

**MOT Collection:
Walking, Traveling, Moving
—From the Great Kanto Earthquake to the Present
Special feature | YOKOO Tadanori—Ever-Changing,
Like Water
100th Anniversary of Birth | Sam FRANCIS**

**Sat. 2 December 2023 – Sun. 10 March 2024
Collection Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art
Tokyo**

Foreword

The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo houses approximately 5,700 artworks in its extensive collection, which spans the modern and contemporary periods with a focus on art of the postwar years. Each installment of the “MOT Collection” exhibition introduces artworks in the collection from various themes and angles in its effort to convey the diverse appeal of contemporary art.

The first floor section, “Walking, Traveling, Moving: From the Great Kanto Earthquake to the Present,” comprises of a diverse array of works, from sketches drawn by KANOKOGI Takeshiro who visited Tokyo after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake to document the devastated areas, to works by Olafur ELIASSON that were produced for his solo exhibition at MOT in 2020, when restrictions on freedom of movement were in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. FUJIMAKI Yoshio’s masterpiece *Scenes from the Sumidagawa River* (1934) will also be exhibited, along with newly acquired works by KUSANAGI Shinpei, MITSUSHIMA Takayuki, and Wataridori Keikaku (ASO Tomoko, TAKEUCHI Akiko) that were created in correspondence to the “MOT Satellite” exhibitions (2017-2020), as well as single channel videos by KUBOTA Shigeko that were added to the collection in correspondence to her solo exhibition at MOT (2021-2022). We hope that this exhibit, by following the footsteps of artists spanning a period of approximately 100 years, will provide an opportunity to enhance our perspective on the world and society in which we live.

The 3rd floor section titled, “Special feature: YOKOO Tadanori—Ever-Changing, Like Water” introduces works spanning from the 1960s to recent, centering on those newly added to the museum’s collection. Yokoo Tadanori has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator since the 1960s, continuing to develop his oeuvre across a wide range of fields after shifting his focus to painting in the 1980s. In 2021, the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo held a large-scale exhibition focusing on Yokoo’s paintings titled, “GENKYO YOKOO TADANORI.” On this occasion, we present a combination of works that were collected in correspondence to his solo exhibition as well as a selection of his graphic works that were not showcased at the time. Yokoo’s work has undergone a myriad of transformations “like water” throughout his extensive career of over 60 years. The exhibit explores new appeals of his artistic practice through focusing on expressions related to “water” that appear in many of his rich variety of works. In addition, works by artists that

inspired Yokoo will be presented.

Also featured is a series of large-scale paintings by Sam FRANCIS, of which this year marks his centennial.

We hope visitors will take the opportunity to freely enjoy the diverse variety of works.

In closing, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of those who have honored us with their unstinting cooperation in realizing this exhibition.

I. Tokyo Observed Through Walking

Walking through the city and depicting the scenery encountered—the first room presents various scenes of Tokyo spanning from the Great Kanto Earthquake, of which this year marks the centennial, to the period following WWII.

The Great Kanto Earthquake that occurred on September 1, 1923, also caused a devastating fire that killed over 90,000 people. After receiving news of the incident, KANOKOGI Takeshiro (1874 -1941) traveled from Kyoto to Tokyo that very month, accompanied by the Japanese-style painter IKEDA Yoson. While at times incurring much criticism from disaster victims, the two walked around sketching the scenery of the downtown area across the Sumida River which had been reduced to ashes. Kanokogi, who had studied academic techniques in realism and composition under the tutelage of French historical painter Jean-Paul LAURENS, later painted the work *September 1, 1923*, based on photographs and sketches. This dramatically composed historical painting depicts people fleeing amidst the smoldering rubble and smoke from a close-up perspective. On the other hand, in the numerous sketches he drew on site, he calmly observes the collapsed buildings and people digging up the rubble from a more distant viewpoint, and captures their contours through clear unhesitant pencil lines.

