

Reconsidering “The Japan International Art Exhibition (Tokyo Biennale)”: The Intentions of International Art Exhibitions in Japan After WWII

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Introduction: Summary and Purpose of this Paper

Art history in Japan developed after World War II through the regeneration of art organizations and a focus on the activities of the avant-garde, alongside the movement from the end of “modernism” to the expansion of institutionalizing “art.” This paper explores “The Japan International Art Exhibition” (commonly called the “Tokyo Biennale”), the first international art exhibition in Japan after World War II. In 1952, the first “Japan International Art Exhibition” was held under the auspices of the Mainichi Newspaper Company, and was continuously held until 1990, when the 18th and last exhibition was organized. The exhibitions inevitably evolved with the trends of the times, but research on these exhibitions as a whole is inadequate. Changes in the organization, structure, and forms of artworks in this exhibition are closely connected with the phases of the Japanese art environment, and provides a new insight into the making of Japanese art history after World War II. Moreover, the transformation of this exhibition involves the problems of the concept of “Art” and the context peculiar to Japan, because it was held in the particular region of “Japan.” International and large-scale art exhibitions have arisen in various districts around Japan since the 1990s. Although they are the same as international exhibitions after WWII, a large phase has arisen in terms of structure. Thus, historically examining the structures of large-scale art exhibitions themselves is important for future studies. In this paper, I comprehensively examine “The Japan International Art Exhibition (Tokyo Biennale)” through examining numerous articles about this exhibition and its illustrated catalogs. Moreover, I review the contribution, significance, and problems of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” in art history by analyzing the intentions of art organizations in Japan that were related to the exhibition, that is, the criteria of judgments and vector on criticisms of the contemporary art situation in Japan.

1. The State of Earlier Papers About Art History in Japan After World War II and “The Japan International Art Exhibition”

Where “The Japan International Art Exhibition” is concerned, we often have focused on the 10th exhibition, the theme of which was “Between Man and Matter.” The 10th “Japan International Art Exhibition” had great impact. Though Tomii (2011) is the earliest paper about “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” she also focuses on the 10th exhibition[1]. Comparing this 10th exhibition with “The Japan International Exposition” (commonly called

the Osaka Expo), Tomii indicates that artworks in the 10th exhibition, which were called “poor art” as opposed to artworks in “The Japan International Exposition” called “rich art,” corresponded with the international art situation before and after 1970 and had acquired “international contemporaneity.” However, I think that the context of “international contemporaneity” is problematic, and that this “internationality” itself involves some phases. In this paper, therefore, I comprehensively examine “The Japan International Art Exhibition” as well as the 10th exhibition and the intentions of this exhibition. “The Japan International Art Exhibition” was the first international art exhibition in Asia, so it appeared in art magazines since the opening of the 1st exhibition. *Table 1* displays a list of articles about “The Japan International Art Exhibition” from art magazines. There were 97 articles between 1952 and 1990, and the 1st to 10th exhibitions were always features in the magazines. Thus, “The Japan International Art Exhibition” continuously involved criticism, even before and after the 10th exhibition[2].

Art during the Blank Period after World War II (『戦後空白期の美術』, 1996) by Shinichi Segi; *The History of the Rise and Fall of Art after World War II* (『戦後美術盛衰史』, 1979) by Ichirō Hariu; and *The Deviation History of Contemporary Art* (『現代美術逸脱史』, 1986) by Shigeo Chiba[3], all focus on the situation of art in Japan after World War II. However, Segi only discusses the “Art Organizations Union Exhibition,” which was the former stage of “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” and Haryū only briefly describes the birth of “The Japan International Art Exhibition.” Chiba’s work is noteworthy from the viewpoint of discussing the relationship between Japanese art history after WWII and the context peculiar to Japan by presenting the concept of “Art as a kind.” But this work also refer to only the 10th “Between Man and Matter” exhibition[4]. In this paper, I reconsider “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” which is not clarified as a whole in these earlier books.

2. The Intention and Change of “The Japan International Art Exhibition”

First, I clarify the structural change of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” from the 1st to the 18th exhibitions, and examine the intentions behind these exhibitions. *Table 2* indicates the basic information and points about each exhibition. While Japan recovered from WWII, art exhibitions were held one after another and invited artworks from other countries, and art circles also revived quickly. In October 1945, *Nikakai* 二科会 had already been reorganized. In March 1946, The Japan Art Exhibition (*Nitten*, 日展) was held, but in April and May, the proletarian groups *Nippon Bijutsukai* 日本美術会 and *Genjitukai* 現実会, respectively, were organized. In September, art exhibitions (ex. *Nikaten* 二科展, *Inten* 院展, *Shinseisakuhaten* 新制作派展) resumed at once. Thus, the first art circles had restarted and reorganized in the Japanese art world after WWII. It is a well-known fact that newspaper companies organized art exhibitions to respond to the starvation of art lovers, taking part in restarting art circles[5]. In 1947, Mainichi Newspaper Company held “*Bijutsu Dantai Rengōten*,” 美術団体連合展 which showed artworks selected from the main art circles, and in 1951, the company held “Salon de me in Japan” サロン・ド・メ日本展[6]. After closing the 5th “*Bijutsu Dantai Rengōten*,” the Mainichi Newspaper Company held “The Japan

International Art Exhibition” to connect the Japanese art world with art overseas. 1952 was an important year for Japan in terms of international exchange. In April 1952, Japan recovered sovereignty with the San Francisco Lecture Treaty becoming effective. In 1951, Japan was invited to the first “São Paulo Biennale,” which was an international art exhibition in Brazil. Moreover, in 1952, Japan took part in the 26th “Venice Biennale” for the first time after WWII. Kōkichi Funato, who was a staff member in the Arts and Sciences department of the Mainichi Newspaper Company, asked, “How should we connect Japanese modern art, which this exhibition has strengthened, with the overseas art world?” after closing the 5th “Bijutsu Dantai Rengōten”[7]. In the following text, I examine points of the change that relate to the gist of this paper, referencing *table 2*.

