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CONTENT

PREFACE

Herewith I would like to express my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the preparation of this Master thesis, in particular to Daijiro Hama, Mio Yamato, Raita Yoshida, Yūsuke Masaki and Tetsuya Ozaki, who provided an in-depth insight into Kyōto's contemporary art world, as well as to Prof. Dr. Thomas Fillitz, who has supervised me patiently during the formation process of this thesis.

The international Hepburn system of romanization is used for the transcription of Japanese personal names (here according to Western standards first name followed by the family name) and geographical names.

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INTRODUCTION

'Kyōto with its two faces, the city, the nature, the Kamogawa river, the mysterious shrines and then the endless bars, clubs, art galleries — all of it is true inspiration. I want to make the people feel dokidoki, make their heart beat when they see my pictures and at the same time: keep Kyōto alive — that is my mission of my life I feel.'

Daijiro Hama, artist

'Kyōto? A mix of internationality and tradition that I fear turning into a 'Kyōto brand' if we don't act against it.'

Raita Yoshida, artist

If one thinks of Kyōto, colorful woodblock-prints of *Kabuki*-actors and Geishas (*Ukiyo-e*, 'pictures of the floating world'), handmade pottery or possibly even Buddhist calligraphy (*Shodō*) might come to our mind. But even though the former capital of Japan (from 794 —1868), with its seventeen UNESCO World Heritage sites, 1600 Buddhist temples and 400 *Shintō*-shrines, is the 'heart' of traditional culture and thus, the center of traditional art- and craftwork, it is a popular misconception that Kyōto's culture- and art landscape would only subsist of these traditional characteristics. Instead, the city always was — and still is — a place of creation and innovation, a melting pot for the old and new, tradition and modernity.

The aim of this Master thesis is to present and outline the findings of my research project entitled '*Between tradition and modernity —contemporary art in Kyōto*', which is based upon the findings and results from my three month-long field research trip to Kyōto (Japan), lasting from the 17th of January 2017 to the 15th of April 2017. In the scope of this thesis, I attempt to draw a picture of Kyōto's contemporary art world, that means its public and private art-related institutions such as galleries or art spaces and artists I have visited during my fieldwork, in order to discuss the character of Kyōto's institutional art world with its local, as well as global features and specifics.

It is undebatable that the last two decades have produced an explosive growth of exhibiting and collecting practices in the Asian art world[1]. However, this increase of commercial gallery space and institutional exhibitions was co-existing with the establishment of many collective, artist-run and independent art spaces that, for various reasons, shun official channels. Accordingly, the art world in Kyōto has also experienced a veritable revival and renewal of its private art institutions, especially in the last ten years. A scrutiny of art galleries, show-rooms, exhibition spaces, public art fairs and local, independent art places, will be presented in this thesis.

Japan, and the city of Kyōto in particular, are by now a reference point for me: being fascinated by the country's cultural diversity since childhood and having lived in Japan already at the age of fifteen, I continued to study Japanese and Japanese culture and arts in Germany, as well as in Kyōto. Thanks to several long-term stays, I was able to get to know Japanese culture and daily life, while also developing fruitful relationships to several personalities, be they artists, curators or art critics, even before the beginning of my research project. Thus, it has been a rather straightforward decision for me to merge my current studies of Japanese culture and arts with cultural and social anthropology into one project for my final Masters-degree.

In order to conduct a research into the 'contemporary' (*John smith's* 'ethnographic present' citation needed), I resorted to an ethnographic approach that was developed during the aforementioned Kyōto fieldwork.
I started acquiring knowledge of the city of Kyōto already during my former one-year-long exchange year at Kyōto University (*Kyōto Daigaku*) in 2012. During that stay I did not only aim to enlarge upon the duality of tradition and modernity, but wanted first and foremost to get to know more about the notion of Kyōto's 'contemporary' art world. That is why I wanted to get to know more about what the notion of Kyōto's 'contemporary' art world is constituted of, which was achieved by looking into the 'local', i.e. insiders' networks and their relation to art institutions.

The focal subjects in this thesis are artists and gallerists based in Kyōto at the time of data collection; they were chosen according to specific criteria aiming at maximizing dissimi-

[1] *Antoinette, M., & Turner, C. (2014: 4).*

larities and increase variety of both background and expression. It is important to note that the chosen people and art institutions, although not encompassing the whole complexity and variety of Kyōto's art world, represented nonetheless an exhaustive sample exactly because of its variety: I paid specific attention not to bias my choice towards specific art inspirations. I would only like to notice here that most of them have been available, generous and open-minded to agree to participate in this endeavor and that they represented a great occasion of in-depth research in this particular milieu and in Japan contemporary art landscape in general. I would qualify all of them as exemplary representatives of their art world.

As said, the declared objective of my research is the exploration of the structure of the art world in Kyōto. Soon it devised itself as being threefold: private, public and institutional. The network of participants and initiators in this threefold structure has been considered a separate entity compared with the mentioned spaces, in that they could be considered either the main actors or the stakeholders in the whole picture. I structured the research topic into the following five research questions:

- How does Kyōto's 'contemporary art world' look like? (What would be a valid representation of Kyōto's 'contemporary art world'?)
- How is Kyōto's 'contemporary art world' being constructed by private and public institutions, gallerists, artists and art critics?
- What are the city's characteristics and local specifics?
- How do the city's governmental as well as non-governmental institutions and intentions influence or shape Kyōto's contemporary art world?
- How does the contemporary art world co-exist with the traditional art world?

The conceptual framework of my field of research is basically aligned within the anthropology of art current framework, of which global art studies and Japanese art studies constitute the theoretical part, whereas the city of Kyōto as my field of research constitutes the empirical one. Due to the fact that the topic of contemporary art is of course not only a field of anthropological studies, but also a concern for art historical or sociological studies, I needed to narrow down the exceeding range of possible research themes to one single

research location and a clear research focus. Thus, even if contemporary art is the theoretical framework of my research topic, I did not embark into sketching a general representation of contemporary Japanese art but a much more limited representation of Kyōto's 'contemporary art' representation for those *Japanese* insiders I approached in that timeframe.

While 'contemporary art' can broadly be defined as the art of the last 25 years, I shall refer to the notion of 'contemporary' art as the art I have come upon during my stay in Kyōto. Solely concentrating on this single locality, I also decided against including the research upon the relationship between the national Japanese- and global art market in general, even though some parts of this discussion (concerning the local art market) were taken into consideration.
I will now introduce the methodological approaches used prior, during and after my field work, which will be followed by sketching an introduction of the city of Kyōto as my field of research. I will then outline the underlying theoretical framework. Lastly, I will give a more detailed overview of this thesis.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach of my research project in Kyōto was highly qualitative, and can basically be divided into three different stages: (I.) research preparation (prior to the field trip), (II.) research methodology used in the field and (III.) qualitative data analysis conducted after the field trip. In these three stages of my research — before, during and after my fieldwork — I mainly focused on qualitative methods in order to collect the required data for my thesis. In the following, the first two steps leading towards the qualitative data analysis and the analysis of the material gained in the field will be further evaluated.

The first step was to properly prepare the upcoming field trip in order to get to know the relevant context and background knowledge about my research topic, which implies conducting literature research in the library of the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, the Department of Art History of the University of Vienna, as well as in the spe-

cialized libraries of the MAK museum[2] and the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Within my literature research, I mainly focused on Japanese and Global art discourse related material, including e.g. books, magazine or online articles. This secondary data has mostly been written in English language, while some books and articles were in Japanese and German, as well.

Another important point of preparation was the pre-writing of questions and questionnaires for the upcoming interviews in Kyōto, which means that I needed to create structured interviews. Keeping in mind that most of the Japanese people I intend to interview might not be fluent in English, I prepared the questions in both Japanese and English language. These two completely similar questionnaires were consisting of twelve questions, including formal questions about personal information (name, age, occupation, place of residence). The question I posed were addressed to both experts and non-experts, as will be explained in the next chapter. Furthermore, I started to make a detailed list of all of Kyōto's contemporary art galleries, listing up their concrete location, contact person(s), current exhibition(s) and opening times. This list was completed in Kyōto.

Despite the formal knowledge-background it is especially important in a country like Japan to get in contact with the people you might want to interview in due time ahead — a fact of social behavior, which I learned from pervious projects with Japanese people. I consider these pre-arrangements to be as important as the fieldwork itself, due to the fact that it helps to establish possibly important contacts from the beginning in a much more stable manner. Thus, after I got the official approval of my KWA-scholarship and knew the concrete dates of my time being in Kyōto, I immediately started to (re-)establish the contact to local artists, curators and art-critics via e-mail and social networks, such as *Facebook, WhatsApp* or *LINE*. These contacted persons likely to be interviewed were informed about my research trip and purposes, and asked in advance for possible meeting dates.

[2] *Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED IN THE FIELD

The second step consisted of the acquisition of qualitative data in the field. This was mainly achieved by means of conducting qualitative interviews (I.) and participant observation (II.).

In order to get relevant knowledge and deeper insight into the research topic, I arranged several face-to-face Interviews, where some of them were planned ahead (in Vienna, see above), but most of them developed after I got into the 'local art network' and was introduced to e.g. artists by people I already knew by then, connecting virtually step by step. Yet, many of my interviews were conducted rather spontaneously, such as for example after a gallery opening or during an artist talk.

During the period of three months, I have conducted several expert interviews, structured interviews (prepared ahead in Vienna), semi-structured interviews and narrative open interviews with the artists and relevant experts of Kyōto's art world and had numerous informal talks (e.g. with locals) about the city *Kyōto* and its contemporary local art world, as I will come back to later on once again.

The expert interviews planned in advance (for example with artists, curators and art critics) were realized both with the use of structured and semi-structured questionnaires, in order to get precise knowledge about the respective research subject on the one hand, while staying open-minded for other, yet related subject areas and references, on the other hand. Thus, although I had a certain structure of what I might want to know from each person in mind, I did not fix to the questions or conform to any chronological order, because I wanted to stay as flexible as possible during the interview. I started each interview by initially asking the person to be interviewed for permission to record the interview, which was — due to respecting their private sphere — sometimes rejected. Nevertheless, all of the questions were always extensively answered. Besides the common basic introductory procedure, the topics of these questions ranged from personal experiences in the art world, such as 'How did your artistic career look like until now?' to personal impressions about Kyōto's current art world, for example 'How would you describe Kyōto's art landscape (private and public institutions)' or 'How do you think did Kyōto's art landscape develop or change within the last years?'. With these questions I wanted to combine the personal practice and experiences made in Kyōto with expert knowledge in order to get a broader, and

more personal picture about Kyōto's art world. While the structured interviews were mostly carried out with 'insiders' from the local art world (referring to artists, curators, critics), I also focused on interviewing students from the several art universities existing, such as the Kyōto University of Art and Design (*Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*), Kyōto Seika University or the Kyōto City University of Arts (*Kyōto-shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku*). These students interviewed were not only more accessible, but did also often have more time for extensive interviews. Furthermore, some informal and unplanned interviews were made with 'random' locals or Kyoto-visiting Japanese tourists, which I happened to meet in, or in front of galleries or art-related public spaces. As a result, the age range of interviewed participants ranges approximately from an age of eighteen to the age of sixty-five. The spoken languages of the interviews conducted were, as already mentioned, Japanese and English. However, as in any field trip experience, there were some problems that occurred: Since many Japanese people I have interviewed were not keen about being recorded, it was necessary to make hand notes.

The second research methodology I used in the field is the method of participant observation, where I mainly concentrated on visiting Kyōto's local art institutions (public as well as private ones), attending exhibition openings and closings, artists talks or lectures in order to get an overview of the local art that was shown, as well as the artists that were exhibiting during my stay, one the one hand. These artist talks and gallery opening events were mostly announced and disseminated through local art-related internet-platforms, flyer and pamphlets that were laid out near the entrance of each gallery or simply by word-of-mouth communication. In such way, I managed to visit nearly all of Kyōto's contemporary art galleries and museums during my three-month long stay, where especially the opening receptions (vernissage) and closing events (finissage) were important to get to know new people and connect with them.

On the other hand, participant observation does not only refer to 'participating' in those public events, but also visiting the artist's ateliers to 'observe' their way of working. Since I already knew some artists living and working in Kyōto, it was relatively easy to establish further contacts — also, because most of the contact-making in Japan is mainly happening in the context of being introduced by somebody. Trying to attend as many artists talks as possible as mentioned above, I became acquainted with the artists and their work, since

these talks did not only provide personal background information, but also the possibility to ask questions at the Q&A-session at the end.

The personal and intensive contact to artists, curators and art critics that has been established made it thus possible to visit their ateliers and even their private homes, where I could see how and where the paintings were made. There, the artists showed me many of their past and current works (which they didn't exhibit yet) and talked about the process of creation and gave me further background information about their way of working. Furthermore, I was able to visit Kyōto's international photography festival KYOTOGRAPHIE, which means that I could take part in the several artists talks, live performances and lectures held by Japanese artists in local venues.

The results of this use of methodology, that means the empirical data gained in the field, was captured in different ways of data documentation, which I will further elaborate in the following.

DATA DOCUMENTATION

The documentation of the material gained during my fieldwork can generally be separated into two categories: written and recorded documentation (I.) and visual documentation (II.). The written and recorded collection of data (I.) implies the hand written notes and electronic records of the interviews conducted, as well as the notes that were written down in my field diary. It does not only contain important side notes being made while interviewing, but at the same time it was used for capturing annotations and subjective impressions of the field site, such as how the gallery looked like, or for describing the general atmosphere of the meeting, for example how the mood of the gallery opening or interview was etcetera. This diary, which I carried with me most of the time, proved to be very helpful afterwards in order to remember the little details of the conversations, e.g. language used by the counterpart, or the places I visited.

While visiting the galleries and going through the city, I was always attentive to take enough visual material (II.) with me, such as e.g. flyers of current or upcoming exhibitions or pamphlets, that were put on display in nearly every public cultural venue (galleries, museums, universities, cafes etc.). I marked and wrote down every place that I have visited on

a special map of Kyōto city, which I have been lucky to receive at one of the art galleries. This map should prove to be very helpful, not only because of me getting a better overview and orientation, but also because it had already listed up some suggested ‘places to see’.
Many information could also be found within local newspapers or magazines, from which I have cut out the relevant articles. But the probably most important step was to document my experiences visually. All of the places I have visited and artworks I saw (in public or private) were thus documented by taking pictures with my digital camera or smart-phone camera — after asking for and obtaining permission (which is a very important point in Japan). Some pictures were made by professional photographers that where attending e.g. gallery openings, which I received later on via e-mail. After sorting and labelling the pictures, the gathered material was listed and organized chronologically (after the field trip) by event, artist/art work and location.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The information for my qualitative data analysis was collected prior- and during the field trip (such as literature, records, handwritings, photographies), updated as soon as new materials were identified (during, as well as after the research trip), listed in tabular form and organized chronologically. The next step was to transcribe and translate the interviews I have conducted, since most of the interviews where held in Japanese. Here I want to point at the challenge of the ‘translation gap’, which every translation process implies. This means, that even if there are adequate translations for every Japanese word existing, one can never *truly* translate its original meaning (in a ‘proper sense’), because there will always be some social, philosophical or psychological concepts remaining within the understanding of the word, which might not be existent in another language.
I applied a rather ’open’ way of coding, which means that I marked repeated ideas and arguments that I thought could help answering my research questions and designed different thematic categories in where to insert them. Sorting and assembling these information also helped me to get once more a better overview of the city’s art-institutional structure, which means that I could describe more clearly the relationships and connections between the

various art centers and places. This way of looking at the art-specific sites of the city could also be understood within the sense of ‘mapping’ the city. I complemented and assembled this set of primary data with the secondary data received from the literature research I conducted prior, as well as new literature I found after the field trip — a way of theoretical sampling, where I could re-conceive which data needs further analysis or research. After the search for this additional secondary data, I could determine which anthropological theories could correspond to my field and topic of research. This variety of written and visual sources proved helpful to get as much (background) information and additional arguments about the research topic in order to find answers for my research questions. However, after the constantly repeated reviewing, analysis and sorting of the literature and other secondary data, I realized that it was moreover constructive to narrow down the range of theoretical approaches in order to find more focus for my thesis. Finally, in order to make adequate statements about the meaning of my collected material and what is represented in it, another evaluation, classification and interpretation completed this step. After the coding of my interviews I have decided to choose some of the artists to be my ‘main characters’ in order to exemplify my results.

However, regarding the way of how to interpret and analyze the artworks of a selected artists, one needs to be careful: similar to the way historical works of art are being interpreted today with an awareness of the difference between our own position and the position we attempt to reconstruct in relation to the era and place in which these works were produced, we also need to see the meaning of today’s art within its very own contexts — as a interrelated system of iconographic determinations combined with political-, social- and cultural significances. However, I need to emphasize once more, that it was not my task or intention to interpret or analyze the art works itself like for example an art historian would do, but rather to understand and use them as just one piece of the whole puzzle, that would constitute Kyōto’s art world.

Figure I. depicts the way in which I considered the main agents of this thesis — that means artists, gallerists, curators and art critics — are connected, and how they look upon art and Japanese art (in general), as well as local art (in particular). With ‘influences’ and ‘outcome’ I am referring to the input the artists gets from outside (such as Kyōto’s traditions or local friends) and the artwork or local (or (inter)national) exhibitions he/she creates. My

position is both an outside and inside one, due to the fact that I try to analyze their standpoint from a neutral position, while simultaneously knowing about (and considering) their personal point of view. Even if there are other examples of methodological analysis existing, the qualitative analysis of my data was supposed to be last of all stages. However, this way of working should not be seen as a hierarchical method, where some step is subordinate to others. Rather, I view this way of qualitative data analysis to be the final step, with the others before leading to it.

Taken all together, the approaches I combined range from a first, rough analysis of my material (overview, consideration, summaries) to detailed analysis (elaboration of categories, interpretation, identifying structures), where the final aim is to generate generalizable statements and be able to describe the field and its body of acquired knowledge.

KYŌTO AS A FIELD OF RESEARCH

Since 794, the city of Kyōto was the Imperial capital of Japan, until the Emperor transferred his permanent residence to *Edo* in 1869, which consequently became the new capital of Japan, known as Tokyo today. Thus, for more than ten centuries, Kyōto was not only the seat of political power in Japan, but also of spiritual, cultural, and even economic power as well. These various different expressions of power also entailed severe consequences for the city's development of urban planning, finding (new) expression in specific forms of urban layout each time a new political stage entered the scenery. However, it is exactly these architectural differences — still visible today — which give contemporary Kyōto its unique and characteristic city landscape.

Located in the valley of the *Yamashiro* basin, Kyōto is surrounded by forested mountains[3] to the East, North, and West, with bordering two rivers, the *Katsura-gawa* (formerly known as *Kadono-gawa*) and the *Kamo-gawa*, running through the city. Originally, *Nagaoka*, an area nearby, had been chosen as the site for a new capital and building work had already started in 784, but after a series of inauspicious events, a new site was selected in-

[3] *The holy Mount Hiei (to the north-east) is 848 meters high, and Mount Atagoyama (to the north-west) with a hight of 924 meters.*

stead and *Heian-kyō*, literally the 'tranquility and peace capital' was founded ten years later.[4] Until the end of the sixteenth century, *Kyōto* was not only unique because of its status as Imperial city, but also because it was the conurbation in an otherwise largely rural country. While the evolution of the city's urban and architectural structures was ravaged by the destruction and reconstruction occurring from several civil wars, fires and natural disasters, it was especially during the seventeen- and eighteenth century that the economy of the city flourished as one of three major cities in Japan (the others being Osaka and *Edo*). As a result of this, Kyōto developed into the capital city of entertainment, culture and arts, for which it is world wide famous for today. After the transfer of the Emperor's residence to *Edo*, the modern city of Kyōto was officially formed on April first, 1889.

Among the larger cities of Japan, Kyōto and Kanazawa are the only two that were not heavily damaged by bombing during World War II. Although Kyōto was targeted for air raids, the U.S. military decided to spear Kyōto because they recognized the importance of its cultural and architectural heritage. Saved from total destruction, many of the city's cultural heritages could remain, but nevertheless, some historic buildings have been lost, or suffered greatly from the careless demolition due to the postwar economic and construction-boom[5]. Realizing this, the national government decided to enact a law for the preservation and conservation[6] of what remained from Kyōto's historic townscape, such as the traditional *machiya* town-houses — low rise wooden buildings with tiled roofs and narrow street frontage, sometimes even containing a small courtyard garden (*Tsuboniwa)* — which are one of the city's most distinguished features. Today, Kyōto is divided into eleven wards (*ku*), with a total population of around 1.46 million inhabitants[7]. Just like other cities in Japan, the city has a single mayor and a city council, governed by the Liberal Democratic Party.

Kyōto's cultural past is long-standing and wide-ranged, so I will just briefly touch upon some important features. Walking along the city's beautiful *Kamo*-River towards the famous *Gion*-district, there is one spot at the East end of a *Shijō Ōhashi*-bridge, where all

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[4] *The city's construction plan was based on the ancient rules of Chinese geometry, whereas the natural characteristics of the plain area was seen as ideal condition to construct the Imperial Palace upon.*

[5] *Fiévé & WALEY (2003: 347).*

[6] *'Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties', Bunkazai hogo ho, involving 'Important Conservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings (Juyo dentoteki kenzobutsugun hozon chiku), enacted in 1975; Fiévé & WALEY (2003: 350).*

[7] *http://www.pref.kyoto.jp/tokei/monthly/suikeijinkou/suikeitop.html accessed last 22.10.2018.*

Kyōto-visiting Japanese tourists gather to take group pictures. There, diagonally across Kyōto's last remaining *Kabuki*-theater, the *Minami-za*, the statue of Izumo no Okuni is standing, erected in 2002 to honor her and to commemorate 400 years of *Kabuki*-performance history in Kyōto. According to tradition, it is believed that there, at the once dry riverbeds of Kyōto, the young said-to-be shrine maiden[8] (*Miko*) sent to Kyōto from Grand Shrine of Izumo (*Izumo Ōyashiro*), began to perform ritual dances in a completely new style of dancing, singing, and acting in the year around 1600, which would later become known as the world's first *Kabuki* performance[9]. Thus, from this day on, Kyōto is renowned to be the birth city of *Kabuki* — a revolutionary dance, indicating that Kyōto has always been seen as avant-garde, a city of creativity and innovation. During the *Genna* (1615-24) and *Kan'ei* (1624-30) eras, Kyōto enjoyed an unparalleled level of prosperity: While experiencing a huge increase in its population as well as in its urban expansion, the city was overflowed with entertainment districts such as *Gion*, where the people of the 'floating' world (*Ukiyo*) were enticing their spectators into theaters, tea houses and (even back then) incredibility expensive restaurants on *Hanami-koji* or *Ponto-cho*-street. Together with *Gojo-ohashi* and *Shijo-gawara*, where street-side shows, fairs, and other traveling exhibitions took place, these scenes were captured in the *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints ('pictures of the floating world') for eternity.

Due to the fact that the end of the seventeenth century was the time of great expansion for the textile merchants[10], Kyōto was not only famous for its abundance of entertainment, culture and arts, but also for its textiles. It was within this context of economic prosperity they brought, that the urban street blocks (*machi*) with their characteristic town houses (*machiya*) could develop, which Kyōto is still nowadays so famous for. Kyōto's merchants were not only wealthy, but moreover always interested and fond of anything that was new. Thus, it was less the government, rather the people living in the city that were pushing Kyōto's development — also in the sense of opening up for Western influences — both culturally and economically speaking.

Eager to modernize during the eighteen- and nineteenth century, the city always had two sides: A Kyōto being proud of its centuries-old traditions (and heritage), and a cosmopoli-

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[8] *While Okuni is credited as being the founder of the Kabuki art form, the validity of such primary sources is difficult to prove. Although many existing sources such as paintings, drawings, and diaries tried to get clear indications on Okuni's life, still very little is known about her.*

[9] *Its distinctive form as known today, was developed later on, in the Edo-period (1609-1868).*

[10] *Which Kyōto's present Nishijin Textile Center still reminds us of.*

tan Kyōto fond of innovation, avant-garde and Western influence. But after the transition of the emperor's residence to *Edo* (today Tokyo), Kyōto was clearly in the search for a new identity: While the city should remain the capital for culture and traditions, it struggled to find a way besides from that. Yet, the time did not stand still after the appearance of *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, as can be seen in the rise of outstanding artists from the Kansai area, which I will come back to in chapter six.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As already mentioned in the beginning, this thesis is aimed to contribute to the fields of Anthropology of Art and Visual Anthropology, even though I do not intend to see the this framework limited to one academic discipline. Moreover, it should be seen as broader, interdisciplinary approach referring to the field of anthropology, art and Japanese studies. To be more specific, the underlying theoretical framework of these inter-linked and connected categories can be aligned within the anthropology of art, global art studies and modern Japanese art history and contemporary Japanese art. In the following I am going to give a short overview of the theoretical approaches and main theories that contributed to this thesis.

A large part of my theoretical references are based upon the publications of the art historians John Clark[11] and Alexandra Munroe[12]. Especially J. Clark's monumental work 'Modernities of Japanese Art' (2013), containing various essential studies of Japanese 'modernities' published by him since 1986, can be seen as the historical framework and theoretical basis for my empirical research about the history and development of Japanese 'Western-style' painting (*Yōga* and *Nihonga* discourse), transitions to modernity, the emergence of avant-garde, as well as the post World War II developments, which underlie this thesis all together.

While the foundation for his writings are based upon empirical research in Japanese primary sources, case studies and his own visits in Japan, his theoretical approach is oriented towards a semiotic terminology applied to traditional 'Japanese-style' painting and modern

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[11] *'Modern Asian Art' (1998), 'Modernities of Japanese Art' (2013), 'The Worlding of the Asian Modern'(2014).*

[12] *'Japanese art after 1945: Scream against the sky' (1994).*

Japanese art. Trying to set up a symbolic context of interpretation for artworks that relies on the study of primary sources and interview material depicting what artists themselves think about artworks and art movement, this theoretical approach has definitely set a corner stone for my own theoretical and empirical research. The conceptual approach differentiating between the 'distribution of art', 'reception of art' and 'dissemination of knowledge' (applied in chapter four) can thus be traced back to Clark's theories.

Despite being an expert in the field of Japanese art (history), Clark's main approach is to describe and define different modernities in Asian art within a comparative perspective between various Asian countries[13], assembling 'micro-studies to deconstruct, or at least reposition, received knowledge'[14]. Among the topics he deals with are neo-traditional art, postmodern- and avant-garde art, types of artists, modes of exhibition, nationalism and international connections (amongst others), which Especially the concepts of 'neo-tradition', 'double othering' and the transfer of art and Clark's 'systematic and rigorous application of these analytical tools to the study of modern Japanese art'[15], have become of significant importance to understand modern Japanese art history global studies of modern art, which have been incorporated within the theoretical background of this thesis and connected to my own research in Japan.

With a special focus on the social and political context of postwar avant-garde culture after 1945, A. Munroe's publication 'Japanese art after 1945: Scream against the sky' (1994) — published on the occasion of the eponymous exhibitions at Yokohama Museum of Art, Guggenheim Museum, New York, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art touring from year 1994 to 1995 — contains several critical essays that contributed to deepen the knowledge about the developments of the last fifty years of Japanese avant-garde art. Divided into two groups of essays, the first group deals with theoretical issues of avant-garde art, the second a discursive survey of Japanese art from 1945 to the present[16]. As 'a comprehensive historical narrative and critical context for the advanced study of twentieth-century

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[13] *The countries and regions discussed in ,'Modernity in Asian Art' (1993) include for example China, Macao, Taiwan, Japan, North and South Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia.*

[14] *Clark (1994: 12).*

[15] *Clark (2013: 9).*

[16] *Amongst the authors of the essays contributing to the publication are art historians like Amano Taro, Bert Winther, Reiko Tomii, John Clark; architect Isozaki Arata, culture critic Karatani Kojin and video artist Nam June Paik.*

Japanese art' that focuses 'the strategy of the avant-garde' in the Japanese context, its originality and its national characteristics'[17], the various essays provided a significant part to understand the emergence and context of avant-garde groups like *Hi Red Center, Gutai, Yomiuri Independents, Neo-Dada Organization, Ankoku Butoh, Mono-ha* and thus, to the historical background of Japanese art after 1945 (chapter two).
Similar to J. Clark's conceptual work, the writings offer a critical analysis of concepts like 'modernization', 'modernity', 'tradition', 'Japanese identity' in the discourse of postwar Japanese art and art making, addressing the difficulty of adopting the concept of modern' art in a non-Western context, rejecting the long time taken-for-granted premise of the West as origin and center of modernity' (and re-interpreting it), which have heavily influenced the theoretical approach of this thesis.

Other works that influenced this thesis largely were 'From postwar to postmodern: Art in Japan, 1945 - 1989' (2012) by Doryun Chong (et al.), an comprehensive anthology of critical essays and artist manifestos of avant-garde art in postwar Japan that proved to be an important resource for understanding the impact of pioneering avant-garde artist collectives like *Gutai*, or the rise of the *Kansai New Wave*. In addition, Reiko Tomii's discursive essays[18] about the notion of *Gendai Bijutsu* provided the framework for understanding the context and emergence of contemporary art in Japan[19].

As the anthropology of art discourse has opened up and moved into main focus of many art-related studies, e.g. dealing with the notion of contemporary art and anthropology in the way of fieldwork practice, especially Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright's writings[20] were groundbreaking to re-open the debates about fruitful cross-disciplinary exchange between art and anthropology. Furthermore, their books turned out to be an initial impulse to link the discourse of anthropology of art with the field of Japanese Studies, trying to connect ethnographic fieldwork with Japanese contemporary art.

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[17] *MUNROE (1994: 20).*

[18] *'Historicizing Contemporary Art: Some Discursive Practices in Gendai Bijutsu in Japan' (2004), 'International Contemporaneity in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond' (2009).*

[19] *Besides this, articles by Kitazawa Noriaki and Robin Thompson (e.g. The Formation of the Concept of Art and the Displacement of Realism, 2012), Takashi Murakami's Superflat (2000) and Tetsuya Ozaki's (with whom I could conduct a personal interview in Japan myself) Bye bye Kitty!!! Between heaven and hell in contemporary Japanese art (2011) were significant for reconstructing the Japanese 'contemporary art' discourse.*

[20] *E.g. 'Between Art and Anthropology' (2010).*

In regard to the broader context of global art studies, the publications by Hans Belting and Peter Weibel[21], were essential to get an overview and theoretical background about the notion and concepts of contemporary art, that means the effects of globalization on the visual arts and the rise of 'the contemporary' within the last twenty years and its inherent challenges.

Exploring the regional and global connections and new developments of Asian art in the twenty-first century, Michelle Antoinette and Caroline Turner's collection of essays entitled 'Contemporary Asian Art and Exhibitions: Connectivities and World-making' (2014) were another crucial reading for understanding the discourse about intra-Asian regional connections and the global contexts within the field of contemporary Asian art, which dynamics and worldwide-connected spheres are both overlapping and challenging the monopoly of a Western art world over the last two decades.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

Having introduced the methodological and theoretical framework, the following chapter shall give an overview of the subsequent chapters. In order to understand the theoretical context of the research that is dealt with within this thesis, the chapters 'Contextualizing Contemporary Japanese art' and 'Modern Japanese art' are intended to provide an overview of the historical conditions and developments that are leading to the discourse about contemporary Japanese art.

Thus, the first chapter deals first of all with the topic of periodization of Asian art and the 'Asian modern', elaborating upon its division into five chronological groupings, in which the Japanese one is included. Focusing thereafter more specifically upon the developments that lead to the notion of *gendai bijutsu* — or what 'contemporary art' is called in Japanese — the notion of *Nihonga* and *Yōga* including its contemporary changes, the conditions of Japanese modernity which outline the specifics of modern Japanese art, paving the way for the transition to contemporary Japanese art, as well finally the creation of the Japanese

[21] *'Contemporary art and the museum: A global perspective' (2007), 'The global art world: Audiences, markets, and museums (2009)', 'The global contemporary and the rise of new art worlds' (2013).*

concept of ‘art’ (*bijutsu*) and ‘contemporary art’ (*gendai bijutsu)* will be explained in detail within this chapter.

The second chapter (‘Modern Japanese art’) will then elucidate the socio-historical key features of modern Japanese- and contemporary art, which has been further subdivided into the categories of Postwar Japanese art (including *Gutai* and *Art Informel*), *Mono-ha* and *Conceptual Art*, Post *Mono-ha* and Japanese art after 1989. Subsequently followed by enlarging upon the art movements that appeared in the Kansai-area in the 1980s — such as the rise of the *Kansai New Wave* and Kyōto-based artists like *Dumb Type* — chapter three shall provide an additional framework to understand the background of contemporary art in Kyōto, before I will start to introduce the results of my own research.

The most extensive chapters of this thesis entitled ‘The institutional structure of Kyōto’s art world’ and ‘Kyōto-based artists’ present, as the titles already indicate, my findings and research results concerning Kyōto’s galleries and art spaces, as well as the local artists that I have come across and researched upon during my fieldwork. Hence, both chapters explicate the largest part of the empirical results upon which the analysis of this thesis is based upon. In order to outline how the institutional structure of Kyōto’s art world (chapter four) can be understood and how it is functioning, a structure of my findings will be provided according to the division of the ‘distribution of art’, the ‘reception of art’ and the ‘dissemination of knowledge’, which I will elaborate upon before going into detail about Kyōto’s particular galleries and art spaces. Aiming at providing an in-depth view of the research results presenting Kyōto’s art world, I decided to subdivide this institutional structure into the categories of private commercial galleries and alternative art spaces, rental galleries, university-related galleries and art festivals, where the different local art-related spaces and events will be outlined and characterized. Furthermore, some selected main characters (that means artists, curators and art critics from Kyōto’s art world)

The followed-by chapter, chapter five (‘Kyōto-based artists’), is also solely based on the ethnographic material I have found during my stay in Kyōto. It is dedicated to introducing the four artists major Kyōto-based artists — namely Daijiro Hama, Mio Yamato, Raita Yoshida and Keisuke Matsuda — who I have met and interviewed in person. Besides shortly outlining each of the artist’s personal and educational background, I will showcase a selection of their artworks that were exhibited or shown to me during the research time.

Expanding on the these findings, I will critically outline the local specifics and characteristics of Kyōto's institutional art world in the last chapter, chapter six. Here, the city's particularities, strengths and weaknesses concerning its art institutional structure will be discussed particularly with regard to the governmental and institutional agents (linked to the tourist-industry), on the one side, and the alternative, non-institutional representatives (referring to the contemporary artists and galleries which this thesis is mainly concentrating on), on the other side. Indicating at the subtitle of this thesis 'between tradition and modernity', the relationship and controversies between these two different inserts groups will thus be analyzed, asking whether modernity and tradition are co-existing by looking at some of the specific features of Kyōto's art world. I will examine whether the governmentally intended development of the city to appear as a touristic, global 'Kyōto brand' is conflicting with the city's cultural landscape and commercializing it, or whether the agents of Kyōto's local art world are actually making use of this image. Another issue to be examined is the question in which way the municipal politics have an influence on the city's art world, promoting or impeding it.

CHAPTER ONE

I. CONTEXTUALIZING CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART

Before talking about contemporary art in Kyōto and in order to understand the theoretical context of the research that is dealt with within this thesis, it is first and foremost important to integrate the topic in the overall context of contemporary Japanese art.

Within the process of global geopolitical and economic changes, there have been tremendous transformations within the art world by the late twentieth century, proclaiming the shift from an art world basically centered in Europe and America, towards a new focus on regions such as Asia[22]. To a certain extend, this can be explained by the outcry of post-modern critiques, who have assailed modernism's Eurocentric assumptions and challenged the canon of modern art history by introducing new cultural theories that included non-Western and minority artists — traditionally considered peripheral or 'other' — which did not only lead to a broadened reflection of the art-critical inquiry itself, but furthermore to a re-evaluation of Euro-American values and dominance in art.[23]

While it is indisputable that the world has seen a dramatic growth of interest in contemporary Asian art over the last decade, I decided to focus solely on the contextualization of *Japanese* contemporary art in Kyōto due to two reasons: The first reason is the fact that the geo-cultural term and idea of 'Asia' itself is problematic: Asia cannot be seen as 'monolithic entity', but should rather be regarded as 'a constructed discourse partly developed in counterpoint to the idea of the 'West'[24]. Without falling into the trap of denying the diversity of local cultures and histories in the region, it is especially in the context of any ethnographic research necessary to look at each country's individual local and historical context before making overall generalizing suggestions. Thus, the notion of an 'Asian' art needs partly to be regarded as a concept of Western classification, and partly as a construction established by the respective Asian countries themselves. Consequently, the second reason is that the range of what contemporary 'Asian' art — in all its variety mentioned above —

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[22] *See e.g. Antoinette & Turner (2014), Smith, T. (2011a), Furuichi, & Kokusai Kōryū Kikin. (2003), Munroe (1994), Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie , Belting, Buddensieg & Weibel (2013).*

[23] *See Antoinette & Turner (2014); Belting, et al (2009); Belting, et al (2013); Bydler (2004); Smith, T. (2011a), Winking (2012), Munroe (1994).*

[24] *antoinette & turner (2014: 7).*

as well as what the notion of ‘contemporary’ is constituted of would simply go beyond the scope of this master research thesis.

