

Selected Essays from the  
Art Writer Award for  
High School Students  
2005-2015

English translation  
from the original essays in Japanese

University of Tsukuba, 2017

Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2005  
[Translated from Japanese]

## **Ai Shirasaki**

**Fukui, Koshi Senior High School**

### **Mind**

## 白崎 藍

福井県立高志高等学校

## 心

Have you ever experienced mysterious sensations while painting pictures?

One feels as if one's hands have a life of their own, and it is the will of another that is controlling one's hands.

In such moments, my mind is full of a wide variety of thoughts. For example, I could be thinking of the weather, conversations with friends just a moment ago, or recollections of the long past.

Such thoughts cause a whirlpool of various emotions in my mind. The emotions are difficult to explain; however, they are always intense like shouting about something.

This painting is a culmination of all the unexpressed emotions in my mind.

Of course, I had a sort of planning in mind for the painting when I began. When preparing a panel for the new painting, I thought of painting a self portrait. However, I did not have any particular intention for painting a self-portrait; it was merely a familiar and easy theme. Thereafter, while making rough sketches, I decided to represent "life" in my portrait. The objects that surround me in the painting are symbols of "life." Nectar is melting and falling from the upper right corner, and the green objects in the upper left are fish scales in my imagination. The left side is for depicting animals and the right side for plants. Below these details, I painted droplets, streams, and bubbles that represent water as the source of life. I intended to paint them as if they were emerging from the darkness in order to represent the theme of "life and myself."

This initial plan was executed faithfully for a while, and I intended to name the finished work "life."

After painting the background in black, I continued to paint myself using a mirror. However, it proved to be difficult to paint my own face. I attempted to repaint my portrait numerous times, but was unable to depict my features appropriately.

As I continued painting, I recalled a painful memory from a long time in the past. I was in a fifth grade classroom in elementary school and could see a bullied child being beaten, surrounded and hit with objects thrown at her, laughed at without reason, and verbally abused. No one spoke with the child.

That child was me.

Initially, I retaliated to every abuse. However, after several months, I became silent. The contempt I suffered hurt me deeply. I wanted to do something that would prove to them that I was special and different from all of them.

In my endeavor to prove myself different, I began copying Manga illustrations from my elder sister's collection despite my ignorance regarding basic drawing skills. When I showed my copied drawings to my sister, she told me they were bad. I drew the illustrations repeatedly with tears in my eyes until she finally told me they were "good." Approximately one year later, when my drawing skills had progressed, the bullying disappeared as if it had never happened.

Reminiscing about that period of my childhood and the misery I felt at the time, I believe what I am today is because of my past experiences .

Thinking in such a direction, the undercoating of the colorful motifs began to represent "my life" rather than merely "life." When I looked at the painting, I felt as if my reflection was staring back at me from the center of the motifs.

I realized then that this was what I originally wanted to paint. "Life" was merely a theme labeled in hindsight. Originally I wanted to paint my portrait.

I finally decided to keep the images of flowers, water droplets, and fish scales because I did not find a need to change them. I thought that they would represent different meanings without transformation if the mind of the artist changes.

My hands moved automatically.

At first, I thought of painting the nectar in yellow; however, a lot of red came into it. I intended to flow all the nectar down, but the nectar motif became more solid as it changes to red. The touches became wilder; the curves of the lines became larger. The fish scales appeared hard initially; however, I found that it assumed a semisolid texture. The droplets falling from the fish scales began to appear as if they were illuminated. I painted the bubbles slowly, imagining them floating upward. They melt and go down, attempt to stop, swirl, drop, flow, and go up again.

The motifs represent conflicting emotions that sprung forth from my inner mind through the paintbrushes. There is no particular intention; I painted a figure in my mind, an inner portrait.