The 1st to the 9th editions of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” had adopted a national section system like that of the Venice Biennale. As shown in *table 2*, seven countries joined in the 1st, and seventeen in the 8th, which was the maximum. A prize system was started in the 3rd exhibition. I focus on the selection of domestic artists as the point of major change in this exhibition in the 1950s. In its foreign section, the Mainichi Newspaper Company had made requests to councils and embassies in other countries. In the domestic section, the steering committee organized in Mainichi Newspaper Company selected Japanese artists, researching art circles comprehensively. In the 3rd exhibition, there were 302 Japanese artworks, which occupied half of the total displayed pieces. That is, the idea of “consciousness as a comprehensiveness,” which was composed of various styles from masters to middle-rank artists in art circles, was employed. This selection was criticized by art critics, and words such as “across-the-board” and “an average display” were found here and there in art articles. However, at this point, overseas displays were also in the same situation. In the first São Paulo Biennale, 45 oil and Japanese-style painters displayed one work each, and Japan was not favorably received. In the 26th Venice Biennale, Ryūzaburō Umehara was a leader and eleven artists displayed two works each, a total of 22 pieces. Japan in the 1950s had the intention of proceeding to the international standard by uniting art circles after their rebirth and the re-inflow of European and American cultures.

Thus, the regulation of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” was that “Japanese artists who were invited once were always re-selected,” but in the 4th exhibition of 1957, the steering committee tried to accept new faces by adding the regulation that “Japanese artist could only show one work each.” In the 6th exhibition of 1961, the selection committee was made up of five members: Atsuo Imaizumi, Shūzō Takiguchi, Teichi Hijikata, Tomoaki Kawakita, and Shinichi Segi. Thus, the selection system of Japanese artists changed to one by art critics. As a result, the number of Japanese artists did not decline extremely, but in the 9th exhibition, the number of artworks by Japanese artists was reduced to 175 pieces, and avant-garde artists had gradually joined the selection of the Japanese section[8]. In the overseas section, after criticism of the selection system by artists and art critics, the International Art Council was established in 1957, and the commissioner system was established in the 1960s. As a result, the intentions of artist selection and display was gradually made clear. Also, in overseas displays, the steering committee discussed whether Japanese-style paintings should be selected, considering the results of the 26th Venice Biennale. In fact, in the 27th and the 28th Venice Biennales,

moreover in the 30th of 1960 when the commissioner system began in Japan, Japanese-style paintings were not displayed. On the other hand, “The Japanese International Art Exhibition” continued to adapt the genres of Japanese-style and oil painting until the 9th exhibition in 1967. In this condition, the strong hierarchy of Japanese art circles, that is, the “domestic situation,” had been involved, but simultaneously the people concerned with Japanese art circles had expected greater progress in oil paintings and Japanese-style paintings as a whole.

I focus on the changes of prize winners as a condition of the 1960s in this exhibition. In the 6th exhibition, after the selection committee was established, 20 artworks by 19 artists called “the Japanese artists who have established reputations overseas” were displayed specially, and artists who had stayed overseas, such as Jōsaku Maeda and Minori Kawabata, received five prizes among the nine prizes of the domestic section. After that, in the 7th exhibition of 1963, Toshinobu Onosato received a prize for excellence, and in the 8th exhibition of 1965, at last Kazuo Shiraga received a prize. The display list in this period included Yoshishige Saito, Tarō Okamoto, Aiō, Seinosuke Sekine, Jirō Yoshihara, and Sadamasa Motonaga, and at last, the steering committee introduced an international judging system and abolished the frameworks of the domestic and overseas sections in the prize system. As a result, Jirō Yoshihara, Minoru Yoshida, Shūsaku Arakawa, Jirō Takamatsu, Tomio Miki, and Nobuaki Kojima were selected as Japanese prize artists, and a change was implemented so that artists as individuals rather than artists from art groups were selected. This greatly shocked people concerned with art circles. In this situation, deviating from the frameworks of painting and sculpture, the forms of artworks had changed into formations composed by diverse materials such as the terms “idea,” “imagination,” and “jumble” found in various articles. As a result, the Mainichi Newspaper Company postponed “The Japan International Art Exhibition” in 1969. The organizer had confronted the problem of how to digest domestic avant-garde activities. Thus, “The Japan International Art Exhibition” in the 1960s was dynamically changed in that the avant-garde groups in art circles or the avant-garde artists who had not depended on the circles had risen. Before and after 1968, when this exhibition was postponed, the method of International Art Exhibitions had been in question internationally. Suffering the influence of the May Revolution in Paris, the Venice Biennale was also targeted by the student movement against the established system and commercialism. In fact, during the 36th Venice Biennale of 1970, the steering committee abolished a prize system, and the art organization in Italy was compelled to change the established system to select younger artists and make artworks in residence. During the 10th São Paulo Biennale of 1969, an international boycott movement against the military regime in Brazil occurred, and during the 6th Paris Biennale at the same time, the steering committee abolished the national section. Moreover, in the 7th Paris Biennale, the prize system was abolished. Indeed, the committee had tried to review the established system. In Japan in the same period, a nationwide campus dispute had broken out. “*Bijutsuka Kyotō kaigi* 美術家共闘会議” (commonly called *Bikyotō* 美共闘) by Yasunao Tone and Naoyoshi Hikosaka was organized in 1969[9].

The catalog of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” observes that “the Steering committee sent out a questionnaire to twenty two critics, curators, and editors of art magazines, and requested them to examine how to manage an international art exhibition drastically and