Artist and newspaper cartoonist YANASE Masamu (1900-1945) suffered the devastations of the earthquake in Tokyo shortly after the first exhibition of *Mavo*, a Japanese avant-garde art group founded by Yanase during the late Taisho period together with the likes of MURAYAMA Tomoyoshi who had returned from Germany. Yanase was arrested by the military police, who took advantage of the chaos and confusion caused by the earthquake to crack down on socialists. After his release, he temporarily fled to the city of Moji in the Fukuoka Prefecture, where his father lived, yet the following month he returned to Tokyo where martial law had not yet been lifted, bringing with him many relief supplies. Yanase documented this journey in a journal and three sketch books. Such sketches illustrate how the artist, from the very midst of the city he had returned to for the first time in a month, attempts to capture people’s lives and the streets where the traces of damage were still fresh. In this way, many painters walked through Tokyo, observed the city from different perspectives, and produced paintings that documented their experiences and the scenes they encountered.

About 10 years later, printmaker FUJIMAKI Yoshio (1911-1935), who went missing at the age of 24, produced plain sketches of the landscapes along the banks of the Sumida River. The riverside was a place where the typical Edo townscape coexisted with the modern cityscape such as the Shirahige Bridge, which was rebuilt as part of the urban planning carried out following the city’s reconstruction efforts. The vast

panorama is created through a remarkable 'editing' process that combines various perspectives, whereby the view observed from this bank is at times connected to what extends further beyond the opposite bank, presenting viewers with a riverside landscape that harbors a unique air of repose.*

Also featured, are drawings by MATSUMOTO Shunsuke (1912-1948) made during the war, as well as postwar sketches by KATSURA Yuki (1913-1991) and ASAKURA Setsu (1922-2014), which have been added to the museum's collection in the past 10 years. Through the works presented in this room, the observant eye and path trodden by artists as they walked through the city of Tokyo that had twice been devastated and burnt to ashes, appear to intersect one another repeatedly beyond time.

* OHTANI Yoshihisa, *Fujimaki Yoshio: Shingi (Fujimaki Yoshio: Truth or Falsehood)*, Gakugeishoin, 2010

2. Visiting the Site

This section focuses on artists who engaged in a means of expression known as "reportage painting." These artists visited actual sites of political and social events in postwar Japan to collect information and paint their paintings.

Immediately after Japan's defeat in World War II, many people were impoverished and suffered from starvation and other dire conditions, resulting in the fervorous spur of labor and grassroots movements. In 1950, the Korean War began with Japan serving as a rear base, yet with more than 600 US military bases remaining even after sovereignty was restored following the end of the occupation period, anti-base protests and peace movements became more active on a nationwide scale. In 1952, BITO Yutaka (1926-1998) and other artists of the *Zen'ei Bijutsukai* (Avant-Garde Art Society) joined the Ogouchi Village Cultural Operation Unit to support opposition to the construction of a dam that was intended to serve as a power supply for a U.S. military base. The following year, the *Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo* (Young Artists' Alliance) was formed in solidarity with young people who were confronting such issues and wished to seek peace. Bito Yutaka, IKEDA Tatsuo (1928-2020), and NAKAMURA Hiroshi (1932-), who were in their 20s at the time, also participated in this group.

Homeward Journey is a work that was presented at the "Nippon Exhibition," the first installment of the unjuried Independent Exhibition that was organized by the *Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo*. In Bito's hometown of Akabane, many repatriates from the continent and war victims lived in buildings that were formerly used to store ammunition, and it was also the place where a weapons factory (PD factory) under the direct control of the US military was located. The painting depicts workers walking home from the factory, their mouths tightly closed, against the backdrop of a landscape with a disturbingly vivid contrast between the dark sky that hangs over the factory and the orange color of the red clay plateau. Meanwhile, in 1953, Ikeda went to Uchinada Village in the Ishikawa Prefecture, where an upheaval concerning a construction plan of a shell testing site was taking place. Based on the sketches he made at the time, *The*

Owner of the Fishing Fleet depicts an owner holding out his boat (=fishing grounds) while a thick rope is wound many times around his neck, presenting a caricature of this figure who finds himself torn between reality and public stance. Since 1956, after producing the work *5th Sunagawa* based on his research regarding the campaign against the expansion of the Tachikawa Air Base, Nakamura cast a sharp eye on society in a manner different from reportage, using newspapers, magazines, and literature as sources for his later works, including *Metropolis in Revolution* which takes as its subject "Bloody May Day" (1951), a violent protest that took place between demonstrators and police forces in the square in front of the Imperial Palace. ASAKURA Setsu (1922-2014) also made numerous sketching trips to coal mines, kiln sites, and fishing villages throughout Japan in the 1950s with fellow artists, and produced many works featuring laborers as their motif. In this way, young artists directly confronted the difficult reality of postwar Japan, and tackled its various issues within the field of painting.