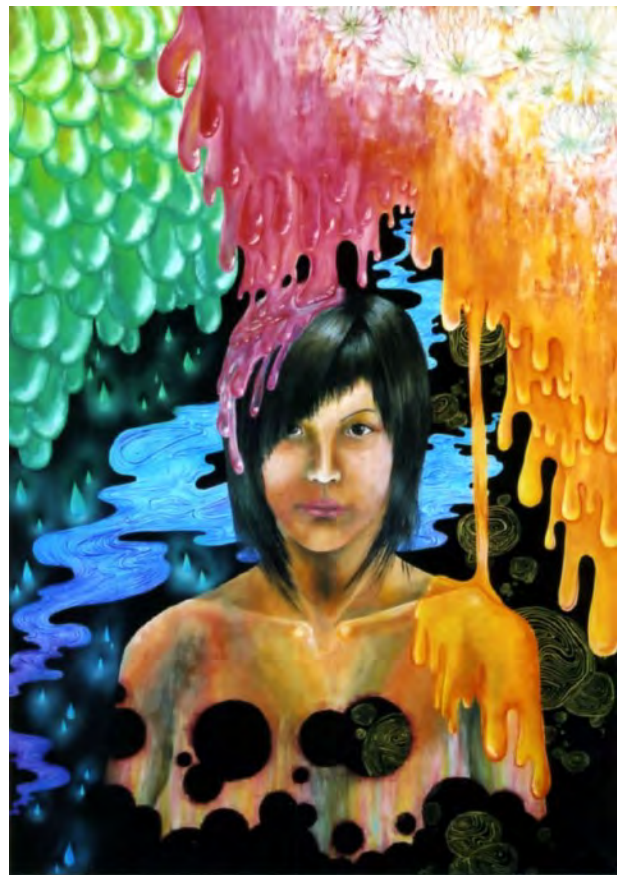
It is difficult to explain what type of emotions I have represented on the canvas. I am unable to find appropriate words to express these emotions ; therefore, they have been expressed through the painting.

I felt as if I was able to reach into my swirling mind while I was painting.

When I saw the completed painting, I caught my own eyes in the picture.

I felt as if the eyes were saying, “I am here.” I thought, “Yes, I am alive.”

Therefore, I named the painting “Mind.”



Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2005  
[Translated from Japanese]

**Motono Tanabe**  
**Okayama, Soja Minami Senior High School**  
**Blind People**

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盲目の人々

In our art class, we had the opportunity to discuss the *Blind People*, a work by Sophie Calle (1953-). The class began by thinking about “What is beauty for people who were born blind?” Everyone had varied opinions —“There is beauty that can be sensed by hearing or tactile sensation,” “Beauty is everything that is pleasant for me,” “Beauty can be sensed with imagination.” Thereafter, the point of discussion gradually moved to the discussion of whether it is right or wrong to question “what is beauty for blind people.”

Until that moment, I had forgotten that I had seen the work under discussion several months ago. There was an exhibition called “Pleasant Walk in Landscapes” in the Marugame Genichiro-Inukoma Museum of Contemporary Art. It aimed to represent a diversity of landscapes, such as “new landscapes,” which have been discovered from unique viewpoints, or “inner landscapes,” which throw light on the deep layers of the minds of the artists. Calle’s work was displayed in the section “invisible landscapes.”

*Blind People* comprises three elements. These are portraits of people who were born blind, their words in response to Calle’s question “what is the most beautiful thing that you have seen before,” and the objects that Calle created based on the imagination inspired by their words.

To me, those portraits and objects appeared full of sadness, and I hardly noticed the intention of the artist. However, I happened to see the work again in class and had an opportunity to think about her work during the discussion.

At the beginning of the discussion, a majority of the students were supporting views such as “the question itself might have hurt the people” or “it is rude.” It may

be considered to be a totally absurd question if the visible world is limited to the eyes of the people who are not blind like us, and beauty exists only in that world. Based on common sense, it may be considered as cruel treatment caused by the arrogance of the strong. However, Calle continued to ask the question to numerous blind people. We were all surprised by the honest and innocent answers they provided.

A man said,

“The most beautiful thing I have ever seen is the sea getting away and getting out of the sight at last.”

In front of the man’s eyes, there is a vast sea. He is able to see clearly beyond the horizon in the distance.

A child answered,

“The color green is beautiful. Because everyone tells me that the things I become fond of are always green. Grass is green, leaves, nature.... I like to wear green clothes.”

The child’s world is filled with colors, especially with his favorite color green.

This made me realize that the visible world is not the only world. I probably believed that beauty is visible only to those who are not blind. It may have been this prejudice at the back of our mind that causes pain and is perceived as rudeness by blind people. I had never before thought of this simple fact. What is the difference between the sea in the perception of the blind man and the sea that is visible to me? Does the green in this child’s perception and that in mine have the same beauty?

It may be impossible to recognize what other people see in one other. However, Calle utilizes her imagination well in order to depict a mutual sharing of the visible world. The dialogues between Calle and the blind people are represented to us in the form of numerous photographs. The photographs are the answers by Calle. No one can judge whether or not they are true. However, I believe that Calle is appealing to people like us too. We must think. We must listen to the voices that always tend to be drowned out because of the tenderness and weakness of the people the voices belong to. There is so much happiness in being able to feel the beauty in the world of another person and relate to one other.

