

Seeing Is Creating: Toward the Completion of Artworks by Society

Modern Western civil society has produced a type of human being with a modern ego known as the individual. Thrown out into the world as individuals, we question our own existence, asking, “Who am I?” “Where am I?” and “What moment is this?” Through this questioning process, we obtain freedom and try to live a disciplined life. Contemporary art is the product of modern society, and it epitomizes the way of life of contemporary people, who are searching for meaning. The acts of making and appreciating contemporary art are ways of establishing a place to exist for this unstable, trembling self. The space-time of artworks created under these conditions often has no recognizable form. They express the shudders and cries of different kinds of spirits, sometimes appearing as straightforward actions and sometimes as systems that produce relationships between individuals and the world. The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art is a museum that discovers, protects, and describes contemporary art, including works that cannot be reproduced or concepts of projects that put certain phenomena in motion, and thinks about how to deal with these new kinds of art work. The activities that take place in this type of museum are completely different from the introduction and dissemination of

preexisting values that occur in an ordinary museum. Each exhibition is an experiment, and these experiments are not under the control of a few specialists. An exhibition only becomes effective through the active participation of many different kinds of viewers, including the many children who visit the museum. The type of art appreciation characterized by passive acceptance of preexisting information and values is not suited to our museum. The act of seeing should be a creative act of making a new self. A work of art may be completed as the self-expression of an individual artist, but it is completed as a social entity a large audience of members of the general public. This is an open-ended process.

The Site of Creation: Mediator Working Together with Viewers

2007 marked the fifth anniversary of the museum. Around that time, especially during the next three years, we began to see the museum as a public laboratory where we could fulfill the ideals under which it was established. We made a serious effort to create programs that flexibly combine the functions of a museum – research, acquisition and preservation of artworks, organization of exhibitions, and education and outreach. The staff positions established when the mu-

seum first opened included curator, registrar, educator, archivist, librarian, and curatorial assistant, but in 2005, we added an installation coordinator and in 2009 a conservator. These new positions were not filled to permit a greater division of labor but to create an organization that could work together and cross disciplinary lines more effectively. This structure was planned on the basis of a consensus that each professional member of the staff is a mediator who helps operate a museum that has the overall function of mediation. The management style that has been adopted sees the museum as a “site of creation,” where an array of different programs is presented at the same time.

Each year the museum presents one or two permanent collection exhibitions, three temporary exhibitions (solo or group), one long-term project-style exhibition, and three or four small temporary exhibitions on the theme of design. The period assigned to each exhibition is four months on average. For the long-term projects, it is extended to a half or whole year. As a result, there are always three or four exhibition taking place at any one time throughout the year.

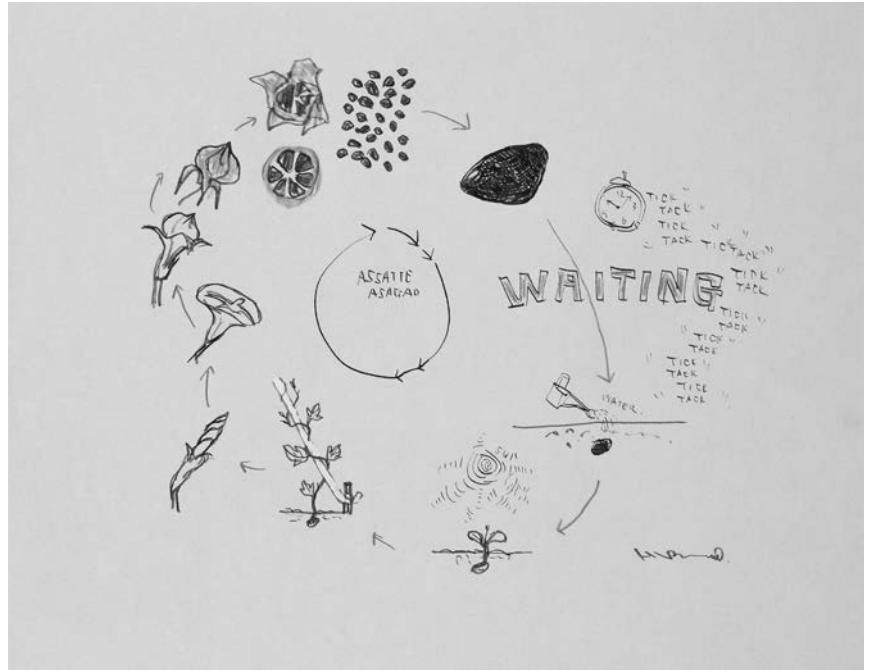
The main exhibitions presented in the period 2007–2009 are listed below by type. Seven solo exhibitions: Grayson PERRY (fiscal 2007 (the dates given below are all fiscal years), AWAZU Kiyoshi (2007), Ron MUECK (2008), SAITO Makoto (2008), SUGIMOTO Hiroshi (2008), YOKOO Tadanori

The Art Museum Mediator 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa 2007—2009

FUDO Misato (Chief Curator, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa)



1



2

(2009), and Olafur ELIASSON (2009). All of these shows were designed specifically for this museum after extensive examination of the artworks and the architectural space by the curator and the artist. Eight group exhibitions: “Passion Complex” (2007), “Collection I, II” (2007), “Kanazawa Art Platform” (2008), “Collection I – Connections” and “Collection II – shell-shelter” (2008), “Hundred Stories about Love” (2009) and “Collection – shift” (2009). The curators conduct research and set themes that reflect the trends or social circumstances of the time, and present exhibitions designed to elicit a response from the public. Four long-term, project-style exhibitions: “Atelier Bow-Wow” (2007), “Art Project by HIBINO Katsuhiko” (2007), “Collaboration Between Hibino Katsuhiko and NODA Hideki” (2008), “Collaboration Between NISHIYAMA Minako and HIROSE Mitsuharu” (2009). These projects were carried out according to methods adopted in 2006. Both artists and curators devote a large amount of time to developing interesting programs and they present the project as a

total production using several rooms in the museum as a platform. From public demonstrations of artmaking to outreach programs in the local community, these programs are effectively combined and carried out with the help of participants.

