The Fate of Landscape in Post-War Japanese Art and Visual Culture

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Abstract
This chapter analyses the interconnections between three incidents that occurred almost simultaneously in the realm of contemporary art and visual culture around 1970: 1) the production of *A.K.A. Serial Killer*; 2) the rise of the Mono-ha movement in contemporary art practices; and 3) the innovative movement in photography, epitomized by *PROVOKE* magazine. In subsequent decades, these newly developed ways of artistic expression were effectively co-opted by consumer culture. The author argues that the high economic growth increasingly resulted in the commodification of the landscape. In the process, the landscape as an artistic genre began to exist as a symbol of itself, a simulacrum, onto which the viewer projected her/his nostalgic yearning for 'the real'.

Keywords: landscape (*fukei*), *PROVOKE*, Discover Japan campaign, Lee U-fan, Mono-ha movement, Karatani Kōjin, Sugimoto Hiroshi

A.K.A. Serial Killer and the extinction of landscape

In 1971, at the critical juncture in the history of post-war Japan when revolutionary political fervour began to lose its grip on the collective psyche, a left-wing movie director and theorist, Matsuda Masao, published an anthology of his essays, *Fūkei no shimetsu* (The extinction of landscape), whose title can alternatively be translated as 'the death of landscape'.[1] Several essays in

1 A new edition of the book, with two additional essays by Matsuda and an extended commentary by Hirasawa Gō, was recently published by Kōshisha in 2013.

this anthology were inspired by his experience of making the film *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, which followed the story of a serial killer, Nagayama Norio, who was arrested by the police on 7 April 1969 after murdering four people, one by one, in four different cities in Japan: Tokyo, Kyoto, Hakodate, and Nagoya. To make the film, Matsuda and two other co-producers, Adachi Masao and Sasaki Mamoru, carefully traced Nagayama's path from Hokkaido to Tokyo – from his birthplace to the place of his arrest – with several unexpected detours en route; they then created a sequential montage of the footage taken in those locations – where he had lived, stayed, worked, or simply passed time – in order to recreate the story of his life.[2] By doing so, the producers tried to capture the clues to understand, even if only partially, the history and environment that had nurtured the infamous serial killer.

After travelling and filming extensively across Japan for the production of this film, Matsuda came to the curious conclusion that *fūkei* (landscape) in Japan – or, at least, what had been traditionally associated with the concept of *fūkei* – was now extinct. The film, in fact, eloquently testifies to the monotony or flatness of the landscapes that Nagayama witnessed in his life before carrying out his abominable acts. Reflecting on what they encountered, Matsuda stated:

> Whether in the metropolitan area or the provinces, in 'Tokyo' or the 'hometown', there is now nothing but a homogenous landscape. In this way, we were unable to discover the 'hometown' that would have nurtured Nagayama Norio. What we saw was merely a little 'Tokyo' (Matsuda 1971: 12).

Matsuda's disillusionment in finding a 'little Tokyo' instead of Nagayama's 'hometown', or *furusato*, might be interpreted as a sign of the failure to find a causal connection between his actions and the environment in which he grew up. On the contrary, however, this failure to find Nagayama's 'hometown' inspired Matsuda to understand the situation from the inside out; that is, to find the cause/origin of the event in the very *absence* of the 'hometown' and, instead, in the 'homogenous landscape'. He suggests that this homogenization of the landscape in Japan proceeded steadily during the period of high economic

2 The exact roles that these co-producers played in relation to each other are not clear, but Adachi Masao is usually credited as its director while all three are credited as its producers. Judging from Matsuda's writing, however, they all travelled together to trace the footsteps of Nagayama and worked as a team, conceptually as well as practically, throughout the production of this film.

growth, as the network of the capital extended its reach to every corner of the country, and that the accelerated force of the capital systematically eradicated traditional semantics and physiognomies particular to the local landscape.

In other words, it is this flattening of the landscape or, simply put, the standardization of commodification, this steady wave of Tokyo-ization across the entire country, rather than the singular characteristics of his hometown, that Matsuda identified as a symptomatic manifestation of what underlies the Nagayama incident, and also what might be called the socio-political unconscious of the whole nation. Although singular in nature, Nagayama's personal history – growing up in a severely dysfunctional family with abusive siblings; constantly drifting from one place to another; repeated acts of theft in various places (the last of which was the theft of a pistol and bullets from the US base in Yokosuka); an attempted suicide, and so on – was not seen as a marker of the very uniqueness of his case, but rather as a sort of monadic channel through which structural problems of post-war Japanese society allegorically or twistedly expressed themselves. In Matsuda's interpretation, Nagayama's action was a symbolic, although terribly misdirected, attempt to break free from the suffocating (of course, liberating in some aspects) infiltration of the capital that had transformed not only the physical appearance, but also the collective mentality of the entire nation.