Furthermore in 1957, following discussions at *Seinen Bijutsuka Rengo*, Bito, in times when overseas travel had not yet been realized, was sent to the World Festival of Youth and Students held in Moscow (NAKANO Jun, who is introduced in the next section, also participated in the festival that year). In *Trans-Siberian Travel*, a work inspired by the view from the train window at the time, he achieves a new mode of expression wherein the shapes of the buildings seen in profile are abstracted and unfold one after another as if rotating within the picture plane.

3. Walking in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa

Fukagawa, Kiba, Kiyosumi-Shirakawa—This chapter sheds light on the artists who walked around the area where the museum is located.

NAKANO Jun (1925-2017) had deepened his friendship with MATSUMOTO Shunsuke after being greatly impressed by his work *Canal View*, which he saw at the *Shinjin Gakai* (Association of New Painters) exhibition that was held in Ginza during the war. In 1948, Nakano became the youngest member of the *Jiyu Bijutsu Kyokai* (Association of Free Artists) and soon relocated from Tokyo's downtown area where he was born and raised, to the Suginami district. Painted more than 10 years after the war by the artist who had once witnessed many deaths caused by air raids while walking along the Sumida River, the 'downtown' series attempts to depict the "miserable postwar period" through images of the "polluted river," while overlaying such landscapes with his "pure childhood memories*." In the 1970s, he completed a series of landscape paintings of the Fukagawa-Kiba area as the culmination of this endeavor. In "Downtown Sketches," he walked along the canal regardless of the weather or season, and used tools such as pen and brush to preserve the memories of landscapes that were disappearing as a result of urban planning and the relocation of the canal to Shin-Kiba. The center of the hand-drawn map that he produced at the time was Kiba, which exactly coincides with the location of the park where the museum now stands.

"MOT Satellite (2017-2020)," planned in line with MOT's

large-scale renovation, is a serial project that was inspired by the idea to connect with the area immediately surrounding the museum, which continues to bustle with liveliness and new energy while preserving the downtown atmosphere and waterfront landscape. Works that were acquired in correspondence to this project are presented for the first time in the MOT collection exhibition. Wataridori Keikaku (formed in 2008) is a project by Tomoko Aso (1982-) and Akiko Takeuchi (1983-), who travel around Japan like migratory birds (*wataridori*) in pursuit of warmth and food. Preparations for “MOT Satellite 2020” (postponed to the following year), which marked the final installment of the project, were precisely underway amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus the two artists can be seen wearing masks in their work, *Hand-colored Journey Postcards*. It was due to such circumstances that the artists, upon visiting the Fukagawa area, had as usual captured the most impressive sceneries and experiences made while traveling around, in formats as varied as paintings, pottery, video works, and *karuta* (Japanese playing cards). MITSUSHIMA Takayuki (1954-) who completely lost his sight at the age of 10, depicts landscapes perceived through sensory measures such as touch, sound, smell, and object perception in three-dimensional form. From the very trajectory of his walk expressed through lines of thin nails hammered onto wooden panels, to the gravel in Kiyosumi Garden that he felt beneath his feet, the voices of children, the bicycles passing by, and the time he spent in stores—we, through our fingertips, are able to tactilely trace, like a picture scroll, the route from the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa station to the museum that Mitsushima had experienced. KUSANAGI Shimpei (1973-), when providing the serial illustrations for MIYAMOTO Teru's novel (2007-2012) set in the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa area, learned that “Kiyosumi-Shirakawa” was a new station name created in 2000 and does not exist as the name of an actual town or street. As a result of this discovery, Kusanagi came to regard painting, like the name of this station, to be as a “translucent intermediary realm that straddles between reality and unreality, both in name and in substance**.” The large paintings, with their many layers of pale colors, are like screens onto which the scenes that exist in people's memories and fantasies are delicately projected.