In the specific case of Japan, it is the country’s explosive rise as an economic superpower (from the beginning of the 1950s to the 1970s) one the one hand, and the fast-moving development of globalized culture in the digital age on the other hand, which facilitated the boom of contemporary Japanese art. Accordingly, one can clearly denote that Japanese art exhibitions organized word-wide by various museums and galleries, as well as the number of Japanese artists being represented in international art fairs and art biennials, are steadily increasing since the mid 1980s.[25]

Furthermore, *gendai bijutsu,* as contemporary art is called in Japanese, did not only become a welcomed resource to satisfy the demands of the proliferating amount of (contemporary) art exhibitions, but also a new tool to approach to legitimize the historization of Japan’s modern cultural history — overseas, as well as in Japan. As an example, there has been a real trend towards discovering and praising some avant-garde artists and artist collectives, which have once been either disregarded or even despised.[26] Furthermore, many Euro-American scholars and curators of modern art have often regarded contemporary Japanese art as ‘derivative of and altogether outside modern art history’[27], as art historian Alexandra Munroe proclaims: ‘Either the work appeared too Western and hence lacked originality — a basic tenet of modernism — or it appeared too traditional — a quality that is antithetical to modern art’s internationalist vision’[28]. These opposing factors are, as will be elaborated on in the following chapters, not only one of the biggest struggles of Japans modern art history, but still a present and crucial element of contemporary art. But while the debate has mostly been focusing on the contemporary, it is necessary to realize the importance of the linkage between historical and modern art history to its contemporary art.
To provide an example: Japanese specialists have frequently tried to neglect late nineteenth and twentieth century art, as if modern Japan, ‘depraved’ by Western influences, would not have been capable of creating contemporary visual arts that could coequal its classical past.

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[25] *Munroe (1994: 19).*
[26] *Ibid., p. 19.*
[27] *Ibid., p. 19.*
[28] *Ibid., p. 20.*

But Japan's major traditional schools of painting (such as *Kanō-ha*, *Enzan-Shijō*, *Yamato-e* or *Ukiyo-e*) and calligraphy have concurrently continued to develop to the present time. It seemed that no matter how 'modern' traditional Japanese materials, techniques or art movements became, they were always either seen within the categories of Western standards or as external categories, inapplicable for modern art.

This misinterpretation has prevailed in all three areas of modern Japanese art, which is *Nihonga* ('Japanese-style painting'), *Yōga* ('Western-style painting'), as well as the avant-garde (including *Dada*, Surrealist and other abstract art tendencies). John Clark, amongst others, has been one of the leading voices in marking the distinction between the 'Asian Modern' and 'contemporary' art, defining the histories, 'multiple art discourses' and practices in what he refers to 'as a particular set of geographically defined entities which became 'the modern state system in Asia from the onset of late Euramerican colonialism in the eighteenth century until the end of colonial rule in the mid-twentieth century'[29].

Focusing on 'contemporaneity' in Japanese art has only recently become a topic of interest, entering the theoretical discourse on 'contemporary art' — or *gendai bijutsu* as it is called in Japanese — as heightened sense of *kokusaiteki dōjisei*, which can be translated as 'international contemporaneity', in Japan's 1960s[30], as I will come back later on.

In the following chapters I am going to provide an overview of the historical conditions and transformations that lead to Japanese 'modernism' and the developments of *Nihonga* ('Japanese-style painting') and *Yōga (*'Western-style painting'), which is inevitably connected to the question of Western impact and influences, as well as and the conditions of 'modernity' in Japanese art, before discussing the creation of the Japanese concept of 'art' (*bijutsu*) and the notion of *gendai bijutsu* ('contemporary art') itself.

I.I. THE PROBLEM OF PERIODIZATION

'Art is rarely produced in terms of established critical categories, let alone nascent ones, and there is always more art being produced at any time which lies across many categories,

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[29] *Clark (2014: 67).*

[30] *Tomii (2009: 123).*

than may be constructed by any one category itself'[31], art historian Clark empathizes in his monumental work *Modernities of Japanese art* (2013). Thus, defining a periodization or even a methodology for twentieth-century Japanese art history becomes quite a challenge, which I will therefore just touch on briefly in the following.

If we aim for the periodization of Asian art according to John Clark, it can structurally be constituted in chronological terms and in vertical terms, by means of stratifying the art activities[32]. Thus, the discourse about the 'Asian Modern', which had its inception in the early to mid-nineteenth century, can roughly be divided into five chronological groupings, in which the Japanese one is to be included[33]:

First, the period of transitioning to modernity (1850s-1890s), where practices and styles of Asian art should not be understood as 'counter-appropriations adopted under the constraints of colonialism or neocolonialism'[34] any more, but rather be conceived as transitional types made by artists orientating more and more towards cosmopolitanism. However, this time-span still encompasses 'traditional' or 'classical' Asian art produced from ancient times up to the nineteenth century (such as *Edo*-Painting and *Ukiyo-e* in the case of Japan) that is mainly produced within the country, without the artist being in contact with major foreign influences.

A second period from around 1880-1914 is characterized by Academy Realism, Salon Art and National art discourses, which could at first glance be viewed as an appropriation or assimilation of Euramerican art styles by successful artists from outside. However, it is important to keep in mind that 'Modern Asian art discourses have arisen in conditions where there have been internal or endogenous forces at play, with external or exogenous demands and provision of models'[35] and accordingly, this period should also be understood concomitant with the counter-appropriation of those styles and practices mentioned above[36]. Thus, in the case of Japan specifically, it means that Japanese artists already had contact

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[31] *CLARK (2013: 251).*

[32] *CLARK (2014: 70).*

[33] *Ibid., p. 70.*

[34] *Ibid., p. 78.*

[35] *Ibid., p. 80.*

[36] *Here, Clark further points out to 'reconsider more carefully the ways of conceiving the distinction between exogenous and endogenous art discourses since the resulting works have become the originary works for long-term and, in most cases, almost wholly endogenous genealogies of the modern.', CLARK (2014: 80).*

with foreign art discourses e.g. due to own travel experiences abroad[37] or art discourses provided by resident expatriate foreigners. However, giving those national art discourses its legacy for domestic siting by continuing to reflect upon modes of styles and aesthetics that are non-Euramerican, art styles like *Nihonga* and *Yōga* came into being. From around 1906, modern art discourses in Japan started to be reconstituted in terms of greater artistic freedom and self-expressiveness, as will be further elaborated in chapter two**.**

From the 1920s-30s, the contact with foreign discourses were facilitated by educational institutions as well as resident foreign teachers and artists began to go abroad to take up residence in a foreign country, overall constituting a period of early Modernism. Whether 'modern' Asian artists moved or stayed at home — their flexibility was imbedded within a set of relations between domestic and overseas art centers, such as Paris and New York[38], which became a fundamental feature of this period. In the case of those Asian artists gone abroad, the separation from their home country and culture implied the relativization of experiencing the 'other' culture from a distant point of view as well.

In a fourth period, Abstractionism and Conceptualism is dealing with the developments under Post-colonialism from the 1940s-1960s, which articulates through 'a drive for the local and essential, and for a locally conceptualized generality'[39] amongst Asian artists in two different directions (the possibility of correlation not to be excluded): One direction is a new narration of 'their' people as 'a subject in storied representation […] beyond the constraints of the colonial or external hegemony'[40], the other direction was to substantiate 'their' national aesthetic tastes or sensibilities, in the case of Japan towards an *Art Informel*, as I will elaborate in chapter II.II.

The last period is referred to as the 'contemporary', commonly understood as period that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s up to the present, where discourses of locality and contemporaneity, the global and the transnational emerge. These discourses enable the

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[37] *To mention some examples: among those artists was e.g. Hosui Yamamoto, who came to Paris in 1878–1888, soon providing illustrations for the 'Poèmes de la Libellule' by Judith Gautier and Kinmochi Saionji. After his return to Japan he became famous for a theatrical visualization of Japanese myths. Goseda Yoshimatsu lived and worked in Paris from 1881–1886, where he became the first Japanese artist to exhibit at a French salon in 1881 and 1883;* CLARK *(2014: 80).*

[38] *Tsuguharu Foujita for example, who was in Paris from 1913–1929 (later in New York from 1947–1949 and back in France from 1950–1968), has always been regarded as the Japanese artist who was most easily assimilated to the French art worlds, also having formed friendships with artists such as Picasso or Matisse and creating a niche market for his 'fond blanc Japonais';* CLARK *(2014: 83).*

[39] CLARK *(2014: 84).*

[40] *Ibid., p. 84.*

artists to ‘rediscover their own ‘tradition’ or ‘national subjects’ and wrap them in approved narratives’[41], which are combined with the pluralization of a variety of temporary art centers such as the biennales — several of them which were held in Asia — of the 1990. Not only the Asian biennials, also the overseas exhibitions by young Japanese contemporary artists started to proliferate, giving the artists the opportunity to expand their international network abroad on the one hand, and introducing a new, modern and ‘cool’ Asia’ on the other hand, such as for example the ‘Cool Japan’ and *superflat* movement (see chapter II.V). Linked to this was that international departments of luxury consumer goods started to set a trend where cultural references were attached to their high-end consumer goods. As such, art works from Asian artists became a cultural marketing for their foundations, treading the line between fine art and commercial art since the 1990s[42].

Since modern Japanese art history is still a field of research with backlog demand and need for more critical inquiry, many of the struggles of defining a methodology — or language of critical analysis and interpretation — for twentieth century Japanese art history have just started to be determined.[43] Furthermore, the way in which Japanese (art) history after 1868’s *Meiji* Restoration is often given account of at universities and in major museum — after almost 250 years of self-imposed isolation a radical program of modernization after Western models was forced upon the country, putting an end to its ‘authentic’ traditions — is misleading and deviating from the truth, because it strictly divides Japanese art into two categories: The pre-M*eiji* period with its classical, traditional art and the post-*Meiji* period, with modern art that is somewhat coined by the supremacy of Western influences. Thus, the actual problem of historical classification lies deeper, in the unilateral Western perception of process of modernization, standing for the blurring of differences, dilution of traditional culture or national identity in a non-Western country.

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[41] *Clark (2014: 85).*

[42] *One of the prominent examples is Murakami Takashi’s iconic ‘Multicolore Monogram’ bag collection collaboration with the french luxury label Luis Vuitton, inaugurated in 2003, where the artist reassembled the trademark ‘LV’ logo into his specific ‘Superflat’ Japanese kitsch-fusion style.*

[43] *Munroe (1994: 20).*

The familiar view holds mistakenly that modernity in art began with the *Meiji* restoration[44] as a Japanese response to the 'West', which relativized existing Japanese discourses over many fields. But such discourses were forced to lose their hitherto unquestioned legitimacy by their constrained comparison with an external 'other'. If we step back and try to generate an overall picture, we can see that Japanese modernism has at least two faces: On the one hand it is the intellectual bias towards Western rationalism and mechanization — the rational idea that values technical and industrial progress — and, on the other hand, it is the liberation of everyday customs, which were brought in through Western consumer culture, such as movies (particularly American ones), mass and print-media. The common assumption is that changes in life and customs were consequently followed by changes in art.[45] But in fact, modernism in Japanese art — a position we need to distinguish from the 'modern' — has often been understood as being a period where most of Euramerican forms of the artistic modernism, which have arrived in Japan, were absorbed unfiltered, and becoming popular in many parts of the Japanese art world especially from the late 1920s onwards. Yet, Japanese modernism in art has never been adjoining or contiguous with the advent of Euramerican styles.[46] Instead, it is important to understand, that Japanese modernism in art should rather be seen as precedent process, which had only been accompanied or maybe paralleled by the overall 'adoption' of Western products[47]. Furthermore, it was not only the 'West' that was emulated: the interest in things Western in early *Meiji*-times was paralleled by a great fashion for *Nanga* (or 'Southern' Chinese individualist and often expressionist ink styles)[48].

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[44] *As the Shogunate had collapsed and imperial rule was restored in 1868, the newly established Meiji government promoted the modernization or 'enlightenment' of Japan ('Meiji Restoration', Meiji Ishin), which commemorates the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912). During this time, the whole country underwent tremendous political, economical and social transformations and rapidly reinvented itself as new nation state under the constitutional monarchy, aiming to contest with the Western imperial powers by introducing a wide range of political, cultural and technological elements that were adopted from Europe and America.*

[45] *Clark (2013: 51).*

[46] *Ibid., p. 51.*

[47] *Japanese art had, in fact, even before its opening in 1868, long been in contact with the West: due to the provision of a controlled trading facility for the Chinese and the Dutch at Nagasaki since 1633, hitherto unknown and 'foreign' art techniques have been transmitted.*

[48] *One of the reasons for that was the development of the hitherto popular Ukiyo-e, the woodblock prints of the 'Floating World', became a more and more profane form of visual art. Another reason was the forthcoming urbanism all over Japan, which did not only provide upcoming large scale intellectual class, but also a new form of artistic public awareness, with a thirst and fascination for anything new, especially in the big cities of Edo, Kyōto and Osaka, where the Japanese population had already been used to — and tired of — these limited images of the 'modern life'. See: Clark (2013: 81).*

While the development of Modernity in Japanese art spans from the 1850s-1930s[49], it did not depend on modernist social customs or mass media technology, even though a certain connection for its later reception and dissemination cannot be denied[50]: the import of European technology and material was about to mark a major change — not only for the art world: as a means of reversing the 'unequal treaties' of 1859 between the US and Japan[51], it also meant for Japan becoming a military and intellectual equal of the 'West' in terms of 'modern' civilization[52].

While the West was long unwilling to recognize Asia's rapidly changing identity, an imaginary Japan became (and maybe still is) largely a fictional projection in the postmodern discourse: 'In emphasizing strategies of appropriation and subversion, Western critiques who became engaged in contemporary Japanese art tended to confuse the impressionistic application of postmodernism with its critical methodology, and discounted the 'reality itself''[53] as Munroe points out, concluding that the 'validity of postmodernism vis-a-vis contemporary Japanese art' should rather lie in a new context, a 'critique of modernist hierarchies [where] pluralistic world views and multiple local histories can coexist within a broader discourse'[54].

Here it is necessary to realize the ambiguity — and risk — of using the term 'modern' in a non-Western context; By implication, an appropriate framework for non-Western modern art needs the development of 'languages outside a Western-dominated art world'[55]: a concept of modernity, that is ready to be re-conceptualized in Japanese terms.

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[49] *Clark (2013: 51 ff.), Clark (2014: 70).*

[50] *Clark (2013: 51).*

[51] *The 'Treaty of Amity and Commerce' or 'Harris Treaty'(jap. Nichibei Shūkō Tsūshō Jōyaku), opened the ports of Kanagawa and four other Japanese cities for trading and granted extraterritoriality to foreigners.*

[52] *The period of opening and civilization was to prepare Japan for this equality, one not in the event achieved until the closing years of the 19th century. Clark (2013: 82).*

[53] *Munroe (1994: 21).*

[54] *Ibid., p. 21.*

[55] *antoinette & turner (2014: 6).*

I.II. NIHONGA AND YŌGA

From this point onwards, Japan's art history underwent a very own way of development: *Nihonga* (or 'Japanese-style paintings') are paintings from about 1900 onwards that have been made in accordance with traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques and materials. While based on thousand-year-old painting traditions, the term was mainly coined in the *Meiji* period of Imperial Japan, to distinguish such works from so called 'Western-style paintings', or *Yōga*. Thus, the term *Nihonga* is usually put in opposition to that of *Yōga*, which was characterized by the use of oil paints, watercolors, also incorporating various predominantly European modernism from nineteenth century such as Realism, Impressionism, Fauvism or Cubism. *Nihonga*, in contrast, was the umbrella term comprising divers pre-modern schools of painting such as *Kanō, Tosa* and *Maruama* and *Shijō* schools, speciously fusing them into a modernized form of traditional Japanese painting that refrained from using e.g. conventional mineral pigments or their binding glue *nikawa*[56]. Characteristically painted on painting formats such as traditional hanging scrolls and folding screens, the subject matters varies from portraying famous localities, historical—, mythical— or, religious themes or the 'beauties of nature' (*kachō fugetsu*).

At this point it is important to understand that the differences and juxtaposition of the terms *Nihonga* and *Yōga* is not unidirectional: a distinction can probably be denoted by terms of cultural practices including the painting style itself, but even though the Japanese/Western-construct has a specific history in late nineteenth century Japan, it is still part of a discourse of much longer duration[57].

However, 'modern' forms of painting have of course not been genuinely self-generated: The earliest transmitters of *Yōga* — as means of technical skill — were the introduction of Technical Art schools (*Kobu Bijutsu Gakkō)*, which were established in order to provide 'recent European techniques to replace the former Japanese professional practices so as to aid and supplement our techniques […] accordingly, the Art school shall teach students

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[56] Nikawa. the Japanese version of natural glue, is made from the skins, bones, tendons and intestines of animals or fish skins and bones, which are boiled in water to extract gelatin.

[57] Already before the Nihonga/Yōga-antithesis, there have been between a variety of historically discrete styles, such as 'Kara-e', which were thought to be typically 'Chinese' and 'Yamato-e', a form of Japanese painting whose non-Japanese origins were omitted. CLARK (2013: 51).

how to understand the principles of art and how to apply them in practice, in doing so […] the Art School shall raise its level to one equivalent to the best Art Schools in Europe', as written in a text of the *Meiji* government announcement for the founding of Japan's first Technical Art School dedicated to *Yōga* art on the sixth of November 1874[58].

Despite famous Japanese teachers and artists[59], foreign advisors, such as the Italian painter Antonio Fontanesi, were hired by the government to train their students in the latest western techniques. These skills were taught with didactic methods that focused on stringent sequence of copying along the lines of the European 'masters' of art — in Fontanesi's case this meant reproducing his own drawings which he had already prepared ahead before his arrival to Japan, sketching after models and figures of classical paintings, practicing water color studies, or drawing naturalistic still life[60]. Overall, the reference to the *techniques*, rather than learning about art in its historical context, as well as the depiction of Realism according to European standards, is what was should be paid particular attention to. Even though the methods Fontanesi introduced had a lasting impact in Japan, the counter-reactions were not long in coming: In the 1880s, when the flood of *Yōga* paintings was about to dominate public exhibitions, the general reaction against this form of 'Westernization' combined with a growing popularity of the traditional *Nihonga* art movement led to a temporary decline of *Yōga* paintings. Things had even go so far that those engaged in *Yōga* would be despised as '*traitors to the nation*'[61]. But not only Japanese, also foreign teachers such as the American Professor of Philosophy, Ernest F. Fenollosa, emphasized and supported the strength of traditional Japanese painting styles, which should be preserved and stimulated until they could renovate a mechanical Western art, that had lost its representational power through materialism[62]. In a speech held in May 1882 he stated:

> *'Why do Japanese people strive to imitate European style paintings when you have such excellent paintings of your own? European paintings are becoming more and more realistic and scientific and declining artistically. The West, in its efforts to find a way to overcome the crisis is actually turning its eyes towards your traditional arts to learn what it can. You Japanese people, therefore, must recognize the virtues of your own painting and*

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[58] *Clark (2013: 82).*

[59] *This department was headed by Kawakami Togai, whose assistant Takahashi Yuichi was a student of English artist Charles Wirgman. Takahashi is regarded by many as the first ‚true' Yōga painter.*

[60] *Clark (2013: 82).*

[61] *Ibid., p. 82.*

[62] *Ibid., p. 84.*

do what you can to put new life into it. If only this is done, the value of your traditional Japanese paintings will be universally recognized within the next fear years.'[63]

He should turn out to be right. Not only the *Kobu Bijutsu Gakkō* was forced to close only one year later (in 1883) and the *Tokyo Fine Arts School* (*Bijutsu Gakkō,* the forerunner of the famous *Tokyo University of the Arts*, *Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku*), where only *Nihonga* subjects were taught, was established in 1887 instead — also Western artists, in desperate need of new artistic inspiration, started to turn their attention towards Japan[64].

Despite the explosive exclusion of *Yōga* in public art exhibitions until the 1890s — *Yōga* art survived, as their artists did likewise. In 1889, the *Meiji Fine Arts Society* (*Meiji Bijutsukai)* was established by *Yōga* artists[65] and a few years later, in 1896, the *Bijutsu Gakkō* even added a *Yōga* department to their curriculum. As a consequence, this led to the wider public acceptation of *Yōga* as a Japanese art form — even becoming cultural part of the new elite again. While *Yōga* art seemed to have secured a new position, its artistic direction vis à vis Europe was still unclear. However, one thing was for sure: *Yōga* had evolved from an rational method of Japanese technical mastery to a legitimate display of technical quality.[66]

Institutionalized in educational institutions from the late nineteenth century and exhibiting institutions such as the national juried exhibition, the *Bunten* (renamed *Nitten* in the post-war period) from 1907 onwards, he terms Nihonga and Y*ō*ga have been the two main divisions of modern Japanese painting, which is mainly reflected in the technical education, stylistic and thematic division of exhibitions and allocation of artists.

Until today, the distinction between both art styles remains a critical one, especially in the registration and the subsequent display and contextualization of these works in a museum's collection.

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[63] *Clark (2013: 83 f.).*

[64] *This Japanese influence on European art should later be known as 'Japonism', a term that is generally said to have been coined by the French critic Philippe Burty in the early 1870s, which subject matter, perspective, and composition inspired artists like Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir or Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, amongst many others.*

[65] *For example the artist Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924), returning from his studies in Europe with new input for the Yōga genre.*

[66] *Clark (2013: 85).*

I.III. CONTEMPORARY NIHONGA

The 1980s saw a revival of *Nihonga* painting styles, that was concurrent with the new painting movements coined with a variety of terms such as 'new image painting' or 'neo-expressionism' in Germany, Italy, England or America, revitalizing the usage of strong colors and motifs drawn from Cubism, Fauvism, Mannerism, German Expressionism, Surrealism, and Pop-Art. Many of the earliest artists Saitō Norihiko (born 1957) and Okamura Keizaburō (born 1958) came directly out of the *Nihonga* course at the Tokyo University of Arts, often painting with mineral pigments in a planar decorative quality. In addition to aiming for the aesthetics of folk art feel and early seventeenth century painting, their artworks were commonly graphical, depicting figurative subjects and animals that became a new trend in contemporary *Nihonga*. However, part of its revival was owed to the writings of the critic and art historian Kitazawa Noriaki and Satō Doushin from the end of the 1980s onwards, who wrote about the origins and formation of *Nihonga* without placing a clear definition and conceptual certitude as a painting idiom in its formation and successive developments. Their writings consequently offered many artists a certain freedom in relation to reinterpret the notion of *Nihonga,* creating their own thematic concerns and individualist aesthetics rather than perpetuating received or traditional ones.

I.IV. CONDITIONS OF MODERNITY

By drawing on the definition of John Clark, 'modernism' can not simply be seen an extended or more complex stage of 'modern', since 'it has a different semantic function given to technical means which circulates within the space of the latter'.[67]

In Japan, it was exactly this use of technical knowledge and skill about 'Western-style' painting techniques taught in special Art Schools, which serves as a reference or introduction to allow the transition away from tradition — to something we might call 'modernity'. This 'modernity' should hence be defined as 'a quality of a work which implicitly or ex-

[67] *Clark (2013: 89).*

plicitly revalues past forms of constitutes present ones not as an exemplar of several works done in different pasts, but as one model for different works in several futures'[68].

What in 1860 had still been a general fascination with everything new that was 'Western' had at least around 1910 become a subject of controversial discussion between artists, intellectuals, performers, and authors as well. Searching for a new freedom of expression and the mode of individuality, it was obvious that solely the display of technical mastery could no longer be sufficient to meet the demands. Discontent with the idea that 'Western development (that is development in general) is set off from within, but the modern development of Japan is set off from without'[69], as one of Japans most famous authors Natsume Soseki wrote in a speech in 1911, the young artists wanted to get rid of the superficial conservatism that was 'masquerading as a mature *Japanification* of things modern and foreign'[70]. After 1910, it didn't matter any more whether the actual origin of an idea or art movement was 'Western' or could be traced back to Europe, due to the fact that new conditions of modernity in Japanese art came into existence, that started to establish their own terms within the Japanese art world.

Thus, the first condition of Japanese modern painting can be summarized in the prerequisite, of an existing widely based art world, which has a large enough painting tradition and can ensure its survival. In this stage of modernity, as Clark proposes, a 'shift in the overall pictorial function given either to certain subjects or to the technical properties of image signs' appeared to be an 'extension beyond the previous constraints of a series from within, or the selective introduction or even wholesale irruption of traits from non-cognate series'[71].

Hereafter, the second condition was that 'the contact with Europe was at a conjuncture with internal demands for new expressive forms'[72], which made it, even if in a limited form, flexible enough to enable those internal forces an adequate appropriation in new media and art forms in the Japanese society in general, and the Japanese art world in particu-

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[68] *Clark (2013: 97).*

[69] *Ibid., p. 90.*

[70] *Ibid., p. 90.*

[71] *In the case of Nihonga this shift can be related to the irruption of European methods (e.g. of oil and watercolor painting), together with interpretations based on conservative ideals of 'classic' paintings in the 1880s. Clark (2013: 99).*

[72] *Clark (2013: 93).*

lar.[73] During this stage, the artists as well as the audience are aware of the limitations of the 'image-signs' and contents which may be related or linked to the 'discourse of traditional painting'[74]. The application of technical means now became equivalent to both 'Japanese' and 'Western' art world, and the choice of which aspects were to be featured 'was in itself a definition in visual terms of what was to be 'Japanese' to modern Japan'[75]. This implementation has subverted nineteenth-century assumptions that art, or any kind of cultural products, are strictly fixed definitions of 'ethnically bound cultural essences, or their mediations, such as the notoriously obfuscating distinction between 'East' and 'West''[76].

But modernity has always been — and should stay — a process of seeking definition in its cultural and political relationships with other nations (both Asian and Western), which can also be divided periodically: While Japan's victories in its first two modern wars of 1884-1895 (First Sino-Japanese War) and 1904-1905 (Russo-Japanese War) had solidified the state, build up popular self-consciousness as well as it strengthened the institutional legitimacy of a newly educated professional class as interpreters of the 'new' and the 'Japanese' in a first period, a second period from around 1906, saw discourses about modern art to be reestablished in terms of greater artistic freedom and self-expressiveness[77]. This step was the crucial next condition for the development of modernity, because it created a scope and space for movements against the official salons and for artistic individuality.
In this third and last period of modernity, beginning after the great earthquake in 1923[78], proved a 'first reflexive understanding of modernity', as Clark points out, where finally 'the past is not simply relativized by current practice, but relativization itself becomes the major subject of art practice'[79]. Last but not least, in this final stage, modernity holds an 'extreme formalist position, where painting becomes its own subject because if uses its own technique to criticize itself'[80]

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[73] *Clark (2013: 93).*
[74] *Ibid., p.101.*
[75] *Ibid., p. 88.*
[76] *Ibid., p. 88.*
[77] *Due to this, one can say that Nihonga is only a 'traditional painting' in a limited sense from the 1920s (or the Taishō period, 1912–26) onwards, since the upcoming modern art discourses can now be compared to those of earlier Nihonga artists between 1880 and 1920.*
[78] *A period that was simultaneously shaped by the domination of all areas of social life by ultra-nationalist militarism from around 1936.*
[79] *Clark (2013: 103).*
[80] *Ibid., p. 103.*

I.V. BIJUTSU: THE CONCEPT OF 'ART'

The Japanese word *bijutsu* is a term commonly used in today's Japanese language to indicate 'art' and especially 'fine art'. While putting the emphasis on visual and figurative arts, including painting, sculpture, craft and architecture, other 'arts', such as literature, music and theatre, are generally being excluded. However, this word was literally 'invented' in the early 1870s, when the Western word and concept for 'art' was translated into Japanese language[81]. It was due to the Vienna World Exhibition of 1873, or more precisely in January 1872, that the word *bijutsu* first appeared in an official announcement. It was created when government officials needed to find a proper translation for a list of categories of exhibit coming from Vienna, which was written in three Western languages — German, French and English. Even though it is not clear to which language's version the translators may have referred to, one thing can be certain: the competent authorities felt that up to this point, no existing Japanese word was appropriate to describe this 'Western term' and concept of something they called 'art' in Europe.

The term consists of two *Kanji* (Chinese characters): *bi*, which means beauty and *jutsu*, that can be translated as method or skill. It was the first time that this particular combination of *Kanji* had been used in Japan.[82] Of course, various forms of what one might call 'art' — such as for example paintings, ceramics and sculptural objects — were included into the category of *bijutsu,* which have obviously already existed for centuries in Japan. However, these art-forms had never been described as a part of a concept called *bijutsu* before. Thus, appended to the translation, there was a additional note explaining that music, painting, sculpture, poetry, and so on are supposed to be called *bijutsu* in the West.

I.VI. THE NOTION OF GENDAI BIJUTSU

While the term *gendai bijustu* seems to be literally translatable as 'contemporary art' at first glance, we should be aware of the fact that it is not synonymous with today's art' or a

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[81] *For further elaboration upon the Japanese translation see for instance: KITAZAWA (1999, 2012).*

[82] *This 'officially invented' term gained popularity — especially in the urban cities — as one of the many Western-style words that were introduced (e.g. also including 'bunka', the term for culture) to indicate the stylish, modern, and sophisticated lifestyle.*

neutral terminology for ‘art produced in the present’.[83] Instead, it represents an own field of practice and a discourse, which developed and institutionalized from *zen’ei bijutsu* (‘avant-garde art’). Since the term includes the scope of postwar avant-garde art, it consequently needs to be distinguished from *Yōga* and *Nihonga* practices, which largely evolved from the establishment. Not to be misunderstood — *Yōga* and *Nihonga* works are still considered to be contemporary art, because this both still take a major place in today’s domestic art discourses. However, their roots and relevance lies in *kindai bijutsu*, which can be translated as modern art’ (*kindai* meaning ‘modern’ or ‘modernity’), since their developments were intimately related to the country’s modernization project that began in the late nineteenth century as already explained. To follow a certain line of chronological order, *gendai bijutsu* comes after *kindai bijutsu*, reflecting the sense of *gendai* as the historical period that follows *kindai*. Concomitant with the rise of *gendai bijutsu*, there has been a decline of the art establishment consisting of art associations (*gadan*) since the late 1960s. It was during the 1960s then, when the ‘turning point’ (t*enkaki*) of *gendai bijutsu* came, replacing *zen’ei* ‘with a new sense of international contemporaneity and the devolution of the avant-garde, as typical exemplified by ‘Anti-Art’ (*Han-geijutsu*)[84]. As the concept of *kindai* gradually began to loose its relevance, being replaced by *gendai bijutsu*, this shift towards international contemporaneity was not only put forth partly by the political situation in Japan’s 1970s, but also by peripheral place Japan needed to face in Eurocentric modern art history. Resulting from more than two decades of conscious interfacing with the ‘outside world’ (typically Euro-America)[85], the increasing awareness of international contemporaneity showed a continuing expansion of new art practices (‘labelled internationalism‘) which was at that time reluctantly connected with the mentality of ‘catching up’ with the West[86]. More precisely, the term ‘international contemporaneity’ was most prominently coined and articulated by the Japanese art critic Haryū Ichirō, who stated in the January issue of the monthly art magazine *Geijutsu shinchō* of 1968 that ‘In my opinion the concept of art internationally underwent a major dance around 1955/56 [with] the tendency called ‘Informel’ and ‘Action Painting‘ […]. As far as Japan is concerned, we have now transcended the dualism of East vs. West and […] have finally achieved con-

[83] *Tomii (2004: 615).*
[84] *Ibid., p. 615.*
[85] *Tomii (2009: 124).*
[86] *Ibid., p. 125.*

sciousness of the ‘contemporary’ (*kontemporarii*) in the sense of ‘international contemporaneity’ (*kokusaiteki no dōjidaisei*).’[87] By connecting ‘international contemporaneity’ to the ‘contemporary’ he joined the discourse of *gendai bijutsu* that transcended the condition of modernity, which occupied Japanese art critics since the mid to late 1960s. At the same time, he aimed for closing the burdening gap of ‘catching up with the West’ mentality, which kept Japanese critics from understanding the slowly emerging, yet truly innovative practices ranging from Gutai in the 1950s to Anti-Art (*Han-geijutsu*) and Non-Art (*Hi-geijutsu*) in the 1960s.

[87] *Tomii (2009: 126).*

CHAPTER TWO

II. MODERN JAPANESE ART

Having discussed the conditions of modernity and the notion of 'art' in Japan, the subsequent chapter will outline the socio-historical key features of modern Japanese art and contemporary art, which has been further subdivided into the categories of Postwar Japanese Art (including *Gutai* and *Art Informel*), *Mono-ha* and *Conceptual Art*, Post *Mono-ha* and Japanese Art after 1989.

The *Taishō* era (*Taishō jidai* 1912–26) and more apparently the early *Shōwa* years (1926 — late 1930s), saw the development of a new kind of artistic subjectivity: Partly, this shift can be traced back to several changes in artistic practice, but moreover it can be regarded as a reaction to the precedent *Meiji* era's state nationalism.[88] Furthermore, the question of how to be 'avant-garde' and 'modernist' has for the artists, ever since the turn of the twentieth century, been a constant struggle: While the Japanese government has established an official, conservative salon system during the 1920s, the so-called *Bunten* ('Ministry of Education Fine Arts Exhibition'), initially presented in 1907, where a mix of French *pleinairiste,* British Victorian and Edwardian styles was preferably in practice, the up-and-coming avant-garde clearly opposed to this state authoritarianism[89].

Thus, the artistic direction of Japanese painters was, especially during the *Shōwa* era, split into those who followed the *Meiji* predecessors in their conservative implementation of 'Western' styles, and those artists who shifted their focus upon expressing their own self-consciousness within their 'modern' art works. Instead of making the discourse of national consciousness a subject of discussion, these artists used the national as a site-discourse to discover the artists' identity.[90]

Being 'modern' and thinking of (and about) artistic subjectivity by the Japanese avant-garde had three significant moments before 1945[91]: The first one was the formation of groups from around 1910-14, among which were a small number of Japanese Futurists and

[88] *Munroe (1994: 41).*
[89] *Ibid., p. 41.*
[90] *Ibid., p. 41.*
[91] *Ibid., p. 41.*

Dadaists who started creating a discourse about the state of the artists' condition, while simultaneously experimenting with a 'broad range of stylistic assimilations from, and transformations of, European modern painting'[92]. A concrete example of the discourse about artistic identity is the advent of the *White Birch* journal (*Shirakaba*), starting from 1910, which 'idealized the artist's life itself'[93] and thus led the artist to take a 'humanist position' in their (artistic) absolutization'[94], e.g. headed by the Dadaist and Constructivist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–1977).

From around 1925 onwards, the Japanese avant-garde seemed to be splitting apart, where some artist began to approach a kind of formalism one the one hand, and others followed newly imported European styles such as Cubism, and subject matters like scientific fantasy on the other hand. While this consequently led to the image-construction of avant-garde practice to be seen as separated from society, artist of the 1930s were moreover inspired by the late *École de Paris* works of e.g. Joan Miró and the Bauhaus[95]. As a result, this new formalism turned into more organic, Constructivist abstract expression in the late 1930s.[96]

The second moment was the appearance of 'socially-concerned art', initiated by fully committed Socialist Realist painters in the late twenties. Thereon, the advent of short-lived Proletarian Art movement (1926–1934) became evident, rising as 'reinterpretation of the critical possibilities of salon realism via the Soviet example'[97].

Yet, it was first and foremost the rise of (subjectivist) Surrealism and abstract art as 'tolerated, tacitly anti-establishment practice'[98] between 1929-1941, which did not only disrupt the growth of the Proletarian Art movement, but became exemplary for those modern stylistic assimilations inspired by European paintings mentioned above. Starting in 1928, the wave of Surrealism splashed over from the European avant-garde to Japan, even though it was frequently criticized by those art critics who disliked the superficial and 'shallow imitation of European trends'[99] and artists, who had been in Europe and thus, had direct con-

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[92] *Munroe (1994: 41).*
[93] *Ibid., p. 42.*
[94] *Ibid., p. 42.*
[95] *Ibid., p. 44.*
[96] *Ibid., p. 44.*
[97] *Ibid., p. 44.*
[98] *Ibid, p. 41.*
[99] *Such as Murayama Kaita (1986-1919) and Fukuzawa Ichirō (1889-1992).*

tact with the European Surrealism themselves.[100] Later on, in the late 1930s, Abstraction was to follow, adjusted by some Surrealist painters like Kitawaki Noboru, but not seeking prominence until after 1945.[101]

II.I. POSTWAR JAPANESE ART

It is generally known that the year 1945 signifies a crucial turning point in Japanese history, with the Japanese population being subdued to accept a broad range of new values in many aspects of their lives.[102] And even though there are a few discourses about the impacts of these changes in postwar avant-garde art in Japan, it still remains a difficulty to define its relationship to Japanese modernization[103]. Likewise, the question of how to define 'postwar' as a period remains debatable. The difficulties lie within the problem, that some of the art forms of Japan's 'modern period' were hindered by being regarded as 'unfitting' within the concept of Western aesthetics.