It is said that a work of art “is merely an imperfect substitute for the real experience.” Struggling with feeling sorrow for the impossibility of perfect sharing,

and attempting to imagine the things that blind people may see are acts that intend to go beyond the boundaries of art. I believe that Calle appeals to us that the real meaning of art exists in the act of seeking truth in substitutes that are not real.

Now, when I look at the portraits in Calle's Blind People, I am able to see that these people are able to confidently look through the real world; they are full of joy to live life. I am able to see that beauty surely exists beyond their eyes. Such a perception of beauty exists for everyone, if we do not overlook it. If one person becomes aware of such beauty, it must be shared with someone else. This work enabled me to discover the joy of sharing "beauty"; it also made me aware of the crystal-clear beauty in the faces of the blind that I never recognized before.

Reference: Sophie Calle and others.

Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2005  
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## Main Shigemasa Gunma, Kyoai Gakuen Senior High School What Did You Miss?

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### 見過ごしたモノは何ですか

“The first step.” The phrase indicates the importance of the initial step taken to begin something. It is the time when a road is constructed. It is the time when a step is taken into a new world. We always begin with our foot. When a baby begins walking instead of crawling, it marks the beginning of a new period in its life, because its world changes. Similarly, “the first step” represents an opportunity to transform the world; for which courage is required and respected. The first step for me to understand this fact in the real sense was the “Footprint Performance.”

The hottest summer had passed and was replaced by cool winds. However, in Gunma Prefecture it continued to be rather sunny on the first and second days of October. An annual bazaar is held in the schools of Kyoai Gakuen during the first weekend of October. It is known as the “Kyoai Bazaar” and is almost like the cultural festivals held in other schools. In these two days, our art club organized an event called “Footprint Performance,” the preparation for which had begun in the summer of this year. The event was initially proposed during the summer camp of the club; our achievements far exceeded our expectations. The starting point of our planning for the event was “we want you to run”; this became the theme of our planning efforts. We wanted people to feel art and know about it. Looking back now, this eagerness was our main inspiration. We repeatedly discussed the manner in which to communicate such a message to the participants of the event. However, in the process of our preparation, the eagerness gradually transformed into a feeling of wanting to have fun ourselves before attempting to provide enjoyment to others.

Prior to the event, when we had begun arranging the site, we felt that the canvas of our setting was small, although earlier it had felt sufficiently large. Therefore, we opted for



outdoor space that did not have any boundaries; a mere change of setting enabled us to discover a different field of vision. The lack of boundaries appeared to make us feel as if everything else was smaller in comparison. We spread blue plastic sheets and cloths on the ground. The first thing that our bare feet felt was the warmth of the soil under the plastic sheets and cloths. It induced a feeling of drowsiness. Someone said, “The soil is warm.” The “small” canvas appeared large once more, and we lay sprawled on the ground and looked up at the endless sky—the bright blue sky and the white canvas. I wondered what every member had thought before we started preparation again. Their minds may have wandered and they must have been engulfed in their own thoughts. This intermission was beyond expectation.

A puzzled face. It belonged to the boy who marked the first footprint on our white canvas in the event. All the participants were initially puzzled. The boy was the first of the first and appeared rather hesitant. It was possible that he may have been garnering courage. He probably suffered from anxiety and tension. The little boy made the first step firmly. Then, a little girl came with her grandfather and stepped onto the canvas gingerly. Making eye contact with us, she put her foot onto the pallet. She began marking



small footprints with some hesitation. If the participants change from one color to another, they had to wash their feet. This was the only rule to be followed and the little girl's gradual change of her facial expression was impressive. Older people displayed different behavior. They appeared hesitant about joining in—worrying about getting dirty; however, once they were prepared for it, they kicked off their shoes and socks and let out startled cries when they felt the coldness of the water and the stones beneath their bare feet. They eventually realized that their feet would not get hurt. They gazed at their first step and appeared to enjoy the feeling of experiencing something different—different colors, dirty feet, the patterns of the footprints, talking with friends and finding new expressions, a baby's footprint made by an adult's hands, jumping and running. We saw that small children had created prints by using their hands; They typically like to use their hands. I saw their mothers and grandfathers watched them. Old ladies came to observe merely out of curiosity. I saw smiles. The staff ourselves were filled with smiling people.

Surrounded by smiling faces under the blue sky was one of the happiest moments of my life. In the latter portion of the day, we all jumped onto the canvas as well. It was possible that we all wanted to express the feeling of happiness we

were experiencing. We saw soap bubbles shining around us. When the entire event was over, we were all smiling again, which doubled our sense of joy.