* NAKANO Jun, *Gaka tachi no Showa: Watashi no Gadan Koryu-Ki (Showa Through the Eyes of Painters: Chronicles of My Interactions in the Art World)*, Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2018

** * KUSANAGI Shinpei, *Kiyosumi kaiwai [Kiyosumi and its Environs]*, Kyuryudo Art Publishing, 2013

4. Walking and Moving Around the World

This section introduces the works of artists from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as contemporary artists who traveled and worked around the world.

KUBOTA Shigeko (1937-2015), who moved to the United States in 1964 and joined the Fluxus movement, started working with video around 1970 when she began living with Nam June Paik. In 1972, she acquired the Portapak, a shoulder-mounted portable video camera, and began

producing autobiographical videos that would later be compiled into her *Broken Diary* works. In the production of her early works, she carried the heavy video equipment on her own shoulders and traveled to various European countries and Arizona, where she immersed herself in different cultures. *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky*, documents Kubota's visit to the Navajo Native American reservation in Arizona, which was the family home of Cecilia Sandoval, a member of the women's group “Red, White, Yellow & Black” with whom she performed live events. Kubota stayed with matriarchal Navajos, witnessing scenes such as the slaughter of goats for the first time in her life, engaged in conversation, and continued to roll the video. At the beginning and end of the video, large colored silhouettes of Kubota's face are seen overlapping one after another onto black-and-white footage of the Navajo people, enabling the presence of the artist herself, who does not make an appearance despite having lived and experienced the lives of these people, to emerge like a vivid afterimage.

In contrast to the large-scale land art of his contemporaries in the United States and elsewhere, Richard LONG (1945-) focused on the humble act of ‘walking’ as the main core of his work. The artist walked alone through vast expanses of nature, including mountains, deserts, grasslands, and shorelines not only in his native England but also around the world. In *England*, the artist moved forward while plucking the daisies that bloomed across the field, thereby creating a set of straight intersecting lines. As well as documenting these kinds of actions through photographs, in works such as *STICKS*, he brings found branches and stones into the room and uses them to create extremely simple basic shapes—circles, rectangles, lines, etc.—that seem to date back to prehistoric times, on the very floor on which we walk.

In addition, the exhibition features photographs by ISHIKAWA Naoki (1977-), who continues his journey to commune with nature and encounter various human activities that have persisted since prehistoric times, such as the sacred virgin forests of the indigenous Maori people (*THE VOID*), prehistoric murals around the world (*NEW DIMENSION*), and the Arctic Circle. Also presented is the work *POYA DAY* by KURITA Koichi (1962-), who gathered stones in various places on the night of a full moon, as if to confirm within himself his rhythm as a living being on this earth.

Viewers are invited to look at the diverse works of artists who have walked and moved through various places, while overlapping their own footsteps, gaze, and thoughts.

5 Artworks Born From Movement

Presented thus far are artworks created by artists as they walked through cities and nature, and moved around the world. This section introduces works by Olafur ELIASSON (1967-) in which movement/transportation itself is documented without involving the artist's hands or body.

Since the 1990s, the Icelandic-Danish artist has produced numerous sculptures that question mechanisms of

perception through color and light, as well as experiential installations that reconstruct natural phenomena, instilling us with new sensations and encouraging awareness for the environment and world around us. Founded in 1995, Studio Olafur Eliasson consists of diverse staff of craftsmen, architects, art historians, designers, cooks, technicians, and various other professionals, who collaborate on a daily basis to experiment, research, and produce artwork. In recent years the studio has increasingly turned its attention to environmental issues, and are engaging in efforts to replace its activities with more sustainable options and approaches.

Also envisioning a sustainable life for the future, the solo exhibition, “Olafur Eliasson: Sometimes the river is the bridge,” held at MOT in 2020, was conceived with the intent to present a “potential shift in perspective” that could help us “reconsider the traditional idea of progress”. * The artist and the studio turned a critical eye to the very structure of creating an exhibition, and instead of transporting the artworks by air as per convention, decided to use surface transport via land and sea: by truck from Berlin to Hamburg, by rail through Poland to Russia and China, and then by boat to Japan. In *Memories from the critical zone (Germany—Poland—Russia—China—Japan)*, this “move,” which serves to reduce the carbon footprint of transportation and symbolizes the effort to address climate change, itself become works of art*. A drawing machine was installed in each shipping crate, in which a ballpoint pen held by a mechanical arm moved over the surface of the paper in response to the vibrations and tilting of the crate during transport. As a result, the trajectory of this two-month journey is replaced by visual records that take shape as a series of abstract line drawings. What is more, this solo exhibition, which by curious coincidence was realized through remote communication due to the artist being unable to visit Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic, could in itself be regarded as having renewed our understanding and thinking regarding ‘movement.’