The end of the First World War brought along a premise of a certain freedom of expression, which had until then been tabooed in Japanese society.[104] While this can be seen as a lucky chance for the arts in general (and particularly avant-garde art), the prerequisites[105] were actually already developing during the early *Shōwa* years[106]. Japanese artists continued to search for a modern art 'original' to Japan, while pre-war artists' urgency to close the 'gap' with the West slowly receded. Instead, the sense of 'contemporaneity' (*Dōjidai-sei*) with Europe and America grew.

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[100] *However, the practice of Surrealism is not to been seen separately from the Japanese art world, but rather as part of its discourse: The overall appeal of Surrealism was up to a certain degree based upon the new notion of art-for-art's sake, which appeared at the same time as an 'identifiable undercurrent of anti-rationalism' in avant-garde painting; MUNROE (1994: 47).*

[101] *MUNROE (1994: 46).*

[102] *Ibid., p. 69.*

[103] *As a fact, not only this, but the whole discourse of Japanese modern art from the Meiji period up until sometime in the postwar has been generally ignored in the context of Japanese art history as a whole. See MUNROE (1994: 69).*

[104] *Ibid., p. 69.*

[105] *Which are the practice of mixing literary, visual, and performance art forms to create new genres, as well as the free adaption of traditional culture to provide a contemporary idiom.*

[106] *Unlike much postwar Japanese literature, forms of expression based on a socialist/leftists ideology never successfully became a major element of avant-garde postwar art in Japan.(...) Rather, they more often express in their work a personal critique of the rampant materialism in contemporary Japanese society; MUNROE (1994: 70).*

The outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953), stimulating the Japanese economy and leading to a construction-boom of government and large-scale office buildings, can furthermore be seen as major turning point that marked the transition between the pre- and postwar art worlds.[107] As if the Japanese wanted to respond to a challenge from abroad, the early 1950s expressed the urgent need to claim international contemporaneity — even if only domestically. Still, the gap between the local and the international art world was undeniable, leaving a bitter aftertaste that the psychological distance from the international world, which was felt during the isolation of wartime and subsequent postwar years, has not been bridged yet. As Japanese art critics pushed on the concept of the 'international' and the 'local' (that is domestic) standards' (*kinjun/sunjun*)[108], Japan soon saw a boom in international loan exhibitions: Several important annual or semi-annual exhibitions of contemporary Japanese art were brought before the public, such as the first *International Art Exhibition of Japan* (*Nihon kokusai bijutsu ten*), later known as the *Tokyo Biennale*[109] or the *Contemporary Art of the World Exhibition* (*Gendai sekai bijutsu-ten*)[110].

Because Japan did not yet have a functioning art system for sponsoring contemporary art, the *Nihon Indépendant or Yomiuri Indépendant Exhibition* (*Yomiuri andepandan-ten)*[111]**,** was designed to give younger artists who lacked gallery, museum, or private support, the opportunity to show their work in Tokyo — and maybe get recognized by the press, using the media itself to make art into an event[112]. In 1951, Japan participated in the first international art event since World War II, the first *São Paulo Biennial* and only one year later, in the *Venice Biennale* (1952). Concurrently, Japan's first public museum fully devoted to modern art, the *Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Art* (*Kamakura*), opened its doors (1951).

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[107] *Munroe (1994: 50).*

[108] *Tomii (2004: 616).*

[109] *Taking place at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, sponsored by Mainichi Newspaper Co., the exhibition featured 232 artists from seven countries. The event was renamed Tokyo Biennale in 1961 and was held eighteen times between 1952 and 1990; Munroe (1994: 86).*

[110] *It was the first comprehensive exhibition of Modern American Art in Japan, held at Takashimaya department store in Tokyo in 1950.*

[111] *After 1957, the exhibition was renamed to Yomiuri Indépendant to distinguish it from the Japan Art Association's exhibition by that name.*

[112] *Sponsored by the Yomiuri newspaper (jap. Yomiuri Shinbun) and held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art annually from 1949—1963, the Yomiuri Indépendent was an unjuried exhibition open to artists who were not working with any official, academic salons; Munroe (1994: 149).*

Nonetheless, the clash between the 'local' and the 'international' has been reopened in precisely these anticipated international events, when chosen *Yōga* and *Nihonga* artist were first sent to the biennials in Sao Paolo and Venice — with actually receiving no critical attention at all. As a result, art critics like Takiguchi Shuzō claimed for the 'need of more world relevance (*Sekai-sei)*'[113], whereas the adaption to international standards only slowly began to take place throughout the next years.[114] As the conservative styles of the dominant salons were replaced by more Dadaist and Expressionist works little by little[115], and also Fauvist-style paintings became more outmoded[116], more radical painting styles, assemblages, and (media) events started to take over[117] Furthermore, the term *objét* became a fashionable art form by the late 1950s, similar to the 'American proto-Pop combine and assemblage'[118], where especially the young *Yomiuri Indépendent* artists rebelled against the adaption of the redundant and traditional definitions of art.

The late 1950s were marked by a wave of social and political unrest. The reason for this were the leftist demands to amend the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty[119], which allowed the U.S. armies to use Japan as a military base in East Asia's expanding Cold War. The upheavals of the so-called *Anpo-crisis* of the 1960s played a significant role for the artists and vice versa. Never since World War II had the avant-garde been so involved in a national political event.[120] But first and foremost, it was the time of the student-protests: Massive demonstrations covered Japan's national universities with strikes, boycotts and bloody riots with the police, leading to thousands of students being arrested and hundreds harmed in the campuses[121].

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113 *Tomii (2009: 616).*

114 *In the case of the biennals, this was tried to achieve by including the two Anti-Art artists Takamatsu Jirō (1936-98) and Miki Tomio (1938-78) in the Venice Biennale in 1968.*

115 *Munroe (1994: 86).*

116 *Such as the so-called Informel whirl-wind that were earlier dominating the Yomiuri Indépendent Exhibitions 1957.*

117 *Munroe (1994: 150).*

118 *Ibid., p. 156.*

119 *'Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan' (Nihon-koku to Amerika-gasshūkoku to no Aida no Sōgo Kyōryoku oyobi Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku), also known in Japan as Anpo jōyaku; first signed in 1954 at the San Francisco Presidio.*

120 *Munroe (1994: 150).*

121 *Initiated by students of the elite University of Tokyo (Tokyo Daigaku), the demonstrations started as protest against the exploitative academic conditions, they were later coordinated by the left-wing Zenkyōtō (or All-Campus Joint-Struggle Concils in English) turning into ideological attacks on Japan's subjugating and reactionary educational system that regulated Japanese higher education and, by extension, Japan itself; Munroe (1994: 257).*

Because the *Anpo crisis* was so conflicting in itself — the political Anti-Americanization movement clashed against the admiration of the cultural legacy that the American occupation-culture represented, such as Jazz and Hollywood movies[122] — art students dealt with their very own agenda: 'Critical of Western superpower intervention in Asia and Japan's passive cooperation with the American military'[123], they called for pan-Asian nationalism and political autonomy.

The (art) avant-garde of the sixties, tired of post-war defeatism and wartime suppression, provided the foundation for the undoubtedly most rebellious outburst of creative, anarchistic and subversive art movements in the modern Japanese history. With the followed by emergence of *junk art*, underground theatre, *Ankoku Butoh*, *New Wave* cinema and a new postwar school of photography, this time of protest movements brought an artistic revolution alive, which fought against authoritarian dictates as never seen before. At the forefront were, once again, several artists and groups that have emerged from the *Yomiuri Indépendent*.[124] The appropriation of 'junk into high-relief or free-standing forms'[125] at the exhibitions were soon known under the term 'Anti-Art' (*Han-geijutsu*). Expressionistic in their styles, the artists mostly dealt with questioning the 'individual' in search for self-identity, reflecting the discourse about self-expression being characteristic for Japan's avant-garde culture in the sixties, while simultaneously also 'giving birth to political radicalism, street theater, body art, and a utopian vision of universal spiritualism'[126].
Artists and art groups that were featured in later *Yomiuri* exhibitions (after 1958) were *Kyūshū-ha, Neo-Dada Organizers, Group Ongaku, Zero-Dimension group, Time School* (*Jikan-ha*) and *Hi Red Center*. Since most of these groups were obsessive about ruins and destruction, they promoted to create junk art and violent demonstrations to make a stand against the conventional practice of art. In experimenting with anarchistic forms of art and performances which parodied and critiqued social establishment at the same time, they were not only '*liberating themselves from the oppressive wartime legacy*'[127], but also creating a counterculture doubtlessly unique to their Japanese generation.

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[122] *MUNROE (1994: 152).*
[123] *Ibid., p. 258.*
[124] *Ibid., p. 49.*
[125] *Ibid., p. 56.*
[126] *Ibid., p. 267.*
[127] *Ibid., p. 150.*

II.II. THE GUTAI GROUP AND ART INFORMEL

One of the most outstanding and exemplary art groups of this time was the *Gutai Art Association* (*Gutai Bijutsu Kyōkai*), commonly known as *Gutai* group (1954-1972). Founded by the prominent oil painter Yishihara Jirō (1905-1972), he brought twenty artists together to work under his guardianship[128]. While their debut was at the seventh *Yomiuri Indepéndant* in spring 1955[129], their 'Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Mid-Summer Sun' (presenting a thirteen day, twenty-four hours long exhibition on the banks the *Ashiya* river in July 1955) should become their legendary breakthrough.[130] The name of the group, the noun *gutai,* composed of the two Chinese characters of *gu*, signifying 'tool' or means, and *tai*, meaning 'body' or 'substance', can be literally translated as 'concreteness'. Aiming for the concrete enactments of the individual character, opposing thought and emotion to cerebral and abstract aesthetics, art was understood and used as a collaboration between physical action and the concrete material.

The charismatic leader Yishihara Jirō considered artistic creation as an 'act of freedom, a gesture of individual spirit, a willful rite of destruction to erect something new'[131]. This approach can be compared to European and American postwar painting movements such as *COBRA*, *Art Informel*, or Abstract Expressionism. However, the groups' significant feature was the appropriation of various natural and manufactured materials to induce the freedom of art itself[132]: 'Material' was defined as 'matter' (*Busshitsu*) combined with 'spirit' (*Seishin*)[133] and since Yishihara furthermore saw the artworks as 'a proposal to the West', he looked for cross-cultural and international exchange and thus tried to go beyond the dominant Japanese avant-garde of its day.[134]

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[128] *The formation and orientation of the Gutai group was influenced by the aim to destruct several structures of Japan's current art world, such as the rigid academic hierarchy and juried salon institutions which younger artists tried to free themselves from.*

[129] *Munroe (1994: 86).*

[130] *Ibid., p. 83.*

[131] *Ibid., p. 83.*

[132] *Whereas artists in the West perceived terror and chaos in the postwar condition, the Gutai artists experienced relief and liberation from decades of oppressive and totalitarian bureaucracy. (P. 84)*

[133] *Munroe (1994: 84); This spirit implicates a universal human consciousness similar to Buddhist and Jungian terms aiming to unite the human and material spirits.*

[134] *Munroe (1994: 89)*

Due to the fact that certain aspects of *Gutai*'s experimental art — similar to the Western concepts of 'happenings'[135] and *Art Informel*[136] — were frequently overemphasized, both Western and Japanese critics often disregarded the group's stylistic and cultural origins: their interest in the interrelation of body, material, time and space, which also encompassed traditions outside the Euro-American paradigm, such as the traditional Japanese festival (*Matsuri*), or comedic folk theatre (*Kyōgen*).[137]

Producing a 'legacy of aesthetic experiments greater than any other Japanese group of their generation'[138], the *Gutai* art group is outstanding in the history of Japanese postwar art[139]. As they drew upon a wide range of both Eastern and Western intellectual discourses and cultural practices within their eighteen-year history, the group's approach did not only influence the development of other art formations like the *Tokyo's Neo-Dada Organizers* or *Mono-ha* in the late 1960s, but also 'expanded the realm of modernist visual research to include the representation of time, space, movement, process and change'[140] — and thus, the understanding of 'contemporaneity' itself[141].

Freeing themselves from the relicts of the past, the postwar *Gutai* artists called for a re-imagination and re-creation of Japanese culture in the post-occupation years[142]. For a nation recovering from the shadow of totalitarianism and still somewhat burdened with the defeat of World War II, *Gutai*'s appeal for vitality, playfulness, and new artistic frontiers mixed with a new postwar idealism served as an invitation to a culture of consensus.

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[135] *Gutai's short, one-off and fast-paced action events, playing between body and matter, human imagination, chance, and time, were often staged in public and intended both to present and produce a 'work of art'. MUNROE (1994: 91).*

[136] *Early experiments, such as Kazuo Shiraga's smeared calligraphic paintings evoked the gestural abstraction of e.g. Jackson Pollock, soon followed by an emphasis on performances, immersive installations, and video.*

[137] *MUNROE (1994: 94).*

[138] *Ibid., p. 83.*

[139] *Especially in their early years, the group was only recognized as media spectacle, lacking serious acceptance. It was only the foreign critics that praised the group as an important movement in postwar Japanese history. But although such foreign acclaim helped to promote the international renown of Gutai (more in Europe and America than in Japan), the group still failed to be recognized within its own cultural context; MUNROE (1994: 94).*

[140] *MUNROE (1994: 94).*

[141] *Even though their vast legacy includes, besides painting, sculpture, national and international indoor and outdoor site-specific installations, also action events, stage performances, experimental film, graphic arts and an twelve-year long issued Gutai journal, the Japanese art establishment was long unwilling to recognize its significance despite the group's general media attention which they received; MUNROE (1994: 84).*

[142] *MUNROE (1994: 98).*

Apart from the independent history of *Gutai* art, the *Informel whirlwind* (*Anforumeru sen-pū*) was a crucial element of the development of contemporary Japanese painting from 1956 to the early 1960s that was both a trendy art-world spectacle, as well as a stimulant for *Anti-Art*.[143] Overshadowing the preceding trends of Fauvism, Surrealism, and Social Realism, Art Informel was a style that dominated Japanese modern painting[144], as well as it left its imprint on the unlikely field of *Nihonga*, e.g. the Kyōto-born painter Ōno Hidetaka (1922–2002) revolutionizing the traditional genre in the fifties and sixties[145].

For the main narrative of postwar Japanese art, the actual relevance of *Art Informel* did, however, not lie within the novation of abstract painting, but rather in the Anti-Art movement's refusal of traditional easel painting. Therefore, *Art Informel* can be seen as the 'first truly contemporary […] art movement to arrive in postwar Japan from abroad'[146]. While this enabled the artists to feel 'contemporaneous' with the international painting developments on the one hand, its critical debate 'after *Informel*' was mainly aimed at Anti-Art (*Han-Geijutsu*).[147]

II.III. MONO-HA AND CONCEPTUAL ART

1964 was a groundbreaking year for Japan. With the Tokyo Summer Olympics (*Dai Jūhachi-kai Orinpikku Kyōgi Taikai*) and the launch of the *Tōkaidō Shinkansen*, the first high-speed bullet train linking Tokyo and Osaka, Japan tried to signalize to the world that post-war reconstruction was over, that the country found back to its strength to progress from its war-time defeat two decades earlier and marked the re-emergence into international society. Hosting the Olympic Games was especially important for Japan — not only because it showed the return to the global stage as a peaceful, economically confident nation, but also because it went hand in hand with a massive (and costly) transformation of the city's infrastructure.

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143 *MUNROE (1994: 308).*

144 *The ninth Yomiuri Indèpendent in 1957, as well as the 'International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai' (jap. Atarashii taiga sekai-ten: Anforumeru to gutai) in 1958 were some of the exemplary exhibitions that revealed the significant influence on Art Informel on Japanese art.*

145 *MUNROE (1994: 308).*

146 *Ibid., p. 308.*

147 *Ibid., p. 309.*

However, some artist saw the Tokyo Summer Olympics rather as a means of controlled government- and media exploitation to officially propagate an idealized 'beyond postwar era'-image shaped by the miraculous high economic growth and prospering middle class. Related thereto, the Japanese government also lifted travel restrictions in order to make overseas tourism easier, with the result that until the beginning of the new millennium, it was actually the overseas travel — and not inbound tourism — which the Japanese policymakers focus upon.

It was the time where several young painters took the chance to leave Japan to push their artistic career abroad, preferably in New York, where Japanese artists like Minoru Kawabata (1911-2001), Kusama Yayoi (born 1928), and Tadaaki Kuwayama (born 1928) already started to gain international recognition[148]. As the sense of international contemporaneity steadily intensified during the 1960s, the character of *gendai bijutsu* soon started to shift as well: now, the main concern was not longer confirming to international standards but 'being competitive in the world (*Sekai ni tsyuuyou suru*)'.[149]

Toward 1970, two art movements emerged, that essentially 'put an end to conventional idea of art-making'[150]: *Mono-ha* and Conceptualism. *Mono-ha*, which can literally be translated as 'School of Things', tried to pose Asia in the centre of contemporary art practice and its discourse, while in doing so, they changed the pathway of Japanese contemporary art itself. Unlike the *Gutai* group's sensational performances, *Mono-ha*'s more theoretical and formal artistic approaches continued to develop even beyond the group's short-term existence from 1968 through the early 70s.[151]

Nearly one century after the *Meiji* Restoration, the *Mono-ha* artists — all born in the 1940s and influenced by American thought and culture — were no longer eager or willing to 'follow the Euro-American avant-garde with the aim to assimilate or be assimilated'[152] and thus, rather demanded their own discourse of 'Asian-ness'. Resisting what they thought of as being 'Japan's blind appropriation of the modern system'[153], they called for and created a contemporary Asian art that had a form and meaning of its very own. They represented a

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148 *Munroe (1994: 311).*
149 *Tomii (2004: 617)*
150 *Munroe (1994: 312).*
151 *Ibid., p. 257.*
152 *Ibid., p. 257.*
153 *Ibid., p. 257.*

growing artistic tendency to create a language from 'things as they stood, bare and undisguised, by letting them appear on the stage of artistic expression'[154]. 'Things' (*Mono*), such as bare stone, wood, Japanese paper (*Washi*), rusted iron plates, sand, cotton or trunks of charcoal, were not seen as mere materials any more, but played the key role in Tokyo's galleries, museum halls or outdoor exhibitions.

The *Mono-ha* movement was largely influenced by the teachings of the abstract artist Saitō Yoshishige (1904–2001), who was a professor at *Tama Art University* from 1964-1973[155]. He and his art students, amongst them Koshimzu Susumu, Sekine Nobuo, Suga Kishio, and Yoshida Katsurō, combined contemporary philosophy with critical theory[156] to create 'a model of alternative modernism that permitted Asian aesthetics and cultural sensibilities to be expressed and reinterpreted in a contemporary context'[157]. The term *Mono-ha* was, however, connected to three different art groups: *The Lee + Tamabi Connection*[158], *The Geidai Connection*[159] and *The Nichidai Connection*[160] — but it is especially associated with Lee U Fan (born 1936) from the *Tanabi* group[161]. His critical theory[162] is considered as 'one of the most thoughtful protests in the history of modern Japanese art against dominant Eurocentric art theory'[163]. Although Minimalism had a likewise profound impact on the Japanese art world as in Europe, the *Mono-ha* artists were, instead of favoring industrial-commercial materials, much more interested in the metaphysic structure of 'things' and

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154 *MUNROE (1994: 263).*

155 *Saito drew upon the Constructivist idea that art must resemble the structure and dynamic process of reality. For critics and his students, his importance lay within the aim to synthesize these principles of Constructivism with Japanese concepts of time, space, and materials; MUNROE (1994: 258).*

156 *For Saito's students who founded Mono-ha, the critique of modernity corresponded to their own investigations into 'relationality' (kankei), 'encounter' of things (existence), site (space), and the impact upon the viewer.*

157 *The conditions that gave rise to the emergence of Mono-ha were one the one hand the general 'consensus […] that the institution of painting is in decline', on the other, it was that the expressionist objet, which especially the Yomiuri Indépendant groups were focusing at; MUNROE (1994: 257).*

158 *Involving Nobuo Sekine, Kishio Suga, Shingo Honda, Katsuhiko Narita and Katsurō Yoshida in the painting department, and Susumu Koshimizu in the sculpture department at Tama Art University, Jiro Takamatsu and Lee Ufan.*

159 *Kōji Enokura and Noboru Takayama, both graduates of the Tokyo University of the Arts (short for Geidai), as well as Hiroshi Fujii and Makoto Habu, who were involved in Mono-ha later on.*

160 *Encompassing students from the Nihon University's (short-form of Nichidai) Fine Arts Department, whose central figure was Noriyuki Haraguchi.*

161 *MUNROE (1994: 262).*

162 *As the architect amongst the Mono-ha artists, he based his theories upon the phenomenological studies of Martin Heidegger and the religious philosophy of Nishida Kitarō to create a discourse of modern aesthetics mixed with theories of ontology.*

163 *MUNROE (1994: 257).*

how they relate to each other.[164] Amongst the different political, artistic and intellectual forces that called for the rise of a 'new' culture, *Mono-ha* certainly serves as its most articulate expression in the visual arts of the 1970s.

II.IV. POST MONO-HA

The *Mono-ha* movement had such a lasting impact on future generations of Japanese artists[165], that the prevailing trends in contemporary art of the late seventies to the eighties are generally referred to as 'post-Mono-ha'[166]. On the one side this term also refers to artists, who refused the Mono-ha postulate, such as the painter Hikosaka Naoyoshi (born 1946).[167] On the other, it implies artists like Kawamata Tadashi (born 1953), who aimed for the deepening of *Mono-ha*'s 'open structure'-practice of e.g. large-scale installations[168]. At the same time, the *post-Mono-ha* artists related to Japanese culture itself, especially drawing their attention upon architecture and traditional aesthetics exploring the human living space as well as the construction of sacred sites.[169]

The 1970s generally pushed Japan's culture and tourist industries further, stimulating the 'realignment of Japanese identity with the ancient East versus the modern West'.[170] The *Expo'70* (*Nihon bankoku hakurankai* or *Ōsaka bampaku*), the first World's Fair held in an Asian country that took place in Suita (near Osaka) entitled 'Progress and Harmony of Mankind', should symbolize 'the fulfillment of a dream postponed for 30 years […] to show the world, East and West alike, that Japan has in effect 'arrived'[171]. But for the artistic avant-garde and leftists, it was rather criticized and denounced as extravagant attempt to prove Japan's modernization and technological equality with the West. The avant-garde group *Zero Dimension* (*Zero-jigen*) for example launched ritual 'Cras*h Expo'70*' perfor-

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164 *MUNROE (1994: 262).*

165 *Although the Mono-ha legacy is relatively small due to their short-lived art concepts (it survived mostly through photographic documentation and artists' later reconstructions), the artists thoughtful 'reevaluation of Japanese art from Zen rock gardens to Gutai action events' was exceptionally significant; MUNROE (1994: 266).*

166 *MUNROE (1994: 266).*

167 *Ibid., p. 267.*

168 *Ibid., p. 266.*

169 *Ibid., p. 266.*

170 *Ibid., p. 258.*

171 *https://www.nytimes.com/1970/03/15/archives/japanese-open-expo-70-to-public-amid-pageantry-expo-70-is-opened-to.html accessed last 01.07.2018.*

mances to make a radical stand against the world fair (and a provocative response to the industrialization of cities and culture, as well as outcry against Japans governmental structures in general), while the art group *Bikyōtō* equated it with 'the enforced production of propaganda paintings that glorified the Imperial cause during World War II'.[172] Despite the criticism — with the representation of *gendai bijutsu* in the Expo'70 in Osaka and Tokyo Biennale'70, both events embodied a hitherto unknown sense of international contemporaneity.[173]

While the Japanese artists continued to develop the idea of 'art as site' and 'material as being within a larger discourse of modernity critique'[174], site-specific outdoor constructions (made of wood or other natural materials) became a major trend in Japan and attracted serious critical attention abroad as well[175]. With their doors opened, foreign influence from abroad was obviously inescapable. Hence, the concept of *heimen* (literally meaning 'flat surface')[176], which was corresponding to the concept of 1970s Euro-American abstraction, such as Monochromism, or American Post-Minimalism, became popular. During the first half of the 1980s, the desire to return to cultural 'origins' and reclaim a unique 'Japaneseness' spread once again through the avant-garde art world. Furthermore, at that time, both the critical discourse about what makes contemporary Japanese painting 'Japanese' (e.g. led by artists like Lee U Fan) and Japanese art journalism played an important role in the introduction and promotion of foreign trade.[177] Likewise, some artists emerging in the

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[172] *Both groups daringly challenged 'contemporary art' as a part of international (that means 'Western') art, and the modern technological 'mind-control', finally leading to the formation of the Expo Destruction Joint-Struggle Group in 1969, who staged their demonstrations in the streets of Shinjuku (Tokyo) and Kyōto. As they dared to disturb the 'cleanliness' of urban spaces (by performing in public spaces instead of suitable galleries), they tried to unveil the antagonism of the 'Progress and Harmony' slogan advocated in the Osaka Expo'70. See* MUNROE *(1994: 258).*

[173] TOMII *(2009: 618).*

[174] *Ibid., p. 267.*

[175] *Ibid., p. 267.*

[176] *The critique of political, economic and social systems that was found in contemporary Japanese art in the 1990s is described with much apropos by Fujtani Takashi as 'There is no denying that the general flattening of our culture — the collapse of history, meaning, and eternal truths — may, in fact, be stimulating a new search for authenticity'; See* MUNROE *(1994: 341).*

[177] MUNROE *(1994: 312).*

1980s were introduced to the European and American audience through exhibitions such as the *Venice Biennale* (1988) and other prominent events.[178]

While Modernism in Japan arose in the 1920s and 1930s, its reception only became apparent within the 'knowledge of previous processes of distanced learning'[179] and as soon as Modernism overcame the stage of 'learning, transfer and assimilation'[180], as it did with *Gutai* in the 1950s, *Moho-ha* in the 1970s, the 'performative aspect of modern art based on consciousness of having learnt'[181] came into light.

From the 1970s onwards, Japan started to turn into a service-oriented society that was no longer dependent on the secondary industrial sector and the popular catchphrase *oishii seikatsu*, meaning 'delicious life' (used in an advertising campaign by *Seibu* department store), became a *mot juste* to convey the feeling of this transition.[182] Japan's economic boom on the onset of the 1980s enabled the integration of Japanese art into the international art market, which consequently opened the doors for more international art trends. Consequently, the 1980s saw the appearance of a futuristic and post-modern Japanese art on an international level, where subcultures mixed with academic art under the big label of 'culture' that was closely connected to the mechanisms of mass consumption. The prosperity of the ongoing Japanese bubble economy led to the emergence of a superficial, symbolic interplays as well as to dialectic dialogued that were asserting strong individuality and techniques of deconstruction. Having its nerve centre in the booming city of Tokyo, the art of the 1980s could also be seen as an era of excessive consciousness manifested through heightening the differences between the individual and masses.

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[178] *E.g. 'Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties' inaugurated at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1989, featuring works that thematized a new pop sensibility, technological developments, and the urban environment, as well as 'A Primal Spirit: Ten Contemporary Japanese Sculptors', which — after premiering at the Hara Museum ARC in Shibukawa (Gunma) with addressing regional culture and local customs — started its US tour in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 1990. Since they both made local identity as a subject of discussion, both exhibitions can be put within a postmodern context.* CHONG *(2012: 344).*

[179] CLARK *(2013: 264).*

[180] *Ibid., p. 264.*

[181] *Ibid., p. 264.*

[182] CHONG *(2012: 342).*

II.V. JAPANESE ART AFTER 1989

With the postwar attitude already beginning to fade away during the 1980s, the term *post-modernism* gained more and more significance. But it was neither the economic uprise that pronounced the end of the postwar in 1956, nor the Tokyo Summer Olympics 1964 or the *Expo '70* in Osaka — in fact, it was the death of Emperor *Hirohito* in 1989, when the term 'postwar art' 'ceased to hold the same meaning in Japan as contemporary art'.[183]As such, Emperor Hirohito's death did not only bring an end to an era of sixty-three years of modern Japanese history that saw the rise of Imperial to devastating defeat, American occupation, prosperity of Japan's postwar 'economic miracle', but also to the postwar era in Japanese art.

The *Heisei* era, starting in 1989 with the succession of Emperor Akihito, did not only mark the collapse of cultural ideological myths that have haunted the county since the *Meiji* era — it was also a symbolic act, portraying the Emperor for the first time in modern Japanese history *not* as a divine being.[184] Fifty years after Pearl Harbor, the beginning of the new 'era of peace' further stimulated new public and artistic discourses between nostalgia and public socio-political criticism in Japanese society.[185] The early 1990s started with attacking the myth around the 'Emperor phenomenon' (*Tennō-sei*), struggling to take hold of the reality of recent changes that became more and more addressed by contemporary media, journalism, academia — and art. Stimulated by these developments, Japanese artists of this 'post-Hirohito era' dealt enthusiastically with social and political question while addressing 'the broader issues of the emperor system itself as a mechanism of social control'[186].

The last fifteen years have — perhaps more than any other period before — seen the redefinition of many long-established social institutions. The peerless changes that took place in recent Japanese history were, however, hardly unaffected by world events: although the collapse of the Soviet Union has gradually forced Japan to integrate itself in world affairs, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, for example, was a foreign event to the Japanese.[187]

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[183] *Chong (2012: 342).*

[184] *Munroe (1994: 348).*

[185] *Ibid., p. 339.*

[186] *Ibid., p. 340.*

[187] *Yet, the breakup of Eastern bloc Communism had its own affect on Japan, freeing the country from yet another structure of national self-identity within its role as the U.S. Pacific 'partner' in the Cold War; Munroe (1994: 72).*

Driven by tremendous social consent, the economic 'miracle' did not only change Japans economic structures, but the entire society. Little by little, mass media, television, and advertising have created a 'hyperreal space […] that produces an apparently meaningless juxtaposition of fragmentary languages and images'. Together with Japan's brand of late capitalism, these issues became delicate subjects contemporary Japanese artists eagerly address and satirize in their artworks since the 1990s.[188] Despite that, artists have steadily implied the notion of 'self-reference' within their works, which is especially a common method for young artist 'whose creative activities have not been motivated by their experience of history on their need to speak of history'[189]. With both self-reference and self-critique, Japanese artists of the 1990s engaged within an avant-garde movement that depicted art to be the allegory of contemporary Japanese being itself.

The Great *Hanshin-Awaji* Earthquake in Kōbe (*Hanshin Awaji daishinsai*) and the Sarin Gas Attack (*Chikatetsu Sarin Jiken*) in the Tokyo subway, both happening in 1995, made the population even more sceptic of major political and economic intentions interpersonal communication, giving mutual support more attention, and also artists put emphasis on strengthening human communication by expressing individual emotions through improvisation and amateur practices.

Another aspect that became prominent during the 1990s was the proliferation of overseas exhibitions by young Japanese contemporary artists. By being increasingly selected to participate in notable international exhibitions, the artists could more often enjoy higher acclaim overseas than in Japan, as well as they also profited from establishing connections overseas and thus expanding their international network.[190] As Monroe concludes, 'the twentieth century has left the Japanese stranded in a zone best claimed by the future and best realized through technology'[191]. Yet, however much Japan's technologization might reflect its creators' conscious efforts towards self-reflection and experimentation, 'the real project of Japanese postmodernism has been the analytic sundering of 'Japanese modernism' from 'Western modernism''[192].

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[188] *Munroe (1994: 340).*
[189] *Ibid., p. 72.*
[190] *Ibid., p. 73.*
[191] *Ibid., p. 348.*
[192] *Munroe (1994: 342).*

The appropriation of images by the so-called 'Neo-pop culture', maybe most prominently represented by the *superflat*-artist Murakami Takashi (born 1962)[193], marked a strong discursivity that reflected a psychological anxiety of a generation, which was rooted in becoming aware of Japan's socio-political backdrop, economic disorders and environmental problems. The nostalgic notion of what has become of 'Japan' in the rush of the countries fast economic growth is one of the major topics of the contemporary Japanese art critique since the 1990s.

Despite Takashi Murakami — still being the undisputed leader of international sales and consistent museum visibility — there were some other artists in the 1990s and 2000s who became world famous with the idea of *superflat* art, such as the cult illustrator Yoshitomo Nara (born 1959) with his childlike paintings, toys and playful installations[194]. Besides this, a number of young female artists (e.g. Aya Takano, Chiho Aoshima or Rei Sato) became employees at Murakami's art production company named *Kaikai Kiki Co., LTD.*[195], producing artworks in the *kawaii*, pop-art-like Murakami-style and spin off products in a related fashion. Why these obviously adolescent art works were so successful internationally had a simple reason: They all appealed to a Western sense of what they thought Japanese youth culture must be like, and as such, sold the West a certain image of 'Cool Japan' that reigned until March 2011. 'Cool Japan' became a kind of neo-*Japonisme*, which functioned as an updated version of the historical Western *Japonisme*-wave end of the nineteenth century. Initiated by Japan's tourism industry during the 1990s and 2000s, countless books, magazines, travel guides and websites created the image of a cartoon-like Japan, full of sweet (*kawaii*) schoolgirls, computer nerds (otaku), crazy fetishes and brightly colored pop culture. What Japan was really like beneath this superficially and naive-looking pop-surface, or in other words to analyze the mechanisms of 'nationhood', became a dominant theme in the work of Japanese artists who emerged after 1989 to 'deconstruct the

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[193] *'Superflat' is a term invented by artist Takashi Murakami, describing a specific type of Japanese contemporary art that combines the 'flatness' and two-dimensionality of Japanese anime (animation) and manga (comics) with commercial graphic design, the kitsch of Japanese kawaii (cute) pop-culture the aesthetic concerns of fine art. See: MURAKAMI (2000).*

[194] *Nara has had nearly 40 solo exhibitions since 1984, where his work has been shown e.g. at the MoMA (New York, USA)and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA, Los Angeles, USA).*

[195] *Founded by Takashi Murakami in 2001, the company evolved from its predecessor, the Hiropon Factory, which was founded in 1996. With about 50 employees in its Tokyo headquarters and 20 people in its New York office and studio, its target as an enterprise is the 'production and promotion of artwork, the management and support of select young artists, general management of events and projects, and the production and promotion of merchandise'; http://english.kaikaikiki.co.jp/whatskaikaikiki/.*

social, political, and economic systems that have long sustained Japanese national identity'[196], such as Yanagi Yukinori (born 1959), Nakahashi Katsushige (born 1955), Nakamura Masato (born 1958), as well as Takashi Murakami. By significantly exposing Japan's modern national myths — while concurrently defying their adherent cultural taboos and issuing the 'ambivalence of cultural narration'[197] — these artists aim to challenge the contemporary discourse of nations as 'imagined communities' […] and 'representations' of social life rather than the discipline of social polity'[198] within the recent history of Japanese art.

Nowadays, contemporary Japanese art which is being embedded in Japanese socio-political contexts, turns away from 'the exotic and derivative paradigms of non Western modernism'[199], offering the 'culturally freakish and incongruous'[200] as discourse for an international art world instead. Drawing one's attention away from the 'dominant other' whilst redeploying the notion of self-identity, Japanese contemporary artists have made themselves become the subject of voyeurism, deconstruction, and postmodern discourse.[201] The approach of addressing socio-political and economic problems without instigating on radically, but rather through patient exploration and expression of inter human relations still characterizes Japanese artists. Especially after '3/11', the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident of 2011 (*Higashi nihon daishinsai*), the same burst of social engagement became clearly apparent in Japan's art and culture, including photography, documentary, architecture and fashion. The Great East Japan Earthquake marked a border between what Japan's art world was before 2011 and afterwards. While it was an eye-opening event for most of young contemporary Japanese artists, the problem with Japan's 'Cool Japan'-image — played out by Murakami and associates as already referred to above — was already visible a long time before 2011. Basically the only Japanese contemporary art that could sell internationally, the *superflat*-cult became a stunning exception to the failure of much Japanese contemporary art to keep up with the international success of Japan's other creative industries, such as the Anime and

196 *MUNROE (1994: 348).*
197 *Ibid., p. 348.*
198 *Ibid., p. 348.*
199 *Ibid., p. 341.*
200 *Ibid., p. 341.*
201 *Ibid., p. 343.*

Manga-, fashion-, design- or architecture-industry. But the easily accessible *superflat*-art was, to anyone who interacted with the topic in greater depth, a flagrant caricature of the underlying struggles of the Japanese art market[202] and the perplexities of modern Japan. Today, Japan has long achieved a transition from an industrial society producing cars and computers to a post-industrial society providing services and information, where a lot of new problems that have emerged — such an aging population and declining birthrate, the rural exodus and depopulation or growing numbers of solitary deaths and social isolation in bigger cities — became the main topics for contemporary Japanese artists to think about in various contexts.