to contribute their opinions.” As a result, dramatic changes were made so that only Yūsuke Nakahara was appointed as a commissioner and decided selected artists and a subject of this exhibition, and the 10th exhibition—Man and Matter—was held in 1970. There were three major changes in this exhibition. First, artworks that did not fit into the established genre of painting and sculpture, and did not represent story and expression, but had subjects with the conceptual elements of perception, recognition, communication, and so on, were shown. Secondly, almost artists made works in residence. Third, artworks were set outside of the art museum and in the park[10]. Much criticism against this method of exhibition occurred. Some titles in art magazines, such as “Accusation Against Tokyo Biennale” in *Geijutsu Shinshō* 芸術新潮 and “Why Is This Art?” in *Bijutsu techō* 美術手帖, clearly show the condition. As an actual result, the number of audience visitors decreased. This shows a problem in how the public in this age recognized art. The Mainichi Newspaper Company had considered for three years holding the 11th exhibition, which was held in 1974. It organized foreign and domestic sections again. It carried out the exhibition based on the themes of “New Realism Paintings in America” and “Hyper Realism Prints in Europe.” At the same time, referring to opinions of some domestic art critics, the organizer selected Japanese artists and set up the theme “Realism in the Age of Reproduction and Reflection.” After the 10th exhibition, “Man and Matter,” the organizer had tried to establish a challenging theme. On the other hand, the style of “foreign vs. domestic” art firmly remained. Like the theme of “Today’s Reflection World” in the Documenta 5 exhibition of 1972 or the shows of photographs and so-called “hyper realism” paintings in the 36th Venice Biennale in the same time, the theme of this exhibition’s domestic section suggests a leaning toward the European-American trend. After this 11th exhibition, with the influence of a stagnant economy after the oil crisis, the organizer abolished the national section. The 12th exhibition was held four years later in 1978, and the organizer only invited one country and held a competition in the domestic section. As a result, the established genres of Western painting and Japanese-style painting were demolished at last, and were changed into the sections of “plane and three-dimensional object.” Thus, the intention of the Japanese art world in the 1970s seems to be an exhibition based on a theme, via the 10th “Man and Matter” exhibition, and the change from the 11th exhibition onward.

In the 1980s, the circumstances surrounding “The Japan International Art Exhibition” had changed further. Open-air exhibitions had increased gradually; such as the “Hamamatsu Open-Air Art Exhibition (浜松野外美術展)” in 1980, the “Biwako Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition (びわこ現代彫刻展)” in 1982, and the “Japan Ushimado International Art Festival (JAPAN 牛窓国際芸術祭)” in 1984. The establishment of art museums in Japan had reached its peak in the 1980s. There were 55 museums in 1960, but the number of museums had increased to 223 by 1987[11]. During this period, “The Japan International Art Exhibition” had attempted to change continually. The overseas section had focused on various cultures: Argentina, India, Belgium, Switzerland, and Holland. Mixed media works had also appeared in this section and had become avant-garde with the demolition of genre. Thus, in these exhibitions of the 1980s, diversity had arisen in the foreign section, but on the other hand, competition was completely adopted in the domestic section from the 14th exhibition in 1982 onward. This selection committee was composed of 15 critics and artists who were influential in the Japanese art

world, and there were over 1,500 entries for each exhibition; the competition was very severe, as only 180 works were shown. In the foreign section “Holland Contemporary Art – Packing Crate” in the 18th and last exhibition of 1990, artworks were set in common standard containers. It is interesting that installation works appeared in this exhibition[12]. This 18th exhibition became the last; it had become a situation that the established organizer could not maintain.

3. The Structure and Role of “The Japan International Art Exhibition”

Thus, many art critics had been involved in “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” responding continuously to the movement of the period by trial and error. On the other hand, this series closed with the 18th exhibition. What are the roles and problems that “The Japan International Art Exhibition” filled and addressed? I examine criticisms of this exhibition in the following text.

It is clear and significant that this exhibition had the role of receiving information from overseas during the regeneration of Japanese art circles after WWII. Additionally, this exhibition had formed the stage for nations to compete against each other by adopting a national section. The time of showing Japanese artworks not only to domestic circles but to the outside world had rose rapidly. The main seven Japanese art circles joined this exhibition: *Issuikai* 一水会, *Nikakai* 二科会, *Dokuritsu bijutsu kyōkai* 独立美術協会, *Kōhūkai* 光風会, *Kokugakai* 国画会, *Shunyōkai* 春陽会 and *Shinseisakuha* 新制作派. Moreover, the following five art groups also took part: *Tōkōkai* 東光会, *Ōgenkai* 旺玄会, *Sōgenkai* 創元会, *Genjitsukai* 現実会, and *Jiyū bijutsu kyōkai* 自由美術協会. As a result, competing groups had gathered as a whole[13]. As an example of discourses surrounding the 1st exhibition, in the beginning of the 1st catalogue, Sōichi Tominaga stated, “the Japanese art world had been confronted with the problem that we must consider Japanese art through an international position and vision.”[14] Moreover, in the article “A Message to Japanese artworks, Shūzō Takiguchi” (the catalogue of the 3rd exhibition, 1955), the following was described,

It is just after WWII at last that the concept of “internationality” emerged as a practical consciousness in Japanese art groups. (...) Anyway, it is just a new condition that an international art exhibition is held in Japan. First of all, a new geographical diagram has been occurring in the Japanese art world at least subconsciously. (p.15)

Some art critics had always introduced the art conditions of foreign countries in the catalogues from the 2nd to the 7th exhibitions. (By Shinichi Segi in the 8th, and by Yoshiaki Tōno in the 9th.) And also, many round talk meetings were run in art journals. Thus, “The Japan International Art Exhibition” had become the stage to confirm the condition of Japanese artworks against the outside world. It is important that people concerned with the Japanese art world had become conscious of Japan itself as well as the world. Criticisms of Japanese artists’ representations and the art movement were always run in this exhibition’s catalogs, with the introductions of foreign countries. Japanese artworks were checked comprehensively and

compared with art in the outside world. This indicates the internationality of the binominal oppositions, that is, “Japan vs. the World.”