*The critical zone refers to the surface of the earth which is shaped by the complex interaction of atmosphere, water, soil, and living organisms.

6. Walking and Flights of Imagination/Creation

This final section focuses on the works of artists who were interned in Europe during World War II, as well as a contemporary artist who uses books as their source material, shedding light on their imaginative/creative journeys.

SUEMATSU Masaki (1908-97) was fascinated by Neue Tanz, an avant-garde dance form born in Germany after World War I, which he encountered in a film he saw at the age of 19. After moving to Tokyo in 1933, he studied at the first Neue Tanz studio in Japan and developed a passion for dance, although at one point briefly helping at a design company in Ginza, where FUJIMAKI Yoshio also worked for a time. Suematsu hoped to remain in Europe after the outbreak of World War II, and took a position at the consulate in Marseille. However, the Allied Forces soon attacked, and he was arrested and imprisoned as an enemy combatant in the city of Perpignan on the border with Spain,

a neutral country to which he was trying to escape. Although he was later able to relocate to a hotel, he spent a year and a half under house arrest. During this time, Suematsu used pencil on paper to repeatedly depict images of people dancing in groups. In these hundreds of drawings, numerous lines, likely drawn while imagining the free movements of the body, appear to dance across the picture plane. Despite restrictions on movement, Suematsu's life in Perpignan, where he continued to dance and venture forward through drawing, became a solid foundation for him to develop his activities as an abstract painter upon his return to Japan.

FUKUDA Naoyo (1967-) is an artist who has been creating works related to words and text, using books and mail as materials. Fukuda, was familiar with books from a young age, and mentions that until becoming an adult she was “unable to sleep without opening the pages of Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* every night.” In producing her work, she cuts out the pages of these treasured books that she had read over and over again, passing a needle through the paper to string together a series of small knots with embroidery thread. One could say that creating such work is equivalent to the loss of the book as a reading material. However, letting the soft thread pass back and forth through the book/text, enables her to come into direct contact with the world of the book that she had fantasized about when reading. By “following the meandering brushstrokes deeper and deeper, while interrupted by the scenes that the words contain,” * Fukuda orchestrates a unique moment of creation in which she becomes one with the books—the innumerable succession of which appear before our eyes like small “green moss growing within a hollow*.”

In this way, just as we actually go on journeys to walk, move, and encounter unknown things in the world, it is possible to open new horizons at any time by walking and taking flight through our own imagination.

* FUKUDA Naoyo, *Hikari Hokori no Kimi: Bijutsu to Kaibun: Selection from the Essential Works of Naoyo Fukuda*, Heibonsha, 2018

7. 100th Anniversary of Birth | Sam FRANCIS

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Californian abstract expressionist painter Sam FRANCIS (1923-1994), we present a series of large-scale paintings (owned by Asahi Group Japan Ltd.) that are deposited in the museum collection.

Sam Francis's career as a painter began in 1944, while being hospitalized with spinal tuberculosis due to an accident during his flight training for the US Army Air Corps. It while bedridden in hospital that Francis started painting with watercolors as a form of therapy, eventually leading him to pursue his studies in art. After moving to Paris in 1950, he came to attract attention as an up-and-coming painter in Europe, where *art informel* was flourishing at the time. Furthermore, Francis was also a painter who developed his artistic practice while maintaining a deep connection with Japan, ever since visiting for the first time in 1957 during his travels around the world. The paintings in this room,

produced in 1985, are large-scale works that boldly and generously incorporate various elements observed in his past oeuvre, and were brought to Japan as a result of a solo exhibition that traveled around the country.