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202 *The Japanese art scene in reality languished for over a decade in the shadow of a far bigger Chinese art boom. Its turnover was a miniscule part of the global art market, and its many expensive museums and ambitious art festivals were largely overlooked by foreigners. Tokyo's lively but small art world has never been anything but a minor outpost on the global map. Successive waves of home grown artists and creators articulated a variety of original and alternative visions to Murakami, Nara or Mori. But in the shadow of Cool Japan, they struggled to attract much attention or sales.*

CHAPTER THREE

III. KANSAI IN THE 1980s: THE KANSAI NEW WAVE

The 1980s were a truly an exceptional decade for the Kansai region (*Kansai-chihō*). It all started in 1982, when the *Art Now* exhibition[203] committee decided to shift its curatorial concept upon featuring younger artists, from which most of them came unintentionally from the Kansai region.[204] But their decision was not the only one that should turn their attention to this area: coincidently, several other new endeavors became symbolic for Kansai in the 1980s, such as the launch of the *Yes Art* exhibition held at the Osaka Rental Gallery *Haku* and *Fujiyama-Geisha,* an exchange exhibition between the *Kyōto City University of Arts* (*K.C.U.A.*) and the *Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music* (today *Tokyo University of the Arts*, *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku*).

The same year, 1982, two other exhibitions, namely *Spiritual Pop,* the first independently organized exhibitions by a younger generation of Kansai artists held at the *Osaka Contemporary Art Center,* and *Poly-Mode* exhibition, displayed at the *K.C.U.A. Art Gallery*, which was one of the inaugural exhibitions that played with the possibilities of the installation format[205]. These and several other independently organized group exhibitions[206], as well as *Osaka Contemporary Art Fair*[207]*,* indicated the rise of a number of radical young artists, whose works 'shifted away from exploring expression to establishing it'[208], presaging the emergence of a new means of expression made in the Kansai area.

The shift from a more 'austere, inorganic art of the 1970s [that] gave way to the expressive, individualistic art of the 1980'[209] can be traced back to the trend of new expression-

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[203] *Held at the Hyōgo Prefecutral Museum of Modern Art (now Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art).*

[204] *CHONG (2012: 366).*

[205] *However, it was only two years later, in 1984, when installation should become significant in opening new expressionistic horizons, with many artists adopting its methods without referring to themselves as 'installation artists', such as Sugiyama Tomoko and Matsui Chie.*

[206] *Such as 'Art Network 83: Various Interactions' (jap. Art Network 83: Samazamana Sōgo Sayō) presented in different galleries in Kyoto, or 'The New Art Scene in Kansai', a student exhibition that inspired also already established artists like Matsui Shirou, Nakahara Koudai, and Matsuo Naoki.*

[207] *A project initiated by various galleries from Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe in 1983. Initially held at the Osaka Contemporary Art Center.*

[208] *CHONG (2012: 368).*

[209] *Ibid., p. 366.*

ism[210], that both *Art Vivant* and *Bijutsu Technō* art magazines propelled as new painting style in 1982. Tadanori Yokō's (born 1936) expressionist paintings, for example, were given sensational coverage in both art magazines and on top of that, the *documenta 7* (Kassel, Germany) and *Zeitgeist* exhibitions (Berlin, Germany), both held in 1982, were pivotal in popularizing the developments by strengthening the reputation of this new style of painting[211]. This new sense of freedom served as sweeping inspiration for the up-and-coming generation of Japanese artists. Amongst several mediators that are associated with spreading these tendencies, it was especially Fukushima Noriyasu[212] (born 1940), instructor in the *K.C.U.A.* sculpture department, who became a key character: Challenging Minimalism and calling upon a livelier interaction amongst his students, his efforts lead to different ways of how to interact, work together and consequently, new methods of how to create exhibitions.

The emergence and blossoming of the *Kansai New Wave* starting in the early 1980s can thus, first and foremost, be ascribed to the nascent prominence and eagerness of individualistic young artists— most notably Morimura Yasumasa (born 1951), Matsui Chie (born 1960) and Sugiyama Tomoko (born 1958). While installation art was only to become an independent format in about 1984, these young artists tested the form of installation as a means of opening up the horizons of new expressivity already around 1982. Even if they did not call themselves necessarily 'installation artists', other Kansai-artists were about to follow this format and began to engage in even more extravagant exhibitions from 1983 onwards. Questioning of the structure of painting and sculpture itself, the new installation format the Kansai-based artists worked with already showed significant creative differences between the Kansai/Tokyo-area: while in Tokyo the evolving of the installation format was rather associated with the dismantling of these mediums (and concomitantly evinced the influence of *Mono-ha*), the Kansai format seems to have concentrated upon overcoming them.

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[210] *E.g. influenced by Frank Stella's Exotic Birds series beginning in 1976, the 'New Spirit in Painting' exhibition, held at London's Royal Academy (1981) and the 'Minimalism to Expressionism' exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY, 1983); See* CHONG *(2012: 366).*

[211] CHONG *(2012: 366).*

[212] *Fukushima lived an worked in NY until 1981 before returning to Japan in 1982, where he presented his solo work show at Kyoto City of Arts Gallery. Despite the fact that his monochromic works did not receive much attention, they became symbolic for the shift of artistic styles later on.*

However, the probably most significant feature of the *Kansai New Wave* was the fact that the emerging group exhibitions were organized by the artists themselves. This means that the Kansai artists were not only creating new styles and formats of artworks, but also showed an excellent ability as producers and organizers. The 'Art Network '83: Various Interactions' (*Art Network '83: Samazamana Sōgo Sayō*) exhibitions, several events held simultaneously at several art galleries all around Kyōto and dealing with a variety of topics, is one of the examples that introduced the radical new methods and independent organizational skills of the young artists.[213] Last but not least, 1983 was the year when the *Osaka Contemporary Art Fair* was inaugurated at the *Osaka Contemporary Art Center*, a new enterprise instigated by galleries from the Kyōto, Osaka and Kobe area, which continues to the present.[214]

Thus, it was not only the time when Kansai-based and self-organized (student) exhibitions increased, also the role and importance of the art critics started to change significantly: While a mixture of independent events organized by both critics *and* artists evolved, the Japanese art world began to go through a major transition in 1985, with a particular focus on the *Kansai New Wave*[215]. Group shows that were organized by critics in 1984 are for example 'The Current State of Images & Painting' (*Imeeji & Paintingu no genzon*) shown at *Gallery Suzuki* (Kyōto), or 'The Current State of Methods' (*Hōdo no genzon*), held at *Gallery 16* (Kyōto)[216]. This close relationship between the artists and art critics was furthermore frequently reviewed in art journals such as *A & C Art & Critique* journal[217].

In order to understand why the *Kansai New Wave* became such a highly discussed — and provocative — topic, it is important to take the new relationship that developed between the Kansai area and Tokyo since the beginning of the eighties[218]: Before the *Shinkansen* bullet train (that connected Tokyo, Kyōto, and Osaka in 1964) was built, it took about nine hours by rail to manage the distance of 300 miles, which also symbolized the social dis-

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[213] *Not only group exhibitions, also several solo shows held in 1983 drew significant attention to the emerging Kansai New Wave art scene, such as the The New Art scene in Kansai exhibition; See CHONG (2012: 368).*

[214] *Nowadays the art fair is called 'Art Osaka', see https://www.artosaka.jp/en/*

[215] *Even though all of these exhibitions concentrated on the Kansai New Wave, the standpoint they took regarding the artists depended and varied greatly according to the art critic.*

[216] *CHONG (2012: 369).*

[217] *Launched in 1987 as a journal especially focusing on Kansai contemporary art, some reviewers of the journal even organized a group exhibition together with young artists, held at the Kyoto College of Art Gallery entitled 'Current Omens' (jap. Yochō no genzai) in the same year; CHONG (2012: 370).*

[218] *CHONG (2012: 370).*

tance between both areas. Since most of the influential art critics and curators, artists organizations, as well as leading art journals were based in eastern Tokyo, western Kansai was long-since dismissed as being 'provincial and remote'[219]. But as soon as the *New Wave* started to get going, the slogan 'High in the West, lost in the East'[220] gradually became a paradigmatic catchphrase that pushed the old cultural rivalry between both areas even further. Even though Tokyo's art world was certainly not under threat of being superseded or replaced by the *Kansai New Wave*, there was a true amount of significance given to these attempts. A good example of this is the Kansai-based *Gutai Art Association*[221], whose artworks were long neglected and criticized by art critics from the Tokyo area, with only later gaining proper attention.[222]

Nevertheless, the almost ten-year long success-story from local Kansai galleries and independent exhibitions organized by students to an international exhibition level at the 43rd Venice Biennale (1988)[223] is definitely remarkable. To draw a line between the 1980s *Kansai New Wave* and my research topic, two of the probably most outstanding artist collectives from Kyōto, namely *Dumb Type* and *Kosugi + Andō*, will shortly be presented in the following.

Founded by a group of students from Kyōto City University of Arts (*Kyōto Shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku*) in 1984, the artist collective *Dumb Type*[224] — *still active today* — were one of the first art groups that used electronic media to portray the characteristics of post-industrialized society.

Lacking in fixed membership, their members[225] were not only artists, but also musicians, choreographers and sound engineers, with consequently different artistic backgrounds ranging from visual arts, theatre, dance, architecture to music composition, cinema and computer programming. Hence, their joint work is likewise versatile — a colorful mix of

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[219] *MUNROE (1994: 83).*

[220] *CHONG (2012: 370).*

[221] *See chapter II.II.*

[222] *CHONG (2012: 83).*

[223] *In the Biennale's 'Aperto section', the artists Ishihara Tomoaki (born 1959) and Morimura Yasumasa (born 1951) showed exceptionally original works that differed from the usual painting, sculpture and predominant installation formats, see CHONG (2012: 370).*

[224] *The group's name plays with the meaning of the word 'dumb' — something 'stupid, speechless, and clone-like' — that can furthermore be understood as political critique of Japans superficial consumer society at the height of the country's bubble economy.*

[225] *The 'core' group, consisting of Teiji Furuhashi, Toru Koyamada, Yukihiro Hozumi, Shiro Takatani, Takayuki Fujimoto and Hiromasa Tomari, already began to work together in 1982, while still studying in university.*

art, sound installation and experimental theater, combining performance, art- and multimedia installation in response to Japan's rapid technological and societal changes of the 1980s and '90s. Exemplary are their series titled *Plan for Sleep / 1* (1984) and *Plan for Sleep /5* (1986), where *Dumb Type* pioneered with a form of performances that brought together formats of performances and computer graphics to create a play of multiple aesthetic regimes.

In their various installations, audio-visual work and publications, the assembly of multidisciplinary practitioners portrays a dark, cynical, and yet humorous world, in which technology bears both — utopia and dystopia, the modern way of life and our possible doom to extinction. Incorporating video and projection, *Dumb Type* make the mechanistic effects of popular culture and near-future consumer technologies a subject of (artistic) discussion. Read as a critique of authority and social institutions, their multi-media performance and installation *pH* (1990) — consisting of various political and economic symbols, traffic signs, pictures of the stock market or overcrowded beaches — depicts the 'depersonalized conditions of post-industrialized urban existence against a backdrop of projected images'[226]. Through the performer's synchronous, robot-like executions of daily routine activity (such as supermarket shopping), they present a grim vision of Japan as mass-consumer society, reduced to and alienated by shallow values and futile conventions. Since the group is still based in *Kyōto*, the collective decided to orientate themselves more to the global than the local, placing the contemporary over the traditional. As such, the *Dumb Type* members claim that Japanese art movements (of any kind) have had little influence on their work. Since their performances and artworks have been presented at notable venues all over the world[227] *Dumb Type* is still today, not only in Kyōto, but internationally considered to be one of Japan's most important contemporary artist collectives.

While Dumb Type makes use of media technologies to create allegories of authoritarian mechanisms of contemporary society, the artist collective Kosugi + Andō use similar technologies to explore the human psyche and structures of a post-industrialized state. Kosugi Mihoko (born 1953 in Osaka) and Andō Yasuhiko (born 1953 in Shiga) joined together in

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[226] *MUNROE (1994: 343).*

[227] *http://dumbtype.com/biography accessed last 18.06.2018.*

1983 to explore the format of installation works as a two-person collaboration unit. Just like the members of Dumb Type, Andō Yasuhiko graduated from the *Kyōto City University of Art's* Course in Conceptual Art and Design, which is why their artistic direction was influenced by conceptional installation art (*kōsō sekkei)*. In their work *Stolen Bodies III* (1991) for example, the artist collective deals with the topic of visual perception, or in other words, the affiliation between what humans can see and understand, but what can nonetheless not be expressed. With an allegory of a body that has been stolen from the center of the environment (symbolized by the installation) Kosugi + Andō try to grasp the enigma of human presence through the mediation of images.

The significance of both *Dumb Type*'s and *Kosugi + Andō*'s artistic works lies within the fact, that postmodernism is depicted and used as critical manipulation of consumer technologies to expose what has hitherto been private, shrouded, and morally taboo in Japanese society.

CHAPTER FOUR

IV. THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF KYOTO'S ART WORLD

During hundreds of years that Kyōto has served as the residence of the imperial family, the city did not only serve as governmental, but also cultural capital and preserver of the Japans 'cultural spirit', which is exemplified in its variety of unique cultural institutions: the theatrical arts of *Nōh*, *Kabuki*, *Bunraku* and traditional dance, the schools of tea ceremony (*Cha-no-yu*) and flower arrangement (*Ikebana*), calligraphy (*Shōdo*), or the masterpieces of traditional painting, sculpture and architecture are just a few examples that can be found everywhere in the city. Besides, many important works of art are kept in Kyōto's temples and shrines, which can be accessed publicly[228]. But Kyōto is not only famous for its incredible number of 'national treasures'[229] and cultural activities, but also for its wide range of representative (fine) arts-, historical, or arts- and crafts museums — such as the *Kyōto National Museum* (*Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan*, founded 1897), *Kyōto Municipal Museum of Art* (*Kyōto-shi bijutsukan*, est. 1933), *Museum of Modern Art* (*Kyōto kokuritsu kindai bijutsukan*, est. 1967), *Raku* Museum (*Raku bijutsukan*, est. 1978) or even an *International Manga Museum* (*Kyōto Kokusai manga myūjiamu*, est. 2006) — as well as a variety galleries for traditional and contemporary art.

Since Kyōto has barely been destroyed during the second World War, most of the existing private or family run galleries could remain — unlike Tokyo, where the art world needed literally needed to be build up from the scratch, facilitating the creation and development of various 'white cube'-galleries[230] and alternative art spaces[231]. It was only in 1962, when the first gallery for contemporary art (*Galerie 16,* still existing today[232]) was opened, ten

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[228] *Even though there are some institutions that normally do not allow to display their collections, there are public showings on given days at which their treasures can be viewed.*

[229] *Including those individuals who have been named 'living national treasures' (Ningen kokuhō) in recognition of their superior skills in the traditional arts and crafts.*

[230] *This term refers to a certain gallery aesthetic and Western modernist concept introduced in the early 20th century, characterized by white walls, square shape and hide light source, that were supposed to ensure the ideal environment for the display of modern, abstract artworks.*

[231] *This also shows how the development of any art world is always also closely related to the development of the local architecture.*

[232] *In its over 40-year-old history, Galerie 16 has held over 2000 exhibitions since its opening, representing nowadays the years of contemporary arts in Kyoto on a smaller scale.*

years after the first one in Tokyo[233]. Many galleries followed this example[234], initiated and fostered especially by art universities in order to create new possibilities of art spaces (and as such, means of expression) for students and young artists.

Concomitant with that, there was an upcoming desire for a radical 'image-change' by this artist-generation of the 1960s and 1970s, who wanted to get rid of the idea, that Kyōto's art world is only consisting of traditional *Ukiyo-e* (woodblock print)-painters and galleries, mostly unwilling and neglecting to exhibit modern artworks.

Kyōto was ever since the opening of Japan at the end of the nineteenth century a well-known place for buying the traditional woodblock-prints and, especially after the Second World War, the city gradually turned into a tourist hot spot famous for selling all sort of prints, that somewhat looked like an *Ukiyo-e*. Thus, the galleries concentrating on traditional Japanese art were indeed still busy to meet the demands. However, not only the woodblock prints, but particularly the special Japanese-style paintings — *Nihonga* — remained the focus of most of the galleries remained. Because unlike Tokyo, where the existing art galleries needed to start from zero (after the *Great Kantō Earthquake* (*Kantō Daishinsai*) of 1923 and the heavy bombing during WWII that both devastated the city), most of Kyōto's traditional *Nihonga*-galleries could remain in place. While these *Nihonga* paintings are still being highly valued up to date, also students are still learning to produce these traditional technique-artworks in Kyōto's art universities[235] and presenting them in various galleries of contemporary *Nihonga* art galleries, or in the context of specific *Nihonga*-contests[236].

Nevertheless, overlapping the movements of contemporary arts in Japan after war, Kyōto's art world could give rise to a variety of commercial and rental galleries dealing with contemporary art, displaying works from both local and international artists (e.g. *Imura Art Gallery*).

Therefore, one can find a variety and mix of different art galleries with respectively differing concepts in Kyōto: On the one hand the modern-looking, 'white cube'-like galleries

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[233] *Founded in 1950, 'Tokyo Gallery' became Tokyo's first gallery for contemporary art.*

[234] *Such as Gallery Beni (1964), Koko.(1966) and Kōan (1969), all of them not existent any more.*

[235] *E.g. at the Faculty of Traditional Fine Arts (Nihonga gakubu) at Kyōto University of Art and Design.*

[236] *According to this, I decided to treat these traditional-style artworks equivalent to any other artistic direction, and in this sense, to include the respective artworks within the scope of my research on 'contemporary' art in Kyōto.*

(mostly situated in Western-style buildings), solely focusing on the display of contemporary art from Japanese and international artists, on the other the traditional Japanese art galleries (usually located in *machiya*-houses), specialized in exhibiting *Nihonga* or *Yōga*-art. Most of the latter type of art galleries are family owned for several generations, with some of them have changed into rental galleries, which is why gallery owners such as Yūsuke Masaki conclude that these galleries are not are not obliged to (actively) sell many artworks in order to 'survive', or in his own words, that 'there is no pressure — it's also okay if they don't sell anything'[237]. According to him, not only the gallery owners of these persisted galleries, but also the art groups that provided the exhibition material (that is their artworks) stayed inherent. Even though these traditional galleries remained in existence until today, there might be a point of issue to be dealt with in the future: if these family owned galleries are not going to be transmitted by a younger generation, they are run the risk to disappear sooner or later — a point, which art critics see, on the contrary, as 'chance for new art spaces to develop in order to mix up the art world'[238], to use Kyōto's full potential and capacity.

Another important feature of Kyōto's institutional art world to be mentioned is the city's size and structure: While in Tokyo up to twenty galleries can be found in only one of the twenty-three districts, most of the (important) galleries or popular 'hotspots' are located in Kyōto's center (*Sanjō/Gion*-area) and around (e.g. *Higashiyama* area). Thus, it is easy to understand why most of the artists and gallerists I have talked to describe the Kyōto as being a rather 'small' city, even though meant in a positive sense: accordingly, it is easier to find access to the galleries, in both a physical, and an emotional way. Referring to Yūsuke Masaki's statement that Kyōto is 'smaller and more compact [because] everybody knows everybody'[239], Kyōto seems to be more convenient to find and start ways of collaborations because the (physical and emotional) distance between artists and those working in the art world is not too big.

Since the development of contemporary Japanese art forms have evolved in parallel with changes in the structures of the Japanese art world in the 1980s (see chapter II.V.), it is necessary for the further analysis of this thesis to get an understanding of the roles and diver-

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[237] *Quote taken from the Interview with Yūsuke Masaki on 9th of February 2017.*
[238] *Quote taken from the Interview with Yūsuke Masaki on 9th of February 2017.*
[239] *Quote taken from the Interview with Yūsuke Masaki on 9th of February 2017.*

gences of Kyōto's institutional structure and respective art world, in order to get to know the social context of art production on the one hand, and to explain some of the 'principal mechanisms by which a society gives meaning to art in general', which also include 'particular kinds of art which it may define as 'modern' or 'contemporary'.[240] Due to the fact that the main focus of this research paper does not lie upon public and state-funded art institutions as those museums mentioned above, but instead on non-state funded galleries existing in Kyōto[241], the following chapter will deal with a selection of some private, rental and university-related galleries I have visited from January until April 2017. Since I could establish closer contact to the gallerists of *Gallery PARC* (Yūsuke Masaki), *Gallery eN arts* (Naomi Rowe) and the art critics Minoru Shimizu and Tetsuya Ozaki *(H.A.P.S.)*, I have included a synopsis of these somewhat extended interviews within this chapter.

In the following I am going to give a more detailed overview of Kyōto's art institutional structure by separating it into different parts, distinguishing between the 'distribution' or distributors of art, including institutions that mediate the art production and their circulation, such as museums, commercial/rental art galleries or publishing media, and the 'receivers' of art — an umbrella-term covering a set of different public and private roles — which include: public recognition at the final exhibition (possibly followed by private consume in the case of an acquisition), patronage through production commissioning, and additional functions like the establishment of communication platforms to influence other receivers or distributors[242].

IV.I. THE DISTRIBUTION OF ART

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Kyōto's 'distributors' of art can be summarized under the notion of art spaces, which produce a cycle of mediating and exhibiting art works, namely art institutions that range from state-funded art institutions (such as museums) to those institutions I have performed researched on, namely the commercial, private and rental galleries, as well as alternative art spaces located in the city of Kyōto.

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[240] *Clark (2013: 259).*

[241] *At the ethnographic present of my research 2017.*

[242] *Dividing this chapter into ‚'distribution' of art, ‚reception' of art and ‚dissemination of knowledge' I followed the line of argumentation presented by J. Clark and H. Becker; Clark (2013: 259).*

As shown in figure II, Kyōto's institutional art world can be visualized as triangular shaped graphic, creating a conjunction between the three main institutional factors: museums, universities (including their related galleries) and commercial art galleries, which can be further subdivided into alternative art spaces and rental galleries. Thus, the 'distributing art institutions', together with the 'producing art institutions', can be resumed as constituting the basic framework of Kyōto's institutional art world.

While the ways of a how commercial gallery works — that is choosing to represent an artist exclusively, promoting his shows, making press contacts, trying to get reputable reviews and creating opening events as well as sometimes P.R. publications — is up to a certain extend familiar to most people, the concept of a rental gallery is, at least in Europe, mostly unknown: The artists submit the application with what they want to exhibit to the respective gallery and, after the gallery has confirmed on featuring them and thus displaying his works, the applicants pay the required amount (usually counted in weeks) in advance. However, even if many of these galleries seem to exhibit 'every' work of art — regardless of artistic style or quality (a reason why the compilation of works displayed sometimes seem to be loosely mixed) — many galleries insist on the artist's work to be in accordance with their own business-philosophy or concept. Despite the announcement of the opening reception (e.g. online or printed) and the exhibition of the artworks for the required amount of days, no extra provision of services are included in the contract. Thus, promoting the exhibition by printing flyers or trying to make press contacts usually lies in the hand of the artist him— or herself.

The proliferation of galleries that rent their space to artists in exchange for payment throughout the city of Kyōto might be a lucky chance and opportunity for some of the young artists to get their career up and running. However, it is not always considered as positive: Many artists, especially those working and exhibiting in more alternative art spaces (such as Raita Yoshida[243]*)*, refuse to exhibit in rental galleries, because they believe that by being able to exhibit everything, the quality of the artworks themselves would decrease, or even get lost.

In contrast to the above mentioned rental galleries, the tasks most of the commercial galleries need to take care of do not only lie within the display of artworks for the local audi-

[243] *See chapter V.III.*

ence, but furthermore also in exhibiting them on an international scale in order to represent and promote their talents outside the respective local art world. This way of patronage can, as Clark points out, increase the pressure for featured artists 'to have their work identified as in a style peculiar to themselves' and to aim for 'having an exclusive ability to explore a particular formal or intellectual direction'.[244]

However, whether the galleries choose to exhibit their representative artist's works at international art fairs in Japan, or travel overseas, defines a major difference: Similar to most of the internationally-oriented art universities sending their students abroad, the hope is to boost the artist's career only by exhibiting outside Japan. And indeed, the experiences of many students and artists who have learned and exhibited abroad seems to confirm that it is almost necessary to reach beyond the national borders in order to acquire renown. Seemingly business-oriented, Mio Yamato is one of these exemplary artists being convinced that only her efforts outside Japan have clearly pushed her career[245]. But it is only a very limited number of artists who are selected to go abroad or choose to go abroad by themselves, which opens up new horizons to sell their artworks on another scale[246]. This further suggests, that especially this limited group of international curators and critics become a crucial and main factor in legitimating the artist's practice and value of the artwork.

The fact that more and more Japanese students are nonetheless willing to go overseas is — if they are not pressured to go due to the lack of exhibition space — mostly regarded as positive development, which leads according to many art critics and university professors (such as Tetsuya Ozaki) to more self-reflection and a broadened self-reflective thinking. As mentioned earlier briefly, it is not only the existing art space that is important to note, but especially the art space that is *non*-existent: this problem of lacking exhibition space is a concern of its own, which I will further go into detail later on.

IV.II. THE RECEPTION OF ART

When hearing 'reception' or 'receivers' of art, one might naturally think of the *public* consumption of art, or to be more precise, the audience (or viewers) who are visiting the museums, galleries or alternative art spaces in order to enjoy the exhibition.

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[244] *Clark (2013: 261).*
[245] *See chapter V.II.*
[246] *Clark (2013: 262).*

As many artists, art critics and gallerists I have talked to have confirmed, Kyōto's inhabitants are more and opening up for the contemporary, as well as alternative art world with its local artists and the events related to it, as one can see for example in the increased interest in the cultural online search engine REALKYOTO[247]. This has, of course, to do with a variety of different factors, such as a generally heightened interest in the art world due to the proliferation of contemporary art itself and the extended access and distribution of digital media knowledge. Furthermore, contemporary art is not solely being displayed in austere 'white cube'-galleries any more, which some of the Japanese interview partners I have talked to described as 'impeding' or 'intimidating'. Rather, new concepts that combine a gallery with e.g. a fashion or accessories-shop came up, allowing also people 'unacquainted' with contemporary art to lose their fear and enter the galleries.

One of these examples is the *Dohjidai Gallery of Art*, which draws most of the visitors from the fashionable café downstairs or the vogue side-venues next to it. However, these mostly young Japanese people and foreign tourists being addressed by this kind of galleries, can be clearly separated from other target audiences, which galleries working on a more international scale, like *Imura Art Gallery,* are targeting at.

Even though my research did not focus on creating any quantitative data analysis, I put up the assertion based on my insights that the consumers or 'receivers of art' in Kyōto are quite broadly diversified, ranging from young high school students over housewives to pensioners, who are all interested in culture and the arts, but differing from one another by the choice of venues. Thinking one step further, the viewing of art might in the best case lead to the acquisition of the artworks, which can consequently be regarded as the *private* consumption of art. While both categories are rightly belonging to the understanding of the 'reception of art', it is not only public and private consumption, but also those people who support the artist by creating a systematical approach of patronage, which is actively processing in the background.

Whether in Japan or anywhere else in the world: Most of the artists do and cannot live only by being an artist and selling their work, since both the potential exhibition venues, as well as the market for (modern) art are either highly hierarchized and/or limited. Thus, in order to make a living, one must either take a 'real' job, which means in the case of Japan being

[247] *See chapter IV.IV.*

employed as a *Salaryman* (*Sararīman,* a Japanese white collar worker) or find some kind of patronage or (financial) support, that allows the artists to further pursue their artistic practice — even if they cannot sell any of their works. However, most of the young students, graduates, seeking-to-be artists and already independent artists/ones need to work part-time or even full-time in order to have a sufficient income to earn one's living.
While the financial support by the Japanese government or alternative state-run institutions is equal to zero, every chance to be supported is more than gratefully accepted. However, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between different kinds of patronage-systems[248]. The first level includes family and friends, who are probably able to raise financial support, to e.g. afford the costs of renting the gallery space or to buy working material. The second level can be referred to as 'educational patronage'[249], meaning the educational support and knowledge transfer provided by university professors or other teachers, which could also imply a job placement or guest professorship, or even periodically allocating their own galleries as exhibition space for appreciated artists. Non-profit organizations like *H.A.P.S.* (*Higashiyama Artist Placement Services*), who are supporting and promoting emerging artists, as well as providing affordable exhibition spaces or possibilities for further artistic development — without direct financial support in the form of payment — are additional patrons within this category.

The special concept of *Gallery PARC* is a very unique system of patronage, which is rather uncommon for the Japanese art world. To recall the gallery's concept quickly: *Gallery PARC* belongs to the '*Le GRAND MARBLE*' company (producing bread and confectionary), who are hiring their gallerists and artists as official employees (so-called *Salaryman*). While the get an average payment for their work as well, they do not need to care about how to survive as an artist or how to afford a minimum of living standard, but can concentrate on creating artworks. Seen as the top level in this pyramid, this kind of '*aristocratic patronage*'[250] is obviously the highest form of support and thus, fairly limited to just a very few lucky people in the art world. Furthermore, this level also includes art critics, who can contribute to support up-and-coming or already established artists by men-

[248] *CLARK (2013: 261).*
[249] *Ibid., P. 261.*
[250] *CLARK (2013: 261).*

tioning them in their art reviews, or promote their next exhibition, as well as curators, have the possibility to ensure and provide possible exhibition space.

Despite *Gallery PARC*'s unique approach — there are recently more and more large companies and well-known department stores, who take advantage of the more direct '*enterprise patronage*'[251] by offering exhibition space or direct sponsorship in exchange for letting the artist feature their latest campaign. I would like to slightly differentiate this form of patronage from the other levels, due to the fact that most of these enterprises have very probably commercial, profit-driven intentions in mind.

As already mentioned above, art critics play a major part within this system of patronage. But it is not only their valued judgments written down in art reviews and the like that create selection- and support possibilities — most of the art critics are fixed components of the Japanese educational elite and linked to the academic departments of metropolitan universities in- and outside Japan. As such, they have, on the one hand, the power to act as mediators between the academic and the art world, on the other hand, they are quite often sensitive to privileging evaluations because of the artist's possible selection for exhibitions held by international commercial galleries or global art fairs.[252]

IV.III. THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

In order to find out what is going on in Kyōto's art world — or in other words, what kind of art exhibitions, performances, festivities and other cultural activities are currently taking place — different publication media are used as sources of information: Despite the commonly used print media, such as local newspapers and magazines that are announcing current museum and gallery exhibitions on daily basis, numerous flyers and pamphlets are used to promote the various upcoming exhibitions. These sources are not only produced by the galleries themselves, but also by the exhibiting artists and art students and can be found in nearly every culture-affine venues all over the city, including cafés, restaurants, bars and the like. In addition to that, digital media, such as the website REALKYOTO, a 'cultural search engine' initiated by journalist and art critic Tetsuya Ozaki, are the main sources to

[251] *Clark (2013: 261).*

[252] *Ibid., p. 262.*

provide culture- and event-related information and recommendations, as well as reviews and criticism centered on Kyōto, including its surrounding Kansai-region. Of course, RE-ALKYOTO is not the only website to search cultural events in Kyōto[253], but certainly the one most specialized on current art- and culture-related events.

Another website, namely the 'Kyōto Gallery Federation of Art'(*Kyōto garō rengō-kai*)'s website[254] is another example of information source, introducing Kyōto's galleries. Supported by the Kyōto Prefectural Cultural Arts Department, the federation was established in 1975 as a fellowship organization of art galleries operating in Kyōto City. On their homepage one can find the introduction of each gallery of members, their location, as well as the schedule and monthly exhibition(s). Despite their online presence, they also publish the monthly magazine 'Kyōto Gallery Federation News' and issues the 'Kyōto Gallery Guide', which I also made use of. Additionally, the Kyōto Gallery Federation of Art held events such as 'Kyōto Gallery Stroll Stamp Rally', from 1997 until 2000. With their homepage and activities, the gallery association hopes to 'contribute to the development of the art world in Kyōto even if it is widely used by everyone'[255].

Another important point to mention here is the city's various 'crossing-points' where local artists regularly meet, or can be met, such as the restaurant *Yoshida-ya* owned by art critic Tetsuya Ozaki. These spots are essential for getting to know people working in the cultural sector or art business, to connect with them and of course, to get information about upcoming exhibitions or other events. Even though Kyōto is not very big, these spots are usually not publicly announced or advertised in guide books and thus, not very easy to detect; Just those, who are already 'inside' a certain artistic or cultural field are being invited or introduced. However, thanks to Kyōto's local-bound (and as such, familiar) art world, the access is somewhat easier to obtain. It is interesting to note that the way of knowledge dissemination is, in spite of the various printed and digital media sources, still largely depending on word-of-mouth recommendations, circulating within the realm of these 'crossing-

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[253] *Other helpful sites to explore Kyōto's daily events are e.g. 'What's up in Kyoto' (http://whatsupinkyoto.com, accessed last 07.05.2018) or 'Inside Kyoto' (https://www.insidekyoto.com accessed last 07.05.2018). 'Kansai Art Beat' (http://www.kansaiartbeat.com accessed last 04.05.20118) is another cultural search engine, but focusing on the whole Kansai-region.*

[254] *http://www.kyoto-art.net/index.html accessed last 08.10.2018.*

[255] *http://www.kyoto-art.net/about/ accessed last 08.10.2018.*

points'. Taking these different kinds of sources for knowledge dissemination are crucial for the distribution of art in and around Kyōto city.

IV.IV. PRIVATE COMMERCIAL GALLERIES AND ALTERNATIVE ART SPACES

I. Gallery PARC

The first time I have visited *Gallery PARC* was quite at the beginning of my research[256]. Situated in one of Kyōto's most fashionable and busiest shopping-districts called *Sanjō* — an area I was already very familiar with — it didn't take long for me to find it, although the question how to access it was more tricky. The gallery itself is located on the second floor, so that one needs to go through a sweets and bakery shop named 'Le GRAND MARBLE', in order to find the entry to go upstairs. This rather unusual setting should turn out to be part of the gallery and its concept itself, which I was told later on. Following the stairway, a variety of flyers and pamphlets to take-away were indicating that I was indeed on the right way.

Arriving upstairs, the sunlight shined through a semitransparent structural painting affixed to the gallery's large glass front, leaving fine reflections on the concrete walls (figure III). Thus, my first impression of the gallery was clearly characterized by its pleasant ambience. Despite exhibitions of art, gallery *PARC* also features works of crafts, design, photography, film and performance art.

The picture on the glass front, and other large-sized paintings displayed on the gallery's walls, belonged to the artworks of Mio Yamatos '*VIVID - STILL'* series (2017). At this time I did not know yet, that I would going to have an interview with the artist at the same place about one week later. After taking a close look at all the artworks exhibited, I went to the 'information-desk', asking the gallery-staff about the current and upcoming exhibitions and just then, the gallery owner himself, Yūsuke Masaki, arrived. While arranging a personal interview with him, I couldn't have foreseen that I would spend many hours in this

[256] *On the 19th of January 2017.*

gallery in the future/upcoming months, attending artists talks or talking to the ever so open-minded gallery owner.

Yūsuke Masaki, born 1974 in Osaka and currently living in Kyōto, studied art production for six years at the private Kyōto University of Art and Design (*Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*) Afterwards, he became an assistant in the gallery belonging to the university. Telling me on our first meeting[257] that he didn't want to produce 'transient artworks, such as performance art etcetera' in the beginning, he therefore started to concentrate on creating 'products' and 'artifacts', such as Japanese-style tee-bowls (*chawan*), instead. Meanwhile, he also delivered product-design-suggestions for big department stores (such as the famous *Takashima-ya*), because he wanted to gain insight into different branches. It was only after these experiences, that Mr. Masaki 'found back' to contemporary art. As he slowly developed an interest to open an own gallery, he did not want to open 'another rental gallery', but rather an 'alternative gallery or art space', due to the reason that there were not so many of these in the Kansai-area yet. While it was not as easy to realize this idea, he found out about Gallery PARC and was immediately fascinated by the gallery's special concept: Gallery PARC belongs is owned by the 'Le GRAND MARBLE' company (bread and confectionary manufacturer), and is thus, unlike usually, not dependent on selling artworks to be financed. While the artists certainly get their payment in the case of selling one of their works, some artists are even hired by the company, treating them as normal employees. That means that Yūsuke Masaki is also not a self-employed or independent gallerist, but an 'official employee' (a so-called *Salaryman* in Japanese) of the 'Le GRAND MARBLE'-company.

