



1963-1

Trend of Contemporary Japanese Paintings

The range of painting styles actually practised in the Japanese art world today is extremely wide. They range from nineteenth-century depictions to abstract forms, and even movements such as Neo-Dada, which are being produced as the sincere work of individual painters, and it is fair to say that there has never been a period in history covered by such a wide range of styles. This is not limited to the Japanese art world, but in the case of Japan in particular, the customary distinction between so-called Japanese and Western-style painting is one reason for the wide range of styles. It should not be overlooked that the wide variety of styles has, on the other hand, tended to reflect the trends of contemporary painting as a kind of confusion in the eyes of the general public.

However, the styles of the period, like the waters of a great river, are constantly moving and flowing. It is an attempt to look at these trends in an organized manner. Here, the transition of style from figurative to abstract is taken up not as a confrontation but as a kind of chain. Although oil paintings are the main focus, I have tried to deal with them without being too concerned with distinctions such as Western or Japanese painting or ink painting. This is because I think that the goal or attitude of expression is more important than such distinctions.

This exhibition of paintings is a combination of some of the works purchased by the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo over the past few years, and works by relatively young painters from Kyoto and other areas.

Imaizumi Atsuo



1963-2

Contemporary Trend of Paintings—Occident and Japan

In the post-war period—and even before the last decade or so—the Japanese art world came into close contact with the European and American art worlds. There are many Japanese painters who have stayed in Europe and the USA and have shown a vigorous performance, and there are also many up-and-coming newcomers from Europe and the USA who have come to Japan and

exhibited their work. This was, of course, not only a boon for the Japanese art world. It is likely that later historians will point out, perhaps more than we think, that for Western contemporary art too, the participation of Japanese painters in the production of art and the presentation of works in Japan by Western painters were a kind of stirring up of contemporary styles linked to Eastern and Western traditions, and that this was becoming a major harvest.

This exhibition “Trends in Contemporary Painting: Western and Japanese” is an attempt to show a cross-section of this aspect. Of the many Western painters who have come to Japan in recent years to hold solo exhibitions, we have selected the works of some who are thought to have given fresh impetus to the art world in particular, and have added to them the works of several leading Japanese painters, as well as those of newcomers who were not shown in the first “Trends in Contemporary Painting” exhibition. In one venue and on the same wall, we can see the works of contemporary painters from Japan and the West responding to each other and talking to each other. This is a contemporary trend.

Imaizumi Atsuo



1964

Contemporary Trend of Japanese Painting and Sculpture

As the universal tendency, the painting and sculpture of today have so wide variety on their artistic presentations that we cannot be simply defined by certain “isms” or schools. Many artists have endeavored, with adventures and experiments, to find and build up their individual image on the ruins of old styles and traditional forms.

For this reason an artist disorder we have never known have brought us now. Contemporary art of Japan also, in spite of his own original history and situation, could not be saved from this universal tendency. As the result, it may be said to be most difficult to obtain a bird's eye view of today's Japanese art.

At the exhibition we have now, we show the latest works of young promising artists who have attracted public attention by means of their new style. They are almost in their twenties or thirties and began their artistic career after the World War II. Accordingly, we can surely say that all their works are not yet accomplished. But in this unaccomplishment, we can see their claims for a free intention and their adventurous execution, being liberated from all conventional forms and skills.

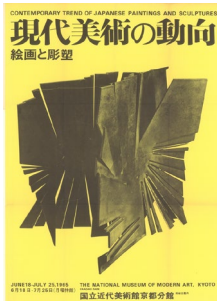
The paintings we show here are almost of “abstract” style, but, of course, they are

expressed by various forms. For example, there are the works of “Action Painting” style, which intend to fix directly the body’s action dropping the colours on the canvas; there are the works of “Informel” style, which make the best use of accidental effect by scratching and colouring earth, sand, cement and plaster on canvas; there are also the works of “Néo-Dada” or “Han-Geijutsu” (Anti-Art), which are made by some scraps and intend to destroy the traditional conception of painting. On the other hand there are the works affected by so-called “Pop-Art”, which present a scathing paradox against modern-times, by using the ready-made patterns, marks, and ready-made objects themselves.