In a particular art class, we had the opportunity to study a contemporary artist—Christ. My first impression of his work was that they are nonsensical and impossible to understand. However, my experience of conducting the event slightly transformed my view regarding Christ. I realized that we tend to miss things that are not obvious and blend into the background. Christ creates opportunity for recognizing such things by wrapping up objects. Our “foot” supports us and helps us to move. We tend not to notice it because it is rather obvious. Occasionally, we tend to forget things that are rather important. The artist and I both may want that someone must notice such things. The event we organized, which began with “want to run,” left a seed for me to think. “You have to have fun yourself in order to make others enjoy themselves.” This is my first lesson.

Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2011  
[Translated from Japanese]

**Tomoko Nakayama**  
**Gakushuin Girls' Senior High School**  
**Living in Japanese Beauty**

日本美に住まう

学習院女子高等科

中山 知子

Opening creaking doors, I pass through the gate. You can go in via the main entrance or go straight to the parlor through the garden. After a moment of hesitation, I slide the door open with a jerk and get inside the house through the main entrance. Silence straightens my heart. As I listen, only the buzzing of cicadas rings in the air.

I have a place to go back to in summer. My family visits my grandmother's every year, where I realized the beauty of Japanese houses. Even though I have been exposed to it unknowingly since an early age, it moves me so much every summer that I feel I have to straighten my posture. The air throughout the house makes me feel so.

Trotting sounds in the corridor. The footsteps become louder and finally my grandmother appears. After a short break we all go into the tearoom. Or shall we go to the parlor today? Reed screens for summer look cooler in our eyes. Greenery in the garden is verdant as we look out from rolled-up bamboo blinds, and I know it is summer indeed.

It is hot in summer here. But Japanese have never failed to try various measures easing the heat. Clothing like Yukata (bathing clothes) or cuisine to inspire cool impression is some example, but I believe it is best expressed in Japanese house, a place where people live. That is one of many reasons why I visit this house in summer. A contrast between dark interiors and bright green of the garden is outstandingly beautiful. In addition, there are screens that limit our sight. Full-screen picture is indeed beautiful, but the beauty of smaller ones, framed and partitioned, can give you bigger impression than their prosceniums. Screen rolled up a little can give a perfect frame to the garden for our eyes. They are also devised to block sunlight, so we can enjoy greeneries without being annoyed by sun glare.

Here I see Japanese "beauty of utility". Our ancestors were excelled in finding a "beauty" in "utility". In what we call "Japanese beauty" today, whether it is clothing, food or housing, we can find no excess of utility or beauty more than necessary. For instance, pictures are generally considered as being viewed or painted, probably because today they are more often in the museums. However, I believe they are essentially supposed to be on the wall of houses. Pictures are

utilized for their original purposes only within daily life. They have power more than just to adorn the wall, even possible to change the atmosphere.

For example, wall scrolls can greet the guests in tokonoma (alcove), be a subject of conversation and affect the mood between the host and guests. The "utility" of pictures is not only to be viewed and to evoke feelings within a person.

How then Japanese houses can embrace pictures? If the "utility" of pictures is in daily life, how Japanese houses as stages of Japanese daily life can draw out their "beauty"? In *Praise of Shadows* by Junichiro Tanizaki answered this question. It says that Japanese culture is a culture of "Shadows", while Western culture is the culture of Lights. Shades of shadows in Japanese houses can draw true beauty out of pictures. This function is quite economical, without giving too much light to pictures as spotlights do. Beauty of Japanese houses lies in its economy.

After that unprecedented earthquake, city of Tokyo was somewhat wrapped up in silence. Glare of electric lights were sedated, people were trying not to depend too much on electricity. Wake up with sunlight and go to bed at nightfall. This way of life without depending artificial, however, is not new to us. It is the way of life Japanese have lived from old times. Japanese Shadows did survive, even though seemed to have suffered the invasion of Lights by the westernization since modern times. Tradition of Japanese houses that find "beauty" more than just "utility" is existent within big cities today and people who live there.

It is indeed impossible to apply "the beauty of utility" straight to contemporary city housings, but it is still possible to maintain this esthetic. As mentioned above, it was proved by shadowy life in Tokyo. Therefore I would like to advocate that we should go back to our sources of Japanese Beauty. "Beauty of Utility" is often easily forgotten, but it is sometimes necessary to be immersed in it and recapture the beauty of Japan, our own origin. In my case, time to spend in my grandmother's is such occasion. How many times have I been moved by the beauty enwrapping a room, as I looked out from the dark into the garden? However, it is not only houses that can embody Japanese beauty. We can still adopt it into modern lives. In summer, there are bamboo screens, yukata, and water sprinkling. It is possible to take in "beauty" when it is of "utility". I believe that the most important thing to maintain Japanese artistry is realizing Japanese beauty day by day, and to take them into our daily lives.

