



**Chikaku.
Time and Memory in Japan**

Press conference: June 3, 2005, 11:00 am

Opening: June 4, 2005, 11:00 am

Duration: June 5 – September 11, 2005

Locations:

CAMERA AUSTRIA and Kunsthaus Graz

Opening hours:

Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Taro Okamoto, *O-UTAKI sanctuary, Kudakajima, Okinawa, 1959.*

This comprehensive exhibition by Kunsthaus Graz and Camera Austria together with The Japan Foundation, entitled "Chikaku. Time and Memory in Japan", reflects the dynamic development of Japanese art and culture during recent decades.

Japan has not undergone the same phases of modernism as the West. Indeed, it was only in the 1870s that the idea of "art" in the western sense was introduced to Japan together with European-American culture. Especially in relation to the art of the past 50 years to which this exhibition is dedicated, it is interesting to find out the extent to which Japanese artists use issues rooted in Japanese or Asian culture – and, if so, how these are influenced by Western receptive associations. With regard to the "Japan Boom" that was observable in Europe over recent years however, we also have to find out what manner of interpretations the exhibition project might offer western visitors, given that it is characterised by a concrete collaboration between Japanese and European curators.

Europe's approach to the "Far East" has a long-standing tradition: fascinating Japan with all its contradictions and ambiguities sometimes reached almost mythical dimensions over the past century. Whilst on the one hand there is and was a lot of talk about economic success and general cultural differences, on the other hand our knowledge about cultural matters remained rather fragmentary and frequently influenced by clichés. Even though Japanese films repeatedly enjoy a lot of attention, contemporary literature is well received to a certain degree and pop culture between Manga and Tamagochi is present in the minds of mainly younger people, there is still no concise overview of current Japanese art.

During recent decades, Camera Austria tried to consistently review and elucidate the idea of what "Japan" is and means through numerous exhibitions, not least with the help of Seiichi Furuya, co-founder and photographer based in Graz, and through placing Japanese photographers in a context of the analyses of both political and social developments.

In this context, also cultural theoretician Toshiharu Ito, author and curator of "Chikaku" repeatedly acted as a mediator by making his networks available. He supported numerous publications and exhibition projects of Japanese artists, as an author made contemporary Japanese approaches accessible for the Western audience, reflecting on questions such as: what are the cultural signs for topical artistic productions vis-à-vis a highly-developed capitalist, potentially almost brittle system? What are the tensions and ruptures resulting from keeping up a tradition, as has been brought about by Japanese Modernism on the one hand, and topical social problems and cultural decay, in particular in big cities, on the other hand.

Equally the project "Chikaku. Time and Memory in Japan" by Toshiharu Ito was developed for a European presentation. First meetings for the realisation of this ambitious plan took place in 2002. In 2003, on the occasion of the opening of Kunsthaus Graz and the new exhibition space for Camera Austria, the plan turned in a concrete project and led finally to the collaboration with The Japan Foundation.

A complex and comprehensive exhibition project such as "Chikaku" leads to a number of questions and problems which, vis-à-vis today's increasingly "global" artistic practice, should be seen in a very special light. Why do we dedicate ourselves to one country and its art in particular? Why do we permit observation on a national basis? Aren't such kinds of exhibition models obsolete, especially with regard to the increasing dynamics of artistic developments in East Asia. – This leads us to the key questions of the project: In which way can specific characteristics of a geographically defined cultural whole be presented in differentiated fashion? Do different histories and traditions still play a role today?

Perception, time and memory were selected as key concepts that should enable the approach to very diverse artistic approaches in this exhibition. The period in which the works were created, stretching from the 1950s to present times, alone provides a wide range of works. In addition, internationally well-known protagonists such as Hiroshi Sugimoto, Yayoi Kusama and Yoko Ono are confronted with works yet to be discovered by the West, as for instance in the case of the early ethnological studies by sculptor Taro Okamoto or the photographic works by Takuma Nakahira which have received more frequent exposure in recent years.

The highly diverse media-related and conceptual approaches of the artists exhibited are also reflected in Makoto Sei Watanabe's very special exhibition architecture which, in a highly novel way, fuses with the spectacular architecture of Kunsthaus Graz.

"Chikaku" does not offer clear answers for visitors, but rather, in the best sense of the word, a rapprochement, eliciting harmony with a fascinating country with a particularly rich tradition and a very vital and dynamic artistic scene. Presenting this variform character to a wide audience is the objective of the exhibition.

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Curator:

Toshiharu Ito, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo

in collaboration with

Adam Budak, Kunsthaus Graz, Seiichi Furuya, Camera Austria, Miki Okabe, The Japan Foundation

Exhibition

with works by Masaki Fujihata, Rieko Hidaka, Takashi Ito, Emiko Kasahara, Tadashi Kawamata, Yayoi Kusama, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Hiroyuki Moriwaki, Daido Moriyama, Takuma Nakahira, Tetsuya Nakamura, Motohiko Odani, Taro Okamoto, Yoko Ono, Yutaka Sone, Yoshihiro Suda, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Masaaki Yamada, Makoto Sei Watanabe, Miwa Yanagi.

Film programme

From June 21st to September 6th 2005 every Tuesday there will be a series of events at the Schubertkino as part of the exhibition. Events will include films and video work from and about Japan by, amongst others, Teinosuke Kinugasa, Sumiko Haneda, Takahiko Imura, Yoko Ono, Paolo Rocha and Manfred Neuwirth. This is organised in collaboration with German film theoretician Olaf Möller.

Competition

In the competition entitled "Graz Art Media Competition", participants from various different fields were invited to submit a project for the BIX-façade of Kunsthaus Graz. The jury, consisting of Toshiharu Ito, Hiroyuki Moriwaki, Miki Okabe, Makoto Sei Watanabe, Adam Budak, Christine Frisinghelli and Peter Pakesch, has awarded two prizes. The "Peter Cook Prize" is awarded by the architect of the Kunsthaus. The works of the award winners will be presented as part of "Chikaku".

Catalogue

A comprehensive catalogue in German and English will be published to accompany the exhibition, with contributions by Ryuta Imafuku, Toshiharu Ito, Yoko Tawada, Makoto Sei Watanabe, Krystyna Wilkoszewska and a foreword by The Japan Foundation and an introduction by Christine Frisinghelli and Peter Pakesch.

Co-organized with "The Japan Foundation".

Further information and press images:

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