As to the sculpture also, there are the works made of ready-made objects and scraps: they express in disorder a curious beauty of machines. But most of them intend to present the hard being and monumental energy of materials—wood, stone, metal, cement and plastics—in the “Abstract” composition.

In this exhibition all the trend of contemporary art in every respect cannot be shown, but the new aspect of Japanese art is shown here under the high-light.

Hence-forward we are going to show the exhibition like this annually in which the speedy movement of today’s art shall be seen one after another.



1965

Contemporary Trend of Japanese Paintings and Sculptures

This is the 4th annual exhibition of CONTEMPORARY TREND OF JAPANESE PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES. You will see many works by artists as yet relatively unknown, but who have shown good progress in the past year or two, as well as others whose talents are more established.

We have tried to draw from the younger artists most, but without any other guide than fresh creative power. As a result, you may see considerable variety at work, though the representation does not pretend to be exhaustive. We have tried to put the emphasis on those most radical departures in painting and sculpture that we think of when we say “avant-garde”.

Some works, we believe, is beyond the international level, while some is as yet in a more preliminary stage. However, we hope that you will find, beyond any discrepancy in abilities, invention and zest of a most promising kind.



1966

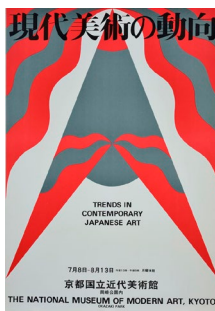
Contemporary Trend of Japanese Painting and Sculpture

So various are paintings and sculptures today that it is virtually impossible to define them by any title or school. Many artists are experimenting and venturing far afield trying to discover individuality amongst the ruins of older styles and traditional forms.

In this 5th annual exhibition of Trends we have attempted an intensive selection. Many of the works are by relatively unknown young artists, most of them in their 20s and 30s, and accomplishment and skill remain open. What we must recognize are their boldness and willingness to break from the conventional and their apparent vitality.

One of the most notable characteristics of this year's show are the multi-dimensional works that are hard to label either painting or sculpture, but which clearly enter the life of art today. Also you will see work affected by the so-called "Optical Art" movement, with its direct visual use of modern elements, often in patterned arrangement, or other work getting at the feel of inorganic substances.

Any selection cannot be exhaustive, but we have made an effort to give attention to new talents beyond any reference to reputation. We hope, as a result, to offer you a fair idea of what is happening in Japan now.



1967

Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art

This is the 6th of our annual exhibitions of the most recent works of those artists who, in our estimation, showed the most remarkable progress in one-man or group shows during the year. Selection was made not on the basis of established reputation, but rather upon freshness of idea.

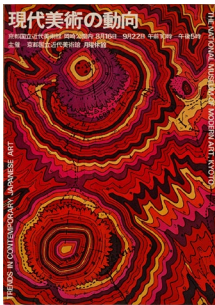
One of the most notable trends this year is the constructing of cubic forms out of plastics, stainless steel, mirrors and lenses. Effects of light, sound and motion are often added by them. As a result the works become spatial constructions, enclosing or revealing space, and not unwieldy masses. These works extend beyond the usual sense of painting or sculpture and even that of fine art. They seem much closer to industrial art. Indeed, some of the artists do not produce their works in an atelier, but have the Works made by artisans.

In this exhibition you may also observe works of the so-called "hard edge" variety, in which the plane figure is emphasized, and of the "op" art type, which create vivid and dynamic visual impressions, and some colored sculpture of monumental proportion.

These works all reflect the intricacies and problems of contemporary art. The traditional modes have gone by the board and originality seems to be muted in inorganic structures. The exhibition reveals with what eagerness young Japanese artists are trying to face the contemporary scene with a contemporary art.

