

[#7 Intl Conference of Eastern Aesthetics, Taegu, July 7-11, 2014]

UEMAE Chiyu (上前智祐) as a “Glocal” Artist of Kobe  
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[abstract]

Globalization is really a grave topic not only in terms of international relations and world capitalist economy system, but also with reference to national culture and identity. When it comes to art creation, modernization of non-Western world meant the import of Western academism and participation in the world art market. Then, I wonder if globalization of art market is equal to creative expansion of art.

Thus, my research concern has become with local artists of Kobe, seeking the creative foundations within Kobe. I have decided on challenging to investigate Kobe artists, alive or deceased, as well as art history of Kobe. Already some artists of Kobe origin won worldly fame as SUGAI Kumi (1919-1996) did.

My implication of <artists of Kobe> is wide in definition. Not limited to those who were born, brought up, successful in Kobe, but in relation of residence, place of creation and exhibition, some are part of the Kobe community, and most important factor is that they or their works represent or symbolize the Kobe culture.

Usually, KOISO Ryohei (1903-1988), TAMURA Kohnosuke (1903-1986) and KAWANISHI Hide (1894-1965) have been regarded as representative Kobe artists mostly in that their works and their motifs visualized the atmosphere, lively and typical scenes of Kobe as a porttown, international city with Western-styled buildings and life-styles. However, I wonder if their works really represent the features in depth of Kobe.

KOISO, TAMURA and KAWANISHI can be said to have depicted only fantastic, representational sides of Kobe, as a good example of Japanese modernization, but eventually only as a copy of the Western civilization and a longing for modernism. In fact, Kobe has multi-facet elements of its own, holding various Asian residents, dark criminal sides of a port, and deep history of ancient and medieval Japan. KOISO, TAMURA, KAWANISHI and others are only the representatives of one aspect of Kobe.

Then, my suggestion is that the alternatives are UEMAE Chiyu (1920-), HORIO Sadaharu (1939-) and ENOKI Chu (1944-), who have in common some characteristics relating with Kobe. They were laborers engaged themselves with a steel company, never being trained at any art colleges of an academic curriculum, not professional artists before manual and physical laborers, situated far away from the center of art

world of Japan.

Nevertheless, in terms of academism, we should not put excessive importance to their career and work, as academism of Western artistic history could not have been duly planted in Japan and the condition of any Japanese artist since modernity has been much the same. Rather, non-academism of UEMAE, HORIO and ENOKI may signify free expression of their creativity different from the academic standard and lead them to local and vernacular art activities.

In my paper, I will treat in particular UEMAE Chiyu, considering him to be an appropriate example of Kobe artist in his life career and creativity. Since his birth and childhood, UEMAE has been suffering unhappiness of family ties, serious poverty and physical and mental weakness. He started laboring before finishing the elementary school, moving to Kobe to get a job as a stevedore or crane driver, while, without losing his dream to become an artist, creating original artworks and joining the group of <GUTAI>. His artistic activity has proved the continuity from labor to work, from life to art. On a moderate scale and as a citizen artist, I believe his life-style and artistic career fit the way of Kobe life and images.

[Introduction]

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[1, Art/artists and Kobe]

The chief topics of my paper will be focused on relationship between art/artist and the image of Kobe.

My question starts by how and why an artist is produced, instead of, or in addition to a person of social position as a laborer.

Generally speaking, a young ambitious person with natural inclination to art will need skills and knowledge. The institutions for art education were founded for the purpose of training young would-be artists in Europe, at first in Italy and France since 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The curriculum for artists have been thorough from how to choose materials and motifs to how to use pencils and brushes, the techniques of coloring, composition, etc. *École des beaux arts* was founded in Paris to support the academy of arts for cultural elites' privileges, authority, and hegemony of administration of art and culture. [cf. *L'idéal classique*]

In modern Japan, the Meiji government, intending to transplant officially the western art (YOUGA 洋画), tried to institute the similar academy of arts, founding the national college of arts called Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko (東京美術学校) in 1887, organizing and backing up public art exhibition. However, poorly established authority of official exhibitions against private ones through struggles between art schools, human connections, etc. only led to less powerful academism in Japan.