In the mid-1960s, Francis, while keeping studios in Europe and Japan, relocated his life and practice to his hometown of California. It was soon after this move that he began to place his canvases on the floor and paint with fast-drying acrylic paint. As observed in *Untitled (SFP85-95)*, *Untitled (SFP85-109)*, and *Untitled (SFP85-110)*, the aqueous blotches of color and the undulating streaks that harbor white void-like spaces within, along with splashes of paint, vivid cluster of hues, and fine lines that seem to dance in the air, create a unique floating sensation. The artist once stated, "I am fascinated by gravity...I like to fly, to soar, to float like a cloud, but I am tied down to place. Painting is a way in and out."* By committing ourselves to the spaces that unfold within the paintings, we may find our senses to also be newly expanded and reawakened.

*Peter Selz, *Sam Francis*, New York, 1975, p. 14

8. The Artists that Inspired YOKOO Tadanori

In conjunction with the special feature on YOKOO Tadanori (1936-), we introduce works by artists who have deep ties to Yokoo.

Jennifer BARTLETT (1941-2022) visited Japan in 1980, during which she produced work in collaboration with the printmaking studio, Simca Print Artists. Yokoo had the opportunity to work at the studio at the same time as this artist, whom he admired and respected. There, together with Bartlett, he experimented with a new method of applying oil-based paint to the brush and painting directly on the plate, which led him to produce prints with a more painterly expression. Bartlett's work is a series that combines painting and sculpture. It depicts a bird as it hatches from an egg and eventually falls to its death under sparks of fire, evoking the legend of the immortal phoenix or firebird that rises from the ashes over time. By using the same motifs to move back and forth between the world of images in the paintings and real space, Bartlett perhaps attempts to bring into existence the cosmic time of reincarnation that inhabits this story.

The large-scale work *Melancholic Encampment* by Sandro CHIA (1946-) was painted in 1982. In the same year, Yokoo held his first solo exhibition as a painter and produced the work *Waterfall*, which foreshadowed his subsequent artistic practice. Around this time, the movement of "Neo-Expressionism" had given rise to significant changes on an international level. In reaction to the minimalist and conceptual art of the past, there was a resurgence of emotional and figurative expression that entailed artists to physically wield their paintbrush against the large screen. Characteristics of this style of work include mythological and historical subjects, citations from art history, collage-like compositions, and the mixing of multiple ambiguous time-spaces. The works of Chia and Yokoo can be positioned within this trend, which had been brought about by a

contemporaneous consciousness. Yokoo had described Chia as "playing with the painting itself as a material," which is in part true of Yokoo's own work and practice as well.

Andy WARHOL (1928-1987), from the 1950s until the final years of his life, had documented his surroundings with a camera. Perhaps links could be drawn between Warhol documentary practice and Yokoo's attitude of keeping a diary for over 50 years. In Warhol's work, four photographs of nearly identical compositions are stitched together in sets of four. The crisscrossing joints created by combining the photographs emphasize the misalignment and tilting of the images, suggesting a kind of rift. As in the works featuring portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Warhol himself, the repetition of these commonplace scenes and objects seems to strip them of their uniqueness, transforming them into tenuous and empty images, where the shadows of death and decay appear to be portentous.

9. Special feature | YOKOO Tadanori Ever-Changing, Like Water

9-1. Introduction

YOKOO Tadanori (1936-) worked as a graphic designer and illustrator in the 1960s, continuing to develop his oeuvre across a wide range of fields after shifting his focus to painting in the 1980s. This special exhibition introduces his works spanning from the 1960s to recent, centering on those newly added to the museum's collection.

Yokoo's first collection of works, *Paintings, Prints and Drawings by TADANORI YOKOO* (1981), published subsequent to him expressing his decision to become a painter, featured a conversation with art critic TONO Yoshiaki (1930-2005) titled "Like Water: The Transformation of Tadanori Yokoo." Indeed, Yokoo's works, "ever-changing, like water," have undergone a multitude of changes. The exhibit explores new appeals of his artistic practice through focusing on expressions related to "water" that appear in many of his rich variety of works.

9-2. Scenes with Water

The majority of Yokoo's works are landscapes. In particular, many of his works depict scenes with water, from oceans to waves, horizons, waterfalls, caves, rain, and flooded interiors*. Such scenes with water may to some extent be connected to the fact that Yokoo grew up near the Kako River in Nishiwaki City, Hyogo Prefecture, and that he was born under the star sign of Cancer and the Flying Star Feng Shui star of 1 white water, which are both recognized as having deep connections to water.

