

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture (ICC) Presents a Workshop on

Three-Dimensional Reading:

Modernism and Spatial Configuration in Interwar Japanese
Fiction (1910s-1930s)

「ワークショップ：立体読書 現代日本文学におけるモダニズムと空間構想」

Date: June 22, 2009, 5-7 p.m.,

Place: L-914, 9F Library Building, Sophia University

Invited participants

Alisa Freedman (East Asian Studies, University of Oregon)

Sakaguchi Kyôhei (artist)

Kyoko Kurita (East Asian Studies, Pomona College)

Dan O'Neill (East Asian Languages and Culture, UC Berkeley)

ICC members:

Angela Yiu (Faculty of Liberal Arts)

Kono Shion (Faculty of Liberal Arts)

Hayashi Michio (Faculty of Liberal Arts)

And Graduate students in Japanese Studies

There are a few seats available for those who wish to participate.

Please Email the Coordinator Professor Angela Yiu by June 19th to register.

Angela Yiu (Professor, Faculty of Liberal Arts)

Email: a-yiu@sophia.ac.jp

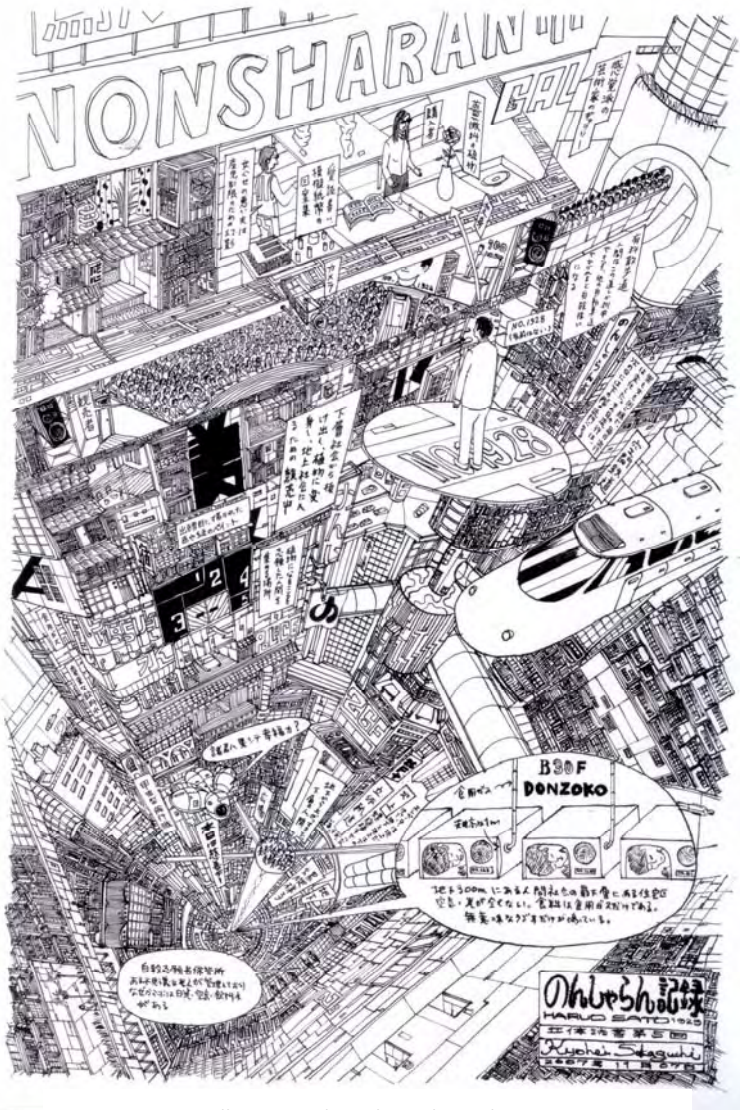


Illustration by Sakaguchi Kyohei

Overview of the Project

This work-in-progress book project examines the development of modernist techniques and content in the representation of space in Interwar Japanese Fiction (1910s-1930s). Sandwiched between the upward thrust of nation-building Meiji (1868-1912) and the dark war years of Shōwa (1926-1988) was a vivacious period in which writers experimented with a protean modernist style to capture a vanishing past and envision a futuristic urban space that is at once utopian and dystopian.

The development of mass consumer culture and a moneyed capital stimulated the publication of many new and experimental journals that became the venues for the debut and development of nouveau art and literary movements, such as the Neo Perceptionist School (Shinkankaku-ha), the New Art School (Shikō geijutsu-ha), the Proletarian School, and mass literature (taishū bungaku). Meanwhile, the frantic development of Tokyo as a leading modern metropolis in Asia to rival the capitals in the West, and the expansionist vision of the Imperial state to extend its colonial transformation of other Asian cities into model modern metropolises (e.g. Dalian as Paris of the East) continued to tease the imagination of experimental writers who

developed narrative strategies and a language drawn from new forms of visual representation to reconfigure space. The result is the mind-bending urban representation in art and literary texts that captured the phantasmagoria of an urban space that is at once fantastical, futurological, haunting, and cautionary, in a language that is cubist (i.e. that aims at the flattening and distortion of space), anti-realism, anti-naturalism. It is a language that is disorienting because of its formal disruption but also exhilarating and engaging for the same reason.

Incorporating images created by the contemporary artist Sakaguchi Kyôhei (See Page 2), this book project of translation, visual art, and critical essays will examine a selection of short fiction in three tropes: 1. Pathological interiority in spatial configuration; 2. Utopia and dystopia in colonial spatial imagination; 3. Fragmented Tokyo as phantasmagoria. Included in the selection are writers such as Akutagawa Ryûnosuke, Hori Tatsuo, Satô Haruo, Uno Kôji, Tanizaki Jun'ichirô, Kawabata Yasunari, Inagaki Taruho, Edogawa Ranpo and others, writers whose work reveal a keen understanding of the inextricable relationship between art, politics, ideology and spatial configuration in literature.

Some of these are well-known writers in and outside Japan, but until recently their works had not been studied as modernist texts, at least not in the existing Euro-centric understanding of the movement. One of the goals of this project is to rethink the parameters of international or global modernism by re-examining these works in comparison to existing critical literature on modernism and urban representation, as exemplified by the sustained critical interest in the Baudelarian and Benjaminian flaneur and the modernist texts by James Joyce, T.S.Eliot, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf.

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