Matsuda's reading coincides well with the actual process by which Japan achieved its economic miracle in the post-war years. As Uchida Ryūzō (2002) demonstrated in his *Kokudo ron* (Theory of national land), the entire scheme of economic rejuvenation during those years centred on various development projects led by the government. Whether it be a civil-engineering project, an industrial development along the metropolitan coastlines, or a housing development in the suburbs, the land as real estate was always the foundational base, and therefore became the object of ardent speculations. Intensified by Japan's physical limitation of land, its price became the most stable index of the steady growth of the national economy and began to even acquire a mythical status; as the phrase *tochi shinwa* (land myth) plainly suggests, 'land' became the most dependable asset in Japan's volatile and erratic market. And as the banking system progressively began to rely on the anticipated increase of this asset, the entire national economy began to revolve around the land price as its ultimate risk hedge. In hindsight, this mythical status of land – as real estate – played a significant role in causing what would later become known as the 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s to the early 1990s. The bubble economy eventually burst and then shattered the collective confidence in the land price into pieces. However, during the period of high economic growth, real estate, as the most stable

commodity, was indeed the master driver of the Japanese economy and, as such, became the area in which the power of the capital and local cultural traditions bluntly collided with each other. The rapid transformation of the landscape Matsuda saw everywhere in Japan was nothing but an expression of this collision and the eventual victory of the force of the capital.

What most symbolized this total capitalization of the land during the period of high economic growth was the enormous, nationwide development plan that Tanaka Kakuei published in 1972, immediately before he became prime minister. This bestseller, *Nihon rettō kaizō ron* (Remodelling the Japanese archipelago), was a condensed manifesto of Tanaka's ideology and policy, which were themselves derived from the conventional policies of the Liberal Democratic Party (Jiyū Minshutō; hereafter LDP) during the post-war years, whose origin goes back at least to the National Overall Development Plan (Zenkoku Sōgō Kaihatsu Keikaku) of 1962 (Tanaka 1972; Uchida 2002: 188). Building upon the LDP's consistent emphasis on public-sector development projects, Tanaka first published a blueprint of his plan in 1968 in *Bungei Shunjū*, a large part of which was quickly integrated into the New Comprehensive National Development Plan (Shin Zenkoku Sōgō Kaihatsu Keikaku) announced by the government in the following year, when Tanaka served as the secretary-general of the LDP (Tanaka 1968; Uchida 2002: 190). In these publications, Tanaka adamantly insisted on the necessity to establish nationwide networks of high-speed railways and highways, so that the whole nation could function as an extended metropolis, organically connected as one large industrial-consumerist machine, as it were. By promoting this policy, Tanaka promised to minimize the economic disparity between the provinces and the urban centres and thereby, at the same time, to solve the problem of the over-congestion of people, goods, and information in cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. Needless to say, although Tanaka's ambitious plan was never fully completed as originally planned, this politico-economic scheme led to the rapid suburbanization, or 'Tokyo-ization', to borrow Matsuda's term, of the entire nation, and wiped out local cultural traditions in favour of a flat network of characterless landscapes.

PROVOKE and the Discover Japan campaign

If Nagayama's serial shootings can be understood in line with Matsuda's reading as an allegorical manifestation of the internal contradiction of Japanese society at the time – its pursuit of economic prosperity and the concurrent destruction of the local-cultural landscape and its rich memories

– there existed a group of contemporary photographers and critics who also tried to tear the suffocating membrane of the capital through their own 'shootings'. This group consisted of Nakahira Takuma (critic/photographer), Okada Takahiko (critic/poet), Takanashi Yutaka (photographer), Taki Kōji (critic/philosopher), and Moriyama Daidō (photographer) and operated around the short-lived, but now legendary, *PROVOKE* magazine that they published from 1968 to 1969. Through the aggressive, dynamic, and grainy images on the pages of this magazine, together with vigorously critical texts, they informed their readership of contemporary theories of representation, and outspokenly challenged the dominant style and ideology of photographic art of the time. For instance, they consistently tried to restore the sense of immediacy of the photographer's contact with the world by accentuating, in print, the palpable traces of his existential presence and movement behind the camera. They pursued this effect of immediacy not only in the register of photographic style that was typically represented by their blurry, coarse, out-of-focus images (famously named *are-bure-boke* in Japanese), but also in the mode of distribution exemplified by the aggressive layout on the magazine's pages – full-page spreads with no margins, high-contrast printing, and so on, which forced the reader to 'touch' the images with their own fingers. Behind this yearning for direct contact with reality lay anxiety about the wholesale transformation of 'reality' into simulated reality, or spectacle, forced by the capital and the process of commodification. In other words, as the keyword of Moriyama's theory, *sakka* (fissure), suggests, by indexing the fragments of the unassimilated reality – be it an abject corner of a red-light district, or the barren no-man's land of an undeveloped rural area, or the recently created landfills which were to be transformed into an industrial zone – they tried to puncture or breach the simulated seamlessness of the capitalist membrane with their photographic 'shots' and expose the logic of exclusion and oppression inherent in the capitalist system.