I focus on the problems of criticisms derived from that condition. As a result, the diagram of “Japan” and “the World” brings the viewpoint on the problem of the given locale, “Japan,” that is, the domestic cultural condition. The criticisms of the Japanese cultural context on art, which was indicated by the use of the term “national characteristic” at that time, were developed on the stage of this international exhibition[15]. Many discourses on “national characteristic” are indicated by “○” in *table 1*. These marks were often found in the 1950s and 1960s, and the sense of the “national characteristic” was already in focus even in the 1st exhibition. The term “national characteristic” is used in the title of the article “Feature National Characteristic and Painting: The 4th Japan International Art Exhibition” in the art magazine *Mizuwye* みづゑ in vol. 624 of 1957. For example, the following text is from the article “National Characteristic and Internationality by Tarō Okamoto” in this magazine,

Anyway, I may ask what national characteristic in art is at all and whether anything such it will lose the principle in the future or not. (...) Even if art loses a locale’s characteristics, we ever have the native reality of ourselves. It is true that they are not always art which has internationality. (...) The Japanese destiny that we assume by force in this society has no connection with the outside world. It’s a reality that only artists from Japan have and must confront the reality in this blocked up world. (p.15)

There was also a roundtable discussion about the 4th exhibition called “The Problem of Climate and National Characteristic In the World Contemporary Art” (art magazine *Bijutsu Techō* 美術手帖) by Teiichi Hijikata, Kimihide Tokudaichi, Ryō Yanagi and Ichirō Hariu. According to the data of *table 1*, in art magazines, the artworks from peripheral locales such as Japan, Spain, Mexico, India, and east European countries are compared with those from Europe, mainly France and Britain. Moreover, the artworks from America, which were regarded as a new stream, seem to be compared with those from France and Britain. In their articles, as well as “national characteristic,” the terms “climate” and “the regional characteristic” are used. On the other hand, the terms “international,” “the world art,” and “the world art groups” are used in contrast. Japanese critics had criticized the techniques and subjects of Japanese artworks, comparing them with artworks from various other countries by adopting these phrases.

In the 1960s, for example, the following was described in the article “The Roundtable Discussion About Tokyo Biennale: The Suggestion Toward Tomorrow” (from the art magazine *Mizuwye* みづゑ vol. 701, in June 1963) by Kusuo Shimizu, Shūji Takashina, and Jō Tanaka:

(Tanaka) In short, I think that there is a need to distinguish the domestic condition from the international one. Though there has been a lot of discussion about Japan or the national characteristic against internationality for the past few years, the attitude about it has been still chaotic.

(Takashina) Though it's natural that art has been tinged with an international character gradually because today, the world has become linked by degrees, I think that the element of national characteristic that you observed now can't be removed from real artworks, even if we desire so. Nevertheless, artists are selected with the reflection of the domestic condition. I disagree with that a bit.

Thus, “national characteristic” was related to the established hierarchy of the Japanese art world, and on the other hand, “internationality,” that is, the consciousness of “contemporaneity,” had been expressed. Actually, in the 1960s, discourses about “internationality” (“◎” mentioned in the data of *table 1*) had increased. In the articles “National Characteristic in Abstract Artworks” by Shinichi Segi, “The Overflow of ‘Unavoidable Trend’” by Shin Hongō, and “International Style of Non-Individuality” by Toyoshirō Fukuda in the feature article “Feature of the 6th Japan International Art Exhibition” (the art magazine *Bijutsu techō* 美術手帖 [July, 1961]), they pointed out that artworks from various countries had shown the transition from concrete to abstract. The issue of “characteristic” under the common ground of abstract art was argued by this situation. But this “characteristic” itself was also criticized as stylized or “not-characteristic.” In this situation, “national characteristic” had been threaten by the term “characteristic” under “international contemporaneity.”

Anyway, the comparative structure of “Japanese art vs. that of foreign countries (mainly the Euro-America)” had arisen with the appearance of “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” and the stage where Japanese critics and artists argued about the “national characteristic” had been set. Though the problem of the cultural context around art had already been found in ultranationalism before WWII and nationalism during WWII, it arose again after WWII and was made clear with the appearance of “The Japan International Art Exhibition.” As a result, when I examined critics' and artists' opinions, I recognized that the pursuit against the expressions of painting (includes Japanese-style painting) and sculpture had much been strengthened by this comparative structure. Especially when Japanese artworks were sent to overseas exhibitions, only the “contemporaneity” had been argued in Japanese-style painting. But in “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” Japanese-style painting had continually become an object for argument with criticism and expectation, such as in the article “Japanese Style Paintings in ‘The Japan International Art Exhibition’” by Shinichi Segi (the art magazine *Sansai* 三彩 in July, 1957 and the same title by Tanio Nakamura in June, 1963. Japanese-style painters had also tried to achieve “contemporary” expression on this international stage. Here, another viewpoint relates to this problem. It relates to contemporaneity mentioned above, and is the problem of the extension of the “art” domain, namely one of a reaction to avant-garde.

4. The Intention of “The Japanese International Art Exhibition” and Institutionalized “Art”

First, Shinichi Segi stated the following in the article “The Contribution Toward the 8th Tokyo Biennale” (the 8th illustrated catalog, 1965):

We must identify the reason that we can't decrease the numbers of selected artists though the selection committee has trouble selecting artists every time. Though the consciousness of established art circles called "*Gadan*" 画壇 has gradually declined in recent years, this situation indicates a practical sign that the hierarchy and the valuation basis against the sense of assignment in art circles have still been kept firmly.

The structure of this exhibition had remained the hierarchy of art circles and the established framework of painting and sculpture. On the other hand, it is a fact that this system had been criticized by critics who were in the position of organizers as in Segi's article. This shows the evident transformation of artworks in the 1960s of Japan as the change mentioned above. The structure of "The Japan International Art Exhibition" had not been able to respond to the movement in spite of an international art exhibition. Actually, though the selection committee was established in 1961 and introduced an international judging committee in 1967, a total of 178 artworks in the genres of oil painting, Japanese-style painting, print, and sculpture were exhibited in both the 8th and 9th exhibitions in the late 1960s.