Asking him about the contact between the gallerist and the artist(s) in Gallery PARC, he replies that 'it is rather a system of 'patronage', or a support-system', indicating that local artists are not only being employed as salaryman, but also payed accordingly[258]. For Yūsuke Masaki it seems obvious that 'only when one gets a proper salary, you are able to survive as an artist or can afford a minimum of living standard, and only you can create proper artworks'. Thus, he sees the gallery's concept that was started about four years ago to be a

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[257] *The first interview was conducted on the 9th of February 2017.*

[258] *At the time of my visit, there were two artist being officially employed. While the artists are 'working' there, it means that they can also enjoy the advantages and benefits of an employee, such as the company-internal insurance-system.*

modern ‘translation-process’ — turning ‘money into time’ — to let the artists work for their artworks instead of working for their basic income: ‘Usually, the artists need to working in another company in order to get money and then, en plus, you need to have time and resources to make art — which is already out of time-reasons impossible’. With the gallery’s unusual concept, ‘this problem is therefore solved’, he describes, seeing it furthermore as a circular flow of ‘quality improvement’ for the gallery as well.

Yūsuke Masaki describes Kyōto’s art world to be a place where modernity and tradition meet and can co-exist, where young people and artists go into temples, get inspired and thus, are able to ‘create something new out of the old‘, while simultaneously preserving thousand-year old traditions. Furthermore, he views the city to be ‘small, the ‘hotspots’ are well-known and the artists know each other very well’[259]. In contrast to Tokyo, where up to twenty galleries are settled in one district, everything is therefore ‘way easier to grasp and easier to access’, even though some spots are ‘quite hidden’. Furthermore, the wealth of art-university students and graduates would create a circular flow gallery-exhibitions, which adds to the city’s characteristic.

Generally speaking, he believes rental galleries to be more ‘independent and free’, which would thus be a bigger potential for the exhibiting artists. There are still many rental galleries in the hands of established art-families and art-collectors, living for many generations in Kyōto, who are hiring out their galleries without having the pressure to actively sell their artworks in order to survive — (or to quote Mr. Masaki) ‘it’s also okay for those old galleries if they don’t sell anything’[260]. However, seeing this ‘old’ galleries in danger because ‘all of them will disappear and be lost soon, if their gallerists will die without further succession’, there will be a need for ‘new approaches and ideas’ — a potential, which he clearly believes Kyōto has the capacity for: ‘We need to mix it up!’

Concerning the question whether there are enough exhibition spaces or support for young artists or university graduates, the direct answer is ‘there are just a few — it’s just not enough’, which is the reason why so many graduates would leave Kyōto after their studies to move to Tokyo, even though the city’s large number of students is ‘Kyōto’s big potential’.

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[259] *Quote taken from an interview on 9th of February 2017.*

[260] *Quote taken from a personal communication with Mr. Masaki on 19th of January 2017.*

II. Imura Art Gallery

Imura art gallery was founded in 1990 by director Yuzo Imura, a gallerist not only active within the local Kyōto and wider Japanese arts community, but also a committee member at the 2014 Tokyo Art Fair. Situated in the city's central Sakyo-ku district as one of the city's first contemporary art spaces for over twenty years by now, the gallery has become famous for presenting contemporary art works both on the international and national stage. While *Imura Art* hosts paintings by local young artists that are just about to make their name in the art world, the gallery is furthermore representing their artists on a global scale, such as Art Fair Tokyo (2009-2018), Art Osaka (2010-13), Art Basel Hong Kong (China, 2017), Art Stage Singapore (Singapore, 2017), KIAF/Korea International Art Fair (Korea, 2006-08, 2010).
However, the primary goal of the gallery is to give up-and-coming artists a platform to show their potential and thus, to prove the city's worth as a center of contemporary artistic creation. With a special focus on those artists based in Kyōto, the gallery holds a 'wide range of collection in the works of art produced by Kansai-based artists as well as the artists who are related to Kyōto, across various genres such as the work in the flat and formative arts'[261].

Promoting Japanese artists abroad and in national and international world fairs as mentioned above, it is hardly surprising that Mr. Imura expanded his gallery-business into Imura Art Gallery Inc., a company focusing on art planning, 'producing cultural exhibits in museums and Japanese department stores art galleries'[262]. In addition to that, Imura Art Gallery is not only existent in Kyōto, but in Tokyo as well in order to attract a 'variety of Japanese and international collectors'[263] to expand their national and international network.

The gallery's main exhibition room is dominated by a large glass-front, enabling those people passing by to catch a glimpse of the artworks inside. While the paintings are displayed on sheer white walls (and sculptures placed right in the middle of the room), the gallery most likely represents something we can call a 'white cube' art space.

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[261] *http://www.artinasia.com/galleryDetail.php?catID=23&galleryID=1357 accessed last 03.05.2018.*
[262] *http://www.kyoto-creative.jp/en/company/imura-art-gallery.html accessed last 01.05.2018.*
[263] *Ibid.*

During my several visits and opening receptions in the *Imura Art* gallery, where I also got to know the gallery owner Mr. Imura himself, I was always impressed with his open-mindedness and advance, e.g. showing me around the gallery's usually inaccessible ancillary rooms, where not-displayed artworks were stored or introducing me to the exhibiting artists, such as Masaomi Raku[264], a sculptor born in Kyōto or Sai Hashizume[265], a young female artist from Tokyo. Being invited to the opening reception of her solo exhibition 'This isn't happiness'[266], Sai Hashizume was one of the many artists I met telling me that her studies (in Germany, France and Austria) and several exhibitions abroad were one of the main factors to push her career not only abroad, but especially in Japan.

III. Gallery eN arts

Located within the picturesque *Maruyama* park in Higashiyama-ward — a prime location for viewing beautiful sakura-cherry blossoms, as well as for tourists visiting the famous *Yasaka*-shrine and hundreds of restaurants next to it — *eN arts* is a gallery for contemporary art founded and run by Naomi Rowe since November 29th, 2007. Hidden between old maple trees and two Kyōto-typical *Kaiseki*-restaurants[267], I remember to must have walked up- and down the winding street, where the gallery was supposed to be located, a few hundred times before I finally reached my destination. A decent painting by Keisuke Matsuda, which I could see hanging on a white wall through the gallery's large glass window facade, already indicated that I was on the right way to the opening reception of the artists' solo exhibition entitled 'eyes and nose' (*mimi to kuchi*)[268]. Entering the traditional house, I was immediately welcomed by the gallery owner, Mrs. Rowe, guiding me inside. But it was not only her warm welcoming — in perfectly fluent American english — but moreover the gallery's expressive and yet unpretentious atmosphere, that I was surprised by. While the entry and main room were fitted with white walls and a grey floor covering, some ancillary rooms were left in their original condition, with the traditional Japanese ta-

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[264] *Interestingly, Masaomi Raku is the second eldest son of Raku Kichizaemon, current 15th generation head of the Raku family (dating back to the Momoyama period, 1573-1615), who produced revolutionary tea bowls in Kyoto for over 450 years; http://masaomiraku.com/en/index.html accessed last 02.05.2018.*

[265] *http://saihashizume.com accessed last 07.05.2018.*

[266] *The opening event was held on the 11th of March 2017.*

[267] *Traditional restaurants with Kyoto-typical cuisine with high-quality, seasonal food, mostly served as multi-course meal.*

[268] *The opening reception was held on the 17th of March 2017,*

tami-mats and a *tokonoma* — an alcove commonly found in Japanese tea houses or reception rooms, in which items for artistic appreciation are presented. But instead of the usual *Ikebana* (flower-arrangement), the paintings by Keisuke Matsuda were displayed. A perfect fusion of traditional and modern style and architecture.

While walking through the exhibition rooms looking at the abstract oil paintings, I incidentally ran into Mr. Shimizu, the journalist and art critic I already knew from a meeting in gallery Main, who also was a good friend of Naomi Rowe and the artist Keisuke Matsuda. All together, I was showed around the gallery, that surprisingly had a ground-floor as well, where the solo exhibition was continuing. This opening event should not stay the last one[269]. Furthermore, as I became friends with the gallery owner, Mrs. Rowe, and could meet her personally outside the gallery as well, I was told about the gallery's concept, which is about as ambitious as the strong woman standing behind it. While the gallery is exhibiting national and international artists with a clear approach on promoting local artists, *Naomi Rowe* is moreover interested to further promising young artists, such as the abstract painter Keisuke Matsuda, outside of her gallery space in Kyōto: Constantly traveling to art fairs all over the world, Mrs. Rowe is not only always searching for new national and international talents, but furthermore trying to introduce the best of Kyōto's contemporary art to a wider, global audience. 'Since the very first opening reception, we try our best to present the best exhibitions for the artists that we collect at their best'[270], the gallery owner frequently emphasized, indicating that the support of the artists are of top priority. In this sense, gallery *eN arts* also collaborates with international galleries, such as the *nag gallery* in Dublin (Ireland), organizing transboundary projects on contemporary art.

IV. COHJU Contemporary Art

Established in 2008 and located near Kyōto's Imperial Palace, COHJU Gallery for Contemporary Art can be found on the ground floor of the COHJU building (designed by the famous architect Kisho Kurukawa in 1986). A structural concept-revision caused a name change from erstwhile COHJU Gallery into COHJU Contemporary Art, in order to espe-

[269] *About a month later, I was even able to visit an opening reception of the exhibition curated by Mr. Shimizu ('Showcase 6: Storytelling').*

[270] *Taken from a personal communication with Naomi Rowe on the 27th of March 2017.*

cially emphasize its engagement in contemporary art. Furthermore, the gallery aims to 'basically present emerging artists in Asia whose works give off the Asian's characteristic atmosphere or sensibility'[271].

On my first visit in this gallery[272], I surprisingly found once again Mio Yamatos' 'VIVID - STILL' exhibition to be on display. Even though I knew her works already, the high ceiling and white walls made her works literally appear in a very different light. It is certainly not only the external facade of the gallery, but also its inside atmosphere that sticks to one's mind — even though the atmosphere felt to be a little too austere.

COHJU Contemporary Art is frequently representing their artists at national art fairs (Art Fair Tokyo 2012/2013, Art Osaka 2011, Art Fair Kyōto 2011), as well as international ones, such Art Busan (South Korea, 2012/2013), Melbourne Art Fair (Australia, 2014), Sydney Contemporary (2013/2015/2017), Seattle Art Fair (USA, 2017) or UNTITLED (USA 2016/2017).

V. Gallery Main

Hidden in the contorted streets of Kyōto's Gojo-district[273], it took me some time to find out that gallery Main is located on the second floor of an old *machiya*-building, one level above an alternative, cosy-looking café, where students and art-lovers would sit for hours to consume the various books and magazines on art and culture being offered to read. Finding the way upstairs, one is received traditional-style attic floor turned into an art space, with a high wooden ceiling and wooden floor, surrounded by white walls, where the pictures and photographies are on display. While gallery Main is not mainly focusing on contemporary paintings, but rather on contemporary photography, they are also offering exhibition-related workshops and even a darkroom to develop own photographies (to be payed per hour). Thus, my first visit in the gallery[274] was also a photography-related event, namely the opening reception and 'artist talk' entitled 'Showcase: Extra Edition: SNAPSHOT - every single day *(sorezore no hibi)'*. Being in short delay after having visited another galle-

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271 *https://www.artsy.net/partner-55a95629776f726e3e000052 accessed last 12.04.2018.*

272 *On the 29th of January 2017.*

273 *I should become acquainted with this area soon, due to the reason that the Antenna Media gallery is located right next to gallery Main.*

274 *On the 29th of January 2017.*

ry before, I remember the talk event to have started, so that I sat down quietly on one of the chairs arranged in the gallery in order to listen to the (artist) discussion. It was one of my first 'talk events', so that I was quite surprised that we would receive a pre-written handout where the discussions' main part was already listed up to follow the 'line' of the discussion. Thus, I could basically read in advance, what the artist was about to say. This is, of course, the usual pattern I needed to become familiar with. Leaning back, I listened to the artists talking about their artworks — mainly consisting of polaroid-photographies — I didn't know yet that I would get to know one of Japans' most renowned art critics, Minoru Shimizu, in some couple of hours. After the talk and having had a closer look at the artworks, a fortunate coincidence brought me into the discussion with the exhibiting artists (Yoshinobu Nakgawa, Hyogo Mugyuda) and Mr. Shimizu, resulting in arranging a personal interview with him.

Minoru Shimizu was born 1963 in Tokyo, where he studied German philology and Philosophy at the University of Tokyo (*Tōkyo Daigaku)* and the Philipps-University Marburg (Germany). After moving to Kyōto and graduating from the *Doshisha University* (Kyōto) in 1992, he became professor of the department for language- and cultural studies at the forenamed university in 1995 until today. While his focus areas are aspects of German semiology of the twentieth century and contemporary music theory, he works also as translator of e.g. Wolfang Tillmanns'[275] or Gerhard Richter's texts[276]. Thus, he is not only fluent in English, but also in German, which I found to be quite rare and surprising.

In the course of the various conversations we had after our first meeting, either at other gallery opening exhibitions, art events or on private occasions, I took the chance to talk about Minoru Shimizu's personal view of Kyōto's art world and the Japanese art market. He frequently emphasized, that even though many art collectors are living in Kyōto (buying art as well), the city's buying power would not be big enough. While this is might not be the case only for Kyōto, but for other cities like Osaka or Nagoya as well, it is one of

[275] *Tillmans, W., Deitcher, D., & Shimizu, M. (2011). Wolfgang Tillmans: Burg : Truth study center. Cologne: Taschen.*

[276] *Such as: Richter, G., Shimizu, M. (2015). Gerhard Richter - painting. Tokyo: Wako Works of Art.; Richter, G., Shimizu, M., Wako, K. (2001). Gerhard Richter: Öl auf Photographie, ein Grundmodell. Tokyo: Wako Works of Art.*

the main reasons why so many Japanese galleries want to expand, and go to ‘more international‘ art fairs[277] in e.g. China (*Art Fair Basel,* Hongkong).

For Mr. *Shimizu* it is obvious, that Kyōto actively tries to create and establish a new ‘image’ for Kyōto within the last years, especially by the use of contemporary art. However, promoting art fairs and festivals for contemporary art (e.g. Art Fair Kyōto, PARASOPHIA) is an ambitious endeavor he still sees ‘in its infancy’ or in other words, in its early stage of developments. According to his opinion, not only Kyōto, but generally the whole Kansai-Area[278] has much potential for an up-and-coming contemporary art world, but still lacks enough sponsoring and not the right exhibition venues.

VI. Galerie Miyawaki

I discovered *Galerie Miyawaki* rather accidentally during a walk through Kyōto’s Teramachi-Nijo-district, thanks to the exceptional modern architecture of the building, which is rather uncommon amongst the other traditional houses in this area. While the neighborhood is widely known for it’s traditional *Nihonga*-galleries and antiques, Galerie Miyawaki is one of the few big galleries that is holding exhibitions of modern contemporary art, as well as also presenting modern *Nihonga*-artworks as part of permanent collection. Originally established in 1958, the gallery was relocated to its present location in 1973 and is thus for already forty years an integral part of Kyōto’s art world. A large glass show window facing the Teramachi-street is displaying works of the current exhibition. Entering the five-story gallery building I noticed, that not only the building’s exterior facade, but also its internal space that bears distinctive characteristics: A surrealistic-looking spiral staircase, connecting the building’s first through third floors, is definitely an unusual feature for a gallery building in Kyōto — and definitely suits the gallery’s conceptional orientation. At the time of my visit[279], the gallery hosted a mix of Western and Japanese oil- and mix-media paintings. While looking around, the owner of the gallery, Yutaka Miyawaki,

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[277] *Minoru Shimizu considers Tokyo’s national Art Fair Tokyo not to be strong enough for the global art market, also because the exhibition concepts seem to be too unclear: For example, one can find ‘Yayoi’-ceramics (traditional handcraft from 300 B.C.—300 A.D.) next to contemporary artworks, as told by Mr. Shimizu.*

[278] *The Kansai-region roughly encompasses the agglomeration area around the Osaka, Kōbe and Kyōto-prefectures, sometimes also including the Nara, Wakayama, Hyōgo and Shiga.*

[279] *On the 26th of January 2017.*

and his assistant came by, so that I took the chance to talk to them. Fond of my research purposes, Mr. Miyawaki took me one floor upstairs to show me his 'special collection' — prized artworks by famous Japanese modernist artists from the 1960s, as well as old *Ukiyo-e* (woodblock)-prints — which he wanted to exhibit together with other contemporary art works at the upcoming Tokyo International Art Fair (in May 2017). This already indicates a shift of orientation, from a specific national to a wider, international focus.

While Galerie Miyawaki was previously specializing in surrealist art and *Art Informel*, as being told by the gallery owner, the gallery has furthermore gradually re-orientated their direction towards collecting artworks from more marginal movements of modern art, such as *art brut*, or *outsider art* within the last years. However, the idea behind this concept is based upon the notion to appreciate and re-associate the connection between the 'traditional' and the 'modern', or in other words that 'modern art should represent a continuity and symbiosis between the old (the known) and the new (the unknown), and the idea that a primal desire for life is the foundation for all creativity'[280].
As such hub for creativity, the gallery is neither choosing their artists in regard to his or her artistic background or nationality, nor the medium of the art work. Instead, the gallery aims to expand the conjunction of traditional and contemporary Japanese art, as well as to introduce the exhibition of rather un-noted art movements and artistic directions of modern art.

VII. H.A.P.S. (Higashiyama Artist Placement Service)

The Higashiyama Artists Placement Service (H.A.P.S.) is non-profit organization and exhibition space located in the Higashiyama area of Kyōto City, established in 2011 with the aim to support Kyoto-based artists, who are 'suffering from a lack of studio space, suitable exhibition space, affordable housing, and efficient industry networks'[281]. H.A.P.S. is consequently promoting emerging artists from different (art) educational backgrounds, as well as providing opportunities for further artistic development to artists who have already established an art practice or career.

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[280] *http://www.galerie-miyawaki.com/GalerieMiyawaki_Kyoto_En.html accessed last 05.05.2018.*
[281] *http://haps-kyoto.com/en/about/ accessed last 06.05.2018*

The Artist Placement Service does not offer financial support to artists in the form of payment, but works together with them to find solutions concerning budget concerns, collaboration opportunities, as well as helping then to get an overview of exhibition or event costs and guidance to technical support. Furthermore, they provide coordinative support for the artists to find accommodation-, studio- and storage spaces, temporary exhibition venues and help to form new relationships by promoting supportive networks, such as with commercial gallery owners and academics or collaboration-possibilities with other professionals in non-arts based business. Another important point is that the employees are providing necessary information on residency programs, and other potential development opportunities (nationally and internationally), as well as trying to arrange meetings with key persons from the art world, such as professional curators and other arts professionals. But most importantly, H.A.P.S.' main concern and key note is to move 'away from institutionalized art systems and production' in order to create an 'alternative circulation system of creativity, fostering positive change, creating a new paradigm for artists […] by encouraging open networks of discussion and exploration of all artists in Kyōto, not just those in the commercial sphere.'[282], as stated by the founders themselves. The exhibition space on the ground floor provides further exhibition possibilities.
Since the director of H.A.P.S., Tetsuya Ozaki, was one of my very first contacts I could establish already prior the research trip, it was not only a pleasure to visit the H.A.P.S. art space itself, but moreover a principal concern to meet and interview him in person.

Born in Tokyo in 1955, Tetsuya Ozaki graduated from the Faculty of Economics at the Keio University (Tōkyo), and began work in the publishing industry[283]. Later on, he worked as an author[284], art and multimedia critic, as well as a producer, editor and editorial director, e.g. launching the bilingual (Japanese and English) quarterly website *ART iT*[285] from 2003-2010, which aims to cover the Japanese and Asian-Pacific art scenes. In 2000, he started 'REALTOKYO', an online web based cultural magazine, which provides cultu-

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[282] http://haps-kyoto.com/en/about/ *accessed last 06.05.2018.*

[283] *He joined Shincho-sha Publishers in 1984 (Paperback Division), and later became deputy editor-in-chief of '03 Tokyo Calling', a city-culture and information magazine, opening his own office in 1995.*

[284] *E.g.* Elliott, D., Ozaki, T., & Japan Society (New York, N.Y.). *(2011). Bye bye Kitty!!!: Between heaven and hell in contemporary Japanese art. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.*

[285] *http://www.art-it.asia/top/ accessed on 29.04.2018.*

ral information of Japans metropolitan areas in both English and Japanese language. Furthermore, Tetsuya Ozaki became an adjunct professor for media sociology at the Musashino Art University (Koidara/Tōkyo) in 2004, followed by a guest professorship for art journalism at the *Kyōto University of Art and Design* (Kyōto) in 2007.

As the current vice-president of H.A.P.S., publisher, journalist, editor-in-chief of the online-magazine *REALKYOTO* (the affiliated site of *REALTOKYO*, a web magazine providing cultural information for the Kansai area) and art critic, he is one of the central figures of Kyōto's cultural world. Frequently hosting 'culture talks' with Japanese and international guests (e.g. the 'artist talk' at Goethe Institute Villa Kamogawa*),* Tetsuya Ozaki has become well-known for his international scale art and culture-network-connections.

But not only Mr, Ozaki himself, also his small restaurant *Yoshida-ya,* run together with his wife and hidden in the center of Kyōto city, is one a renowned meeting-place and dynamic hub for people from Kyōto's art- and intellectual world. It was not only there, but also at many other art events, opening receptions, culture talks and some face-to-face meetings that I had the occasion to talk with him about the Japanese art world, Kyōto and his personal connection to the city[286].

Growing up and working in Tokyo for many years, Tetsuya Ozaki took the decision to move from Tokyo to Kyōto for several reasons. First of all it was due to private decisions, such as the job-change to teach at Kyōto's University of Art and Design. But moreover, it was also the city of Kyōto and the changes in the cultural scene he felt to be going on within the last ten years.

Taken together, he believes Kyōto being 'smaller and more compact, which is why 'everybody knows everybody' and thus, 'one can easier find and start collaborations', which would be a great advantage. While Tokyo has more 'distance' between the artists and the disciplines, or in his words 'more distance between the art backgrounds', Kyōto has many 'crossing points', such as his restaurant *Yoshida-ya* mentioned above. After all, looking back at the city's history, Kyōto's merchants were always 'interested and fond of anything new'. Kyōto has always been 'avant-garde', he explains, such as for example being the birth city for *Kabuki*-theatre. Speaking of mixing tradition with modernity, Tetsuya Ozaki notes: 'Of course Kyoto has many temples and a lot of traditions, but progress and mod-

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[286] *The following quotes originate from an face-to-face interview held in the 'Café Bibliothek Hello!' (Kyōto) on the 12th of April 2017.*

ernization was also always wanted.' Later on, he found the student movements of the 1960s and art groups like *DUMP TYPE* to have been likewise revolutionary for Kyōto's culture and art-development (see chapter three).

Asking Tetsuya Ozaki about his opinion concerning Kyōto's plans to improve it's 'contemporary art image', such as introducing new art fairs, he directly recalls the case of the PARASOPHIA Festival of Contemporary Culture (2015): While the festival's approach was to introduce a 'western standard of a 'high quality festival' with top artists', he believes that the gap between prior festivals (such as the *Kyōto Sentō Art Festival*) has been be too big and thus, the concept to have run in the wrong direction[287]. Furthermore, the artists featured in the PARASOPHIA festival were mostly famous artists of the 90s', Mr. Ozaki especially missed the representation of young artists.
More generally speaking, the support of young students is one of the many aspects he considers Kyōto's contemporary art world to be lacking: 'Nawa Kohei[288] and its *SANDWICH factory* are quite well-off in Kyōto's and the Japanese art world right now, but only because he's supported by Korean companies. So where is the support for young artists and alternative art-spaces?'.

Creating H.A.P.S. and administrating the web-site and cultural search engine REALKYOTO, which is being 'devoted to providing culture and event information, as well as reviews and criticism centered on Kyōto and the Kansai-region'[289], Tetsuya Ozaki is eager to do everything in his power to promote alternative art- and cultural institutions and their events, and especially to support local artists. Actively following the progress of young Japanese artists, he noted that over the last years, more and more students were willing to go abroad. As a positive consequence, this has lead to more self-reflection and more self-reflective thinking within their creation, as he describes.

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[287] *Nevertheless, it is not only PARASOPHIA, but also other festivals around Asia that have to deal with similar problems.*

[288] *Born in Kyoto in 1975, Nawa Kohei studied at the Kyoto City University of Art, and moved to London in 1998, to learn at the Royal College of Art. Nowadays, Nawa has become one of the most renowned artists in Japan: Being awarded with grants from Japanese, American and European institutions, his works are part of prestigious collections around the globe. His artistic production spans from sculptures and architectural interventions to installations and fashion.*

[289] *http://realkyoto.jp/en/about/ accessed last on 28.04.2018*

Concerning his web-site-project (REALKYOTO), Tetsuya Ozaki has noted an important improvement, as well: ‘There more followers and the reading audience has improved’. Even though this means that Kyōto is more and more opening up for the art world with its local artists and local events, he yet believes the general knowledge about art in Japan to be ‘quite bad’. This is supposed to be partly be due to the reason of poor dissemination of art historical knowledge in Japanese high schools.

IV.V. RENTAL GALLERIES

I. Dohjidai Gallery of Art

The Dohjidai Gallery of Art was the first rental gallery I came to visit at the beginning of my research — not because of its prominence, but its prominent location. In the midst of Kyōto’s liveliest shopping area in the center of the cit*y (Sanjō), o*ne can find the gallery on the first floor of the well-known *1928 Biru*-building[290], that is registered as one of the many modern historical properties of the city. While it has a theater (‘GEAR’) on the third floor in the same building where plays are frequently performed, the building is rather famous for its fashionable ‘Café Independants’, a cafe and restaurant that also hosts live performances and live paintings by local artists and university students. Thus, not only its historical appearance, but also the various in-vogue side-venues create a unique atmosphere many young Japanese (and also foreign tourists) are fond of.

With *Dohjidai* meaning ‘contemporary’ in Japanese, its concept aims to be analogous to the name of the gallery: to ‘exhibit works with Zeitgeist, irrelevant of experience, genre, technique or gender’, intending to ‘discover and grow potential artists in new generations and deepens the interchanges between Asia and Europe and us through art as social culture’ since its opening in 1996. However, as a rental gallery, this support comes at a price: the weekly charge ranges from 61.500 to 183.000 Yen (converted around 465 to 1380 Euro), depending on which exhibition room to be chosen.

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290 *The former Mainichi Newspaper building designed by architect Goichi Takeda and constructed in the year 1928.*

Entering the gallery the first time, I was somewhat irritated by concept of the venue, including small shops and unidentifiable ancillary rooms. The gallery itself consists of two rooms, a large and a smaller one, where basically any kind of artworks, such as paintings, sculptures or installations, as well as ceramics, textiles, accessories and other small works are freely displayed (additionally also in built-in shelves). Being told by the exhibiting students that 'you are free to use needles and screws to display your works the way you want to', the location reminded me moreover of a creative working space than a gallery for art exhibition.

As a consequence, the segmentation and display of artworks seems to be rather loosely mixed, according to who is currently renting the gallery's art space. Nonetheless, I was lucky to come upon a relatively high-standard Student-exhibition entitled '*0 kara 1694.35 made*' ('from 0 to 1694.35'), where one of the young exhibiting artist, Miyagi Yuka[291], was even present and receptive to be interviewed another day.

II. Gallery Maronie

Gallery Maronie is a rental gallery that is located in Kyōto's busy Kawaramachi-shopping area, exhibiting a variety of artworks from handcrafts to contemporary art. Due to its connections to the Kyōto University of Art and Design, student graduation exhibitions are frequently being on display. Therefore, while the normal gallery rent amounts from 120.000 up to 190.000 Yen for one week (around 900 to 1430 Euro, depending on which floor one chooses), students who are about to exhibit get a onetime discount of twenty percent. The buildings third, fourth and fifth floor are being provided as exhibition and art spaces with respectively different atmospheres[292]. Thus, a variety of paintings, sculptures, handcraft and other artistic artwork can be found over three floors 'in order to correspond to the shape of today's diversity and manifoldness (of art)'[293].

On my first visi*t at Gallery Maronie[294], the Kyōto University of Art and Design graduation works were exhibited. The quality and v*ariety of works being surprisingly high, it took

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[291] *The young artist was also the mediator who connected me to Mio Yamato, who has already graduated at that time and therefore supposed to be able to tell more about Kyotos art world, after having talking to her about my research purposes.*

[292] *Furthermore, a small shop selling accessories and books is located on the third floor as well.*

[293] *http://www.gallery-maronie.com/about/ retrieved last 29.02.2018*

[294] *On the 29th of January 2017.*

some time to walk through the several rooms, with the artworks hang up on concrete and white walls. But especially the flow of natural light from the attic window of the ceiling, creating a pleasant atmosphere within the room of the fifth floor, sticked in my memory. Since most of the young artists were present, I took the chance to talk to some of the students, who were eager to tell me about their works and their university.

III. GALLERY H2O

Striding through the wooden gate following a typical Japanese stone path (*roji*) that is guiding you through a beautiful garden to a traditional *machiya*-house, one would rather expect a traditional *Ryokan* (traditional Japanese guest house) or a stately home by one of Kyōto's many wealthy families, than a rental gallery to be located inside this admirable property. But, the pictures and paintings displayed on the wall were undoubtedly indicating that it was a gallery, indeed. The inside rooms were in no way inferior to its outside beauty: While a few rooms were kept — with its *tatami*-mats and *shōji*-sliding doors — in its traditional style, the main exhibition rooms are fitted with white walls in order to display the artworks. While being stunning from outside, the exhibition inside was unfortunately rather unspectacular, consisting mostly of textile- and fashion-design-related works by young artists, who showed their 'fashion collections'. Additional rooms displayed a few Anime-inspired works by other young university students and also amateur artists.
Reading the pamphlets laid out in from of the gallery, my assumption that this art space could probably also be rented — enabling anybody to display his/her works — was confirmed.

Since the focus of the gallery H2O is to target on 'people who create, view and use works of arts, crafts and design in their daily lives', the gallery sees itself as a 'communication space' to give those people (artists and viewers) the chance to 'exchange ideas with each other and encounter art'[295]. However, the selection of possible exhibition pieces is quite multi-variant and seemed farraginous: For example, gallery H2O also hosted a 'Contemporary Japanese Medallic Art'-exhibition (in April 2017) or the 'International Tea Ware

[295] *http://www.eaudesign.com/h2o/ accessed last 04.05.2018*

Expo' (in May 2017)[296], which also indicates the gallery's orientation towards trying to combine traditional arts and handcrafts with a contemporary approach.

IV. GALLERY TOMO

Gallery TOMO is another small rental gallery situated in the historic gallery-quarter near Kyōto's Imperial Palace (*Kyōto Gosho*). Even though a large glass front is facing the main street, I probably wouldn't have found the place if I wouldn't have picked up a flyer, informing about the latest exhibitions, from another gallery spot. Thus, I first entered the traditional *machiya*-house with its high ceilings covered with cedar boards due to an opening reception of Caori Fujita's sculpture exhibition ('yours', 2017)[297]. While the artist aimed at expressing the contrast and difference of texture between the in- and outside of the human body, e.g. by creating various shapes of a human back view, he used a traditional Japanese *Kanshitsu*-technique ('dry lacquer'-technique) for sculpture production, where the figures are covered with many layers of hemp cloth soaked with *Urushi*-lacquer, and further details applied with a mixture of lacquer, sawdust and powdered clay stone. Thus, this mixture of traditional Japanese craftsmanship with contemporary motifs seemed to blend in well with the gallery's *machiya*-atmosphere. On further visits, I came across various university graduation exhibitions where the artworks displayed were interestingly mostly focused on *Manga*- and *Anime*-style-inspired paintings. Even though I did not manage to establish a contact to the gallery owner, I got to know Naoyuki Ogino, a Kyōto-based photographer who participated in the KYOTOGRAPHIE 2017 festival and organized several festival-related workshops (KG+) I was invited to.

V. Art Space MEISEI

Art Space MEISEI is a rental gallery specialized in exhibiting traditional Japanese painting (*Nihonga*). Despite their permanent collection (with paintings by e.g. Hiroko Fukuda), the gallery shows artworks from university students and graduates, as well as already established artist. The gallery itself can be found near to Galerie Miyawaki, within the gallery-

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[296] *https://ameblo.jp/galerie-h2o/archive1-201704.html accessed last 10.04.2018*

[297] *On the 26th of January 2017.*

packed Nakagyo-ku area. Situated in another beautiful traditional *machiya*-house, the specific thematic focusing on *Nihonga*-artworks inside were truly fitting to its surrounding architectural style and atmosphere. Entering the gallery through a traditional Japanese sliding door, one can see the paintings framed in rather clunky/bulky-looking frames displayed next to each other on the white walls. The rental charges are 140.000 Yen (approx. 1070 Euro) per week (counted as six days). Walking to the counter located in the back of the gallery, I could enjoy an interesting conversation with the gallery owner Mrs. Yamashita, where she told me about the characteristics of *Nihonga*, and of Kyōto (still) being especially famous for it. Since most of the traditional galleries — including this one — were not destroyed in the course of the Second World War, they continued to be present on Kyōto art- and cultural map. Not changing much of their conceptual orientation/direction, they kept on exhibiting and dealing with *Nihonga*-paintings as before.

On the day of my visit[298], a solo-exhibition by *Nihonga*-painter Masayuki Adachi was on display, presenting the artist's landscape paintings. Another day I came by, I was surprised to see a joint-group-exhibition of recently graduated students (Azusa Ishihara, Takashi Tanaka among others) entitled '*tekuteku*' ('on foot'), that did not consist of Japanese-style *Nihonga*-, but Western-style *Yōga*-paintings (mostly oil on canvas).

IV.VI. UNIVERSITY-RELATED GALLERIES

With Kyōto prefecture having the largest percentage of students in Japan[299] — both national and international — Kyōto can clearly be called a 'student city'. Compared to other cities like Tokyo and Osaka, living expenses, such as rental costs etc., are much lower and due to the city's rather compact size, riding a bicycle has become one of the city's typical pictures and 'specific' characteristics. Needless to say, especially the areas around the respective universities, with its many restaurants, café and stores in particular suited for students, have long before discovered and drawn from this lucrative potential. But throughout the years this development has gone hand in hand with the creation of a young, alternative

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[298] *On the 28th of January 2017.*

[299] *Based on Dec 2014 Database of the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 1 out of 10 people in the Kyōto city area is actually a university student, which means approximately 150,000 students. Furthermore, around 9,000 students are foreign students. See: https://www.studykyoto.jp/en/whykyoto/ accessed last 17.05.2018.*

— and recently even vegan — scene, opening up art-related cafés and concept stores throughout the city, that are very popular with the students. Here it is not only possible to create artistic events in combination with (live-)performance or the display of art, or even turn them into temporary gallery venues, but also to distribute information concerning upcoming events, e.g. by laying out the relative flyers and pamphlets.

The fact that Kyōto has so many university and also art universities, for which reason students from all over the country move to Kyōto, creates a very special atmosphere which correlates with the feeling of an international mingling of different people — students, foreigners and tourists.

Thus, the large number of existent art universities can not only be seen as one of Kyōto's prominent specifics, but can moreover be regarded as one of the city's biggest potential for Kyōto's art world, as art critics and gallery owners such as e.g. Tetsuya Ozaki or Yūsuke Masaki have frequently emphasized during our interviews. The multitude of art university students and graduates leaving the universities every year consequently produce a circular flow of regularly held graduation exhibitions, taking place in either the university related art spaces, or in commercial galleries. In the following I am going to introduce three of the most important university-related galleries I have visited during my research.

I. Kyōto City University of Arts Art Gallery: @KCUA

In 1991, a center for the arts was build on the *Katsura* campus of Kyōto City University of Arts *(Kyōto-shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku)* providing an opportunity for visitors to view the works from the art school's collection in the showrooms, as well as an atelier to present a variety of exhibitions related to new research and other topics. After the Kyōto Horikawa Senior High School of Music was relocated to a new building in 2010, the Kyōto City University of Arts Gallery, also known as @KCUA[300], was opened in the heart of Kyōto city on the second of April 2010[301]. Besides developing activities in three university faculties (the Art Department, the Music Department, and the Research Center for Japanese Traditional Music), the *@KCUA* center is also involved in reciprocal projects with these

[300] *@KCUA is an acronym for the name of the university, and when pronounced, it should also the Latin word for water 'aqua'.*

[301] *Along with it, another new gallery called Horikawa Oike Gallery was built.*

facilities as well as other off-campus collaborations, creating exhibitions, performances, symposiums, lectures, research meetings, and workshops.

Since I knew the @KCUA-gallery already since my university exchange year in Kyōto in 2012 and visited their exhibitions various times, it was especially interesting to see the gallery within the new context of my research. Even though the @KCUA-gallery is certainly transcending the existing university framework, it cannot be called an alternative off-space for young artists. If not being launched and funded by the Kyōto City University of Arts, the exhibition space and projects to be featured would definitely go beyond the scope of any students budget willing to hire a 'normal' rental gallery. I will adduce the artist duo *Kawai + Okamura*'s exhibition 'Mood Hall/Mood Hole'[302] as an instance: Organized by Kyōto City University of Arts, with additional funding from the Japan Arts Council and in the cooperation of Kyōto University of Art and Design, it was Hiroki Okamura and Takumi Kawai's first solo exhibition in nine years, presenting a variety of mixed-media and video installations, paintings, photographies and animations. Both artists were local artists from the Kansai-region[303], graduating from Kyōto City University of Arts, Okamura in oil painting and Kawai in sculpture. After the formation of *Kawai + Okamura* as a visual art unit in 1993, they started to exhibited their works globally[304]. The exhibition presented in three large rooms on the second floor of the @KCUA-gallery was due to its variety quite impressive, even though the video installations were clearly set to be the focus. While professionalism and set-up was beyond any usual exhibition displayed in other university-related galleries, we need to keep in mind that it was not a student's graduation exhibition, but one of two renowned local artists. Thus, the gallery should rather be seen/understood as exhibition venue that is moreover focusing on already established artists.