<Reference>

Junichiro TANIZAKI, *In Praise of Shadows*, (Chuo Koron Sha, 1995)



Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2011  
[Translated from Japanese]

**Mana Uetake**  
**Tokyo Metropolitan KOGEI High School**  
**A Town Called Akihabara**

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「秋葉原」という街

I love Akihabara.

Saying that, some might think that I am a person who is “obsessed with subcultures.” Some might even feel repulsed by it.

People have impressions of Akihabara as an “electronics quarter” or “Mecca of Subculture,” meaning anime, manga and (pop) idols. However, I love Akihabara because of its characteristic atmosphere, and not only because I love subcultures.

So where in this town with its characteristic atmosphere does what attracts me so much lie?

There are many towns in the world where interactions between art and people are active.

Akihabara is surely one of them, but stands out for its sheer peculiarity.

In many cities with vibrant art activities, people are using their own ways of expression for different purposes such as self-expression, realization of harmony, achieving beauty of utility or space production. As a result, many of those towns are either lacking consistency and unity or being monotonous by simply pursuing harmony.

However, all art activities in Akihabara are for the sole purpose of “self advertisement”. In addition, those activities are done extravagantly without any reserve, from lifting big logos and illustrations to playing movies or music on the street in big size and volume.

By conducting somewhat excessive advertisement in the whole town, Akihabara forms its peculiar atmosphere with full of lights, music and visual designs.

This method could let the town fall into chaos, but as most of these ads are for Anime, games or illustrations, a strange sense of unity is born throughout the town when looked as a whole. It is “a harmony by chance” born by individual advertisement without caring about harmony at all. I feel some kind of artistry in this harmony. It is

like one life formed by countless cells, not made by any design.

For me the town of Akihabara is one work of art on its own.

For the existence of Akihabara as an art form, the presence of “people” is essential. Because even little details such as clothing or bags of people are important elements that consist this art of Akihabara.

When I first visited Akihabara, the main street was vehicle free as is in every Sunday, only people not cars strolling through the electric town.

However, on that day, I felt the town was somewhat deserted. It is not that there were fewer people or ads were inactive.

Unable to solve my question, I visited the town again some time later. When I came to Akihabara for the second time, some large-scale event was being held on the vehicle-free street.

I was surprised. Akihabara on that day was overflowing with people, far more than previous time. There are many cities full of well-designed buildings and well-dressed people. But in Akihabara on that day were cosplayers, people dressed in anime fashion, (and people) carrying big paper bags with illustrations. The entire town, though chaotic and filled with people, was somewhat unified by the event held on that day.

At that moment I felt certain that the “harmony by chance” of Akihabara is only complete with (the presence of) its people, not just its buildings.

The domain of Art is extremely obscure. However, when anyone saw beauty in anything, it instantly transforms to Art. Art has unlimited possibility because of its obscurity.

Only people can find beauty in things.

If some feel that the range of art expression is limited, it is because they are trapped in preoccupations and cannot see new form of beauty.

I love Akihabara. I visited Akihabara and found beauty in the town itself: in the shape of the town with full variety of artwork.

Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2011  
[Translated from Japanese]

## Chiharu Hosaka

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Ritsumeikan Keisho Senior High School

### Beauty of Melancholy

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哀愁の美

During the summer holiday, I visited an exhibition called “The Palace of Heaven on Earth: Works from the Palace Museum in Beijing”. I saw pictures of gallant court ladies, intricate and gorgeous automaton clocks, luxurious jewelries and magnificent tableware. In the midst of this pompous atmosphere, one picture caught my attention by its solitude and loneliness.

As its title, “Lady on a Bed Looking at Magpies,” indicates, a princess was leaning on her bed, fiddling with trinkets. Magpies were singing outside. The artist depicted the delight of seeing magpies for the first time in spring, after winter was gone. Chinese letters that mean “Long Life” are displayed behind the lady, but she is not at all giving her attention to it, instead watching the magpies.