In the West, in order to sustain conservative and firm academism, organizations of artists, promotions of artistic activities, art institutions have been deliberately maintained. The idea of classicism has played an important role to keep the authority and power of academism.

According to OHKUMA Toshiyuki, there never rose a debate on the concept of academism only after 1930s and on the concept of classicism after 1920s. [cf. OHKUMA, 224] While almost no discussion on what the academism should be in Japan rose, rather many art institutions were founded and some lineage of art schools has been formed. Still, the lack of classicism in Japanese western art world must have had poor effect. From the start of the department of Western painting in Tokyo Art School, the first instructors KURODA Seiki (黒田清輝, 1866-1924) and KUME Keiichiro (久米桂一郎, 1866-1934) studied and preferred the Pleinairism rather than authentic classicism. And the most famous collections of Western art, "Matsukata Collection" by Kobe businessman MATSUKATA Kohjiro (松方幸次郎, 1865-1950), consisted mainly of the Impressionists art.

Nevertheless, artists gathered in Kobe for residence and artwork. Already in 1922, there founded the Art Association of Hyogo Prefecture (兵庫県美術協会), main members of which were painters of Japanese traditional art.

It is said that the first gallery was open in Kobe and <gallery> was translated into 「画廊」, because those artists bound for Europe with ambition of success came to Kobe

first to wait for the ship of European line.[cf. ITO, 302ff.]

KOISO Ryohei may be generally regarded as the representative Kobe artist in his work's characteristics of warm, peaceful, middle class images of motif, which very well fits general representation of Kobe and the area around Kobe. Kobe has boasted of its open port town developing to one million and a half population, prosperous in heavy industry of shipbuilding and steel as well as international trade business.

On top of it, Kobe as a quarter of mild climate and scenic beauties with sea and mountain as well as high convenience of transportation has attracted Kansai people for their best residence.

KOISO's art in addition to those of TAMURA Kohnosuke and KAWANISHI Hide really conforms to images of Kobe.

In fact, anyone would admit that Kobe is a good place to visit and live in and that historically and as yet it is the center city of "HANSHINKAN Modernism"(modernism culture between Osaka and Kobe), being proud of the porttown of modernization Japan, European-styled big city, open-broad-minded and cheerful citizens. That may be, in a sense, a stereotyped image of Kobe, about which I agree to a larger extent as a former dweller of Kobe. Moreover, in addition to constructing infrastructures of port and town, Kobe has also developed culture and art of its own. Painting is a part of the city's history.

Thus on way to modern city, art and culture have played an important role for city life and society, artists becoming social celebrity, a fact which signifies the similar situation of city life represented in the Impressionist art. The Matsukata Collectins' features of impressionist paintings were not only by a curious coincidence.

However, I wonder if art and culture represented by KOISO and other famous artists have been really the exact copy of Kobe. Movie theaters, golf courses, beauty salons for hairdressing permanent, cocktail bars, etc. appeared one after another to entertain citizens of Kobe where speculators with snobbish ambitions flocked.

This is how Kobe has produced illusions of modernism and Western civilization.

Against this aspect of Kobe, Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) who stayed in Kobe for two years as a correspondent of *The Kobe Chronicle* hated in particular the scenes of the Foreign Settlement [Hearn, 314]. Raphael Koeber (1848-1923) was also disgusted by Kobe scenes, saying that he observed in Kobe parodies of European and American sins and stupidity [Koeber, 78].

In terms of sense of balance, we had better take notice of the dark aspect of Kobe. Both illuminated side and dark side were a result of globalization and modernization of Japan.

In history of fine arts in modern world, modernity was shown through realistic imitation of natural scenery and cityscape, and representation of human figures against city life and apartment interior as if those images and motifs are good documentations of modernity. As middle-class citizens emerged as a majority of society, art and culture contributed to upgrade and sophisticate civic humanist culture. Impressionists, both in art and music, led and steered cultural ethos of civil society.

Probably similar to the Western society, and by following their civilization, Kobe, as a kind of pilot city in order for modern Japanese to innovate the old-fashioned and implant superior Western systems, developed and Kobe citizens have enjoyed new way of life.

