

First ever large-scale retrospective exhibition of Heisei (1989-2019) Japanese art!
Bubbles/Debris: Art of the Heisei Period 1989 – 2019

Dates: January 23 (Sat.) – April 11 (Sun.), 2021

Venue: Higashiyama Cube, Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art

Organizer: Heisei Art Exhibition Executive Committee (The City of Kyoto, The Asahi Shimbun)

Curatorial Supervisor: Sawaragi Noi

Corporate Sponsors: SunM Color Co., Ltd. Minebea Mitsumi Inc.

Aside from the standard Western system of counting years, Japan uses a system based on the enthronement and reigns of emperors. The Meiji Period, for example, is marked by the reign of Emperor Meiji (1868-1912), the Taisho Period (1912-1926) by the reign of Emperor Taisho, and the Showa Period (1923-1989) by the reign of Emperor Showa. The Heisei period coincides with the reign of Emperor Akihito (1989-2019).

Art critic Sawaragi Noi, who has consistently engaged in incisive analysis on Japanese contemporary art since the late 1980s, is curating the *Bubbles/Debris: Art of the Heisei Period 1989-2019* exhibition to be held at Higashiyama Cube. This exhibition looks back on the Heisei period* with a focus on the response of Japanese artists and art groups specifically selected by Sawaragi to the series of unprecedented natural disasters and economic stagnation in Japan during this time. The exhibition keywords are ‘bubbles’ and ‘debris.’

My idea is to review the more than 30 years of Heisei art from the standpoint of Kyoto at the dawn of the turmoil-ridden Reiwa period. It is not my intention to demarcate trends by ten year periods such as the 1980s, the 1990s, etc. Rather, I am exploring whether or not Heisei art has its distinctive character in the way that Meiji (1868-1912) art reflected the introduction of art itself into Japan, Taisho (1912-1926) art was marked by the emergence of a self-centered Japanese avant-garde, and Showa (1926-1989) art carried the contrast of the gloom and light of the pre- and post-war periods and the branching of art in many directions in the wake of the introduction of democracy and a pacifist constitution. I am asking if there is such a thing as a Heisei *zeitgeist*, a ‘spirit’ of Heisei times. With Kamo no Chomei’s *Hojoki* [The Ten Foot Square Hut] and Isozaki Arata’s *Deburi no mirai* [The Future of Debris] in mind, and the context of the collapse of the bubble economy and following economic crises, and frequent calamities and natural disasters such as the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima nuclear power plant reactor meltdowns, I have chosen *Bubbles/Debris: Art of the Heisei Period* as the title of the exhibition.

— Sawaragi Noi



Chim ↑ Pom *Build-Burger* 2016

Courtesy of the artist,
 MUJIN-TO Production, ANOMALY
 Photo: Kenji Morita
 Image for reference only



Is Tohoku-ga possible? *Ark Plan* 2011

Photo: SENO HIROMI (FLOT)



the council of divina commedia (towata+matsumoto)

DIVINA COMMEDIA 1991

Photo: Fukunaga Kazuo © TOWATA-MATSUMOTO

Image for reference only

Sawaragi Noi

Art critic. Born in Chichibu, Saitama in 1962. Studied in Kyoto and is now professor at Tama Art University. He has authored numerous books including *Shinbijutsuron* [Earthquake Art Theory] that won the 68th Minister of Education Award for the Arts. He has been involved in many groundbreaking exhibitions since curating *Anomaly* (Röntgen Kunst Institut) introducing Takashi Murakami and Yanobe Kenji and other new wave artists at the time. In the wake of the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake and the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, he turned his attention to post-war Japanese art theory and produced many ambitious works questioning fundamental existing ideas across various fields regarding the relationship between art and wars, earthquakes, natural disasters, and social incidents. His publications include *Senso to Banpaku* (2005) [War and the World's Fair], *Gobijutsuron* [Post-art theory] (2015; recipient of the 25th Yoshida Hidekazu Prize) (all published by Bijutsu Shuppan-sha), *We Don't Know God: Chim ↑ Pom 2005-2019* (text, Sawaragi Noi et al) and many others.

Highlights of the Exhibition

1. The first ever large-scale retrospective exhibition of Heisei (1989-2019) contemporary art:

It features fourteen Japanese artists and art groups including TECHNOCRAT from the beginning of Heisei, along with still active Chim ↑ Pom and Is Tohoku-ga possible?

2. A reconsideration of alternative Heisei expression:

It will re-examine the workings of artist groups and casually connected individual artists through installations and video projects and introduce works of GEISAI, DOMMUNE, Purplume, Kushino Terrace, and Artificial Intelligence Art and Aesthetics Research Group.

3. An exhibiton of experience-based structure:

In addition to a 15 meter wide Heisei art chronology wall the 'Suddenly, the view spreads out before us' team will reproduce a bridge that spanned two universities to give a panoramic view of the entire venue. The space is configured in a way that visitors can move horizontally and vertically through 'streets' or visit booths scattered around in Heisei space-time roughly divided into three periods, as follows:

1989 – 2001

World context: the collapse of the Berlin wall; the Gulf War;

Japan context: the collapse of the Bubble Economy; the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake; the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack

Complesso Plastico (1987-1995; Osaka/Tokyo)

Unit formed by Hirano Jiro and Matsukage Hiroyuki while they were undergraduates at the Osaka University of Arts. Their sound and image-based installation works attracted attention and they were invited to participate in the 1990 Venice Biennale. (Production support: Nagoya University of the Arts, New Media Design)



Complezzo Plastico
LOVE AND GOLD Tokyo Version 1989
Photo: Oguma Sakae
Image for reference only.