It is understood that this picture is to promote the idea to wish for a life in harmony rather than a long life. I felt somewhat familiar with this picture. Ladies in other pictures were beautiful indeed, but I was attracted to this lady with her distinctive melancholy. What is this melancholy? Warm and sedate colors. Blurred, slowly filtering melancholy, smelling of incense. Overriding loneliness and desolation. A melancholy everyone must have experienced for once. This melancholy could shroud everyone. Time passes so slowly here. I am immersed with feelings like nostalgia. Old memories are coming back to me- when I was in

elementary school, when I was in kindergarten-. We all should have lived with this loneliness and desolation, and longing roused by them, from the days of our earliest recollection.

Apparently contrasting to this melancholy, there was a picture of a happy family: “Painting of Emperor Daoguang enjoying himself”. This picture is by a court painter, unveiling the scene inside the late Qing Court to public. Emperor Daoguang and his princes and princesses are here depicted enjoying picnic. The location is Old Summer Palace. Emperor Daoguang in back right is graciously holding a snuff pot. Children are enjoying themselves in whatever ways: some playing with each other, some at desk, in interesting variety. However, when I look closer, I also felt some melancholy in this picture as well. It is strange indeed but I think I know why. Because I myself also have found melancholy within happiness when I was painting.

I painted this picture a while ago. Titled “New Year’s Eve with My Grandparents”, I painted it from a photo when my family and me dined together. Jolly-looking picture. Full of Life. However, as I try to paint details carefully, melancholy somehow steeped in. Still, there is clear sense of enjoyment for certain. I think you can feel the excitement of my grandparents who met us after a long time, and our happy time on New Year’s Eve.

I realized that melancholy and happiness, though they seem contrastive, could be mixed together. We can still feel overriding happiness while keeping melancholy such as loneliness, desolation and longing.



Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2013  
[Translated from Japanese]

## **Park Ste** **Tokyo Korean Junior and Senior High School** **Invisible “Roots”**

**朴 秀太**

東京朝鮮中高級学校

### **目に見えない「根っこ」**

I am a Korean living in Japan. I am also a high school student.

My day-to-day life in a world of “boxes” such as society and school was stifling to me.

This is the feeling that inclines me towards expression.

For me expression could variously mean making a proposal, making a wish, raising one’s voice in triumph, or weeping in grief. Expression became the indispensable sustenance that I required to live.

My will to live made itself known in art club activities above all. In fact, I may have had a hunger to convey myself and give form to my own feelings. This may be because each time I created art, displayed this art and had it appreciated, it felt as if I would project my own interiority onto the wider world.

Being as I am, the creation of art may even have been a so-called “search for self-realization.” I wished to seek out my roots and find out my relationship with the outside world by expressing and conveying myself outwards.

I intently continued to flounder alone in my attempts to express something.



Roots.

Yes indeed, I should unearth the roots of that tree beside the gymnasium.

Over two weeks I unearthed roots in school, which was far bigger and longer than myself.

This was because I now had the feeling that I knew where my roots were to be found.

I put the roots that I dug up in a case, and decided to complete this artwork by having visitors sit one by one on top of it.

My existence is also similar to that of a member of the diaspora. I am like the seed of an invasive plant let loose in Japan.

Such plants also have roots. While there exists a Japanese expression “Nenashigusa,” meaning rootless wanderer, I myself have my very own roots. These are the roots growing underfoot.

This is what I think:

That people do not necessarily have a single root. That I have roots in Japan, the place of my birth. That just because this is true I don’t believe that the Korean roots within me have withered. And that there is an unmistakable “me” which exists on top of these roots, which will constitute the stems, leaves, fruits, and the tree.



**Park Ste, *Roots*, 2013**

height1550×width1200×depth450

Raw wood, concrete panel, video

The roots of neighboring trees were intertwined with the roots that I dug up. Despite this, this tree continued to stand proud, and seemed to be a message to myself as a person who had completely lost sight of roots. My roots are indeed intertwined with those of other people. An infinite number of other people's roots are complexly intertwined with my own. They may be the two languages of Korean and Japanese that dwell inside me. They may also be the inner worldview imbued by these different languages. They had existed before I was born and have been shared with speakers other than me.

I wonder if it was this noticing of an "inner other" which lived inside me which caused my expression to become focused outside of the boxes.

At the same time the affectations in my demeanor as a soloist, meant I lost my standing within these boxes and found that a large gully had now opened up between us. This was a gully of my own making. Put otherwise, this was because my behavior and existence had been validated by this gully. Standing alone, without relying on the group. This also seemed somewhat embarrassing and lonely. And yet, only having come to learn of my existence's connection to what lay on the other side of that gully did I feel impelled to remain imbedded within this group while questing for my own individuality.