Because exhibitions are given the function of an experimental laboratory, they are often carried in a uniquely dynamic way and are constantly changing. We present readings of children’s books, live performances, lectures, and so on in the exhibition rooms, but in order to provide a broader experience of art we also organize artist-in-residence programs, displays of work in progress, workshops, and performances. In addition to the actual works of art and documentation emerging from the exhibitions, we also collect conceptual plans for projects and workshops and plays produced in conjunction with artworks, adding them to our archives as living documents.*1 The entire staff has become involved in art appreciation education, developing and improving such programs as the “Museum Cruise,” carried

out in cooperation with the public schools, and “Marubi Art School.” After considering the place of school education, art education, and volunteer education, we also created a new program, the “Art Mall School Project,” in which a variety of volunteers are enlisted to work actively in forming connections between the works and viewers. The format of the long-term, project-style exhibitions was developed by fusing the functions of exhibiting and educating and combining research with acquisition and conservation, resulting in an overall integration of the many elements of museum operations. To facilitate these projects we initiated the “Kanazawa Youth Dream Challenge Project,” recruiting participants from 18 to 39 years of age. In the fifth anniversary symposium, “Museum Education 21,” we invited a group of first rate scholars, active in their respective fields, to discuss the overall activities of the museum and develop a kind of museum education that goes beyond the narrow boundaries of conventional education and outreach.

Forming a Collection Open to the Society of the Future: Dynamic Exhibition and Preservation of Contemporary Art

The museum has greeted over 1.5 million visitors each year since 2008. The number of paying visitors accounts for approximately 20 or 30 percent of the total.^{*2} Art museums are complex facilities that generate all sorts of activity, and people come to them for a variety of reasons. The job of the museum's professional staff is to maintain its identity as a contemporary art museum, which includes quality control, and not become distracted by numbers like 1.5 million, since not all of these people are drawn by contemporary art. While paying attention to the changing numbers of people who visit the exhibitions, since the museum opened we consistently made it our motto to plan our exhibitions with complete autonomy. The more large numbers are bandied about, the more important it is to seriously ask ourselves what mission in society should be played by a contemporary art museum and what sort of message we should be sending out now as we plan our exhibitions.

In the lead interview in the *Research Bulletin*, volume 4, published by the museum, the poet and art critic TATEHATA Akira (then the director of the National Museum of Art, Osaka), discussed the role of public museums of

contemporary art, concluding that they are "sites of a slow bourgeois revolution." These words suggest an essential guideline and basic reasons for the long-term operation of our museum as a contemporary art museum in a regional Japanese city in the 21st century. Modern or bourgeois consciousness is characterized by a critical spirit. This means relativizing the self and casting doubt, asking questions like "Where are we? What am I? What is this moment?" and keeping a certain distance in seeing and thinking. The museum's function as "the site of a slow bourgeois revolution" should be activated to create a place where conversations of this kind can take place. The numerous dialogues accumulated through the workshop programs, project concepts, and documentation generated by exhibitions have no relation to the commercial values of the art market. The task of evaluating, collecting, and preserving the historical and artistic values created by this process is the mission of a public museum of contemporary art. Something like a timing device is contained in a collection of contemporary art documentation. The future execution of projects according to the concepts it contains may bring about unexpected results. Unknown values may be discovered by reading or interpreting the living, first-hand records. These documents, which may have implications that are not predictable in the present, should be carefully preserved for the artistic possibilities they

contain and left to the society of the future. This is a necessary condition of an open collection.

We imagine an art museum that becomes a medium for creating new values by holding conversations with artists about their works and performing experiments that involve large numbers of viewers who encounter them.

(translated by Stan ANDERSON)

*1. Art documentation of this kind that has been added to our collection is listed below. NARA Yoshitomo, *Dog-orama: Pup Patrol* (fig.1), HIBINO Katsuhiko, *Asatte Asagao Project 21* (fig.2), SHIOTA Chiharu+OKADA Toshiki, *About A Room of Memory* (fig.3), KOSUGE1-16 , *AC-21* (fig.4), TOCHKA, *PIKA PIKA in Kanazawa 2008* (fig.5), USHIJIMA Hitoshi, *ball rolls beyond, ball rolls ahead* (fig.6), KISHIMOTO Yasushi, *YASUMASA MORIMURA: Chapter 0* (fig.7), 2750 pieces art works of AWAZU Kiyoshi donated by the artist, YAMASHITA Yosuke, *Burning Piano 2008* (fig.8)

*2. 250,422 (fiscal 2004), 248,553 (fiscal 2005), 350,046 (fiscal 2006), 411,803 (fiscal 2008), 337,890 (fiscal 2007), 374,107 (fiscal 2009)



3



4



5



6



7



8

1. 2. 8. Photo: NAKAMICHI Atsushi / Nacása & Partners
3. Photo: Sunhi MANG
4. Photo: FUKUNAGA Kazuo
5. © TOCHKA, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
6. Photo: IKEDA Hiraku
7. © 2008 Yasumasa Morimura, Yasushi Kishimoto