Here is an important point that we should focus on when we reconsider "The Japan International Art Exhibition." The criticism of "national characteristic" that we have examined here is apt to converge in the institution of "art" that stems from the West, that is, in the "expression" in the closed domain of genres of painting and sculpture. So the western criterion of value is always seen off and on in the consciousness toward the world standard, which is contemporaneity. Moreover, the pursuit of "Japanese originality" doesn't work in contemporaneity sufficiently. For example, Yoshiaki Tōno, one of the international judges, stated that "Japan belongs to the first territory that has achieved modernization and capitalism like Western Europe, being not Asia. So Japan can accept contemporary art under the western concept." [16]

Here exists the problem of "what is internationality" in "The Japan International Art Exhibition." There are both the problems of the transformation of artworks and established hierarchy, and the relation with institutionalized "art" in "internationality" or "contemporaneity." In particular, in order to arrange "contemporaneity" in international exhibitions, Japanese people must understand and use the "national characteristic" mentioned above, that is, "Japanese originality," by their own will. Despite the situation, the idea of "what is peculiar to Japan" on just formalism: color and form, was pursued until the 8th exhibition, and the focus had always turned toward the comparison with France or America. Though young artists rose in the 9th exhibition, "contemporaneity" there was achieved by the criterion of value that is the international judgment from America, France, and Britain. According to research materials, in the international judge system, though Japanese critics focused on domestic artists and explained their characteristics, they concentrated their attention only on the point that the artists did not belong in art circles, so they could not present their original criterion of value. As a result, Japanese critics evaluated Japanese artworks only by "representation": concept, material, and composition, in institutionalized "art." Moreover, Japanese-style paintings, which were expected as part of the "national characteristic," also had retreated under the international contemporaneity as they were sent to overseas exhibitions.

Actually, Japanese-style painters didn't received prizes at all in the 9th exhibition.

Here, I pay attention to the book mentioned above by Shigeo Chiba. Chiba analyzes “the context peculiar to Japan” from the peripheral avant-garde actions in which “The Japan International Art Exhibition” could not take part. For example,

There was western art (painting and sculpture) in Japan originally, and the processes of ruining the traditional art (mainly painting) and one of introducing western art (painting and sculpture) proceeded in Japan intricately. When we naturally explain “art,” that is, “painting and sculpture” in “Anti-Art (Han-Geijutsu 反芸術),” we presuppose the idea of western art unconsciously without a historical fact. (82)

Noriaki Kitazawa, who published “The Sanctuary of The Eye: The Note of the Adoption of History of Art (『眼の神殿—「美術」受容史ノート』)” in 1989, also points out that “Japan” is the particular locale that took in “Art” stemming from the West. Kitazawa questions, for example, “What is anti-art at all? (...) If I summarize it, it's a deviation from fine art and a bursting from the layout of painting and sculpture”[17].

Thus, the age that “The Japan International Art Exhibition” had pushed its way toward had not been under the situation that Japanese people had referred to only the changes of style and art movements in various other countries. This indicates the problems of institutionalized “art” and also one of the “conservative nature” or the “intention” of this international exhibition. The problem is connected to the intention of the Japanese art world after WWII. That is to say, though the discourses indicated above always had the intention of establishing a “national characteristic,” in other words, “the expression (or context) peculiar to Japan,” they were apt to ardent admirers to the blocked up field as modernism: western criticism. The fact that most discourse until the 1960s was about “internationality” and the “national characteristic” (*table 2*) also seems to relate to institutionalized “art” in modernism. Japanese art critics had not been able to acutely respond to the actions by the artists called “Gutai” or “Anti-Art.”

This conflict with this art movement was retained in the 1980s. The steering committee had attempted to respond to the contemporary movement by establishing the sections of graphics and video, introducing various cultures. But the basic structure of this international exhibition had remained traditional in style. In 1990, when “The Japanese International Art Exhibition” closed, a roundtable discussion about an international exhibition by Yūsuke Nakhara, Tadayasu Sakai, and Kunio Yaguchi was held[18]. Yaguchi described the following :

(Yaguchi) We have recognized that we must match the western context in some way. But Japan has its original basis in its own way, and the viewpoint that it is not always understood isn't true. It may be understood actually. (...) So if an international exhibition is held in Japan, I think it is interesting that it offers the opportunity to go over the context peculiar to Japan and an international one. (125)

It is interesting that this remark arises before the appearance of new large-scale art

exhibitions from the 1990s onward. This discourse, the intention of not cutting-edge but “locality” in an international art exhibition, had already occurred. In Japan, after the blank period of the decade from 1990, international art exhibitions relating to “locality” had appeared in succession, as the “Echigo-Tsumari Art Field” in 2000 and “Yokohama Triennial” in 2001. It is symbolic that Yūsuke Nakahara, who had been related to “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” used the term “Post-Art” to describe the “Echigo-Tsumari Art Field,” which appeared in the whole Tōkamachi-city of Niigata-prefecture, which is regarded as a country area[19]. For the foregoing, though “The Japanese International Art Exhibition” had finished its role, it is said that the exhibition is very significant and works greatly as the preparation for the situation of the 21st century.

Conclusion: The Phase and Structural Change of an International Art Exhibition in Japan After WWII

Thus, I have analyzed the structure of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” from its birth to its end and examined the intentions of criticism related to the exhibition. “The Japan International Art Exhibition” endured from the restoration period after WWII to 1990, and its changes can become a touchstone for the intentions of the Japanese art world after WWII. In the above-mentioned study by Segi, Hariu, and Chiba, the authors did not consider this exhibition’s structure, but I have gathered the intention of this exhibition through this investigation. We find the structure of “Japan against the world” in the intention of “the Japan International Art Exhibition” at its birth, but Japanese “originality” had been pursued as the “national characteristic” in the diversity of “expressions” in various styles, as the use of the word “comprehensive” indicates.

The form of “a comprehensive display” had changed from the late of 1960s to the 1970s. The consciousness of “contemporaneity” in an international art exhibition had increased, and the “cutting-edge,” which many international art exhibitions possess today, that is, the criterion of value that indicates a period’s movement, had appeared. However, the Japanese art world had simultaneously held the western criteria of value in the “avant-garde” and a conservatism towards institutionalized “art.” The transformation of artworks in Japan involved the conservatism of institutionalized “art” and the problem of expansion or deviation from it. This is an important issue that relates to the formation and criticisms of Japanese art history after WWII, as indicated by the description of “art as a kind” by Shigeo Chiba. The condition had appeared as a limitation in the organization and structure of “The Japanese International Art Exhibition.” The exhibition had formed an important stage for criticism of the changes of the Japanese art world after WWII. This exhibition had relatively indicated the locale of “Japan” with the merits and demerits in the points of an international art exhibition and selection.