IDEAL COPY (1988 - ; Kyoto)

An anonymous art unit that started in Kyoto and became active throughout Japan and overseas from the 1990s. They are known for conceptual works focusing on daily life social systems.

TECHNOCRAT (1990 - 1996; Tokyo)

Art unit centered around Ameya Norimizu, who started out in the theater. Their works are characterized as physical and conceptual, and making use of machines and biotechnology. Their last presentation was their 1996 exhibition in Mexico. (Production support: Nagoya University of the Arts, New Media Design)

DIVINA COMMEDIA (1991 - ; Kyoto/Kobe)

Named for Dante's Divine Comedy, the project centers around Towata Masayuki and Matsumoto Yasuaki, who both studied at Kyoto City University of Arts. Their works with "praxis of death" as theme draw attention with flashing light and sound. (Production support: inter office ltd.)

2001 – 2011

World Context: September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States; the Iraq War; SARS outbreak; Lehman Brothers bankruptcy and subprime mortgage crisis

GEISAI (2001 - 2014 ; Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, Taipei, Miami)

A large-scale project organized by Kaikai Kiki under the supervision of Takashi Murakami. Derived from the annual arts festival held at Japanese art universities, GEISAI featured in total more than 10,000 exhibiting artists.

Chim ↑ Pom (2005 - ; Tokyo)

Artist group composed of Ushiro Ryuta, Hayashi Yasutaka, Ellie, Okada Masataka, Inaoka Motomu, and Mizuno Toshinori. Their art is linked to social issues of our times.

Contact Gonzo (2006 - ; Osaka)

The group name reflects their particular technique of physical expression. The current members—Tsukahara Yuya, Mikajiri Keigo, Matsumi Takuya, and NAZE—focus on performance and are active in Japan and internationally.

Is Tohoku-ga possible? (2009 - ; Yamagata)

Mise Natsunosuke and Kozaki Masatake conduct research and art production with their students at Tohoku University of Art and Design on an alternative art history based on questioning the possibility of using the term "Tohoku-ga" (Tohoku-style painting) in the same way as nihonga (Japanese-style painting).

DOMMUNE (2010 - ; Tokyo)

Launched by Ukawa Naohiro, Dommune is Japan's first live-streaming studio/channel. It has continued an artist-interview program "The 100 Japanese Contemporary Artists" since 2014.

Chaos*Lounge (2009 - ; Tokyo)

An artist group generated out of exchange on the Internet. The exhibition reviews their activities through documentary materials.

2011 – 2019

World context: Expanding terrorism; natural disasters

Japan context: Great East Japan Earthquake; Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident

Parplume (2013 - ; Kanagawa)

A community established by Umetsu Yoichi. Based at the Parplume Preparatory School, this is an 'art movement' and 'alternative of Japanese art education' synchronizing art activity to daily life.

Suddenly, the view spreads out before us (2015 - ; Tokyo)

Ichikawa Akiko, Tsuchiya Michiko, Haibara Chiaki, Chong Ri-ae, and Ri Jong-ok, while students at Musashino Art University and Korea University, built a bridge spanning a wall in a joint exhibition between their universities. This exhibition is their third time showing together.



Haibara Chiaki, Ri Jong Ok
Drawing for "A Bridge Striding over a Fence"
2015

Image for reference only

Kushino Terrace (2016 - ; Hiroshima)

An 'outsider art gallery' established by Kushino Nobumasa in Fukuyama, Hiroshima. The gallery searches out and presents works of artists from all over Japan that diverge from the general contemporary art scene.

Kokufu Osamu's Engine in the Water re-creation project (2016-2017; Kyoto)

Kokufu Osamu died suddenly while finalizing his *Engine in the Water*. Endo Mizuki, Shiraishi Koichi, Takashima Megumi, and Haga Michiko reconstructed and exhibited the work in 2017 and have again reconstructed it for this exhibition.

Artificial Intelligence Art and Aesthetics Research Group (2016 - ; Tokyo)

A study group formed by Nakazawa Hideki and Kusakari Mika to explore whether or not AI can have a sense of aesthetics or create original art. The group's activities include public study groups, exhibitions, and concerts.

Venue: Higashiyama Cube , Kyoto City KYOCERA Museum of Art

Opening hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (last admission 30 minutes prior to closing)

Holidays: Mondays (except for public holidays)

Admission (tax included):

Adults ¥2,000 (Groups* ¥1,800)

University students ¥1,500 (Groups* ¥1,300)

High school students ¥1,000 (Groups* ¥800)

Elementary and junior high school students ¥500 (Groups* ¥300)

Pre-schoolers: free

*Groups = 20 or more persons

Elementary, junior high and high school students residing in the city of Kyoto: free

Disabled person with one caregiver: free (certificate of disability required)

Special Discounts:

Pair tickets: ¥3500 for two

Heisei discount: Visitors born in the Heisei period (1989–2019) ¥1800 (limited to regular tickets)

For inquiries about the exhibition:

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*Content may be subject to change due to conditions related to COVID-19.