It is important to note in this regard that the *PROVOKE* aesthetics emerged in parallel with, or counter to, the increasing dominance of advertising agencies in the Japanese industry. The epoch-making advertising campaign in the history of post-war Japan was indeed staged by Dentsū (the largest agency in Japan, both then and now) around 1970 to promote the then financially struggling Japanese National Railways (Nihon Kokuyū Tetsudō). Ironically titled 'Discover Japan', this campaign primarily targeted young, single, female workers in urban centres, who were seen as potentially influenceable and influential consumers, empowered with the means to fulfil their curiosities. In order to appeal to this new consumer group and

cultivate their dormant desire for independence from traditional social institutions such as the family and corporate culture, this campaign indeed extensively used the photographic image of (a) young, female consumer(s), travelling alone in a rural area, 'discovering' and enjoying the forgotten corners of Japanese landscapes. Parallel to this campaign, two newly established women's fashion magazines, *an-an* (1970-) and *non-no* (1971-), also eagerly promoted the image of young, female travellers by staged photographs or snapshots, often accompanied by personalized travel essays by female writers. Partly as a result of these strategically synchronized mass media advertising campaigns, the number of female travellers skyrocketed around this time; they were soon to be labelled as *annonzoku*, or 'an-non tribe'.

Although we may still need to be cautious in evaluating the impact of this rise of young, female consumers in Japan in terms of its ambivalent contribution to the development of feminist thought and practice, there is no question that this new campaign for the rediscovery of the Japanese landscape was seen by many left-wing critics and artists, including those associated with *PROVOKE*, as a symbolic instance of the increasing commodification (that is, the death) of local landscapes as described by Matsuda (1971). What was even more disturbing and upsetting for the *PROVOKE* photographers was that their coarse, dynamic, or 'materialist' style – employed to challenge the easily consumable, picturesque images typically used by the tourist industry – was itself immediately appropriated by the Discover Japan campaign. Whether the creators of this campaign directly and deliberately borrowed the *PROVOKE* style or not remains an open question. However, Nakahira, the main voice for the magazine, considered this probable appropriation a serious blow to their aesthetic ideology and openly criticized the campaign (see, for instance, Nakahira 1972).

But given the gradual and ever-expanding capacity of the capital to appropriate any style, and thus undermine its critical possibilities (just like the once-rebellious jeans soon became a commonplace or luxury fashion item), it is easy to imagine that Nakahira's struggle to free himself from the imprisonment of commodification was confronted with more and more difficulties. In fact, already in 1973, only a couple of years after the end of the *PROVOKE* period (1968-1969), Nakahira published an essay, titled 'Naze shokubutsu zukan ka?' (Why an illustrated botanical dictionary?), to declare a surprising departure from his commitment to the evocative *PROVOKE* style. Calmly describing the previous style as 'art' and 'expression' and not transparent or neutral (or neutered) enough, he now propagated the idea that photography has to reject 'all nuances and emotions' in order to

confront 'the world as it is'.[3] Instead of further pursuing stylistic originality, which was destined to be co-opted by the capitalist system, Nakahira turned his back on the idea of originality itself in order to immerse himself in the world of the most banal and mundane, as exemplified by the illustrations in a botanical dictionary.

Lee U-fan's aesthetics: Phenomenology and structuralism

What is notable here is that the idea of 'the world as it is', as emphasized by Nakahira in his essay of 1973, resonated with a similar idea advocated around 1970 by the artist Lee U-fan and others who were part of the so-called Mono-ha movement. In fact, the original Japanese phrase *aru ga mama* (as it is) that Nakahira used already appeared extensively in Lee's first published essay in 1969, titled 'Sonzai to mu o koete' (Beyond being and nothingness), on his fellow artist Sekine Nobuo, and remained the central concept for the Mono-ha aesthetics (Lee 1969a: 51-3). Lee introduced this concept as an antidote to the domination of 'images' in the increasingly industrialized consumer society. The idea of a media-saturated society was elucidated by thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan and Daniel Boorstin, whose analyses of it, together with the belated introduction in Japan (but earlier than the Anglo-American reception) of Walter Benjamin's thoughts, largely influenced the art discourse in 1960s' Japan.

In short, the concept of 'as it is' was advocated by Lee as a way out of the world of images and representations in general and, as such, was envisaged as a sign of one's renewed encounter with the world-as-such – just as Nakahira and the other *PROVOKE* photographers tried to cleave open the membrane of conventional photographic representations by emphasizing the bodily dimension of their encounter with the world. The parallels between *PROVOKE* (and Nakahira's radicalization of its aesthetics) and Mono-ha are hardly coincidental since, according to Lee himself, Nakahira and Lee knew each other well and were exchanging ideas about the critical possibilities of their art practices against the capitalist colonization of daily life around 1970.[4] They shared, in other words, a deep sense of the crisis of 'reality' – or 'landscape' – being irrevocably replaced or erased by the secondary images

3 Nakahira 1973. An abridged English translation of the article is included in Chong et al. 2012: 265-9.

4 The relationship between Lee and Nakahira was confirmed by Lee himself in a conversation with the author on 6 August 2012 in Lee's studio in Kamakura.

produced in the ever-expanding commodity culture. Both Mono-ha works and *PROVOKE* photographs emphasized the importance of a kind of tactile 'encounter' (another keyword for Lee) with the world in preference to the spectacular visuality of technologically mediated images; this, as well as the fact that they therefore often preferred sombre, black-and-white materiality over colourful superficiality, was a logical outcome of their shared aesthetic ideology. In the meantime, the Expo '70, held in Osaka from March to September and attracting over 60 million visitors during that period, represented the powerful drive of the entire nation, accelerated already by the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, towards the production and consumption of these new, technologically mediated 'images', or objects-as-images, which were typically sugar-coated with shiny, synthetic colours.