When I think about it, I realize that the "expression" to which I had thus far been drawn had been a compulsion to have to establish myself while also isolating myself within the group. Nevertheless, this raises the question of what that compulsion is. This does not mean that my "expression" necessarily allows judgement of things outside of myself. That is how I thought: however this meant that I could no longer remain a soloist and that I needed to find an expression for this "inner other."

I created artwork as a painter, sculptor, songwriter and dramatist. I had affectedly intended to "autonomously" put the things I wished to do into practice. That expression banished my own standing to the gully of my perceived inner loneliness. This was an illusion of "independence." Nevertheless, when I realized it was not true independence, before I knew it my expression had become a means to learn about the world of others while simultaneously being a behavior which conveyed my "self" in order to confirm that self. One wonders if it is possible for expression to be completely free of all things worldly. If, for example, I could be allowed limitless freedom of expression unshackled with baggage, I wonder if in fact that expression would lose its meaning. Would this be no more than expression as a tautology of nothingness?

I am nobody. A floating existence obsessed with its complete incompatibility with its surroundings. But inside me there exists an "other." That is exactly why I

wish to continue my search. I wish to learn about my roots, to learn about others, and to seek out my existence. In this way I will continue to establish myself.

I will encounter people such as I have never before encountered. I will see sights I have never before seen. I will encounter knowledge of which I had not been aware. In this way I will find a new self. At first I was intent on currying favor with the outside of those boxes due to my conviction that there was no room for me in the boxes, and my place was outside them. However expression as a means of escape was what made me notice my "roots." When I realized this, the distinction between "inside" and "outside" the box disappeared for me.

This is precisely why the perhaps peculiar-seeming "search for self-realization" as a person that expresses themselves has become all the more firm.

I will continue to live as a person with "roots" expressing themselves.



Essay from  
the Art Writer Award for High School Students 2015  
[Translated from Japanese]

**Harumichi Nakamura**  
**Tokyo Metropolitan KOGEI High School**  
**The feeling called flow**

中村 陽道

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流れる、という思い

I always wish to know about origins. In this I am referring to what in modern times is called “art.” Now these are widely accepted in society as one cultural activity, but I wonder how we came to begin such expressive activities? I would imagine that an activity that provides no sustenance should have held no meaning for the far more “animalistic” people of ancient times for whom hunting and gathering was the extent of their livelihoods. I am not aware of any other animals besides humans who actually began to draw pictures and carve statues of their own volition. Why did we begin this expression and why do we continue it? This is a question which has no clear answer. However, I constantly wish to somehow propose an answer to this.

The ARTS OF JOMON exhibition was held at the beginning of 2015 in Spiral Garden Omotesando. This involved modern artists and creators inspired by Jomon pottery, applying their various techniques to exhibit artworks with the theme of Jomon pottery. While it was not a big exhibition, I remembering being extremely moved by it. Anyone in Japan will likely have seen examples of Jomon pottery in history textbooks. This refers to the pottery created in the Jomon period in every region of what is now the Japanese archipelago from Hokkaido to the Okinawa Islands (Japanese language Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). A unique characteristic seen in much Jomon pottery are the various patterns used such as the swirls on the pottery surface or the thorn-like decorations. Among these there are those which take ingenious forms which surpass utility and could even be called outlandish. Good examples include those excavated from the Umataka ruins (deep pot Kaen pottery, above figure.) I had long been preoccupied with this as a potential hint of the “origins” to which I previously referred, which is why I made my way to this exhibition.

At this exhibition I encountered the artworks of an artist called Ifurai. He identifies as a Jomon artist and creates the kinds of artworks that could even be called modern Jomon pottery. What I felt with his art right in front of me was the existence of a “flow”. I think this may be similar to the impression I was left with when I first saw Kaen pottery (Jomon period earthenware vessels with a flame-shaped rim.) It was a sculpture

which should have been solid but I was certain that in it existed a “flow.” What on earth was this flow? Maybe it was water and maybe it was flames. Either that or it might have been a pulse. What I felt was a current identified with the enormous surge of a wave, and in this above all there was life.

I directly perceived that it does not express a specific object nor emotion. It expresses the heartbeat of the world, the steady power of life, the powerful spirits which dwell in all creation. This may have been born from the idea of animism peculiar to Japan. Or it may have been a prayer that they dedicated to the earth in ancient times. However, preceding such beliefs or thoughts, they seem to me to have already arrived at the abstraction of “flow,” a powerful concept to contain within it life.

