

# Katsura Yuki and the Stakes of Exposure

Namiko Kunimoto (Ohio State University)

13:00-15:00, Saturday, June 4th

10-301, 3F, Building 10, Sophia University Yotsuya Campus

This presentation examines the work of Katsura Yuki (1913-1991), a Tokyo-based painter and assemblage artist. Katsura enacted political resistance by representing contentious issues such as self-sacrifice in times of war, the United States Castle Bravo nuclear test, the representation of gay lovers, and the status of women in Japan. This presentation will focus specifically on her paintings from the 1930s-1960s, as well as her illustrations of the James Baldwin novel, *Another Country*, that were featured in the *Asahi Journal* in the 1960s. Katsura's body of work evaded the overdetermined masculine heroics of abstract expressionism and action art that had taken Japan by storm in the postwar period, forging an innovative mode of expression that was whimsical and strange in its tone, but nonetheless bore a potent political thrust.

By experimenting with the visibility and invisibility of the body, I argue Katsura enacted what Jacques Rancière terms political "dissensus." Rancière sees genuine art and politics as those that create new relations between the visible and the invisible, liberating bodies from their assigned places and breaking with the 'natural' order of the sensible. Similarly, by experimenting with the visibility of the Othered body Katsura reoriented aesthetic-political sensibility and opened up a space for a wider discourse on gender and race in Japan.

Namiko Kunimoto is an assistant professor in the Department of History of Art at The Ohio State University and is currently a Japan Foundation Fellow in Tokyo. She is a specialist in modern and contemporary Japanese art, with research interests in gender, urbanization, photography, performance art, transnationalism, and nation formation. Her recent publications include "Tanaka Atsuko's Electric Dress and the Circuits of Subjectivity" (*The Art Bulletin*, September 2013) and "Shiraga Kazuo: The Hero and Concrete Violence" (*Art History*, February 2013). Her first book, *Thresholds of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press in 2017.