One may describe their attempt at restoring direct contact with 'reality', which had become lost behind the veil of representation, as Heideggerian in its implicit claim for a phenomenological authenticity and totality, and may critique it, as the artist-theorist Hikosaka Naoyoshi did in 1970, as ahistorical and reactionary. Partly inspired by the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, Hikosaka sensed some mythical-nostalgic, or simply escapist, yearning in Lee's claim for an ontological transcendence and criticized it from the viewpoint of dialectical materialism (Hikosaka 1970). He also suggested that Lee's inclination towards ontological epiphany reduced the critical possibilities of art praxis back to the individualist ideology of modernism, rather than opening it up to the critical reflection from inter-subjective as well as social-institutional perspectives. It seems to me that Hikosaka's critique of Lee's theory, which resembles Heidegger's notion of ontological 'clearing' or the poetic revelation of Being, is valid with regard to Lee's explanatory rhetoric. But if we pay attention to the actual works that Mono-ha artists produced around 1970, we can see that the story is more complicated than that. Their sculptural or environmental pieces invariably suggest that they needed to aggressively intervene with an already existing environment, rather than simply acknowledging or pointing to its presence, in order to let the desired experience of 'encounter' emerge. Sekine's *Phase-Mother Earth* of 1968 is a paradigmatic example in that regard, because he literally dug a large hole in 'Mother Earth' in order to make it appear anew as a place of ontological revelation. Their works, in other words, testify to the fact that the experience of the 'encounter' is a function of differential intervention and therefore can never be a simple encounter with the given world. It is to say, as it were, that nature has to be de-natured, or damaged, in order to be experienced *as* 'nature.' And this epistemological paradox is reflected in the confusing and conflicting reference to both Maurice Merleau-Ponty and

Michel Foucault, or phenomenology and structuralism, without theoretical mediation in Lee's writings.[5]

In crude terms, it is this structuralist side of Mono-ha works – their reliance on differential effects and their awareness about the system of producing such effects – that opens up the possibility of undermining the authenticity of their alleged phenomenological pursuit and invites an investigation of their works from the viewpoint of simulacra. Seen from this perspective, recent reinterpretations of Mono-ha aesthetics in terms of their initial, somewhat inflected, connection to the *Torikkusu ando bijon* (Tricks and vision; hereafter *Tricks and Vision*) exhibition in 1968, where the mechanism of our perception was examined from a scientific or cognitive standpoint by a wide variety of works, begin to acquire special significance.[6] In other words, Lee's advocacy of the return to the world 'as it is' cannot be taken at face value. If the effect of 'as it is' is produced through a carefully contrived intervention into the existing environment, the alleged invocation of the primordial Being cannot be equivalent to the naive affirmation of the world as it lies in front of us. The naive dualism between representation and reality (prior to representation) that Hikosaka sensed in Lee's discourse therefore has to be reformulated. What historically makes more sense in light of this ambivalence is to see the emergence of Mono-ha aesthetics as a symptom of a larger epistemological shift (or crisis) that created a curious twist, at this particular historical juncture of around 1970, where two incommensurable systems of representation – one disappearing, the other emerging – collided with each other. To me, this anxious coexistence seems to correspond to the contrast we saw between *PROVOKE* and the Discover Japan campaign. This epistemological shift made it impossible to separate the 'as it is' of the world from that of the representation (or sign), and the desire to retrieve the primordial dimension of Being, it became increasingly clear, had to remain an unattainable dream. The discordant relationship between Lee's phenomenological rhetoric and the structuralist practice as visible in many of the Mono-ha works is a sign of this contorted transition. If, on the one hand, the figure of man who perceives the world was erased 'like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea', as Foucault argued famously at the end of *The Order of Things*, the world to be perceived as it is, on the other hand, was also erased from the horizon of encounter.

5 See, for example, Lee U-fan 1969b and 1969c.

6 See, for example, the catalogue of the exhibition *Mono-ha saikō* (A reconsideration of Mono-ha), which was held in 2005 at the National Museum of Art, Osaka. Honnami Kiyoshi (2010) also discusses the relationship between the *Tricks and Vision* exhibition and Mono-ha.