We should like to express our deepest gratitude to the artists involved and to these others who have helped in preparing this exhibition.

Yoshiaki Inui



1968

Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art

The kaleidoscopic changes in contemporary art are hard to understand by traditional concepts of art. Experiment in revolution, not slow evolution, is the rule to be new and original, to be altogether free of the old ideas.

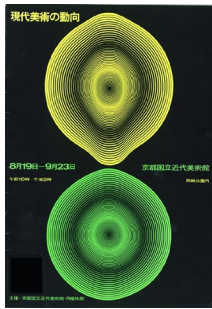
What we see are various aspects of immediacy.

These annual exhibitions of "Trend in Contemporary Japanese Art" intend to show precisely the most recent tendencies. This seventh exhibition presents recent works by artists who have progressed notably during the year and demonstrate unusual imagination and projection. Selection was made without regard to established reputation or standard conceptions.

Most remarkable this year is the trend toward construction of cubic forms out of plastics, stainless steel, mirrors and lenses. These works extend beyond the usual sense of painting and sculpture and move closer to industrial products and production techniques. In fact, some of the artists had their works made in factories to which they submitted their designs and exact instructions. Most employ effects of light, sound and motion. Through these devices the artists build a new world. This world relates to what is present, not remote.

Tableaux and woodcuts are also on exhibit, but by and large, the tendency of transformation into symbolical ideas dominates.

Kenji Suzuki



1969

Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art

In this 8th annual exhibition of TRENDS what is most contemporary in Japanese art may, we hope, be surveyed and projected. The larger part of this show is dominated by 25 or more "new faces", whose work during the year has assumed prominence. They are mostly, as yet, unknown. But we look to them to maintain and refresh the scene.

The forms of contemporary art are outwardly complex and multifarious. Experimentation in every sort of material and technique and style verges on mere chaos. We have tried not merely to register this diversity, hut to draw carefully out of the mass works that reveal fresh and true originality and possibility.

One of the most salient points of this exhibition is the attempt to discover objects in themselves, or the effort towards the loss of particular substance in the pursuit of the ideal. Stone, wood, water, air, earth and cloth reveal themselves like surprises; in other works only a trace of the original element remains like a ghost. The thrust towards new forms and ideas often mutes the importance of the works as such and the space or circumstance, the environment, in which the work occurs assumes moment. Even the time itself in which the work operates takes on vitality. The display has, in its very nature, posed difficult problems of arrangement, but we have tried to put our entire utilizable space, indoors and out, at the disposal of the chosen work.

As always some prints are presented too. Recently craftsmanship seems to be waning and replaced by a new style in using the plates themselves as the ground of both meaning and form.

We are honored to be able to express our gratefulness to Mr. Tamon Miki, the artists involved and others who have shown concern-for their kind cooperation.



1970

Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art

The forms of contemporary art are outwardly complex and multifarious. Experimentation in every sort of material and technique and style verges on mere chaos. We have tried not merely to register this diversity but to

draw carefully out of the mass works that reveal fresh and true originality and possibility.

One of the most remarkable points this year is the attempt to attach importance to the process of time or the effort towards the loss of particular substance in pursuit of the conception. This trend emerges in opposition to environmental art with its technological use of movements, lights and images. Stone, wood, water, air, earth reveal themselves surprisingly. These two trends, however, have the same idea; that is, both of them do not confine themselves within the traditional frame of art, both try to expand it. As for the interest in the process of time, there are several approaches.

Some show work as process, or some leave the materials to suggest the process to the imagination of the spectator. Other artists try to observe the change of the material in the course of time, as chemical action on an iron plate. This aims to eliminate the object into event. More radical artists even aim to eliminate the object itself entirely.

On the border of art and non-art they seem to ask what the essential quality of art is. There are also several works made by print techniques. They are produced by means of mass-production, and replaced by new styles both in meaning and form. This is also beyond the range of the traditional print.

We are honored to be able to express our gratefulness to the artists and others who have shown concern—for their kind cooperation.