I propose that a limitation of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” was that it could not create “locality” or “originality” peculiar to Japan situated in Asia. In the case of an international exhibition, it is conversely inevitable to consider the problem of the locale of “Japan,” as art critics had become aware of this problem. As I focus on “national characteristic” in this paper, the problems of institutionalized art and the context peculiar to Japan that have

continued from the modern era onward are again expressed at the stage of this international exhibition after WWII.

However, the organization in the 1980s had been distressed not to achieve an “international” art exhibition peculiar to Japan that many countries and artists took part in, and this has resulted in new large-scale art exhibitions from the 1990s onward by different organizations. As the starting point, I have examined the organization and institutional changes of “The Japan International Art Exhibition” and clarified its structural phases and problems in this paper.

Notes

- [1] Tomii, R. (2011): “Toward Tokyo Biennale 1970: Shapes of the International in the Age of ‘International Contemporaneity,’” *Review of Japanese culture and society* 23, 191-210.
- [2] I investigated this number myself, based on the results of references of the search engine of the National Diet Library. I used the following words: “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” “Tokyo Biennale,” and “international art exhibition.”
- [3] Segi, S. (1996): *Art During a Blank Period After World War II*, Shinchōsha; Haryū, I. (1979): *The Rise and Fall History of Art After World War II*, Tokyo shoseski; Chiba, S. (1986): *The Deviation History of Contemporary Art*, Shōbunsha.
- [4] The following books are also important: Asano, K. (1997): *Short History of Art Exhibitions After World War II* (『戦後美術展略史 (一九四五—一九〇年)』), Kyuryūdō; Sawaragi, N. (1998): *Japan, Modern, Art* (『日本・現代・美術』), Shinchōsha; Raiji, K. (2010): *The Anarchism of The Body* (『肉体のアナーキズム』), grambooks. However, they do not discuss “The Japan International Art Exhibition,” so they are not used in this paper.
- [5] Segi, *op.cit.*, 80-88.
- [6] Yomiuri Newspaper Company held “The Occident Masterpieces” exhibition in 1947 and the first “Japan Independents” exhibition (Yomiuri Independents) in 1949, which has become well-known today. Asahi Newspaper Company also held “The Western Art Masterpieces” exhibition in 1947 and “The World Contemporary Art” exhibition in 1956.
- [7] Funato Kōkichi : “The Decade of “The Japan International Art Exhibition”” (『日本国際美術展の十年』), *Bijutsu techō*, no.191 (June 1961), 34.
- [8] For example, in prizes in the domestic section, the fine work prize in the 3rd exhibition was *On White Color* by Masanari Murai, the most excellent prize in the 4th exhibition was *Burial* by Ichirō Fukuzawa, and The national modern art museum prize in the 5th exhibition was *The Trace of Blue Color* by Yoshishige Saitō.
- [9] Japan Advertising Artists Club (commonly called *Nissenbi* 日宣美), which was authoritative in the design field, was dissolved by a student movement in August 1969.
- [10] For example, Richard Serra’s work was *To Encircle: Base Plate (Hexagram)*. He buried the circle of iron under the asphalt. (He tried to perform the work in front of the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, but it was rejected. Finally, he carried out the performance in the Ueno Park.) Christo’s work was *Wrapped Floor*. He packed the sculpture room in the underground floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum with 175 sheets of drop cloth. Toshiaki Minemura, who belonged to the division in the Mainichi Newspaper company at that time, handled this exhibition.
- [11] Namiki, S. (1998): *Contemporary Museum Learning* (『現代博物館学』), Kyoto University of Art & Design, 54.
- [12] On the point of organization, Sjarel Ex, director at Central Museum Utrecht, planned this exhibition. This plan is a pioneer in a special exhibition by a so-called curator.

- [13] Minemura Toshiaki: “Tokyo Biennale Has Been Discontinued” (「東京ビエンナーレが中止になって」), *Bijutsu techō*, no.354 (April 1972), 363-368.
- [14] Tomimoto Sōichi: “What ‘The Japan International Art Exhibition’ Brings” (「第一回日本国際美術展のもたらすもの」), the first illustrated catalog, 1952, 4.
- [15] At that time, “international contemporaneity” had frequently been used to indicate the situation peculiar to Japan. “Locality” was often adapted from the 1990s onward in place of the word. Both terms are important concepts in considering Japanese art after WWII, and we should examine them in detail with considering contexts of the time. I only point out this problem in this paper due to the word count limitation, and I will write these analyses in another paper.
- [16] Tōno Yoshiaki: “On the Occasion of the Opening of the 9th ‘The Japan International Art Exhibition’” (「第九回日本国際美術展開催にあたって」), the 9th illustrated catalog, 1967, 6.
- [17] Kitazawa, N. (1989): *The Sanctuary of The Eye: The Note of the Adoption History of Art* (『眼の神殿—「美術」受容史ノート』), Bijutsu Shuppansha, 320.
- [18] Nakahara Yūsuke, Sakai Tadayasu and Yaguchi Kunio [Roundtable discussion] : “The System of an International Exhibition: To Hold an International Art Exhibition in Japan” (「国際展のしくみ—日本で国際美術展を開催するには」), *Bijutsu techō*, No.627 (August 1990), 108-126.
- [19] Nakahara Yūsuke: “What Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale Brings” (「越後妻有アートトリエンナーレのもたらしたもの」), *Echigo-Tsumari art field: Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale2009*, Special nonprofit corporation Echigo-Tsumari Country Hill Cooperation Organization, 2010, 15.

* This paper is based on the Japanese version printed in *Bigaku (Aesthetics)*, No. 245 (Vol. 65, No. 2), 2014, 85-96, published by the Japanese Society for Aesthetics.