Kawabata Yasunari and his Hawai'i lecture

What is curious in this regard is the fact that Mono-ha and the Discover Japan campaign shared a suggestive reference, a sort of nodal point where seemingly two incongruous aesthetic ideologies intersected with each other. That is, both resorted to the ideas of the writer Kawabata Yasunari, who had recently (in 1968) been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Moreover, the way they referred to his ideas and words was not simply for the sake of rhetorical decoration, but was deeply related to the essential claim of their respective ideologies.

In arguably the most well-known article by Lee U-fan, 'Deai o motomete' (In search of the encounter) (1970), the author cited an episode from Kawabata's lecture delivered at the University of Hawai'i in 1969.[7] It was about Kawabata's 'encounter' with a large number of table glasses glittering in the morning sunlight on the terrace of a restaurant in the hotel where he was staying. He described it as an unexpected aesthetic revelation, and connected it to the old idea of *ichigo ichie*, which roughly translates as 'one chance, one encounter (which never recurs)'. The writer, in other words, saw it as a kind of phenomenological epiphany and also as an impetus of the 'beginning of literature' conceived as a challenge to the existing system of representation. No wonder that Lee quoted this episode as a model for his idea of 'encounter' through which he wished that the 'world' (re-)emerge anew for the experiencing subject as that which transcends the conventional system of representation. Furthermore, that this Kawabata episode was central to the Mono-ha aesthetics is clear from the fact that another critic, Ishiko Junzō, who in 1968 had co-organized the *Tricks and Vision* exhibition with Nakahara Yūsuke, quoted the exact same passage in his 1969 article in order to support the works of Lee and Sekine (Ishiko 1970).

On the other hand, the relationship between Kawabata and the Discover Japan campaign was more direct and obvious. A simple comparison between the title of the writer's acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize and the main catch copy of the advertising campaign will suffice: 'Utsukushii Nihon no watashi' (Kawabata) and 'Utsukushii Nihon to watashi' (Discover Japan), whose literal translations would be 'Myself of beautiful Japan' and 'Myself and beautiful Japan'.[8] The only difference is between the Japanese particles[9] *no* (of)

7 Kawabata 2015: 50-84 (originally delivered on 16 May 1969 at the University of Hawai'i, Hilo).

8 The English title of Kawabata's speech, 'Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself', translated by Edward G. Seidensticker, does not reflect the nuance of *no* in Japanese. Although it is probably a smoother English title, the 'and' in it corresponds closer to the particle *to* in Japanese. See Kawabata 1969.

9 Particles are small words indicating the relationship between words within a sentence, whose function can somewhat be compared to English prepositions.

and *to* (and). According to Fujioka Wakao, who was the chief director of the Discover Japan campaign at Dentsū, this was a deliberate choice.[10] However, when Fujioka realized that the title of the campaign he had chosen was almost identical to the title of the recently published Nobel laureate's speech (Fujioka's explanation is ambiguous as to whether he intentionally borrowed the phrase or not), he visited the writer to get permission to use the only slightly different campaign title. The reason why Kawabata granted him permission is not clear, but apparently his response was positive, if not enthusiastic, since the writer took a brush on the spot and hand-wrote the catch phrase on more than ten sheets of traditional Japanese paper and gave them to Fujioka.[11]

In light of the aesthetic conviction and sincerity one finds in Kawabata's acceptance speech, this carefree attitude towards the nationwide advertising campaign remains an enigma. It may be the case that the writer was simply disinterested in what was happening in the world of advertisement or business; or he might have been enthralled by his new status as an influential public figure after receiving the Nobel Prize. The latter might be closer to the correct answer, given the fact that Kawabata became politically active, rather awkwardly, in the last two years of his life between his acceptance of the Nobel Prize and his suicide.[12] But nobody knows. What is important for us is the curious fate befallen on the idea of beauty that the writer had pursued in his literature and elaborated in his acceptance speech. Its supposedly authentic connection to the tradition of Japanese literature was transformed by the Discover Japan campaign into a secondary sign of itself, which added surplus value to consumer tourism. The 'myself' who was imagined to be *of* the tradition, as indicated by the particle *no*, was turned into a subject through the use of the connective *to* (and), standing outside,

10 See Fujioka's interview on the following web page of *PHP Online*: http://shuchi.php.co.jp/article/123, accessed 6 October 2016. What is more interesting is the fact that Kawabata himself originally had the idea of using *to* (and) in the title of his speech. That original idea was 'Nihon no bi to watashi, sono hashigaki' (Japan's beauty and myself: An introduction), which still remains visible on the draft of his speech. The writer apparently crossed it out shortly before the speech and changed it to the present title, in which *no* (of) is used. According to Ōkubo Takaki (2004: 4-5), the reason for this last-minute change was probably that Kawabata wanted to emphasize his sense of belonging ('of'-ness) to Japanese tradition.

11 See Waga's dialogue with the writer Arai Man on the following archival website: http://web.archive.org/web/20101227025252/http://voiceplus-php.jp/archive/detail.jsp?id=355&nif=false&pageStart=0, accessed 6 October 2016. The dialogue was originally published on *Voice +*, in the issue of 27 December 2010.