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[302] *Visited on the 21st of January 2018.*

[303] *Takumi Kawai born 1968 in Osaka and currently based in Kyōto, Hiroki Okamura born 1968 in Kyōto and currently also based there.*

[304] *E.g. at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (France), the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (Tawain), and Art Tower Mito (Japan).*

II. Kyōto University of Art and Design: Galerie Aube and ARTZONE

Galerie Aube[305] is the main fine-arts exhibition hall located inside the Kyōto University of Art and Designs' *(Kyōto Zōkei geijutsu daigaku)* main building (*Ningenkan*), that was established in 2005 to display artworks by the selected faculty and graduate students, as well as other artists from Japan. While the students are in charge of the whole exhibition process — such as managing the curatorial duties, creation of advertisements, planning of the event etcetera — the hall is also being used as a space for practical education.

The Kyōto University of Art and Design[306] is a private university in the Sakyo-ku district, founded as a four-year college in 1991. Providing various studies on visual and performing arts in twelve different departments, the university frequently hosts international guest lecturers and an *International Research Center for the Arts* (*IRCA*) since 2004. The overall 'mission' is oriented towards internationality — 'to send young people with an artistic spirit out into the world'[307] — and the belief, that creativity can transform society, or in other words, 'that the revival of the arts is, if nothing else, a movement that will nurture a future generation to launch a new renaissance'[308].

Since I have visited the university campus already severe times before prior to this research project, I was already acquainted with the main hall, as well as with its several sub-galleries (each belonging to the specific departments), which are spread all over the spacious university campus area. With mostly student graduate exhibitions on display, Galerie Aube serves for many young artists as vitally important first exhibition venue to refer to in their artistic career. Furthermore, against the backdrop of university's good and established reputation, nearly every student I have talked to dreams of having the honor to be chosen by their professors to exhibit in this venue. But not only the renowned professors teaching at the university, but also the universities' architecture is famous throughout the whole country/beyond the city's boundaries: the whole campus consists of several futuristic-looking buildings varying in conception and architectural style that are surrounded by tall, old pine trees and a terrace (on top of the hill), with a view over the whole city.

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[305] The gallery's name 'Aube' — french for 'daybreak' or 'dawn' — was chosen in the hope that exhibitions being displayed will engender a new dawn of fine arts in the 21st century world.

[306] *Former Kyōto College of Art (founded 1977).*

[307] *https://www.kyoto-art.ac.jp/en/about-us/statements/a-future-built-on-the-arts/ accessed last 04.05.2018*

[308] *https://www.kyoto-art.ac.jp/en/about-us/mission/mission/ accessed last 04.05.2018*

Entering the main building and passing by the entry hall and the university's cafe, all ways lead directly to the buildings center — Galerie Aube — the sun-drenched, spacious exhibition hall adorned with tall columns, parquet flooring. white walls and some parts of natural stone. Additional exhibition-rooms can be found on three floors up- and downstairs, which are accessible via elevator or the (almost) cantilevered steps. This particular venue was not only adjuvant for visiting graduation exhibitions, but most of all in order to establish contacts to the young students and artists, as well as to conduct on-site interviews. By collecting the info-material placed next to the art works at e.g. graduation exhibitions, I was able to receive further interview-contacts.

Most of the young students I have interviewed initially moved to Kyōto in order to study at this renowned university, as they were recommended to do so. The second reason was linked to Kyōto's excellent image, which is one the one hand related to its traditional and historical past and on the other to its international flair. For example Baichen Wan, a 27-year old university-graduate with Chinese roots, who has studied in Kyōto for six years, describes Kyōto as the 'old city', being more 'closed' in comparison to other 'more open-minded cities like Osaka or Tokyo', where one would be able to have 'more possibilities and a wider spectrum to exhibit whatever you want to', while it would be 'easier to start something'. However, he often praises his university to be — on the contrary — 'very open-minded, unrestricted and independently thinking', with for example the professors introducing the young students to established artists and important gallerists and vice versa in order to establish future contacts. Indicating the importance of this network-making, he came to the point that Kyōto's galleries are actually too small and inflexible (especially concerning the exhibition of large artworks or the topic), and rental galleries are either 'too expensive for students' or have a 'bad atmosphere'[309].

Art Project Room ARTZONE is an additional experimental gallery space managed by students of the Kyōto University of Art and Design (*Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*). Located in Kyōto's Kawaramachi-Area, it provides an alternative art space for young students to plan and host a variety of events that are ranging from exhibits and workshops to recitals and open discussions. As an art project room that doesn't see itself merely as gallery, but as

[309] *He himself has taken part at different group exhibitions organized by the university without having had a solo exhibition yet due to the reasons mentioned.*

an experimental art place 'pursuing to make arts function in the society'[310], the attempt is to create a system especially for young students in order them free hand and to let art become alive outside the university rooms. Unlike Galerie Aube, ARTZONE is located outside of the university campus and thus, more accessible for non-university related visitors, e.g. pedestrians just passing by and looking inside.

IV.VII. ART FESTIVALS

Within the last years, the city of Kyōto has actively engaged in providing new platforms for artists (and young art students) to show their works, which are designed both for Kyōto-related and international purposes. Despite their diversity and different approaches (both thematically and regarding the financial and governmental support), these festivals are all connected by an local approach that is aimed at exhibiting artworks from local, as well as international artists in Kyōto-typical venues.

In the following I will cover three festivals — the Kyōto Sentō Art Festival, Parasophia and KYOTOGRAPHIE festival— that I have either attended myself during my own research time in Kyōto, or that I had a specific relation to, e.g. by knowing the artist, who has participated in one of them, personally.
Thus, in order to stay within the scope of my research question and aims, I have deliberately excluded art fairs and art festivals held in Kyōto, such as Art Kyōto (2010-12), Chokyōto festival (irregularly held since 2010), KIFF *(Kyōto International Film and Art Festival,* 2017) or the latest Artist's fair Kyōto (2018), which are nonetheless, worth to be mentioned.

I. **Kyōto Sentō Art Festival**

The first public art fair to mention here is at the same time the one with the most local focus: The Kyōto Sentō Art Festival. The Kyōto Sentō Art Festival took place for already three times, in the years of 2014, 2015 and 2017, displaying artworks in public baths (*Sentō)* all over Kyōto. The festival was formerly organized in 2011 by graduates from the

[310] *http://artzone.jp/#about accessed last 16.04.2018.*

Kyōto University of Art and Design *(Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku),* intending to use the city's conditions and characteristics, which are not directly related to the Kyōto's tourism-sector. While other art festivals focus on displaying their artists's works in traditional *machiya*-houses or even famous temples and shrines, the Kyōto Sentō Art Festival acts upon a more unpretentious scale: Concentrating on exhibiting the artworks in some of the city's great plenty of public baths — daily visited by people of every age and class — the initiators cleverly chose those venues, that seem to be most appealing for Japanese people *living* in Kyoto, and not just for those visiting. Thus, this approach to provide an access to the work of local artists for everyone, as well as to broaden the idea of the 'exhibition space' itself, clearly underlines the alternative regional and local focus of the festival.

Even though I could not participate at the festival during my research time in Kyōto last year, I have interviewed one of the participating artists, *Raita Yoshida* (participating 2015), who is one of the 'role models' for the local, alternative art scene that has been building up within the last years. While the festival was always organized by Kyōto University of Art and Design students and independent artists, the 2014-*Kyōto Sentō Art Festival* took place in cooperation with the Kyōto Experiment: Kyōto International Performing Arts Festival 2014, and the festival in 2015 was given a hand by H.A.P.S. (*Higashiyama Artists Placement Service).* However, the festivals were not actively supported by the city's government and thus, needed to depend mostly on donations.

II. Parasophia: Kyōto International Festival of Contemporary Culture 2015

The second art fair to be mentioned is the probably most prominent example: the Parasophia Festival of Contemporary Culture. Curated by Shinji Kohmoto (former chief curator of The National Museum of Modern Art of Kyōto, as well as the Yokohama Triennale, 2001), Kyōto's 'International Festival of Contemporary Culture' was the city's 'first large-scale international exhibition of contemporary art to be held' in 2015.[311]

Over the course of three months, approximately 40 national and international artists from all over the world showed their work at various museums and galleries that acted as venues

[311] *http://www.parasophia.jp/en/about/ accessed last 20.01.2018.*

for the Parasophia festival, such as e.g. Kyōto Municipal Museum of Art, the Museum of Kyōto, and other selected locations in Kyōto.

The idea to create an international contemporary arts festival in Kyōto was Mikio Tase, a businessman and investor who wanted to create a 'platform, or laboratory of thinking, like the Venice Biennale.' Thus, he didn't shy away from the ambitious budget costs of approx. 572 million Yen, funded via both public and private money[312].

Additionally presented by the Kyōto International Festival of Contemporary Culture Organizing Committee, Kyōto Association of Corporate Executives (*Kyōto Keizai Doyukai*), the Kyōto Prefecture and Kyōto City itself, as well as sponsored by big companies like *PANASONIC*, *Kyōto Ginkō* bank, *SUNTORY* or *SHISEIDO*, the festival did definitely not lack of support.

One of the key characteristics of the event was, however, not solely focused on the venues, but on how the works were created: Prior to the festival, the participating artists visited Kyōto, got to interact with the locals and thus, tried to delve into the city's distinct atmosphere in order to create a work being literally inspired by it[313]. Embedding the city's cultural heritages and historic venues into the overall artistic concept instead of promoting them as places of consumption, the festival directors wanted furthermore to 'create a new heritage, new assets for the future'[314],

To encourage not only art-lovers, but also the public to go and visit the various exhibitions, the festival organization offered a passport ticket allowing unlimited entrance to the festival's exhibitions. Even though this festival also took place two years before my research trip to Japan, it was nearly not possible to get around this topic when mentioning 'Kyōto' and 'art festival' — with every artist, art critic or gallerist having an own opinion about it.

Overall, this festival can be seen as attempt to really internationalize the art scene, while simultaneously referring to local conditions. However, art critics I have talked to described it rather as a western-standard, high-quality oriented festival, that belied its expectations and probably 'failed', because the city did not seem to be 'ready' for it and thus, local

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312 *https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/03/05/arts/parasophia-take-kyoto-now/#.Wv0hfi_5wWo accessed last 17.03.2018.*

313 *For example, 2010 Turner Prize winner Susan Philipsz chose the Kamogawa River Delta as the main venue for her sound installation.*

314 *https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/03/05/arts/parasophia-take-kyoto-now/#.Wv0hfi_5wWo accessed last 17.05.2018.*

people found it to be too ‘elitist’[315]. Apart from that, art critics were criticizing that young new talents have been overlooked because Parasophia needed a ‘style that corresponds to international art-industry standards’[316] — which apparently wouldn’t have been possible with artists under the age of 30.
Nonetheless, one thing is for sure: The Parasophia festival can be seen as turning point in Kyōto’s contemporary art world.

III. KYOTOGRAPHIE

Last but not least, I will elaborate on KYOTOGRAPHIE, the ‘International Photography Festival’, that claims to be ‘one of the few truly international artistic events taking place in Japan’[317]. Held annually over four weeks during the height of the spring tourist season in Kyōto, the festival seeks to integrate the artworks with the exhibition space to accentuate both: ’We inspire a greater appreciation and understanding of photography, with original scenography in traditional and contemporary architecture’[318], as proclaimed.
Under French- and Japanese curatorship and with the support of BMW Group Japan as their main sponsor for three years beginning in 2017[319], as well as governmental support from the Kyōto prefecture, the festival had already established its stable foundation.
The fifth edition of KYOTOGRAPHIE was at the time of my visit under the motif of ‘LOVE’ — truth be told, a big topic that seemed rather difficult to grasp.

Even if contemporary photography was not included in my main focus of research, I took the chance to visit the festival and to participate in a range of talks, workshops, musical events and other special program-events during my stay. The various, thematically diverse exhibition were spread across the city, staged in traditional and modern venues, such as museums (e.g. The Museum of Kyōto’s Annex building), galleries, Kyōto-typical *machiya*-(town)houses, as well as temples or shrines, which clearly underlines their motif to be a

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315 *See interview with Tetsuya Ozaki, 2th of April 2017.*

316 *https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/03/05/arts/parasophia-take-kyoto-now/#.Wv0hfi_5wWo accessed last 17.05.2018.*

317 *https://www.kyotographie.jp/about/?lang=en accessed last 22.01.2018*

318 *Ibid.*

319 *Other sponsors are e.g. Fujifilm, CHANEL, Sony, Epson, Takashimaya, DAIMARU, Ruinart or ANA amongst many others.*

‘light of culture on an international scale’ while ’honoring its millennium of history and tradition’[320].

In addition, the satellite festival *KG+* was actively promoting local artists as a special side-venues,. Featuring the work of emerging photographers in more intimate venues such as temples and café-galleries to allow artists, industry professionals and visitors an opportunity to interact with each other.

Although the big preview- and opening party was held[321] in the exclusive and modern event halls of Hyatt Regency Kyōto Hotel, one of the big highlights were the exhibition by Arnold Newman: ‘Masterclass’ (with the special feature of displaying the *BMW Art Car by Andy Warhol* and a live-painting show) held in Nijo-castle (*Nijo-jō*), which is not ordinarily open to the public. However, for the duration of the festival, the castle and it’s southeast corner turret opened to the public for the first time. Another important cultural property exceptionally turned into an exhibition space was the exceptional *Kenninji* temple (together with its annexed *Ryosokuin*-temple) in the Gion-district (Noboyoshi Araki: ’A Desktop Love’).

It seems that the actual charm of the festival — for art lovers and tourists alike — is to be introduced and invited to fairly unknown or off-limit corners of Kyōto. The historical *Kondaya Genbei Chikuin-no-Ma machiya*-house, where Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographies ‘MEMENTO MORI’ were exhibited or *Mumeisha*, with Yan Kallens’ ‘Between the Light and Darkness’ displayed are just a few more examples to underline this assumption. However, as the festival has grown more prominent, some modern, bigger, more commercial and even industrial exhibition venues have replaced *machiya,* temples, and other traditional buildings. As example, last year’s visitor’s center, closing party, and several exhibitions took place in the shell of the partially demolished *Shinpuhkan* building.

Thus, the aim to connect contemporary art, culture and local artists with the city’s traditional architecture is a local approach which is, however, not solely directed to Japanese people living in the city, but moreover intended to attract an international audience: Attracting some 380,000 visitors from within Japan and overseas since its beginning in 2013,

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320 *https://www.kyotographie.jp/about/?lang=en accessed last 22.01.2018*

321 *On the 15th of April 2017.*

it is definitely one of most visited artistic festivals in Kyōto. Placing the exhibition shows in famous, Kyōto-typical buildings as well as 'cool urban hotspots' is undoubtedly an endeavor to show the city's 'best' image.

While the festival-committee is 'confident this fusion of the new and the old will bring about new ways of thinking, and propel our festival to new heights'[322], the idea of 'opening up Kyōto' by promoting its international potential, is not seen solely as a negative, tourism-oriented factor, but also appreciated amongst the artists living in Kyōto.

[322] *https://www.kyotographie.jp/about/?lang=en accessed last 22.01.2018*

CHAPTER FIVE

V. KYŌTO BASED ARTISTS

The following chapter will deal with the introduction of four artists — namely Daijiro Hama, Mio Yamato, Raita Yoshida and Keisuke Matsuda — who I have met and interviewed during my research stay in Kyōto from January to April 2017. While all of the artists were at this time living and working in Kyōto, I was able to conduct the respective face-to-face interviews either in their private ateliers, or in representative galleries where some of the artists have exhibited in, all of them being located in Kyōto city.

In addition to a short outline of the artist's personal and educational background, I will provide a further description of selected works, which have been chosen according to following criteria: I.) the artwork(s) are 'currently'[323] on display in at least one of Kyōto's art galleries, II.) I have seen the artworks personally and III.) I have talked to the artist about his artwork(s) in person. In regard to the last criteria and my knowledge of Japanese culture, I have furthermore decided to add a personal interpretation of the artwork(s) to provide a more detailed description. Due to the fact that I could establish an especially intensive personal contact with the artist Daijiro Hama, I shall provide a more detailed report about him and his work to start with.

Since most of the interviews I have conducted were semi-structured and narrative open interviews that did not only focus on the artist and his work, but also on the artists relation to Kyōto and his personal impressions of Kyōto's art world, a summary of these key aspects are included within the artist's portrayal.

V.I. DAIJIRO HAMA

What is the color of emptiness? Or, if there would be colors for emptiness, which ones would you choose? Would it be white as the symbolical color of purity in Japan, the color of worldly asceticism and austerity like the pilgrims garments, or those of the deceased souls to their last journey to the unknown? Or black, as the unknown itself, the endless silence, releasing oneself into the profundities of nothingness and tranquility?

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[323] *Retrospectively during the time of my research stay in Kyōto.*

For Daijiro Hama, it is both, black and white, representing the ‘world of void’ and the ‘empty space’ [324]itself: ‘In the empty space, the guidance to the infinite world of the unconsciousness begins. Seeing emptiness is "a manifestation in the depths of ones own existence’[325]

Daijro Hama was born 1984 in Izumo (*Izumo-shi*, a city located in *Shimane*-Prefecture, Japan) and decided to move to Toronto (Canada) in 2006, where he first started to work as an antique dealer. Soon, however, he was found by a multi-media group named ‘Exploding motor car’ and agreed on working together on several visual art related projects. After his stay in Canada, he initially wanted to go to Europe, but needed to return to Japan, landed in Kyōto and stayed — because ‘it felt amazing’[326].

While most of his paintings are abstract, consisting of rough lines playing on monochrome black or white surfaces, the motives never lose their subtle, finishing touch: fine, even scrupulously precise lines form seemingly endless, reticular patterns, which remind the viewer of spider webs — or rather traditional kimono patterns? They are painted with Japanese ink brush, sumi, and thus belong to the category of *sumi-e* (‘ink brush paintings’, also known as ‘literati painting’), mostly using black ink, as common in various East Asian calligraphy (figure III). Other paintings are made with acrylic paint and acrylic gauche colors on canvas, or pencil on paper (figure IV.).

This play of contrasts and opposites — black and white, rough and delicate — seems to catch one’s eye immediately. Even so, his works are not simply contrasting black and white, ‘right and wrong, the presence of life and death’[327] — they are a pursuit of the ‘depths of ones own existence’[328] and thus, the idea of ‘emptiness’ is not about ending - but about constant revival and new beginnings[329].
In trying to unite extremes, to learn about their power and to use them, these pictures are embodiments of moderation, in search for a way to express ‘profundity’: ‘It is a view of the world in which the opposite poles of black and white are unified and are born. It is ex-

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[324] *http://www.daijirohama.com/pages/about.html accessed last 22.04.2018.*
[325] *Ibid.*
[326] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 17th of March 2017.*
[327] *http://www.daijirohama.com/pages/about.html accessed last 22.04.2018.*
[328] *Ibid.*
[329] *Taken from a personal communication on 30th of March 2017.*

pressed by the word ‘moderation’. It is the world beyond what is reflected as right and wrong, the presence of life and death, the equality of the north and south pole.’[330]

Having asked the artist himself, what he is associating with the colors ‘black’ and ‘white’, he answered ‘nothing in particular’[331]. For him, the associations appearing while looking at monochrome colors are not the principal factor. Rather, it is about the empty space they leave for further ideas to emerge, beyond the meaning of color. Throughout the years and process of painting, Daijro Hama found out that ‘color just bears too much meaning and information’[332] and in this way, the motif itself would get lost if too much color is used. This statement becomes more conceptional, if we understand the artists’ idea of seeing any picture as a medium of communication. In this way, the communication transmitted through the painting would be irritated or even hindered by the use of colors.

At this point it is worth mentioning, that Daijiro Hama did not always paint in only monochrome colors: ‘My style now developed after the big earthquake[333]. Until then, I used a lot of colors, but suddenly, it became difficult to use colors. Well, not difficult to use, but everything felt forced’. As soon as he started to use black and white, it became more and more difficult for him to go back to color. Now, it was ‘all about the lights and darks’[334]. While it was not about the colors, was it about the blending? Or about the shading? The contrast? Being interested in these concepts more than before, he started to explore this style deeper.

First thinking that narrowing down the use of colors by only applying black and white would be ‘more simple’[335], Daijro Hama realized that the data and knowledge these achromatic colors contain kept constantly changing — for him, and the viewer.

He furthermore described this viewpoint as being related to the buddhist concept of *umu* (also sometimes read as *ari-nashi*)[336], which could literally be translated as ‘having or not-

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330 *http://www.daijirohama.com/pages/about.html accessed last 22.04.2018.*

331 *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 17th of March 2017.*

332 *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 17th of March 2017.*

333 *The 11th of March 2011’ earthquake off the Pacific coast of Tōhoku (Tōhokuchihō Taiheiyō Oki Jishin’), also referred to as ‘Great East Japan Earthquake’ (Higashi Nihon Daishinsai).*

334 *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 25th of March 2017.*

335 *Ibid.*

336 *Taken from a personal communication on 30th of March 2017.*

having', while it rather implies the meaning of 'existence or non-existence', where we need to accept, that everything in life consists of having both sides — black and white.

Looking at some of Daijiro Hama's other paintings, more representational figures, sometimes more, sometimes less visible animals and people can be detected standing in front of monochrome, or in front of black-to-white graduating backgrounds. Even though his subjects may vary, one seems to always feel a strong connection to traditional Japanese art itself, not only because of the *sumi-e*-ink technique Daijiro Hama is using, but most of all because of the motives and stories they seem to tell: in many of his artworks, he 'portrays' people who appear to be Japanese, which is indicated by the specific hair arrangements and clothes (for example kimonos) they are wearing, as we can see in figure V. and VI.

Yet, most interestingly, it is not the clothes that are shown which catches ones attention, but to a greater degree their faces that are not shown or rather, made unrecognizable. In Japan there is a saying, that Japanese people have three faces: The first face is the one shows the world. Friends and family see their second face. And it is only the third face, the one being hidden, that is the truest reflection of our personal soul. As such, the concept of showing ones face and 'keeping ones face' (*mentsu o tateru*) is very central to Japanese culture, etiquette and communication.[337] Since the artist is looking for a mutual communication (picture/viewer, as well as abstract/figurative), faces would 'already answer'[338] and therefore would be too obvious to paint.

Where does the inspiration come from? For Daijiro Hama, it is the everyday details, experiences and emotions that he is inspired by: 'It's everyday, the inspiration comes from every day. It's like anything that surrounds you, anything can be possible. For example some birds, sometimes how you feel the air or the temperature on your skin.'[339]
But it is especially the city of Kyōto, that keeps inspiring him: the size and structure of the city, its surrounding nature and also its historical, literary and especially philosophical background, that creates a very special atmosphere 'people were fascinated by since anci-

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[337] *The face is the quality embedded in most Asian cultures that indicates a person's reputation, influence, dignity and honor. By showing e.g. respect you 'give them face' or similarly, you can 'loose' your face when doing something inappropriate.*
[338] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 17th of March 2017.*
[339] *Ibid.*

ent times'[340]. It is not only one aspect, but the 'balance of everything', that one can 'live and work in the city'[341] — these things makes up the city's specific character.

Visiting his atelier studio (figure VII.), which is located right in the city's center, Daijro Hama states that even though he was always being creative, his career as painter started off after a little detouring: 'I used to work with clothes but when I started to think about what I could do on my own, it was something I was doing from when I was little. Well, it was a natural process. This was something I could do on my own. This was the beginning for me.'[342]

Daijiro Hama continues to work with fashion even today: designing various motives, that are printed on plain clothes (for example T-shirts) and he even decorates Japanese traditional kimonos with his own paintings. These works and other paintings are frequently displayed in concept and fashion stores all over Kyōto, where I used to run into him incidentally while walking along Kyōto's fashion districts (figure VIII.).

As depicted in figure VIIII., 'Keep Kyōto weird' is a slogan that was created based on a popular slogan called 'Keep Portland Weird', which appears on stickers, signs, and public buildings throughout the city of Portland, Oregon (US). Similar to its origin, the slogan is intended to promote local businesses. Later on, this meaning was extended by promoting personal, as well as local individuality and accepting atypical or eccentric lifestyles.

Thus, keeping Kyōto 'weird' means to appreciate the city's uniqueness[343]. Thinking of the revolutionary Kyōto university uprisings and workers struggles of 1968 and the 'various independent minded people having settled since', Daijiro Hama furthermore considers Kyōto be 'a city of independence'. Thus, by writing this slogan on e.g. the windows of Kyōto's fashion stores, he hopes to promote Kyōto in general, and its local art world in particular.

While he also accepting commissioned work (such as wall-paintings in private houses), Daijiro Hama is moreover interested in live-painting shows, which are commonly held wi-

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[340] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 28th of March 2017.*
[341] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 28th of March 2017.*
[342] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 28th of March 2017.*
[343] *Taken from a personal communication on 30th of March 2017.*

thin the framework of music performances and events taking place in Kyōto's urban and alternative venues (e.g. UrBAN GUILD[344]). Despite these rather modern spaces, Daijiro Hama also uses Kyōto's traditional locations, such as old *machiya*-(town)houses paved with *tatami*-mats, to display his works (figure X).

Despite the connection to Kyōto, he is very receptive to look beyond the city's limits: frequently exhibiting in Tokyo and Osaka, having had several solo exhibitions in Amsterdam, Netherlands (e.g. INVISIBLE, 2015, Boomerang Art Screen, 2016) and even being part of a group exhibition at ART BASEL MIAMI (RED DOT MIAMI art fair, Miami, US, 2015), one can see that Daijiro Hama is always searching for ways to communicate with people from all over the world. Thus, he sees an international career as part of the greater whole. But it is not the fame, but the art of communication he can bring alive through his art works, that he is focusing on: 'I want to see art as medium of communication, getting 'famous' is just one additional aspect'[345].

In the end, believing in the idea that communication can 'change peoples' minds', the artist regards his paintings, as well as other art works and designs, as 'personal expression you can show and share with people'[346].

V.II. MIO YAMATO

Fine red and black colored lines, drawn so delicately upon canvas and the window of the Gallery PARC (figure XI), that it is only on the second glance I was realizing that these are not lines, but more precisely, little dots strung together, bit by bit, until they become a structure of infinity. The first artworks I saw exhibited from the series 'VIVID - STILL' reminded me of organic structures, dots and lines becoming alive and creating a flow of natural looking harmony.

Mio Yamato views art as an display of her — or generally anybody's — 'own human being and living'[347], trying to capture the movement of time and the process of creation itself wi-

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[344] *http://www.urbanguild.net/top.html accessed last 05.05.2018.*

[345] *Quotes taken from the interview conducted on the 17th of March 2017.*

[346] *Quotes taken from the interview conducted on the 28th of March 2017.*

[347] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 21st of January 2017.*

thin the expression of constant repetition: 'I think what I'm trying to comprehend, through constant repetition and simply, intently continuing to draw the same pattern, is the process of how material and form, over time, steadily move forward and change […] In the end the image that rises to the top is a projection of the experiences of solitary human being called 'me' and perhaps it is a record of the phenomenon called living'[348], she explains.

These forms and patterns of repetition, such as 'Repetition black (line) 1' (picture x) or 'Repetition red (dot) 43', are her signature feature, that she has constantly kept developing and thus, her organic-like structures evolved ever since the beginning of her studies. Earlier works show similar patterns, which are, on a closer look, hundreds of Japanese characters (such as 'luminous red', figure XII), put in an artistic formation. Other pictures are more colorful, more expressionist, and yet again organic-like structures, which seem to have been splashed out of the artists' paint pot (e.g. 'SPURT', 2013).

Mio Yamato was born 1990 in Shiga Prefecture (near Kyōto), discovering her love for art already during her highschool-time, where she attended several art-related clubs. After graduating, Mio Yamato studied from 2013 to 2015 at the Kyōto University of Art and Design (*Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*). Even though she first wanted to study fashion design, she reoriented herself towards studying art in the department of fine art and mixed media.

One of her first exhibitions, 'KINEKITEL', was held in gallery Antenna Media (Kyōto) in 2012, followed by her first display in Gallery PARC (entitled 'aspect of LUMINOUS RED') in the next year (2013), where she got to know to gallerist Yūsuke Masaki, who stayed her patron from this time on. Still during her studies, several solo exhibitions followed in the Gallery PARC, such as for example the exhibition '[con] Temporary Commune' (2013).

While studying in university, she noted that 'there were many good professors'[349], who did not only rent their own galleries gratuitously, but also provided easy access to other galleries for their students. Since many of her professors furthermore always encouraged the young artists to go abroad, Mio Yamato took the chance and made use of this option as well, laying out the foundation stone for a more international art world. Thus, her final

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[348] *http://mioyamato.com/biographie_en/ accessed last 10.05.2018.*

[349] *Quote taken from the interview conducted on the 21st of January 2017.*

graduation exhibition show in 2015 (‘Kyōto University of Art and Design Graduation Exhibition 2015: Selected Group Exhibition’) was not only shown in Kyōto, but in a more international setting in Tokyo as well.

Looking at her various appearances at international exhibitions and art fairs (despite participating at the ‘Kyōto art fair’ in 2015) in e.g. Sydney (‘Sydney contemporary’, 2015), London (‘ART’ 16, 2016), Singapore (‘ART STAGE SINGAPORE’, 2016), Miami Beach (‘UNTITLED’, 2017) or New York (‘VOLTA NY’, 2017), one clearly can see that she has claimed a place within the global art world, beyond the borders of Japan. But it was also her gallerist, Mr. Masaki, who recommended Mio Yamato and encouraged her to participate at e.g. the ‘Singapore Art Stage’ 2016. Seemingly business-oriented, she also offers her various art works for selling on the international online resource for art collecting, *artsy*[350], where one can buy directly from galleries and bid in auctions online, as well. In Kyōto, I was even able to see her work twice, exhibited in two different art galleries: Gallery PARC and COHJU contemporary art gallery (figure XIII), where she showed her latest works of the ‘VIVID/STILL’-series (2017).

Meeting her for the first time in Gallery PARC[351] (after having had arranged a personal interview some days earlier in the Dohjidai Gallery), she explains that Kyōto’s art world would be ‘much freer’ than other Japanese cities, especially in comparison to Tokyo. There, she views art exhibitions to rather focus on ‘exhibiting the artist’ rather than their representative artworks, based upon ‘clever market-strategies’, which have the purpose to ’show-off’ the artists primarily.
In Kyōto, instead, she feels that the artist has the possibility to show, what he or she really would like to show. If one would put it interrogative clauses, she says, one could distinguish both city by the people asking: ‘Who is it?’ (asking for the artists’ name), in Tokyo and ‘What is it?’ (asking for the artist’s artwork) in Kyōto.

Generally speaking, Mio Yamato regards Kyōto’s art world to be a rather ‘closed community‘, which is one of the reasons why she wanted to exhibit in Tokyo and abroad as early

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350 *https://www.artsy.net/artist/mio-yamato accessed last 11.07.2018.*
351 *On the 21st of January 2017.*

as possible. Even though Kyōto has a variety of galleries and art spaces to recommend, she regards the city to be capable of improvement, which would only be a question of will on the part of both the gallerists and the governmental side. Nevertheless, since the wave of founding alternative art spaces for young students has ‘splashed over’ from Tokyo, great venues for showing one’s creativity outside any art institutional frame are gradually emerging, opening up Kyōto’s art world to more diverse exhibiting possibilities.

V.III. RAITA YOSHIDA

Whether creating an artwork for his next solo exhibition in his house and atelier in Kyōto, or together with other artists from Kyōto for a group exhibition project on a deserted island[352] — Raita Yoshida is always searching for different methods and unusual design alternatives to (re-)define the idea and concept of ‘space’ and ‘material‘. Exploring the production and display of the artwork outside the usual framework of art, he tries to create an extended understanding and experience of ‘the artwork’ itself. In this sense, he doesn’t only employ classical canvas, but also makes use of windows, traditional Japanese sliding doors (*Shōji*, figure XIIII.), furniture and everyday objects, or more generally speaking ‘everything and any material' he ‘can find’, what he considers to be interesting and ‘would like to paint on’[353].

Figure XX. is one of the pictures I took during my visit in his private house, which is also his atelier. Here we can see some of his colorful collage-compositions that he has directly applied on the upper wooden Japanese sliding-doors of a former built-in-closet for Tatami-mats (now used as bookshelf). In order to let ‘unconscious perceptions and experiences’ take shape in form of an artwork, Raita Yoshida also uses rather unusual settings like theatre-stages or push carts, which therefore turn into mobile exhibition venues.

Trying to make an overall summarizing description of Raita Yoshida’s artistic style is due to the large variety of different media he is using rather difficult: His works largely consist of mixed-media collages with ‘grotesque‘ motives and themes (see figure XXI.), where acrylic or crayon colored hand drawings are being mixed with traditional textile elements,

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[352] *Okinoshima Art Festival (Okinoshima shiosai Geijutsusai) held on the Oki-Islands (west of Honshu), in 2012.*

[353] *This and the following quotes originate from an interview in his private house on the 2nd of March 2017.*

newspaper cutouts or other materials. Thus, his motives may vary on a daily basis, as depicted in figure XXII.

Whilst Raita Yoshida is also interested in fashion and design, the inspiration for his art is to a great extend based on used, vintage or broken everyday- and typical Japanese objects, that he wants to 'recycle, revitalize and give a new meaning' with the help of art. Using 'everything what is there', including waste-materials, he wants to 'create atmospheres' that are 'beyond the everyday way of seeing art'. By utilizing these objects and materials that are 'close to human lives' in his solo, as well as in his group-works, these exhibits become points of contacts and thus, a medium of communication. Raita Yoshida himself explains not be keen of simply 'looking at art' being displayed in e.g. museums and other institutional venues, because 'art is already there', which one should be more aware of.

Raita Yoshida was born 1984 in Kyōto, graduating in 2009 from the private Osaka Seikei University (*Ōsaka seikei daigaku*), department of Western arts (*geijutsu yōga*). Even though he was trained in Western-style painting techniques, the artist realized soon, that he wanted to combine his studies and skills with his connection to Japanese culture, such as traditional architecture or clothing.

When I asked the artist why he has started to create art, he answered smiling 'Because it's fun', explaining further that he considers art to be an 'expression of the self'. Whilst his priority is not to sell, but first of all to create, secondly to show (even though it doesn't need to be in public spaces) and, only as a last, to sell his works. Thus, Raita Yoshida refuses to exhibit in rental galleries, because he feels uncomfortable that 'one can exhibit nearly everything there', whereby consequently the quality of artworks would 'get lost'.

However, Raita Yoshida frequently displays his works in independent art spaces that are connected to restaurant-, bar- or café concepts. One of these concepts was an alternative art space project named 'Final Kyōto', that was not only a small restaurant and bar, but at the same time, a gallery where the artists themselves could stay and work temporarily.[354] For him, the 'Final Kyōto'-concept was not a 'business' (despite the small income from the restaurant and bar), but rather 'a place to gather, get together and create something together' — an idea, which runs like a common thread through his career and art works.

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[354] *Located in the countryside outside Kyōto-city, I was able to visit this place once in 2012, when Raita Yoshida still lived and worked there.*

However, due to rent increases and other financial problems, this project needed to end in 2016. Furthermore, Raita Yoshida has also participated in the Kyōto Sento Art Festival in the year 2014, and participates in the annual ‘Sakyo Wonderland arts- and crafts market’ in Kyōto’s Sakyo-ku ward.

Thinking about Kyōto, he states that the city is a ‘mix of internationality and tradition’, where Japan’s culture is still present on the one hand, while becoming a ‘Kyōto brand’ on the other. However, even both aspects are regarded to be something positive, Raita Yoshida considers himself to be one of the many people, who cannot identify with this ‘Kyōto brand’. Despite this, he appreciates Kyōto’s large number of students living in the city in order to study at one of the many universities, which creates a very special atmosphere or a 'Kyōto-typical scent’ for the artist. Furthermore, he mentions the ‘flow’ of different people — students, foreigners and tourists — as well as the focus on regional and local products (e.g. typical vegetables growing only in this region or fabrics from local weavings or textile centers[355]), which are ‘not expensive to buy’ and easy to find around Kyōto.

Regarding Kyōto’s art world, Raita Yoshida states that there are ‘many galleries and a flow of art’ indeed, admitting nevertheless, that ‘there is much more in Tokyo. But still, there are so many exhibitions, and you can find both high culture and entertainment culture’. In comparison to Tokyo, people can connect much easier in Kyōto because of the city’s size: ‘in Tokyo they are much more separated’, according to his opinion. In the future he would like that Kyōto ‘takes off a bit of its traditional *machiya* picture’ and should instead open up more for alternative art worlds, without ‘completely exploiting’ or commercializing the charm of these independent venues.
Being of the opinion that museums are ‘rather uninteresting’, due to the reason that they would only show ‘artworks being solely produced for the art market’, Raita Yoshida believes it would be better if ‘everybody could be an artist, so that everybody would think about something, create something and would not only produce for the market or for selling’.