Table 1 Articles about “The Japan International Art Exhibition”

time	year	magazines
1st	1952	•illustrated catalog○ •Gejitsu shinchō(52.6) •Mizuwye(52.7)○ •Bijutsu techō(52.7)○ •Eigo Seinen(52.9) •Atelier(52.7)○ •Bijutsu hihyō(52.6)(52.12)
2nd	1953	•illustrated catalog○◎ •Gejitsu shinchō(53.6)○(53.7) •Mizuwye(53.7)○ •Bijutsu techō(53.7)○ •Zokei bijutsu(54.2) •Bijutsu hihyō(53.6)
3rd	1955	•illustrated catalog○◎ •Gejitsu shinchō(55.7)○◎ •Mizuwye(55.7)○ •Bijutsu techō(55.7)○ •Color circle(55.7)○
4th	1957	•illustrated catalog○ •Gejitsu shinchō(57.7) •Mizuwye(57.7)○◎ •Bijutsu techō(57.7)○ •Sansai(57.7)○
5th	1959	•illustrated catalog○ •Gejitsu shinchō(59.5)(59.6)○◎ •Mizuwye(59.6) •Bijutsu techō(59.7)◎ •Sansai(59.6) •Jiji tushin(59.7)○ •Kindai bijutsu kennkyū(59.7)○
6th	1961	•illustrated catalog○ •Gejitsu shinchō(61.6)◎(61.7)○ •Mizuwye(61.7)○◎ •Bijutsu techō(61.7)○◎ •Sansai(61.6)○◎ •Geino(61.7)
7th	1963	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(63.6)○◎ •Mizuwye(63.7)○◎ •Bijutsu techō(63.7) •Sansai(63.6) •Geino(63.6) •Kindai bijutsu kennkyū(63.7)
8th	1965	•illustrated catalog○ •Gejitsu shinchō(65.6)○(65.7) •Mizuwye(65.5)○◎(65.7) •Bijutsu techō(65.7) •Sansai(65.7)
9th	1967	•illustrated catalog○◎ •Gejitsu shinchō(67.6) •Mizuwye(67.7) •Bijutsu techō(67.6) •Sansai(67.7)◎ •Asahi journal(67.6)
10th	1970	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(70.2)(70.7) •Mizuwye(70.7) •Bijutsu techō(70.7)(72.4)◎(78.1) •Sansai(70.8)(70.9) •Space design(70.7) •Asahi Journal(70.6)
11th	1974	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(74.7) •Mizuwye(74.7) •Bijutsu techō(74.7) •Bunka hyoron(74.9)
12th	1978	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(78.6) •Mizuwye(78.6) •Bijutsu techō(78.7)
13th	1980	•illustrated catalog
14th	1982	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(82.6) •Bijutsu techō(82.7) •Sansai(82.7)
15th	1984	•illustrated catalog •Sansai(84.6)
16th	1986	•illustrated catalog •Gejitsu shinchō(86.6) •Sansai(86.6) •Atelier(86.7)
17th	1988	•illustrated catalog
18th	1990	•illustrated catalog •Bijutsu techō(90.6)

(Notes)

- the figures in () indicate the time the magazine was published. For example, (52.6) refers to June of 1952.
- indicates whether the discourse of “national characteristics” is mentioned.
- ◎ indicates whether the discourse of “internationality” is mentioned.

Time	Year	Period	Grounds	Plan	Prize	Notes	
11th	1974	May. 10-30	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Foreign section) America 21 artists 36 pieces, Britain 8 artists 13 pieces	Not carried out	National exhibitions were abolished, and exhibition based on a theme was adopted.	
		June. 15-30	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) “The Realism in The Age of Reproduction,” reflection 108 artists 108 pieces			America: New realism paintings
				oil, Japanese-style painting, print, poster, sculpture, ceramic, photo, and so on. Various materials.			Britain: Hyper-realism prints

* Postponement again.

12th	1978	Apr. 25 - May. 10	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Special exhibition) Bulgarian Contemporary Art: From The 1930s to Today	Painting 29 artists 70 pieces	Revival	The beginning of the system of inviting one overseas country.
		June. 6-18	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) The Development of Mass Media	Graphics 27 artists 70 pieces		Domestic section changed to a competition.
					Plane 151 pieces, Three-dimensional object (including Video) 58 pieces, Graphics 7 pieces		Genre became plane and three-dimensional object.
13th	1980	Apr. 24 - May. 9	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Special exhibition) Argentine Contemporary Art	Painting 30 artists 60 pieces, sculpture 6 artists 18 pieces		* “Hamamatsu Open-air art Exhibition” started.
		June. 7-19	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) Individual and Society in The 1980s	Plane 121 pieces (1247 pieces), Three-dimensional object 60 pieces (269 pieces), Video 9 pieces (24 pieces), Graphics 12 pieces (60 pieces)		* “Aperto” started in the Venice Biennale.
14th	1982	Apr. 27 - May. 12	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Special exhibition) “A Century of Italian Art (1880-1980)” oil, sculpture 65 artists 100 pieces			The genre of Graphics was abolished.
		May. 26 - June. 6	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) — (Complete competition)	Plane 129 pieces, Three-dimensional object 42 pieces, Video 6 pieces		
15th	1984	Apr. 25 - May. 10	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Foreign section) “Indian Contemporary Art” 95 pieces (oil, collage, print, water color and so on. Various genre.)			The art museum prizes increased. (Total was 13 pieces)
		June. 6-17	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) —	Plane 145 pieces, Three-dimensional object 47 pieces, Video 5 pieces		* “The Japan Ushimado International Festival” started.
16th	1986	Apr. 23 - May. 7	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Foreign section) Contemporary Art of The Seven Flanders	Belgium 7 artists 70 pieces (oil, acrylic, gouache)		* “Chambres d’Amis” exhibition by Jan Hoet was held.
		June. 4-15	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) —	Plane 171 pieces, Three-dimensional object 41 pieces, Video 2 pieces		
17th	1988	Apr. 23 - May. 7	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Foreign section) Swiss Contemporary Art	10 artists 59 pieces (mixed-media, oil, acrylic, iron, resin etc.)		Only the sections of plane and cubing were adopted in competition. / The forms of artworks had diversified.
		June. 8-19	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) —	Plane 146 pieces (1420 pieces), Three-dimensional object 34 pieces (134 pieces)		The five art critics organize a steering committee.
18th	1990	Apr. 23 - May. 7	Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Tokyo)	Foreign section) Dutch Contemporary Art — Packing Crate —	16 artists (Three-dimensional object in a same standard container)		Installation artworks have been developed in the foreign section.
		June. 6-17	Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (Kyoto)	Domestic section) —	Plane 142 pieces, Three-dimensional object 35 pieces		