12 It is well known that Kawabata, for example, in 1971, publicly supported and made campaign speeches for Hatano Akira, who was running for Governor of Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture. (Hatano eventually lost to the more liberal and widely popular candidate Minobe Ryōkichi by a wide margin.)

or being alienated from, the tradition; the only access route that remained between them was the route of consumption. Coincidentally, as if to verify the significance of the historical shift implied by this seemingly unimportant instance of linguistic appropriation, Kawabata suddenly experienced writer's block and could no longer produce a notable masterpiece after the Nobel Prize. He ended his own life abruptly in 1972, following the suicide in 1970 of his friend, writer Mishima Yukio, who, like Kawabata, continually lamented the loss of the authentic cultural tradition in Japan.

The Discover Japan campaign's appropriation of Kawabata's speech is consistent with its appropriation of the *PROVOKE* style; integrated with each other, they unabashedly signify the capital's irrevocable encroachment on the authentic experience of the landscape, or the world at large, and as such resonate deeply with the 'extinction of landscape' that Matsuda discussed in his writings. The deaths of Kawabata and Mishima seem to support the idea that the extended era of modernism (in which the notion of 'authentic tradition' accompanied it like a mirror image) was coming to an end around 1970. The fact that Lee's invocation of the ontological encounter was, through his reference to Kawabata, connected to, and undermined by, the Discover Japan campaign also seems to imply that Mono-ha's aesthetics was destined to fall short of accomplishing its declared objective of foregrounding the world 'as it is'. We have already seen that their practices contained structural aspects that contradicted and undermined their proclaimed aesthetic ideology. In short, the odd but symbolic intertwinement of these instances – *A.K.A. Serial Killer*, *PROVOKE*, Mono-ha, the Discover Japan campaign, and Kawabata Yasunari – attests to the fact that the concept of the extinction of landscape resonated widely with various representational practices of the time and thereby pointed to a seismic epistemic shift, which happened around 1970.

Karatani Kōjin's theory of landscape

To borrow from Jean Baudrillard's vocabulary, this shift could be described as that into the age of simulacra, where 'reality' is gradually and irrevocably replaced by a network of signs. In this regard, the landscape, in the word's traditional sense, indeed died. But that is only half of the story, since this death, or extinction, can also be interpreted as a sign of rebirth from the perspective of the simulated landscape. Landscape in that sense survived by becoming its own image, just as the *PROVOKE* style survived as a 'style', even though it lost its initial power of provocation after the 1970s. Ultimately, the driving force behind this tidal shift is the capital, whose power to colonize

every corner of our life reached a critical point where the differential network of image-signs became the foundation for their exchange value as a commodity, overshadowing their use value and its direct connection to reality. The fact that the so-called tertiary industries – which make profits not by producing actual objects but by distributing them (for instance, retail or food service industries), by providing images for existing products or companies (for instance, advertising agencies), or by investing in the monetary market (for instance, financial firms) – came to occupy the largest share of Japan's GDP around 1972 explains well this weight shift towards intangible image-signs from the tangible products.

Seen from a larger historical viewpoint, this coming of the age of simulacra can be interpreted as a result, or completion, of the long process of 'modernization' whose history goes at least back to the Meiji period. If our discussion began with the 'death of the landscape', we are also obliged to look back at the 'birth of the landscape' – and this brings us to Karatani Kōjin's argument as developed in his *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. In this book, Karatani argued that the modern concept of *fūkei* emerged in Japanese literature in the 1880s, with works by such writers as Kunikida Doppo, and that it appeared as distinctly different from traditional concepts such as *meisho* (famous places) because *fūkei* no longer referred to symbolic places frequently cited in the literary tradition. Instead, it increasingly encompassed an arbitrary and anonymous corner of nature discovered by, and as such specific to, an experiencing subject. Furthermore, to be more precise, like an impressionist painter encountering his 'motif' in nature by chance, Karatani thought that protagonists in the literature of the 1880s appeared as 'modern' precisely because they were able to find *fūkei* in any random corner of nature as a marker of their own individual existence. *Fūkei*, in other words, emerged as a screen onto which a modern subject can project her/his own interior reality to apprehend itself; the *fūkei* and their sense of self became a mutually dependent pair, just like a child and his reflection in Jacques Lacan's 'mirror stage'.

In sum: on the one hand, this discovery of the landscape was evidence, and a medium, of the perceiving subject's liberation from the traditional code of representation and, thus, a sign of their modernity. On the other hand, this aesthetic democratization of landscape and its potentially endless discovery, one can argue, opened it up, ironically, to an entropic process of disintegration. For if any corner of the world can be a 'landscape', the concept itself loses its symbolic value and turns into an empty signifier. In other words, the individuation/atomization of landscape by a 'modern' subject led to the relativist coexistence of an infinite number of landscapes, while the various social conditions that sustained the landscape as a

communal entity steadily vanished. The only binding force that remains powerful in this entropic process is, as we have seen above, none other than the capital. Landscape thus becomes a network of images and information, whose contours are arbitrarily determined, developed, and shifted by its translatability to monetary value. Of course, a wide range of cultural and ecological rhetoric continues to be employed to endorse its value, but these are no longer able to function independently from their involvement in the production of surplus value.