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[355] *For example the Nishijin Textile Center, situated in the centre of Kyōto in the Nishijin weaving area, which is an alliance of more than 700 small companies continuing to keep Kyoto’s 1200 years old textile tradition alive.*

Mentioning the ‘local’ art world, I ask the artist what he is associating with the word ‘local’: ‘The local connects people, who are not primarily thinking of exhibiting (in galleries), but for example also at concerts or in cafes’ and thus, meaning artists who are generally implying their art into their daily lives and ‘spaces they would go themselves’, to create art not in order to exhibit or ‘to show off, but to see it as a part of their life’. Another critical point is the question whether there is any or enough support for these artists currently working in Kyōto: There is sometimes support for students, but not for others outside the institutional system’. There are also some examples, where artists get sponsored or supported from ‘big companies’, if they ‘sell their art as some kind of services for them’, e.g. for events that are sponsored by technological concerns or department stores, as he explains further. For those ‘alternative scenes’ he considers himself related to, there is according to Raita Yoshida’s opinion ‘no support at all‘, but if anything, the people would usually ask themselves ‘where should they fit into?’. However, Raita Yoshida is optimistic about his artistic career and future prospects. Furthermore, his future plans are not only to continue painting pictures, but also to continue working at his small restaurant-business[356], which he keeps ‘for living‘. Because of this, he can follow his ‘vision‘ without worrying about possible financial shortages.

V.IV. KEISUKE MATSUDA

Born in 1984 in Gunma Prefecture, Keisuke Matsuda has graduated from Kyōto City University of Arts (*Kyōto-shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku*), where he gained his major in oil painting in 2009, followed by receiving the *Naoki Sato* Prize at ‘Art Award Tokyo’ in the same year. While there were no obstacles to a promising international career, Keisuke Matsuda decided to stay and work in Kyōto. Having already had nine solo exhibitions (e.g. ‘WORDS LIE’, ‘STABILIZATION’, ‘STRAIGHTFORWARD’ or ‘eyes and nose/*mimi to kuchi*’, figure XXIII. and figure XXIV.) and one group-exhibition (‘eeny, meeny, miny, moe | red’) since 2009 in gallery eN arts, he can definitely be seen as one of the gallery’s regular artists. Other exhibition venues include Galerie 16 (where his first solo exhibition,

[356] *Raita Yoshida is currently managing a small restaurant-business called ‘Yamafuku’ together with his wife Mami in Kyōto.*

‘Ongoing’, was held in 2008), Galerie Aube (Kyōto University of Art and Design, ‘DRAWING LESSONS’, 2012) or the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (‘TOKYO WONDER WALL’, 2013) among others.

The occasion I got to know the artist for the first time was at the opening reception of the ‘eyes and nose/*mimi to kuchi*’-solo-exhibtion in gallery eN arts (figure XXV and figure XXVI)[357]. Thanks to being introduced by the art critic Minoru Shimizu — apparently a big fan of the painter — the seemingly rather shy artist was persuaded to be involved in our discussions.

Looking at Keisuke Matsuda’s works of art, which are mostly painted in oil on canvas, they tend be viewed in two different ways: Either as modern, abstract paintings, raising a lot of somewhat suggestive or even unconscious feelings, or simply as unidentifiable, childish or even obscure approach — what are these shapes? Primeval snails? Bananas? Intestines? — towards something that might be called ‘art’.

And indeed, Matsuda’s work seems on the first view to be completely devoid of all kinds of ‘skills’ we usually deploy to measure the ‘mastery’ of a painting: irrecognizable figures (such as mentioned above), a seemingly extreme lack of concern for technique and colors used in a way reminding of a beginner in oil painting. When looking at the artist’s work, all familiar standards of ‘proficiency’ need to be re-thought. But isn’t it exactly the point of (contemporary) art to re-think and question any given idea of ‘standards’ or ‘proficiency’ stuck in our heads?

We condemn some abstract paintings to be unintelligible or not professional enough, forgetting that the notion of ‘abstract’ is also just another category that lies in the eye of the beholder. While we can see a more or less distinctive palette of colors, bold, powerful brush strokes and funny — or strange — motifs, for the artist himself they are only ‘images before my eyes, just as they appear’[358]. Keeping those emerging and fading images in the back of his mind, Keisuke Matsuda explains that he is just ‘painting what’s right in front of my eyes and nose’ — consequently, the title of the exhibition,’eyes and nose’, is self-explanatory.

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[357] *The opening reception was held on the 17th of March 2017.*

[358] *Taken from a personal communication with Keisuke Matsuda on 17th of March 2017.*

Standing in front his freely expressive paintings, the viewer is automatically drawn into Matsuda's world, struggling to get an understanding of this 'something' that was painted on the canvas. Asking whether these elusive forms with an absence of any composition are abstract — or rather surrealistic, the artist replied that his paintings were not surreal or anything, but simply the experience of the condition in which he finds himself — how he envisions and depicts the world surrounding him. And as such, the characteristics of Matsuda's way of painting are a natural consequence of his way of seeing (things).

While we had a profound discussion about the idea of abstraction and his artworks, I already knew intuitively that he would not invite me to visit his atelier — and thinking about him painting in his self-created, private world, where he was 'happy to be alone' to 'concentrate on painting'[359], I was totally in accord with that decision. He told me that he loved Kyōto and its surrounding nature, that this would inspire him and, at the same time, calm him down.

After our first meeting in gallery eN arts, I had the chance to meet the artist a few more times in the gallery, as well as due to other opening receptions, where Keisuke Matsuda would always be as modest as in our first meeting, suggesting that there is nothing to really say about his artworks — but only to look at.

[359] *Taken from a personal communication with Keisuke Matsuda on 17th of March 2017..*

CHAPTER SIX

VI. LOCAL SPECIFICS VS GLOBAL BRAND

Having defined in the previous chapter what the institutional structure of Kyōto's art world is constituted of in general, the purpose of this chapter is to outline the local specifics and characteristics of Kyōto's institutional art world.

While the city of Kyōto is continuing to promote its local culture and traditions, it has long since developed into a 'must-see' tourist hot spot for people from all over the world, and consequently, became a global brand of its own. While the number of tourists visiting the city has increased dramatically in the recent years, the question is in how far this more and more 'touristic image' is conflicting with the city's cultural landscape and art world — and consequently commercializing it —, or whether Kyōto's local art world is playing with its characteristic features and gaining advantages from this special 'Kyōto brand'. To begin with, we need first and foremost to clearly distinguish between two interest groups: firstly, the governmental and institutional agents, closely linked to the tourist-sector, on the one hand, and secondly, the alternative, non-institutional representatives (that means the contemporary artists and galleries which this thesis is mainly focusing on), on the other hand. In the following chapter I will thus analyze the particular interests of both oppositions by taking a closer look upon some specific features of Kyōto's art world.

Due to the reason that the city was spared from being bombed and destroyed during World War II, most of the ancient temples, shrines and old *machiya* (town)-houses could remain undamaged, leaving an inexhaustible source of inspiration behind. Especially young art students and artists use these traditional places to get inspired, create new artworks and as thus, are able to create something 'new' out of the 'old' while simultaneously keeping thousand-year-old traditions alive. Hence, Kyōto's local art world holds the image of being a place where modernity and tradition are still co-existing, giving the possibility to create new fusion projects and explore the possibilities between art and local architecture. In this sense, the local approach and connection to Kyōto's traditional architecture should not only be seen in the appreciation of the city's cultural world heritage sites, but also of its effective usage for the artists. Whether ancient temples or old *machiya*-townhouses: one can find a wealth of exhibition venues that perfectly underline the fusion of the modern (con-

temporary art exhibitions) and the traditional (the architecture), such as the *machiya*-based-in galleries *Gallery MAIN*, *Gallery H2O*, *Gallery TOMO* or *Art Space MEISEI*, which Kyōto's contemporary artists creatively make use of (e.g. the artists Daijiro Hama or Raita Yoshida, thinking of *machiya*-houses to be the most suitable place to exhibit their art-works).

While the gallery owners may be seen as the initiators of these 'fusion-processes' (displaying contemporary art in *machiya*-houses), they are of course not the only people responsible for the creation of such Kyōto-representative art venues — and in fact, there is a lot more governmental interest behind it than one might think. Initially born out of necessity (and sheer availability of the location), the government, as well as the tourist industry, didn't take long to recognize this creative potential, turning the architectural 'circumstances' into an (art-)marketing strategy: Art festivals like Parasophia, where 'artists from around the world […] create[d] and show[ed] in the historic buildings and rich natural environment of Kyōto'[360], or KYOTOGAPHIE, with its self-proclaimed 'original scenography in traditional and contemporary architecture'[361], made efficacious use of Kyōto's specific architecture to promote an overall image of Kyōto being a city, where tradition is supporting the contemporary and vice versa. Since both festivals get financial support from the Kyōto prefecture, a governmental interest behind it cannot be denied. In this way, the municipal government aims to prove the city's worth being a center of contemporary artistic creation on the one hand, while simultaneously assuring that Kyōto's traditional image will be preserved, on the other hand. But in fact, it is less the contemporary artistic side (which is actually already existing in other venues), but moreover the touristic traditional side that is really getting support from the local government. For example, the idea of offering passport tickets (Parasophia) or 'stamp cards' (KYOTOGRAPHIE), allowing unlimited entrance to the art exhibitions for art-loving locals and especially for Kyōto-visiting tourists, is a smart strategy: as an invitation to walk around the city to get to know Kyōto-typical *machiya*-houses, temples or shrines, it hence offers a perfect opportunity to discover Kyōto's traditional face, where most of the exhibitions take place[362]. In addition to that,

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[360] *http://www.parasophia.jp/en/introduction/ accessed last 22.01.2018.*

[361] *https://www.kyotographie.jp/about/?lang=en accessed last 22.01.2018.*

[362] *The KYOTOGRAPHIE festival management was even thinking so much in advance, that they offered rental bikes for free for non-Kyōto-residents in order to facilitate an easier access to the different venues around the city.*

the KYOTOGRAPHIE entrance cards provided the possibility to access such cultural (world heritage) sites which are normally not, or just rarely, open to the public (such as the *Nijo*-castle (*Nijo-jō) or the Kenninji* temple for example).

This creation of such a traditional 'Kyōto image' leads to another specific feature, namely the commercialization of Kyōto local traditions, culture, and history, labelling the city with a special 'Kyōto brand', which is especially targeted by the local city government. But despite the fact that the government is promoting to use its local architecture as cultural venues as discussed above, those people responsible seem to be, at the same time, unsure about the necessary procedures to protect Kyōto's traditional architectural heritage[363]. The tourism industry, in contrast, did not hesitate long to recognize that the unique quality of a city with such a national historic and cultural value, combined with its natural attractions, had an enormous economic value and potential. Thus, in 1950, an ordinance was introduced by the municipal government to declare Kyōto an 'International Cultural and Sightseeing City', releasing the promotion of tourism and activities to 'beautify' the city. In accordance with the city government's intentions, most historic parts of the central Kyōto were transformed into commercial zones for shopping, entertainment or tourist accommodation. Consequently, a large number of traditional houses or culturally (as well as socially) distinct and atmospherically charged places — like unused school-buildings or market places — needed to give way for shopping malls or hotels. Even though Kyōto has been a popular tourist destinations for hundreds for years, the numbers of people visiting the city (from all over the world) within the last years have broken all previous records. Due to the fact that Japan's tourism numbers remained rather low until 2003 (only 5.2 million foreign visitors), the national government decided to initiate the 'Visit Japan' (or '*Yōkoso* Japan') Campaign in the same year, aiming to double the number to 10 million travelers by the end of 2010[364]. As a result of this, the number of visitors to Japan increased explosively up to

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[363] *Even though the government decided to preserve the old machiya in according to a 1972 law-ordinance, it was decided that only the building's outside facade should be kept, not its original construction materials. While many critics feared that the city would turn into an artificial outdoor museum with the town-houses as 'adjustment models for aesthetic zones', it came even worse: the government startet to demolish whole machiya-houses, replacing the old buildings with facades of historic designs made of traditionally-used, natural materials. Thus, the overall effort to protect the machiya turned out to be 'insufficient', and some critics even regard Kyōto to be 'on the verge of extinction as a historic city', a current predicament that has resulted of the city's unchecked urban development, putting its status as an undamaged city of tradition in question. FIÉVÉ & WALEY (2003: 373-67).*

[364] *https://us.jnto.go.jp/press/press_item.php?past=0&prid=11 accessed last 31.05.2018.*

20 million in 2016, up from 10.4 million in 2013[365]. While Japan experienced a short period of tourist-number-decrease between 2009-2011 (due to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and other incidents), the country welcomed 28.7 million tourists in the last year. The city of Kyōto had already set its own record of 1.65 million foreign visitors by 2012[366]. By 2016, the accumulated number of guests at accommodations in Kyōto prefecture already amounted to 4.14 million visitors, four times more[367].

Nevertheless, despite the various problems reported by Kyōto's local residents, the central government is still eager to raise the number of overseas tourist. If their plans come to fulfillment, the foreign tourist number will reach 40 million by 2020 and 60 million by 2030[368], which does not only mean more income for the city, but also creating a new infrastructure (hotels, hostels, transport system) to meet the requirements. While the numbers of tourists are continuously rising, many upcoming problems are still in question to be resolved, such as how the government is going to handle the inrush of tourists (especially in respect to the upcoming Olympic games in 2020) and how it will be achieved to protect the traditional architectural landscape (e.g. *machiya*) from large-scale construction projects such as hotel chains and shopping centers.

The reason why so many people not only from Japan, but from all over the world, are seeking to visit the city is the fact that Kyōto always was — and still is, of course— a symbol and embodiment of traditional Japanese culture, cuisine, architecture, arts and handcrafts. Accordingly, an additional question of particular interest within the context of my research was whether the municipal politics and tourist economy have an influence or even promote the city's contemporary art world in the course of the rising tourist numbers, as we will come back to later on.

The city's effort to actively promote its traditional arts as regional specifics[369] on both a 'local-bound' and touristic level can be seen on two different levels: on the one hand the local universities and art institutions are offering possibilities to both Japanese and foreign

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[365] *http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201706270001.html accessed last 16.04.2018.*

[366] *https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--lodgers--by--prefecture accessed last 29.05.2018.*

[367] *Ibid.*

[368] *http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201706270001.html accessed last 16.04.2018.*

[369] *Kyōto-typical are for example Nishijin-ori (weaving), Kyō-yuzen (dyeing), Kyō-shikki (lacquer ware), Kyō-sashimono (wood work), Kyō-yaki (ceramics), Kyō-sensu/ Kyo uchiwa (folding paper fan/flat paper fan), Kinzoku-kogei (metal work), Zogan (inlaid work), Kyō-hamono (cutlery), Kyō-hanga (woodblock print), or Take-koegei (bamboo craft work).*

students to study 'Japanese Traditional Arts' for some exchange-semesters (e.g. at the *Ritsumeikan* University[370]), as well as they provide various kinds of workshops and innovative projects for the conservation of traditional arts (such as e,g. the *Kyōto Art Center*). Also the direction of the Parasophia festival states: 'Kyōto can be described as a magic circle of sorts that connects the past with the future and its brimming with endless possibilities […] adding to the power and potential of Kyōto as an instrument of intellectual and cultural production, rather than a city that merely consumes'[371].
Accordingly, this opens up the possibility for local artists to get in contact with foreign (art) students and to create new, interdisciplinary projects[372].

On the other hand — the more tourist-oriented side that is obviously supported by governmental interests — websites like *Kyōto Artisans Concierge* that promise to present 'genuine experiences' to people 'who wish to visit the places where the finest pieces of art are born, to observe the demonstrations of craft skills of artisans in the creative atmosphere of their studios, to have a hands-on experience and to purchase traditional craft item'[373]. Another example which became strikingly popular is the pluralization of so-called 'Kimono rental shops'[374], where tourists can rent a 'real' Kimonos (in fact, mostly polyester-imitates) to get a make-over, walk around the city for some hours and make an additional photo-shooting to feel like a 'real' Geisha or Samurai. Whether some of these possibilities can really offer an insight into the 'genuine' world of traditional arts— if actually existing in this sense — in such a short time is questionable. As long as the image of a specific and yet for everybody accessible 'traditional' Kyōto can be created and remain intact, any method is justified. Non-commercial or alternative artists like Raita Yoshida, who are working with traditional Japanese materials (e.g. Japanese sliding doors, *Shōji* or Japanese paper, *Washi*), fear that this misuse of traditional images might reduce the credibility of their artwork, as well.

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370 *http://en.ritsumei.ac.jp/admissions/skp/curriculum/traditional-arts/ accessed last 19.06.2018.*

371 *http://www.parasophia.jp/en/introduction/ accessed last 22.01.2018.*

372 *Two prominent examples that foster these intercultural and interdisciplinary projects are the 'Villa Kujoyama', operated by the French Institut Français, and the 'Villa Kamogawa', operated by the German Goethe Institut, where French and German artists in residencies collaborate with Japanese artists (among others).*

373 *https://www.kyotoartisans.jp/en/ accessed last 19.06.2018.*

374 *E.g. https://kyotokimono-rental.com/en/, accessed last 01.11.2018.*

While independent artists like Raita Yoshida or Daijiro Hama still see Kyōto as a 'mix of internationality and tradition'[375], where Japan's culture is still being preserved, they simultaneously represent the fear of many local artists that the city could turn into this shallow 'Kyōto brand' mentioned above, outlining the commercialization of the city and its traditions on the other part of the coin. Even if both aspects seem to be apparent and certainly important for the development of city as well as its local art world, there also are many artists who cannot identify with this 'Kyōto brand'. Here, the clash between the two main interests groups — local artists versus government and tourist-industry — becomes clear, where the increasing wish for more 'counter-culture' comes to oppose the commercialization of Kyōto's art world as discussed above.

Daijiro Hama's 'Keep Kyōto weird'-project (see chapter V.I.) is just one of the examples to promote local and alternative businesses and creative (art) work. Other, more radical methods, are to completely avoid governmental-funded or institutional locations or rental galleries to exhibit in — such as Raita Yoshida does — feeling the need to support alternative art spaces that do not want to sell the art works in first place, but care about the sustaining Kyōto's local art world. Alternative artists like him, who are mostly not represented in larger galleries, would like to see that the city would withdraw a bit of its traditional (*machiya*)-image and rather open up more for more contemporary and alternative diversity instead, without exploiting or commercializing the charm of these independent venues, as well. Yet, this is not to say that Kyōto's contemporary local artists want to seal off from global affairs, since they still consider Kyōto's internationality as a creative hub of manifolded possibilities. Mio Yamato for example sees Kyōto as a stable base where her creative capacity can be expressed and her work can further unfold from (e.g. internationally).

Since Tokyo was generally believed to be the city of commercialism and fast pace, it was actually Kyōto's contrary feeling of tranquility, which made artists, art critics or gallery owners move to the city — and which many of them would like to preserve. Not only the city's cultural background, but also its ambiance is always mentioned as being a source of creative inspiration for the artists living in Kyōto: it is especially the city's spacious structure in combination with its surrounding nature — the *Kamogawa*-river that flows through the city and the mountainous woodlands — that keeps being referred to as a source of in-

[375] *Quote taken from the Interview with Raita Yoshida on 2nd of March 2017.*

spiration for the artists and young students who decided to stay in Kyōto. They appreciate that 'Kyōto is a city and a village at the same time'[376] and that 'the city has a high livability — a great balance of everything: the silence and beauty of the nature and also the urban life'[377], while some artists even see as 'a mystical place [where] you can calm down, find peace and get energy to create your work'[378]. Furthermore, the city of Kyōto, as well as many young farmers and entrepreneurs, encourage the cultivation and selling of many local products — such as the typical *Kyo-yasai* ('Kyōto vegetables'), heirloom vegetables the region is famous for — or other local goods, which make the residents feel to improve their quality of life. Accordingly, it is not surprising that most of the artists and local residents I have talked to desire for the maintenance of its traditional architectural landscape, special atmosphere and high standard of living.

Despite the city's convenient site and structure, it is also the 'flow' of different people, students, foreigners, tourists from all over the world that creates a special atmosphere the artists keep being inspired from. Walking through the city streets, one can eventually meet them in some of Kyōto's many cafés, bars or organized events and get connected. According to artists like e.g. Daijiro Hama, 'in Kyōto you can find many more independent-minded people than in, for example, Tokyo, where so many people are that automatically need to follow the system or you would be overrun'[379] — a statement which is likewise often connected to the legacy of the Kyōto university uprisings from the 1960s[380]. Further connected to the city's manageable size is the prominence of the city's popular 'hotspots': Kyōto has many 'crossing points' functioning as dynamic hubs, such as local cafés, alternative bars or for example the restaurant *Yoshida-ya* referred to in chapter x. They are well-known (even if sometimes quite hidden) establishments amongst the creatives of the local art world, which do not only provide a perfect opportunity to meet, share ideas and ex-

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[376] *Quote taken from an interview with Hiroaki Yoshioka, a student of the Kyōto University of Art and Design on 5th of April 2017.*

[377] *Quote taken from the interview with Daijiro Hama on 17th of March 2017.*

[378] *Quote taken from the interview with Raita Yoshida on 2nd of March 2017.*

[379] *Quote taken from the Interview with Daijiro Hama on 17th of March 2017.*

[380] *Between 1967 and 1969, whole Japan saw the advance of student uprisings with armed students who seized barricaded their campuses against police intrusion. The from mid-1968 to early 1969 lasting Zenkyōtō movement (short for Zengaku kyōtō kaigi, 'All-Campus Joint Struggle Councils') spread to hundreds of universities and thousands of high schools nationwide, including also the famous Kyōto University (Kyōto Daigaku), finally leading to the closure of university campuses nationwide.*

change views, but also a chance to disseminate information about latest and upcoming events, for example.

Thus, eager to push and encourage the potential of Kyōto and its local art world from within, many of Kyōto's contemporary artists clearly take a stand against the governmental opposition and their interest to turn the city into a tourist magnet decorated with so-called 'local' art. This can be seen, for example, when looking at the independent gallery spaces around the city, which are mostly joined-venues combining a café with an art space, where local artists can exhibit their artwork without paying rent. However, these art spaces are rather small and do not underlie the structures and mechanisms of 'independent' galleries.

Thus, the probably most effective way for local artists to show and promote their work, without being bound to a certain gallery, seems to be participating at one of Kyōto's art festivals — which is not always easy to achieve due to the fact that many festivals are in conjunction with either the tourism sector or the local government and its hierarchical structures. But luckily, despite Kyōto's large-scale art festivals which have been discussed in the beginning, there are also other, alternative ways to promote art (and the local artists) within the city-context and vice versa: The 'Kyōto Sentō Art Festival', in contrast, is another example of how the city's conditions and characteristics can be creatively made use of, without being directly related to the Kyōto's tourism-sector. Instead of promoting Kyōto-typical architecture or world heritage sites, the festival concentrates on a more unspectacular and yet not unimportant, typically *Japanese* and certainly not very touristic venue — the public bath (*Sentō):* 'Public baths have historically acted as places of social exchange where men and women, regardless of age, come together. Each public bath also reflects the unique characteristics of the neighborhood or district they are located in. Walking around the city, you can say that *sentō* have nurtured their own unique values. This art festival, which combines public baths and art, marks a new development for both'[381], as the introduction of the Kyōto Sentō Art Festival 2014 explains. Thus, due to the fact that these venues are rather visited by Japanese people *living* in Kyōto, and usually not by foreign tourists, we can see an overall local approach, that is combining a centuries-old tradi-

[381] *https://www.kyoto-art.ac.jp/en/topics/116 accessed last 10.10.2018.*

tion[382] with the intent to display contemporary art from local artists. The artists can use the public baths as a venue for creation and creativity, developing new projects directly targeted at the costumers or simply exhibiting their already existing artworks. The festival underlines its local approach by its intention to get in contact with those people from the local neighborhood, where the artists' position is not to sell or promote something to its audience, but tires 'to share the charms of the public bath with the general public, making these baths places where you can experience real-life relationships'[383] instead. On top of that an 'audience prize' (one month free entrance ticket to public baths in Kyōto Prefecture) was awarded to an artist chosen by the votes submitted by the bath visitors[384]. This idea clearly empathizes the will to introduce the artists from Kyōto's art world (or their art works) to the local neighborhoods and to raise the awareness of what is currently happening in Kyōto's cultural sector. Interestingly, three years later, the festival already aimed at a more global perspective, 'creating a chaotic jumble with locals, visitors from overseas, traditional Japanese businesses — a diverse range of people, from young to old and from near and far'[385], where for the first time Kyōto's visitors became a target group as well.

Nevertheless, the festival still remained on a very local scale and we need to keep in mind that, unlike the other festivals mentioned before, the *Sentō Art Festival* is a project organized by graduates from the Kyōto University of Art and Design (*Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*) and as such, does not receive any additional governmental support. This means that it was limited in its financial means for media publication methods promoting the festival and due to this, the range of public attention (or participation) was limited to those studying at the *Kyōto University of Art and Design*, those who heard about the festival incidentally or those, who were confronted with it in the *Sentō* bath itself. Thus, the festival committee was even looking for financial support in form of donations 'from everyone who understands the purpose of the event and supports them'[386] in order to help the festival to expand.

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[382] *One of the fist references indicating that Sentō were existing in Kyōto can be found in Japan's oldest anthology Konjaku monogatari ('Tales of Times Now Past'), which was written during the Heian period (794–1185). See: https://www.nippon.com/en/views/b07302/ last accessed 07.05.2018.*

[383] *https://www.kyoto-art.ac.jp/en/topics/116 accessed last 10.10.2018.*

[384] *Besides that, there has also been a 'grand prize' of 100.000 Yen (approx. 780 Euro) for one artist, selected by invited jurors.*

[385] *http://www.kyotosentoartfes.com/2017/ accessed last 10.10.2018.*

[386] *http://www.kyotosentoartfes.com/2015/ accessed last 10.10.2018.*

As far as ‘local’ festivals are concerned, it seems that the governmental and touristically influenced interest group is more likely to win the power struggle between commercial marketing and local artist support, creating the image of an art world that is more a wolf in a sheep’s clothing — local from the outside, governmental- and tourist-industry-led from the inside. But what does this mean for the local contemporary artists?
On the one side it can be a great opportunity for local artists to engage within the context of such a large-scale governmental and international art project, getting to know other artists from all over the world and the various dimensions of different art festivals, as well as receiving a lot of attention due to the advertising strength and promotional advantages those kind of larger art festivals can utilize (e.g. the advertising range of local newspapers and magazines). On the other side, the choice of artists who are actually local ones, that means based in Kyōto and actively engaging within Kyōto’s art world, is often being narrowed down to a handful of people in favor for artists from either outside Kyōto city, or even outside Japan, in order to comply with the wish to be on a more international level. Thus, it is questionable whether large-scale, governmental-supported and internationally oriented art festivals like KYOTOGRAPHIE or PARASOPHIA really have a local approach concerning the representation of Kyōto’s contemporary art world and its artists.

Notwithstanding the very different financial conditions, ambitions and approaches of these three art festival which were researched upon, they all had at least one aim in common: to link the display of contemporary artworks (from both local and international artists) with Kyōto-typical venues, as well as to broaden the idea of the ‘exhibition space’ itself. As such, the attempt to provide an access to the artworks for everyone interested in contemporary art in combination with highlighting Kyōto’s specific characteristics (both traditional and modern ones), clearly underlines the regional and local approach of these festivals. However, these ‘fusion-processes’ need to be regard within a critical context, since both interest groups (governmental versus local artists) pursue quite different goals — the commercialization of Kyōto’s culture and traditions on the one side (government), and the support of its local art world on the other (artists).

Now coming back to the question whether the municipal politics and tourist economy have an influence or even promote the city’s contemporary art world (especially in the course of

the rising tourist numbers), it is more easy to understand that we have to deal with two anti-poles, which are not exactly fighting each other, but clearly not supporting each other either. Because if we step away from the festivals, turning to alternative art spaces, we are confronted with a different situation: If not supported by external forces (such as Gallery PARC is supported by 'Le GRAND MARBLE'-company) or part of an university structure (such as Kyōto City University of Arts Art Gallery @KCUA, Galerie Aube or ARTZONE), the promotion of alternative art spaces — not even to speak about financial assistance — is nearly non-existent. This is one of the reasons why rental galleries take over the cityscape, being the only place to offer young artists the opportunity to exhibit their artworks — even if only against payment. H.A.P.S. (Higashiyama Artist Placement Service**)** is one of the rare exceptions, that provides exhibition space free of charge and additional support in form of collaboration opportunities and other guidance for local artists.

VI.I. STRUGGLES

While Kyōto was praised by many artists and curators to offer a high quality of life itself, the city's art institutional structure has some more 'struggles' that were addressed by most of them. Despite the big potential of so many young people living and studying in Kyōto, there are a few things not only young art students, but also established artists need to struggle with, such as the concern of not having enough venues where to display their artworks, that means the lack of exhibition space. Even if many students have the possibility to exhibit within the frame of their graduation exhibition(s), or use rental galleries to exhibit their artworks — for those who do not have enough money for the costly rental, the situation is a more difficult one. Because of this reason, most of the artists have already experienced during her university-time, they decide to leave Kyōto — or are forced to, in a certain way — usually in order to move to the more 'promising' city of Tokyo. There, they believe to get easier access to exhibit in a renowned gallery (maybe even without being charged) and thus, followed by an probably increased potential to become more prominent (or even famous), the artists hope for having a greater chance to be connected to the international art market outside Japan. But this lacking exhibition space is not the only issue the artists are struggling with: In addition to that, most of the young graduates and artists (regardless of whether already established artist or newcomer) complain about the lacking

governmental support that forces them to leave Kyōto already immediately after graduation, or after their first setbacks, as argued by both the artists themselves and curators I have talked to. While some of the art students studying at private universities (such as Kyōto City University of Arts, *Kyōto Zōkei Geijutsu Daigaku*) are still supported during their studies, e.g. in their form of helping them to organize exhibitions at the university-related galleries or offering special cost reduction agreements at rental galleries, non-private students and those artists 'outside' the institutional system cannot count on additional patronage. What remains is the possibility to sell their art as some kind of service for bigger companies in order to get sponsored, which as a matter of course often implies that the artists are either limited in their choice of topics or even being told what to create.

Another struggle to be addressed in this context is Kyōto's art institutional triangle described in chapter IV.I. While the city's public art institutional structure (such as museums, etc.) seem to meet the demands of local inhabitants and tourists in general, the artists, art critics and gallery owners I had personal communication with criticize, that these state-funded institutions would not really exhibit contemporary art — or just very few — on the one side, and would not really work together, on the other. The generally felt struggle of institutional conservatism causes a number of further challenging factors, such as a closed practice personnel affairs, institutional rigidity in the universities which creates the issues of Japanese academism and the administrative limitations of public museums mentioned above. As a matter of fact, many artists and art critics complain about a time-lag of several decades between what is shown in Japanese 'contemporary' art exhibitions what is exhibited on the institutional level abroad. Furthermore, the seemingly closed practices of institutions are e.g. by art critic Tetsuya Ozaki considered to be a major reason for the lack of discourse on Japanese contemporary art, which fosters Japanese students and art-interested people to see contemporary artworks and exhibitions as a foreign domain.

Kyōto is — after Tokyo — still the strongest standpoint for contemporary art, but regarding Kyōto's art market, there is 'no art-market existing in Kyōto'[387] — especially not in the case for young artists and art students. This struggle is one of the reasons, why so many young students decide to go, work and exhibit in Tokyo. But Tokyo is not always the only

[387] *Quote taken from an interview with Tetsuya Ozaki on 12th of April 2017.*

choice and not always the only image for being a city of contemporary art. Telling me that the Japanese art market would 80-90 % represented Tokyo, and 10-20 % in Nagoya, art critic Mr. Ozaki concludes that Nagoya might even be actual 'birthplace' of contemporary art, due to the fact of its existence since the 1950/1960s. In addition to that, Kyōto with its mix of an international and cosmopolitan flair and innovative cultural past has a certain charm that many artists are lately rediscovering. Later on, he found the student movements of the 1960s and art groups like *DUMP TYPE*[388] to have been likewise revolutionary for Kyōto's culture and art-development.

One more additional point to be mentioned here referring to art critic Mr. Ozaki, is the absence of journalism and the in-existence of art criticism and critics, which not only he, but also various other curators, gallery owners and artists I had personal communication with, confirmed. Even if there seem to be enough resources of knowledge distribution available, they criticize the lack of critical discussions and actual art critical assessment of the artworks that are shown. While REALKYOTO is one of the few websites that is actually providing critical discussion about contemporary art being shown in Kyōto and the Kansai area, there was indeed rarely any (art) magazine or other media that I came across during my local research which covered this issue.

The last struggle to be mentioned here is Kyōto's relation to *Nihonga*, the traditional Japanese painting style that is till prominent in various galleries and taught at many art universities. Among contemporary *Nihonga* or *Nihonga*-related artists it became more and more essential to define their relation and conceptions to the *Nihonga* painting style. While the artists and artworks themselves are in fact further disconnected from artworks and the broader history of postwar *Nihonga*, they tend to pick up only those aspects that are relevant to their own (contemporary) standpoint and engagements, rather than to touch upon the conjunction with various other previous postwar developments. Hence, an important point of discussion that frequently occurred during my research time and interviews was the question whether the more 'traditional' and specific *Nihonga*-style is or can be considered as a part of contemporary art.

With regard to Kyōto, where still a large number of *Nihonga* galleries are existent and a hub of art students are graduating from *Nihonga* courses taught at e.g. the Kyōto City Uni-

[388] *See chapter three.*

versity of Arts each year, the *Nihonga*-debate is indeed two-sided: One the one hand, most of the Japanese art critics, gallery owners and artists I have talked to think of *Nihonga* as a specific style that is definitely belonging to the field of contemporary art. Gallery PARC director Yūsuke Masaki for example agrees with this point, stating that these artworks 'painted with 'traditional' techniques and Japanese motives are a category of art, which is not bound to any specific time'[389]. Thus, even if *Nihonga*-art made in accordance with traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques and materials, their subject matter(s) and themes can nonetheless be contemporary. Especially the young art students I have met at several graduation exhibitions were keen about discovering new fusion possibilities between traditional art techniques and current topics like migration, xenophobia or nationalism and top of that, a contemporary *Nihonga*-painting won the first prize at the 'Kyōto Art for Tomorrow' competition[390] for young artists based in Kyōto.

On the other hand, some artists and design students I have met considered *Nihonga*-painting to belong in special category — apart from contemporary art — due the fact that even though the subjects might have a connection to themes of current interest, their artistic implementation does not fit into what they considered to be 'contemporary'.

This dichotomy is reflected in Kyōto's contemporary galleries, where some of the galleries are solely focussing on traditional *Nihonga* art and some (e.g. white cube galleries) are explicitly rejecting these artworks. The issue at hand is that young artists, who have for instance just graduated from art university with a degree in *Nihonga* art, are not able to exhibit their artworks neither in the traditional, nor in white cube galleries because they do not fit in either of the wanted profile categories, so that their only chance is to rent a rental gallery to show their talents.

However, last but lot least, I want to mention that while all of the circumstances and 'struggles' I noticed Kyōto's contemporary art world was facing during my time of research might usually be seen as potential 'problems', I would suggest to see it as a *not* negatively connoted issue of concern, but rather as a present condition the artists are facing and working with; a condition, where creativity helps to create new possibilities to find alternative solutions.

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[389] *Quote taken from an interview conducted on the 9th of February 2017.*

[390] *The award ceremony I had the chance to attend took place at the Museum of Kyōto (Kyōto Shiritsu Bijutsukan) on the 28.01.2017, where afterwards the selected artworks were exhibited for three weeks as well.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

VII. CONCLUSION

The present Master thesis entitled '*Between tradition and modernity —contemporary art in Kyōto*' aimed to present the development and findings of my three month-long field trip to Kyōto (Japan), during the 17th of January 2017 to the 15th of April 2017, researching upon Kyōto's contemporary art world. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork results and with an anthropological and art-historical-related theoretical framework, the main goal of this paper was to get an overview of the situation and characteristics of Kyōto's art institutional structure, which means the local art-related institutions and establishments (art galleries, show rooms, exhibition and independent art spaces) and public institutions (museums, art universities and, if possible, upcoming art fairs), as well as their participants or initiators, referring to the artists, gallerists and art critics I got to know during the time of my research stay in Japan.