Many of his works produced in the 1960s feature a large motif in the center of the picture plane, or are rendered in a symmetrical composition. The water depicted in them is accompanied by things that remind us of incidents and accidents, such as charging airplanes and sinking ships, or at times surround the characters as if it were a device to enhance the development of the narrative. These elements of water enter the images and collide with other fragmentary

motifs, creating a sense of movement that disrupts the order and harmony of the original composition. As implied by the idiom, to “pour [throw] cold water” on something, water is also regarded as “that which stands between things and interferes with their smooth interaction (progression).” Perhaps the water in his work constantly fascinates and attracts people’s attention because of the way in which it disrupts its surroundings while creating an unsettling atmosphere.

* The depiction of horizons is discussed in detail in Dehara Hitoshi, “The Introduction of a Pictorial Perspective,” *Yokoo Tadanori: Beyond Graphic Work*, exhibition catalogue, Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.

9-3. A Vessel for Landscapes

Water can take on any form depending on the vessel in which it is contained. Yokoo employs several techniques to create vessels for containing the landscape. (1) Bordering. As already noted, many of his graphic design works are framed with a border. Such brings to mind a black-edged obituary or a somewhat ominous looking tourist poster. (2) Repetition. Repetitions of motifs and compositions is the most characteristic technique observed in Yokoo’s work*. Works utilizing the printmaking process can be considered as an example of this technique. (3) Emphasis on central axis and symmetrical composition. In particular, his 1970s series of work that depicts the ideal world of “Shambhala,” is characterized by their balanced composition based on triangles (△). (4) “Yare”. A technique inspired by surprint. Yokoo mentions that he found surprise and beauty in the “Yare” made by surprinting on discarded printed materials until the printing ink would settle on the paper—a sight he witnessed when working at a printing press after graduating from high school. He described the images created as “like expressions of a four-dimensional world.” Many of his collages combining various images can be seen as a development of such “Yare”.

**Yokoo Tadanori: HAN-HAN-PUKU-PUKU-HAN-PUKU*, exhibition catalogue, Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012.

9-4. Water / Mirrors

Water can also serve as a mirror that reflects a different world from the one in which we are in now. Yokoo uses the power of such mirrors to open up worlds that seem familiar but have never been seen before. It is possible to identify each and every element of what is depicted in his work. Many include reproductions of or references to something. However, mysterious worlds unfold before one’s eyes, as the texts featured are reversed or combined with other things. Yokoo’s works are like mirrors, capturing everything within the picture plane, repeating and multiplying images as if it were a kaleidoscope. For Yokoo, “Yare” (also written in Japanese as “Yabure,” meaning “rupture” or “crevice”) is what informs the overlapping of miscellaneous images, yet connections could also be drawn between “Yare” and his works in which motifs are rendered transparent, with waterfalls appearing to flow through them. Like the

unexpected worlds glimpsed through these chasms and crevices, Yokoo creates landscapes in which this world and otherworldly realms intermingle and coalesce.

9-5. Similar Shapes

The front cover of Yokoo’s 1994 essay *Heaven and Earth Are Similar* (paperback edition titled, *I and Intuition and Alien*) features the ace of hearts superimposed onto an image of Mt. Fuji, which is similar in shape due to being reflected in water. This book, written with love to Mt. Fuji that he had gazed upon whilst writing, appears to play between heaven and earth. This is indicative of Yokoo’s practice that attempts to connect this world and otherworldly realms through art. His attitude of not choosing one or the other, but rather both, is also expressed in the two subjects that appear in his works, such as a waterfall and cave, a man and a woman. The “Y-junction,” recognized as a representative series within Yokoo’s oeuvre, are of two roads branching off into different directions, while the “Hanshan and Shide” (known in Japanese as Kanzan and Jittoku) series feature two legendary monks. Such works perhaps reflect his idea that the two subjects both exist and continue to change forever while influencing one another.

“I personally feel that it is necessary to be fluid in the act of living.” This way of life, “like water,” as mentioned in his 1981 portfolio of works, has served as an impetus for his artistic practice that moves freely here and there.

Texts by
MIZUTA Yuko (1-7),
FUJII Aki (8-9)
Translated by Bengier Kei

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