In this sense, it seems reasonable to argue that the birth of the autonomous modern subject associated with the birth of the landscape by Karatani was, from the beginning, compromised by its susceptibility to, or defencelessness against, the random connectivity to the flow of the capital and the increasing commodification of its territory of experience. The atomized subject, seen from a different angle, functioned as the most important agent through which the capital could extend its reach to every perceivable part of the world (just as the *PROVOKE* photographers' radical engagement with the landscape was quickly co-opted by the system). This 'collaboration' of the modern subject, who sees their own reflection in the landscape, and the capitalist machine, which by definition has to constantly integrate new landscapes into its orbit of marketability, no doubt accelerated during the high economic growth, when the exchange value of land became, as mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the foundational engine of the national economy. And if the period around 1970 marked 'the death of the landscape', or the beginning of the new era of its simulacra, one can assume that the mirroring relationship between the landscape and the modern subject that originated in the 1880s came to an end around that time as a logical development of the mutually accelerating and auto-deconstructive collaboration. Ultimately, instead of the landscape, whose symbolic weight had been gradually neutered, a random combination of world-as-images began to occupy the projection screen of one's 'identity', whose contours can be performatively altered in response to the constantly shifting combination of those images.

Philosophically speaking, this, I argue, was the critical moment when the 'modernist' or 'phenomenological' construction of the subject, based on the transcendental-ontological 'home' (in the sense of Heidegger's *Heim*), became something like an object of nostalgia and was replaced by the 'semiotic' or 'structuralist' model, in which the transcendental ground of one's subjectivity became nothing but an object of simulation or negative theology. Furthermore, this loss of 'home', as a matter of course, coincided with the loss of 'destination' – that is, the loss of the revolutionary imagination that

Lyotard (1984) once described as the end of the grand narrative. The death of the landscape and the death of revolutionary politics, in other words, came as a complementary pair to mark this historical turning point. What remained in this void was an infinite expanse of consumable objects-as-signs, while one's subjectivity, as Ueno Chizuko (1987) once argued, became that which was to be established, confirmed, and possibly transformed by what one selects from a wide range of commodities, including natural substances. Even water, which had always been there as a natural resource, began to be sold in supermarkets as bottled merchandise in the 1970s, as Yoshimoto Takaaki (1994) pointed out. The natural was taken over by the simulated 'natural'.

Thus, if landscape as a concept carried with it an aura of totality or a world view, as George Simmel (2007) argued in his essay on landscape, and if, as I believe, the Japanese equivalent of *fūkei* also carried the same connotation, the death of landscape or the birth of its simulacra around 1970, I would argue, irrevocably destroyed this traditional sense of totality. For although the flatness or the grid of consumable signs that has enveloped the entire world seems to demand the title of 'world view' in its own right, this flatness is never able to give us a sense of ontological plenitude and totality. Rather, whatever relationship we are able to establish with it, it always ends up being haunted by the mark of contingency, uprooted-ness, and impermanence. It is total in the sense that there is no way out, but not graspable as a totality because of its infinite extension and directionality beyond one's cognitive capacity. It is almost like the Kantian sublime, in that sense, especially the mathematical one whose infinity can only be thought but never be perceived, represented, or even imagined as an ontological entity. This is the moment when the modern, autonomous subject, whose origin Karatani located in the literary works of the 1880s, was unseated from the driver's seat of our philosophical vehicle and replaced by a fragile, fragmentary, and makeshift subject-formation. Concomitantly, the grand narrative of the revolution was gradually and decisively replaced by the micro narrative of identity formation – discover yourself! – as the dominant mode and site of political imagination.

Long epilogue: Sugimoto Hiroshi and the notion of post-landscape

My attempt to delineate the moment of the epistemic shift around 1970 through an analysis of several simultaneous events in contemporary art

and visual culture ends here. But in the form of an epilogue, I would like to touch upon a series of images produced by a later artist, Sugimoto Hiroshi, whose career began in the mid-1970s and who made his way to stardom in the world of contemporary art in the 1980s. The reason is simple: his works, especially the seascape series (1974-), seem to indicate either the fate of landscape after its own death or a particular way in which it survived its own extinction.

The seascape as a visual motif occupies a privileged place in the iconography of modernism. Starting with the era of romanticism, it was recurrently taken up by numerous artists and writers: in the field of painting, for example, names such as Turner, Friedrich, Courbet, Manet, Cézanne, and Mondrian immediately come to mind. In the field of literature, too, we can recall numerous examples in which the sea appears as the symbolic topos of literary imagination: Coleridge, Conrad, Poe, Melville, Hemingway, and so on. Of course, this history harks back to the world of myth in the ancient time exemplified by Homer's *Odyssey* and is not limited to the era of modernism. But there is something special about the sea in modern art, for it embraced more layers of semantic as well as structural functions than it did in previous periods.