Throughout the text, I attempted to discuss the character of Kyōto's institutional art world with its local, as well as global features and specifics, asking what the city's contemporary 'art world' is constituted of, how is it constructed by private and public institutions, gallerists, artists and art critics and how the city's governmental as well as non-governmental institutions and intentions influence or shape Kyōto's contemporary art world. Furthermore, indicating my topic as a search 'Between tradition and modernity', I furthermore aimed to find out if and how contemporary art can co-exist with the traditional art world and its inherent 'Kyōto image'.
Before drawing general conclusions, I will first of all remind on the topics discussed in each chapter, reviewing the essential points and main considerations that developed throughout this thesis in the following.

Chapter one dealt with the underlying theoretical background of this Master thesis, aiming to contextualize the discourse about modern and contemporary Japanese art by providing an overview of its historical conditions and developments. While identifying a periodization or methodology for twentieth-century Japanese art history is still quite critical and

challenging, the discourse about the ‘Asian Modern’ (in which the Japanese one is included) was divided into five chronological groupings: A period of transitioning to modernity (1850s-1890s), followed by a period characterized by Academy Realism, Salon Art and National art discourses (around 1880-1914), a time span of early Modernism (1920-1930s), Abstractionism and Conceptualism dealing with the developments under Post-colonialism (1940s-1960s) and finally a period generally referred to as the ‘contemporary’ (late 1980s/ 1990s up to the present). However, here it was especially important to indicate on the circumstance that Japanese modernism in art was never contiguous with the advent of Euramerican art styles, but rather a precedent process, pointing at the ambiguity and its concomitant risks of applying the term ‘modern’ in a non-Western context.

Introducing the concepts and developments of *Nihonga,* or ‘Japanese-style’ paintings (made from about 1900 onwards in accordance with traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques and materials) and their opposite counterpart *Yōga*, or ‘Western-style’ paintings (using oil paints, watercolors to incorporate predominantly European modernist styles), it did not only become clear that the differences and juxtaposition of both terms shouldn’t be understood as unidirectional, but also the their distinction remains a critical issue up to this day. After defining several conditions of modernity (semantic functions attributed to technical means) that led to complex stage of the Japanese ‘modern’, this critical inquiry led us to the question of how to evaluate contemporary Nihonga, which has been approached by the idea that the definition of contemporary ‘Japanese-style’ paintings — a recurring topic I needed to deal with in my own field research in Kyōto — offers a certain freedom of reinterpretation and artistic recreation from the end of the 1980s onwards, which the artists make us of nowadays.

To get an understanding of what ‘art’ and ‘contemporary art’ actually can be referred to in Japan, we looked at the creation and development of the concepts of *bijutsu* and *gendai bijutsu.* Here it was emphasized that the term ‘art’ (*bijutsu*) was non-existent before 1873, but ‘invented’ for the cause of the *Vienna World Exhibition*, and likewise, that the term *gendai bijustu* (‘contemporary art’) is not directly synonymous with ‘today’s art’, but a discourse which developed in the scope of (postwar) ‘avant-garde art’ (not including *Yōga* and *Nihonga* practices).

Chapter two outlined the socio-historical key features of modern Japanese art and contemporary art by subdividing the different eras into the categories of Postwar Japanese Art (including *Gutai* and *Art Informel*), *Mono-ha* and *Conceptual Art*, Post *Mono-ha* and Japanese Art after 1989. Here some important key facts to be reminded of are that the end of the First World War brought along a hitherto unknown premise of a certain freedom of expression in Postwar Japanese Art, which prerequisites have nonetheless already been developing during the early *Shōwa* years (1926 to late 1930s). While the sense of 'contemporaneity' (*Dōjidai-sei*) with Europe and America began to grow in the 1950s, post-war Japanese artists ceased to obsessively search for a modern art 'original' to Japan or to close the 'gap' with the West. In the 1960s, art movements like *Art Informel* were seen as the 'first truly contemporary', enabling Japanese artists to feel 'contemporaneous' with international painting developments. While Japan's economic boom in the 1980s furthermore fostered the integration of Japanese art into the international art market — implying the opening-up for more international art trends — the term *postmodernism* started to gain more and more significance. During the 1990s the proliferation of overseas exhibitions by young Japanese contemporary artists became more prominent and significant, which meant that Japanese artists were more often selected to participate in notable international exhibitions and thus, could enjoy even higher acclaim overseas than in Japan while profiting from their expanded international network — a move, which also the artists I have researched upon can claim for themselves: the fact that more and more Japanese students are willing to go overseas, as I have stated throughout this thesis, is mostly regarded as positive development, which naturally leads to more self-reflection and a broadened self-reflective thinking.

Addressing socio-political and economic problems without instigating on radically, the approach of exploring and expressing the inter-human relations beyond the 'cool Japan'-trend of the 2000s —especially after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident of 2011 — characterizes the work of nowadays Japanese contemporary artists.

The third chapter enlarged upon the advance of several art movements in the Kansai-area in the 1980s, namely the rise of the *Kansai New Wave* and artists like *Dumb Typ*, illustrating that the new installation format these Kansai-based artists worked with showed signifi-

cant creative differences between the Kansai and Tokyo-region, which led to the development of a new relationship between both areas since the beginning of the 1980s. Further elaborating on the work of the two Kyōto-based artists *Dumb Type* and *Kosugi + Andō*, this chapter provided an additional framework to understand the background of contemporary art 'made in Kyōto'.

Chapter four and five served for presenting the findings of my own ethnographic research, which means introducing to the institutional structure of Kyōto's art world, as well as Kyōto-based artists that I have come across during my fieldwork in Japan.
After having given an overview of the historical development of Kyōto's art institutions, chapter four was dedicated to providing an in-depth view of Kyōto's particular galleries and art spaces. While Japan's art scene has long been centered around vibrant Tokyo, this paper has argued that Kyōto has witnessed a rapid emergence of independent art galleries and fairs in the last two decades. Concomitant with contemporary art developments, Kyōto's art world could thus give rise to a variety of commercial and rental galleries displaying works from both local and international contemporary artists. Likewise, the city of Kyōto has actively engaged in providing new platforms for artists (and young art students) to exhibit their works, such as local art festivals that are designed both for Kyōto-related and international purpose (e.g. *PARASOPHIA, KYOTOGRAPHIE, Sentō Art Festival*). Despite their different approaches (both thematically and regarding the financial and governmental support), these festivals are all connected by the idea to link the exhibition of artworks with Kyōto-typical venues around the city (e.g. *machiya*-houses or public baths, *sentō*).

While a selection of different local private-, rental- and university-related art spaces and art festivals have been outlined and characterized in detail, I have provided an introduction of some of the gallery owners and art critics (Yūsuke Masaki, Naomi Rowe, Minoru Shimizu and Tetsuya Ozaki) in this chapter to further portray the institutional structure of Kyōto's art world. Subdivided into the categories of private commercial galleries and alternative art spaces, rental galleries, university-related galleries and art festivals, my research showed that a variety and mix of different art galleries with respectively differing concepts can be found in Kyōto. There are the modern-looking, 'white cube'-like galleries (mostly situated in Western-style buildings), focusing on the display of contemporary art from Japanese and

international artists existing on the one side, and traditional Japanese art galleries (usually situated in *machiya*-houses and often family-owned) on the other side, which are mostly specializing in exhibiting *Nihonga* or *Yōga*-art.

Another finding and important feature of Kyōto's institutional art world that this research has shown is the city's size and structure. In contrast to Tokyo (where a multitude of galleries can be found in every district), most of the main galleries or popular 'hotspots' are located in Kyōto's city center (*Sanjō/Gion*-area) and around (*Higashiyama*-area). Hence, the artists and gallerists felt that it is easier to find access to the galleries, in both a physical, and an emotional way. Due to this relatively small physical and emotional distance between artists and those working in the art world, getting to know each other and collaborating with each other is a convenient and positive factor of Kyōto's art institutional structure.

A likewise characteristic feature of Kyōto's art world that this thesis has depicted is the way of how rental galleries are fundamentally differing from commercial galleries: after an artist has submitted an application with what they want to exhibit to the respective rental gallery and being confirmed, the applicants need to pay a certain amount of money in order to be exhibited. While this system is certainly a chance for young art students to gain recognition, I have stated throughout this paper that the amount of money to be payed is often considered to be a burden or simply impossible for a young student. Due to the fact the financial support by the Japanese government or alternative state-run institutions is equal to zero, every kind of patronage or financial support, whether by the family or non-profit organizations, is gratefully welcomed and certainly needed.

Regarding the dissemination of knowledge, that means what kind of art exhibitions, performances etcetera were taking place, I have stated that print media, such as local newspapers and magazines, flyers and pamphlets are used to promote the various upcoming events in the galleries as well as in several cafés, restaurants, bars all over the city. Additionally, digital media is the main source to provide culture- and event-related information, recommendations, reviews and criticism centered on the events happening in the Kansai-region.

Chapter five has concentrated on the introduction of the main characters of this thesis, namely Daijiro Hama, Mio Yamato, Raita Yoshida and Keisuke Matsuda — who I have met and interviewed during my research stay. The artists have been chosen according to the criteria that they are living and working in Kyōto, their artwork(s) are 'currently' on

display in at least one of Kyōto's art galleries and the premise that I could talk to the artist about him/her and his/her artwork(s) in person. Hence, this chapter does not only give background information about the artists and her/his artwork(s), but also provided additional knowledge about how the artist e.g. think about Kyōto and its institutional art world.

Taking these interview-based empirical results and the findings of what Kyōto's institutional art world is constituted of together, the final part of my research represented in chapter six was dedicated to analyze my research findings according to the questions posed at the beginning of this study. As the title of the chapter 'local specifics vs global brands' indicated, I have argued that Kyōto has long since developed into a 'must-see' tourist hot spot for people from all over the world, turning into a global brand of its own by promoting its local culture and traditions. Thus, this chapter was necessary to discuss how the city's governmental, as well as non-governmental institutions and intentions, influence or shape Kyōto's contemporary art world and how the contemporary art world can co-exist with the traditional art world and its inherent 'Kyōto image'.

The results of my research analysis showed that in the case of Kyōto, two different interest groups are facing each other: the governmental and institutional agents, linked to the tourist-sector versus the alternative, non-institutional representatives (contemporary artists, galleries, independent art spaces etcetera).
While the number of tourists visiting Kyōto has increased dramatically in the recent years, the first interest group — the city government and tourist industry — did not take long to turn the city's creative potential and architectural 'circumstances' into an (art-)marketing strategy. Art festivals like *PARASOPHIA* or *KYOTOGAPHIE* are just some of the example I have presented throughout this thesis that made efficacious use of the 'Kyōto brand' by promoting an image of Kyōto being a city where tradition is supporting the contemporary and vice versa. In this way, the municipal government tried to prove that the city can be both: a center of contemporary artistic creation *and* a flagship for traditional cultural heritage that keeps the local and traditional art and handcraft institutions alive. But as the results of this study indicate, it is less the contemporary artistic side (not even to speak of independent art spaces), but moreover the touristic traditional side that is getting more support from the local government — at least in financial form. But contrary to the percep-

tion that the city government aims to keep tradition ‘alive’, the upcoming and inventible commercialization of e.g. Kyōto’s city center, such as turning heritage sites into shopping zones, also means endangering the city’s local culture, history and architecture.
At this point, the clash between the two interests groups became most obvious: many independent artists, like Raita Yoshida or Daijiro Hama I have introduced in this paper, made a clear stand against this development: they represent the fear of many local artists that the city could turn into a shallow ‘Kyōto brand’, with its traditional images being misinterpreted or misused, which does not only reduce the credibility of the city’s cultural heritage, but also of the artists’ artworks. While my research has emphasized that Kyōto’s contemporary local artists do not aim to seal off from global affairs and certainly also see a chance in Kyōto’s developments to open up for new influences or collaboration projects, they simultaneously try their best to promote local and alternative businesses and creative (art) work. Even if not all of the artists I have interviewed choose the most radical way to completely avoid governmental-funded or institutional locations or rental galleries, all of them (including art critics and gallerists) wish for more ‘counter-culture’ and for the city’s future to withdraw a bit of its ‘traditional’ image, rather opening up more for more contemporary and alternative diversity (without exploiting the charm of these independent venues) instead.

Despite Kyōto’s high quality of life and the high number of art graduate students that many artists have argued to be a great advantage, the city’s artistic potential seems to be hitherto unexploited, leaving the artists alone with some ‘struggles’ to combat. It was shown that the main ‘struggles’, which not only young art students, but also established artists need to encounter, are the lack of exhibition space and financial support. Due to this and the fact that there is actually no major art-market existing in Kyōto, a large number of them decide (or are obliged) to leave Kyōto in order to move to Tokyo — a place more ‘promising’ and better connected to the international art market. Another struggle that was addressed in this context is Kyōto’s art institutional triangle, showing that the city’s public art institutional structure (such as museums, etc.) might seem to meet the demands of local inhabitants and tourists in general — but not those of the local art world: these state-funded institutions are rarely exhibiting contemporary art on the one side, and are not really working together, on the other.

However, while Kyōto undoubtedly experienced a revival and renewal of its private art institutions and public art fairs that was also supported by the municipal politics throughout the last ten years, it became clear that this effort was not made in order to promote or support its local artists — not even to talk about strengthening its independent or alternative side — but rather to create the image of being a city where the 'new' and the 'old' are co-existing. But linking the display of contemporary artworks with Kyōto-typical venues (such as holding exhibitions in old *machiya*-houses) to provide an access to the artworks for everyone interested in contemporary art while simultaneously highlighting Kyōto's specific characteristics (both traditional and modern ones) is an attempt that not only government-supported institutions (e.g. art festivals), but also alternative artists make use of. However, as this paper has emphasized, these 'fusion-processes' always need to be regarded within a critical context, since both interest groups (governmental versus local artists) pursue quite different goals — the commercialization of Kyōto's culture and traditions on the one side (government), and the support of its local art world on the other (artists). Hence, it is more due to a handful of open-minded gallerists and art critics — many of them who moved from Tokyo to Kyōto — that Kyōto's art world started to become a promising stage for new galleries, exhibition spaces, joint art venues and discussion platforms. These individuals turned Kyōto into creative hub of manifolded possibilities and a stable base where their creative capabilities can be expressed freely.

Overall, we need to keep in mind: notwithstanding the fact that the government and tourist industry is focusing more on the traditional arts as local specifics, Kyōto has always been a city of internationalization, invention and center of creativity, eager to modernize and fond of any western influence. With a traditional and a cosmopolitan side, it always combined a sense of tradition with the idea to think globally: Gallerists encourage their artists to expand outside Kyōto, as well as to use its local specifics in order to imbue the tourist-claimed 'Kyōto-image' with their own artistic expressions. Alternative artists are using Kyōto-typical venues to prove that a contemporary, independent art world can be exiting even without governmental support.

Besides the different goals of the two interest groups, Kyōto truly is a place 'between tradition and modernity' where both governmental and non-governmental institutions pursue an

overall local approach to link Kyōto's traditional art world with the contemporary art world.

The findings from this research made several contributions to start investigating into the hitherto disregarded Kyōto's contemporary art world, addressing anthropologists, art historians, Japanologists and artists equally, But the generalizability of these research results is still subject to certain time limitations and such, a future study would certainly be very interesting in order to see the developments since 2017. With rising tourist numbers and likewise rising awareness for the need to open up for interdisciplinary art projects and alternative art spaces, we shall stay even more curious about what the future holds for Kyōto and its contemporary art world.

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APPENDIX

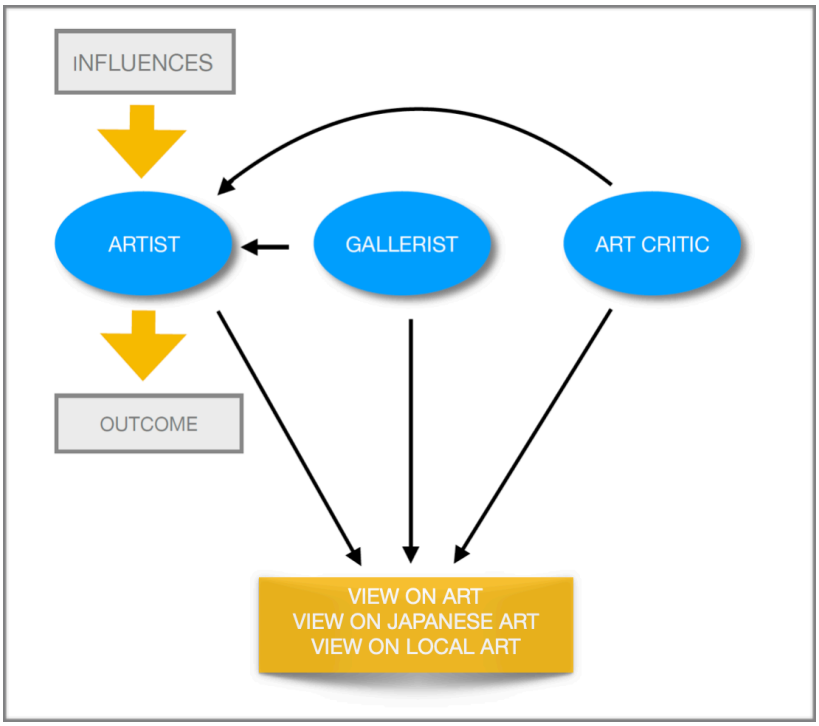

Figure I. : Research methodology applied in the field, the main characters' view on art

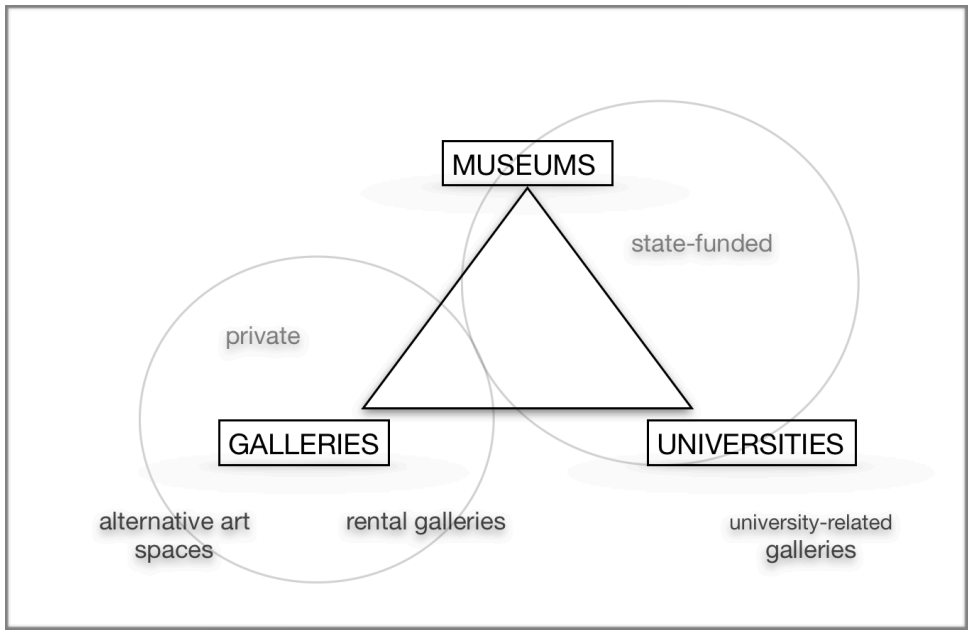

Figure II. : Kyōto's institutional art triangle

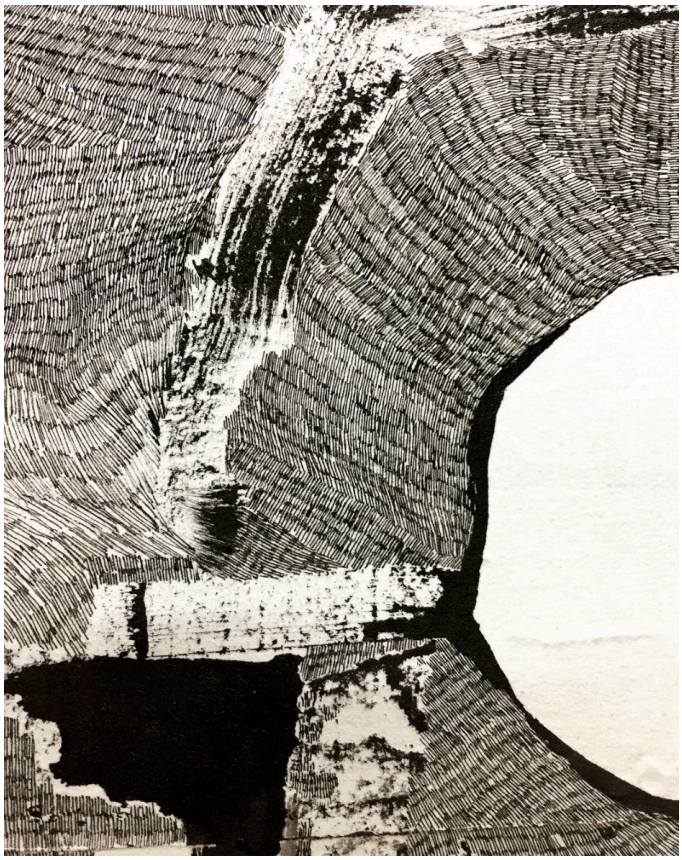

Figure III. : Daijiro Hama, ‘Kukan’, *Sumi*-ink on Japanese paper

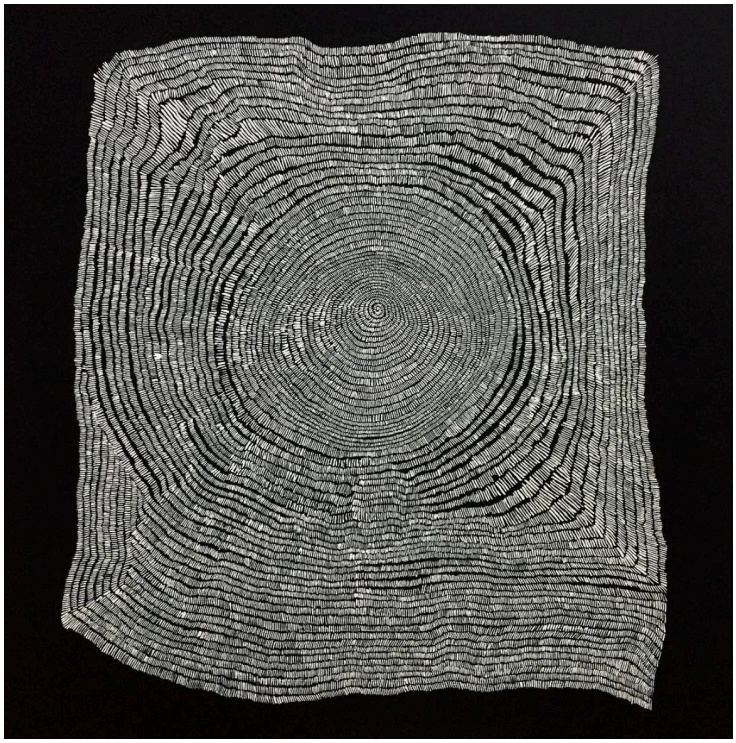

Figure IV. : Daijiro Hama, ‘Clepsydra’, acrylic gouache on canvas

Figure V. : Daijiro Hama, ‘Woman in Kimono’, *Sumi*-ink & acrylic gouache on canvas

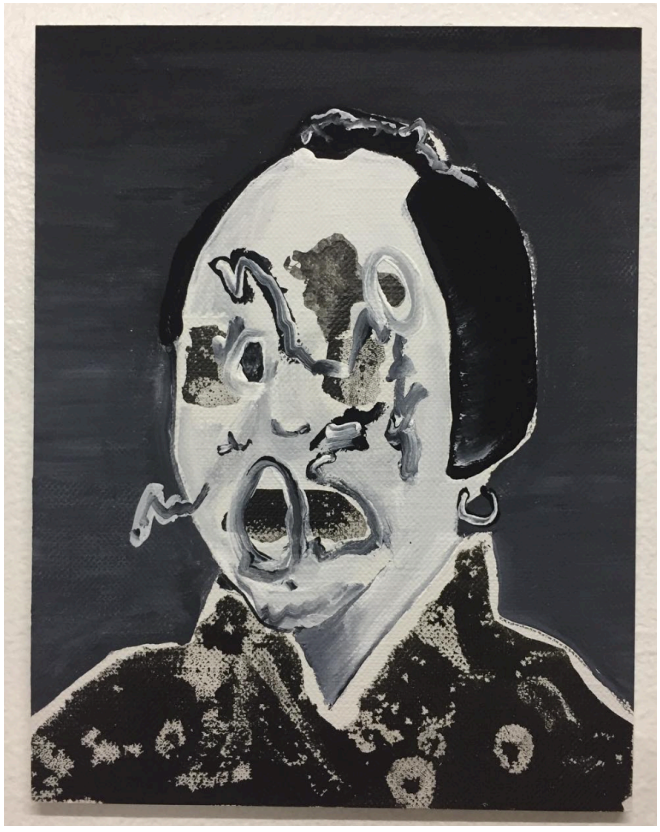

Figure VI. : Daijiro Hama, ‘Man in Kimono’, *Sumi*-ink & acrylic gouache on canvas

Figure VII. : Daijiro Hama's atelier studio in Kyōto

Figure VIII. : Daijiro Hama's T-shirt design in front of shopping street in Kyōto

Figure VIIII. : Daijiro Hama's ‘Keep Kyōto weird’ painting on shopping-street window in Kyōto

Figure X. : Exhibition by Daijiro Hama in old *machiya*-townhouse in Kyōto

Figure XI. : Mio Yamato, "DRAWING HEARTBEAT 1', acrylic on glass, Gallery PARC

Figure XII: Mio Yamato, 'Luminous red', acrylic on glass, Gallery PARC © Mio Yamato
http://mioyamato.com/works/luminous-red/

Figure XIII. : Mio Yamato, ‘Repetition red (dot)’, oil on canvas, COHJU contemporary art gallery

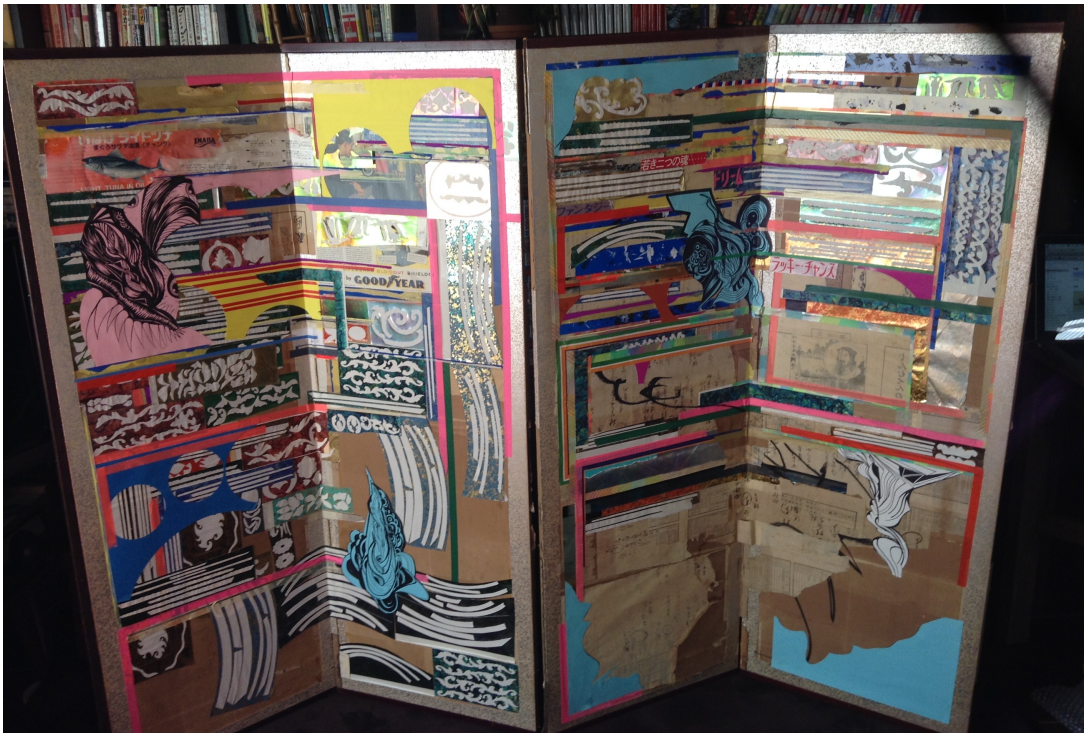

Figure XIIII. : Raita Yoshida, Painting on Japanese sliding door (*Shōji*)

Figure XX. : Raita Yoshida's home, painting on wall

Figure XXI. : Raita Yoshida, 'Grotesque', acrylic on wood

Figure XXII. : Raita Yoshida, collage/mixed media on wood

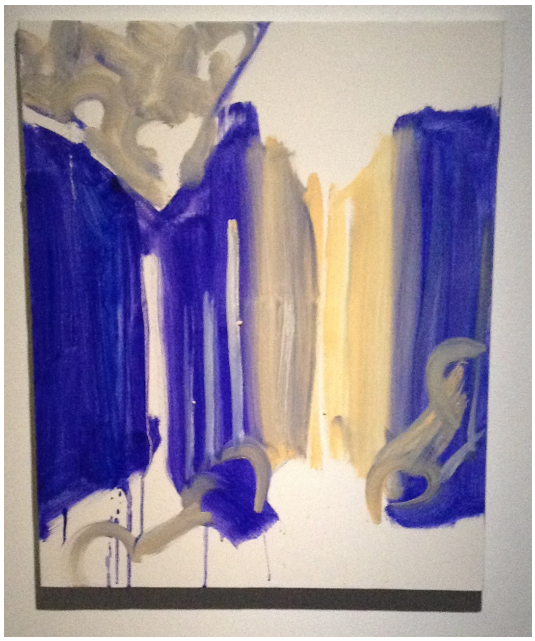

Figure XXIII. & XXIV. : Keisuke Matsuda, eyes and nose/*mimi to kuchi* I & II, oil on canvas, Gallery eN arts

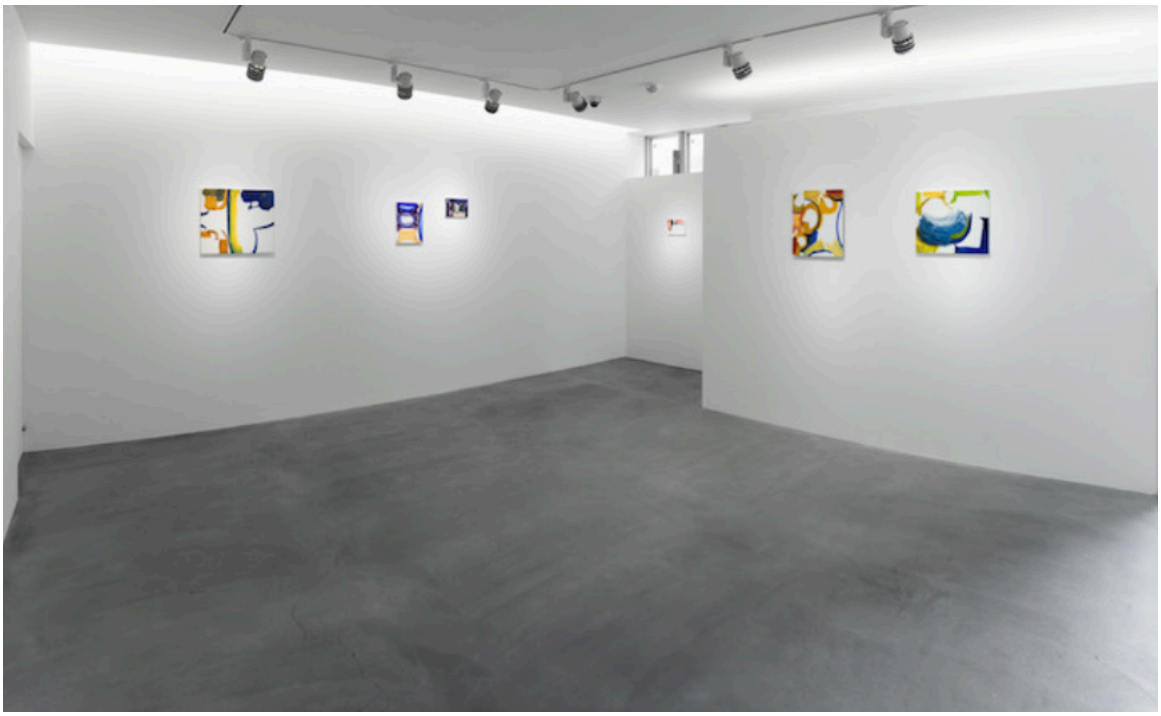

Figure XXV. & XXVI. : Inside view of Gallery eN arts with paintings by Keisuke Matsuda.

ABSTRACT

Kyōto — the former capital of Japan, is with its seventeen UNESCO World Heritage sites, 1600 Buddhist temples and 400 *Shintō*-shrines, world famous for being the 'heart' and birthplace of Japans traditional culture and thus, also the center of traditional art- and craftwork. But are *Ukiyo-e*, woodblock prints, handmade pottery or Buddhist calligraphy (*Shodō*) really the only artistic works that the city's art world has to offer? Since the last two decades have produced an explosive growth of exhibiting and collecting practices in the Asian art world, the art world in Kyōto has also experienced a veritable revival and renewal of its private art institutions, especially in the last ten years.

The present Master thesis aims to outline the findings from my three month-long field research trip to Kyōto (Japan), lasting from the 17th of January 2017 to the 15th of April 2017. In the scope of this thesis, I attempt to draw a picture of Kyōto's contemporary art world, that means its public and private art-related institutions such as galleries, showrooms, exhibition spaces, public art fairs and local, independent art places and artists I have visited during my fieldwork, in order to discuss the character of Kyōto's institutional art world with its local, as well as global features and specifics.

Thus, within the scope of this thesis I aim to answer how Kyōto's 'contemporary art world' looks like and how it is being constructed by private and public institutions, gallerists, artists and art critics. Furthermore, I will enlarge upon the question whether (and how) the contemporary art world can co-exist with the traditional art world and how the city's governmental interests— including those of the tourism-sector — influence or shape Kyōto's contemporary art world.

The conceptual framework of my field of research is basically aligned within the anthropology of art current framework, of which global art studies and Japanese art studies constitute the theoretical part, whereas the city of Kyōto as my field of research constitutes the empirical one. However, in order to understand the theoretical context and interdisciplinary framework of this thesis, I provide an overview of the historical conditions and developments that lead to the discourse about modern and contemporary Japanese art in general, and contemporary art in Kyōto in particular.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Kyōto — die frühere Hauptstadt Japans mit ihren siebzehn UNESCO Weltkulturerbe, 1600 buddhistische Tempel und mehr als 400 *Shintō*-Tempeln ist nicht nur als „Herz“ und Geburtsort der japanischen Kultur, sondern auch als als Zentrum traditioneller Kunst und Handwerkskunst weltberühmt. Aber sind *Ukiyo-e* Farbholzdrucke, handgemachte Keramik oder buddhistische Kalligraphien (*Shodō*) wirklich die einzigen Repräsentanten aus Kyōto's Kunstwelt?

In den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten erfuhr die Asiatische Kunstwelt eine explosionsartige Pluralisierung von Ausstellungsorten und Kunstsammlungen, welche auch Kyōto nicht unbeeinflusst ließ. So ist auch dort, vor allem seit den letzten zehn Jahren, von einer wahrhaften Revitalisierung und Erneuerung der lokalen Kunstwelt die Rede.

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit präsentiert die Resultate und Forschungsergebnisse meiner dreimonatigen Forschungsreise in Kyōto (Japan), welche vom 17. Januar bis zum 15. April 2017 stattgefunden hat. Im Rahmen dieses Forschungsprojektes ist die Absicht dieser Arbeit ein Bild von Kyōto's zeitgenössischer Kunstwelt — d.h. die privaten und öffentlichen Kunstinstitutionen wie Galerien, alternative Ausstellungsorte, Kunstmessen welche ich zur besagten Zeit aufgesucht habe, — zu geben, um deren Charakter und die Charakteristika, wie auch ihre lokalen und globalen Aspekte zu untersuchen. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es aufzuzeigen, wie Kyōto's zeitgenössische Kunstwelt mit ihren öffentlichen wie auch privaten Institutionen, Gallerien und Künstlern strukturiert ist, um darüber hinaus den Fragen nachzugehen, wie die zeitgenössische Kunstwelt mit Kyōto's traditioneller Kunstwelt koexistieren kann und ob, bzw. in welchem Maße die lokale Regierung — bis hin zur Tourismusindustrie — Einfluss auf Kyōto's Kunstwelt ausübt.

Der konzeptuelle Rahmen der Recherchen und Ergebnisse können in der Anthropologie der Kunst, wie auch in den Global Art Studies und der Japanischen Kunstgeschichte verordnet werden, wobei der Großteil der Forschung auf den empirischen Daten meiner eigenen Feldforschung beruht. Um ein Verständnis von den interdisziplinären Zusammenhängen des theoretischen Kontextes dieser Arbeit zu verschaffen wird darüber hinaus ein historischer Überblick über die Entstehung moderner und zeitgenössischer Kunst in Japan im Allgemeinen, und zeitgenössischer Kunst in Kyōto im Speziellen gegeben werden.

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