rituals 2)," *Eiga Hyoron*, Eiga Shuppansha, July 1968, p. 100. This image can be associated with the recent paintings by Kato Yoshihiro in the fusuma (sliding door) format (Mizuma Art Gallery, 2001).
- (43) Tone Yasunao, ed., "Zero Jigen," *Bijutsu Techo*, Bijutsu Shuppansha, October 1971, p.59.
- (44) cf. 17. "Adachi Masao interview 3," p.154.
- (45) cf. 43.
- (46) Anonymous (could be Sato Shigeomi), "Kato Yoshihiro sama – watachi no namae wa kyoki, yasashii yobina wo Souru (Dear Mr. Kato Yoshihiro, My name is lunacy, call me by my soft name Seoul)," *Eiga Hyoron*, Eiga Shuppansha, August 1969, p.35.