We live for a short time and our deaths are predetermined from the moment of our births. Even my classmates will almost all be dead after 100 years have passed. Daily progress towards the final destination of death applies to all things which have life and not just humans. Life is truly transitory and can be seen as but a momentary incident. However, during the course of each life the life in each body flows greatly and with violent eddies and continually emanates great power. Unfortunately there is no way to know whether the Jomon people actually thought this far. Nevertheless I wonder if in our creation of artworks, or seeing them and being deeply affected could possibly be identified the place which has been stimulated by such powerful invisible energies.

“Now life is living you.” At the 750th anniversary of the death of Shinran held in 2011 these words decorated the walls on Higashi Honganji Temple. I am not a follower of Buddhism. Nevertheless, these words again gave me a real feeling of the mysteriousness of what we call the life force. Ultimately life is not fixed in flesh but is found in the currents of feeling that have steadily flowed from the past to the present and through into the future. Undoubtedly such feelings have been inherited by many people since the distant past of the Jomon. This is also something that mankind just happened to feel more sensitively than other animals. I believe this enormous energy flowing through our bodies, as somehow belonging to ourselves, and from this may somehow have welled-up the powerful desire to sublimate these selves into a single solid body. I wonder if somehow to retain this energy as our own we ended up creating these whirlpools. What is born, a feeling of being drawn to a variety of impulsive feeling, may have assumed the form of what we now call art.

Each and every flow chips away at and changes that appearance, and at times it can reveal previously unconceivable implications. What will we, and what will I myself, create, keeping these in front of us?

Essay from  
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[Translated from Japanese]

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## Seeing the world with a pure heart

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### はだかの心で世界をみる

In Autumn of last year I made my way to the Art as a Haven of Happiness exhibition held in a gallery in Roppongi, Tokyo. This exhibition freely exhibited various artworks by persons with disabilities and the venue was brimming with a pop-like and joyous atmosphere that I had never before felt at an art gallery.

The artwork was all completely different depending on the person who had created it.

I felt keenly the abundant energy of the creator of each artwork: Clothes which had been embroidered in almost belief-defying detail with a variety of colors, palm-sized paintings thickly recoated with paints on cardboards, in addition to a dollhouse with minute attention apparent in the details and a plate made from wood with coarse chisel marks.

The venue itself was lively and excitement hung hot in the air. This was not just because of the artworks unveiled there but also released from the “people” in the venue. This was because, while there were of course many members of the general public who had come to see the artwork, there were similarly many persons with disabilities and their families in the venue. They scurried about the venue and touched the artwork and started conversations with the people appreciating this art. At other art exhibitions, you would be warned about this kind of behavior as inconveniencing other guests.

However, at this exhibition things were different. With their presence, the entire venue became a place of interaction. The people who were spoken to at first may have laughed in bewilderment but then carefully listened to their words and movements and spoke back. In fact, I felt a tap on my shoulder as I was looking at an artwork and when I turned around there stood a man of around 30 years old. Right beside him there was a kindly-seeming lady who appeared to be his

mother, and she said “excuse the sudden interruption.” Then she told the man, “go on.” So he spoke to me with smile, moving both hands clasped in front of his chest. While I am unsure exactly what he was saying, as he was trying with all his might to speak to me I in turn tried with all my might to understand him. When he had finished speaking the lady said this.

“This fellow painted the picture you were just looking at. He became very excited as you were intently studying the painting. Please excuse the suddenness.”

When I heard this I realized that my enthusiasm had risen. Me too, me too!! I am really happy. This picture is excellent. It is very charming. Extremely. I conveyed this to him in gestures. He seemed delighted.

Just as I had this experience, I believe that there were many exchanges between those attending the exhibition and those persons with disabilities and the artworks they had created.

The stars were the people running around, touching the artworks, and suddenly starting conversation with people. It ended with the staff giving up indicating that it was dangerous if they ran into each other and tidying away the signboards saying “Please do not touch the artworks.” Also, I think that this was because there was no one touching the works in a way that would break them.

As the stars livened up the venue we were overwhelmed, moved and had our hearts filled with joy, fun and happiness.

After I left the venue and till I reached home, I had never left an exhibition with such an intense feeling of joy.

Now I have left my hometown of Tokyo and am devoting myself to creating things in the vast expanses of the north. What things are fun, interesting, surprising, moving? Are among the things I think about. But that is surely not it.

What is important is to speak to and listen to the people in front of you with an unadorned heart. To turn one’s gaze to the world.

I do all I can to try to put into form the things I felt spending time with pure hearts. That is what is best. That is what matters. There can be found what only I can create.

This is what I learned from them and from their art. This is what connecting with them and their art taught me.

From now on I want to continue to look at my own heart and the hearts of others.