In addition to the way in which the sea has always (and across cultural boundaries) played a mythical role on the primordial matrix as the place where beings originated and ended, the image of its nameless expanse in modern art seems to have played at least two more roles: first, to simultaneously represent both the sublime spirituality (or nothingness) and the concrete material reality (or plenitude of water); and second, to provide the stage where its extensive horizontal plane can be, at the next instant, tilted vertically to become one with the pictorial surface, as in Cézanne's *L'Estaques* series and Mondrian's early seascapes. More than that, the sea is ultimately believed to be the site where culture-specific signs are wiped out in favour of the purity and universality of vision per se. In front of the seascape, in other words, the act of vision is folded back onto its own activity because it is deprived of the very object of focus. This transcendental aspect of the seascape and its affinity to the modernist aesthetics of purity and self-referentiality are the reasons why it was consistently seen as being immune to historico-cultural or geographical determinations and, as such, was invoked repeatedly as a primordial or archetypical model of landscape in general. That is precisely why, I would argue, it remained or emerged as the last resort of the concept of landscape around the time of its death around 1970.

Nakahira Takuma, the photographer/critic of *PROVOKE*, for example, produced memorable images of the inhuman sea, together with the desolate

landfills of Tokyo Bay, as if they were an allegory of the death and the entropic dissolution of the traditional landscape. In the world of literature, in contrast, Mishima Yukio nostalgically glorified the image of the sea as the last vestige of the lost tradition and the possible horizon of spiritual transcendence. The most typical of the many instances in which Mishima used the sea as a symbolic topos of his vision is the last scene of *Runaway Horses*, the second volume of the *Sea of Fertility* tetralogy, in which the protagonist Iinuma takes his own life by *seppuku* (hara-kiri, or ritual suicide by disembowelment) on top of the mountain, facing the sea with the sun rising from beyond the horizon (Mishima 1973). In this scene, the vastness of the sea in front of him functions as the vanishing point of his life and the site of possible regeneration (hence, the 'sea of fertility'). This image prefigured the author's own death on 25 November 1970, which marked the end of his quest for the revival of what he believed to be the authentic Japanese cultural tradition that had been lost in post-war Japanese society. Both images of the sea – the desolate flatness of nothingness and the matrix of transcendence or regeneration – seem to correspond, in their contrasting ways, with the extinction of landscape that Matsuda lamented on in his essays. The seascape also reached its liminal point, where the only way out of its simulated membrane was either nothingness or metaphysical transcendence.

Thus, it is unavoidable that artists who adopted the theme of the seascape after 1970 have had to face the fundamental question of the 'post-ness' of their subject unless they are ignorant of the history of this topic. For the 'landscape' or 'post-landscape' they photographed, filmed, or painted had to take into account, one way or another, that inevitable belatedness vis-à-vis earlier images of the seascape, just as the *PROVOKE* aesthetics no longer remained a viable option after its appropriation by the Discover Japan campaign. Thus, Sugimoto's heavy aesthetic investment in seascapes and his repetitive invocation of Japanese traditional culture cannot be taken at face value, at least not without a sense of irony or suspicion. The mythical rhetoric or references to thinkers such as Orikuchi Shinobu, which the artist uses to describe the seascapes, are a dangerous conceptual trap into which many readers (and possibly the artist himself) can easily fall (Sugimoto 2012). His rhetoric seems to me to be a diluted version of that of Mishima, whose writing already displayed something of a kitsch sensibility with its carefully (almost mathematically) crafted, but intensely theatricalized rhetoric.

Furthermore, Sugimoto's seascapes and textual supplements are not only a repetition of the Mishima-esque imagery, which makes his images twice

as kitsch (despite their pristine, authentic appearance); they also internalize the repetition into their own serial structure. If repetition and difference is the logical requirement of a sign that functions as a sign, Sugimoto's serial production and the necessity of it seem to indicate that very requirement which undermines both the transcendence and immanence of any seascape he produces. As a result, what plays a crucial role in his seascapes is not the pure sensation of vision, but rather a differential perception and a strategic scheme of significations. The viewer is therefore constantly alerted to the interdependence of the illusion of transcendence and the manipulation of differential image-signs. The fact that Sugimoto started out his career with the *Diorama* series and continuously engaged himself with the theme of simulated reality throughout his career endorses this interpretation. How can his approach to nature be exempted? His works should also be critically viewed from this angle precisely because their seemingly contemplative appearance easily tricks us into considering them in the traditional Orientalist-Japanesque discourse. Rather than a submersion *into* the sea, the intention of his seascapes, after all, seems to be a detachment *from* the sea; they tell us more about the condition of being a spectator before the industrially fabricated image than about experiencing the sea as the ontological foundation of our being. This may be the only way in which his seascapes can become critically valuable in the context of contemporary art. Perhaps against the artist's wish to be considered otherwise, his seascapes thus exemplify the simulacral status of 'post-landscape' on whose surface one (a seduced viewer) can arbitrarily project one's own ontological nostalgia.

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