Notes

- About organizers: Mainichi Newspaper Company had been the only organizer from the 1st to the 6th exhibitions. The Japan International Art Promotion Association had joined from the 7th to the 18th. Kyoto city had joined at Kyoto ground since the 11th. And the order of the Japan International Art Promotion Association and Mainichi New Paper company had changed since the 11th exhibition. The Art Culture Promotion Foundation had joined since the 14th. Swiss • Pro • Helvetica Culture Fondation also joined at the 17th “Swiss contemporary art”.
- About selection: The organizer had made requested to embassies, councils, cultural organizations, and national modern art museums, except in the 10th “Human and Matter” exhibition in the overseas section, cooperating with correspondents and Takanori Ogisu. The steering committee of the Japan International Art Exhibition and the Japan Contemporary Art Exhibition had managed the domestic section from the 1st to the 5th. The steering committee had consisted of an Arts department manager, a division manager, some members in the arts and sciences department, management employees in the division, and Chōken Ueshima (a file department) who had been deeply concerned with the management of this exhibition. Yasuhiro Uchii (a division department), Kōkichi Funato (an arts and sciences department). The five art critics, Atsuo Imaizumi, Shūzo Takiguchi, Teiichi Hijikata, Tomoaki Kwakita and Shinichi Segi had selected Japanese artists since the 6th exhibition. Yūsuke Nakahara only made selections in the 10th. The organizer selected under the opinions of Ichirō Hariu and some art critics in the 11th. Competition had been adopted from the 12th to the 18th, the selection committee had been organized by the 15 members who consisted of art critics and artists.
- About participating nations: Seven countries, America, Britain, Italy, Brazil, France, Belgium, and Japan, participated in the 1st. Switzerland, Germany, and Mexico also joined in the 2nd, and the total was 10 countries. India and Yugoslavia (then) also joined in the 3rd, and the total was 12 countries. Austria and Spain also joined in the 4th, and the total was 14 countries. The Soviet Union also joined in the 5th, and the total was 15 countries. The numbers in the 6th was same as in the 5th. The Soviet

Union, Brazil, Mexico, and Yugoslavia left in the 7th, and the total was 11 countries. Brazil, South Korea, Sweden, the Soviet Union, Portugal, and Yugoslavia also joined in the 8th, and the total was the highest with 17 countries. The numbers of the 9th was same as the 8th.

- About this prize system: the prize system started in the 3rd exhibition. The prize system of this exhibition had overseas and domestic sections until the 8th exhibition. First, the members of the steering committee were nine art critics (Atsuo Imaizumi, Shūzō Takiguchi, Sōichi Tominaga, Takachiyo Uemura, Yasuo Kamon, Tomoaki Kawakita, Kenzo Tadika, and Ryō Yanagi). Some numbers changed until the 9th exhibition. For example, Shinichi Segi joined in the 5th, Ichirō Hariu and Yoshiaki Tōno joined in the 6th, and Yoshiaki Honma joined in the 8th. An international judging system was introduced in the 9th exhibition, and overseas and domestic frameworks for awards were abolished. Judges were Atsuo Imaizumi, Yoshiaki Tōno, Ichirō Hariu, Teiichi Hijikata, Michel Ragon (France), Jacia Reichardt (Britain), Maurice Tuchman (America). The prize system was abolished in the 10th and the 11th exhibitions, but revived in the 12th. The selection committee consisted of 15 art critics in the sections of plane and three-dimensional object and 5 designers in the section of graphics. Just one selection committee by 15 members had been organized since the 13th exhibition. (Some members had changed until the 18th.) The main members were Yasuo Kamon, Tomoaki Kawakita, Yoshishige Saitō, Ikkō Tanaka, Tatsuo Takayama, Yoshiaki Tōno, and Yūsuke Nakahara Teiichi Hijikata, Shigemitsu Hirano, Shigeo Fukuda, Masayoshi Honma, Tamon Miki, Junkichi Mukai, and Katuhiro Yamaguchi. The titles of this exhibition's prizes in the overseas section had been the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prize, the Ministry of Education Prize, the Governor of Tokyo Prize, and the Mainichi New Paper Company Prize from the 1st to the 8th exhibitions. In the domestic section, the prizes in the 3rd were the Best Prize and the Fine Work Prize. In the 4th, not only the Best Prize, the Fine Work Prize, but also the National Modern Museum of Art Prize, and so on. There were each Art Museum Prizes. The Fine Work Prize changed to the Prize for excellence since the 5th exhibition. There had become The First Prize, the Fine Work Prize, and the Art Museum prizes since the 12th.
- About grounds: This exhibiton had toured not only in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, but also art museums, department stores, memorial halls, and gymnasiums in all parts of the country from the 1st to the 9th exhibitions. Sogō Gallery (Osaka), Iwaya Gallery (Fukuoka) in the 1st. Tsurumai Gallery (Nagoya), Sogō Gallery (Osaka), Ube Citizen Hall (Ube), Iwaya Gallery (Fukuoka), Sasebo City Public Hall Gallery (Sasebo) in the 2nd. For example, about grounds, Matsuya Gallery (Nagoya), Aichi Culture Hall Art Museum (Nagoya), Sogō Department Store (Osaka), Fukuya Tenmaya (Hiroshima), Watanabe Memorial Hall (Ube), Iwaya Department Store (Fukuoka), Sasebo City Public Hall (Sasebo) were used in the 3rd exhibition. In the 5th and 6th exhibitions, this organizer chose artworks at his discretion and they toured, dividing into two groups. The lists after the 10th exhibition are indicated in this table.
- About the steering committee of the 17th and the 18th exhibitions: This organizer started it up again to reconsider the methods of international art exhibitions. The members of the steering committee in the 17th exhibition were Yasuo Kamon, Tomoaki Kawakita, Yūsuke Nakahara, Masayoshi Honma, and Tamon Miki. They were Yasuo Tamon, Tomoaki Kawakita, Yūsuke Nakahara, and Honma Masayoshi in the 18th exhibition.

* Reference material: Hirano Shigemitsu. (1978): "The abridged chronological table of 'The Japan International Art Exhibition'," *The 12th The Japan International Art Exhibition* (illustrated catalog).