Kobe may have been a symbol or typical modernizing city of Japan. A successive constructions of infrastructure of harbor, roads, water service and sewerage, buildings of commercial and financial use, were outstanding among other large cities in Japan. As well as hardware parts of town, those of software of city life such as shopping, entertainments and culture also expanded in Kobe, attracting artists from outside of Kobe, projects of artistic activities and exhibitions becoming popular.

However, modernization as westernization with copying mind never accomplished deep and genuine culture only to leave ephemeral and representational culture, confusing novelty for exciting.

## [2, UEMAE Chiyu as a Kobe artist]

Why shall I pick up UEMAE? In my view, he miraculously combines his destiny, life career and artistic creation. I will not treat his artworks in this paper, but only treat his life career with a suggestion on the conjunction of life and art.

He was born in a village near Maidzuru-city (舞鶴市) of Kyoto Prefecture (京都府) in 1920. His father was a farmer and died after one year of UEMAE's birth. Naturally, his mother and he spent a very poor life during his childhood, and before finishing the term of primary school he was sent to work at a small studio shop for dyeing and weaving, where, it may be supposed, he had experiences of beautifully-colored cloths and clothes brought for refitting by geisha girls of the town. His work of later years using cloth ("NUI" 「縫」) may have the root of artistic inspirations in his childhood experience.

At the age of 18, UEMAE left his home in 1938 to move to Kobe in order to find jobs of higher wages and a good instructor for painting. Working as a stevedore, he indulged himself in drinking, brawling and gambling.

In 1939, seeking for even higher wages and another luck, he moved to Yokohama and

then Tokyo, but eventually on recruiting for the WWII he was obliged to come back to the hometown Maidzuru in 1940.

After the war, he resumed his artistic activities, challenging a public exhibition, and as quickly as in 1947 at the age of 27 one piece got accepted and shown at Tokyo Metropolitan Museum. Meanwhile, due to help of a friend through painting, UEMAE got a job as a crane man at KAWASAKI Heavy Industry in 1949, when he married and has spent rather peaceful and stable life till today.

In his career of artistic activities, most noteworthy may be his participation in <GUTAI> (具体) group directed by YOSHIHARA Jiro (吉原治良, 1905-1972). UEMAE was a member of the group all through from its establishment of 1954 to its dissolution of 1972. Though UEMAE seems to have been very unique and isolated from other members, still he was one of a few that kept his membership accompanying YOSHIHARA till his death.

In artistic style, the <GUTAI> and UEMAE differed in several respects in that UEMAE didn't prefer <action> and <performance> which most of the other members tried; UEMAE very much stuck to the materials of his art such as cloth, while others seldom cared about the material. Moreover, interestingly enough, UEMAE seems to have kept on embracing the idea of beauty, while to others it must have been not so much the beautiful art as innovative and original expressions that counted.

Another impressive feature of his personality is with books and publications in relation to his career and intellectual life. He published nine books by himself as private editions. They consist of books on his autobiography, his view to modern art, his exposition about his works and collections of photos taken by his own. There are the other collection of books for reading, including the Japanese translation of Winderband' *TETSUGAKU GAIRON* (哲学概論 Outline of Philosophy), TAKAMURA Kohtaro(高村光太郎)'s *ZOUKEIBI-RON* (造形美論 Essays on Plastic Beauty), Georg Simmel's *GEIJUTSU no TETSUGAKU* (芸術の哲学 Philosophy of Art), NISHIDA Kitaro(西田幾多郎)'s *TETSUGAKU no KONPONMONDAI* (哲学の根本問題 Fundamental Topics of Philosophy) and others, most of which are very specialized books of highest quality.

Considering his lack of experience of higher education at college or university, we are impressed by his highly intellectual inquisitiveness.

As for his biographical side, it is very pitiful to read and know about his childhood of poverty and domestic misery, his hard youth years as a laborer at the harbor dispersing his stress and mental imbalance by indulging himself in gambling, drinking and fighting, though, amazingly, never lost in his wish to become an artist.

[Conclusion: UEMAE as a glocal artist]

It would not be unusual to see an artist with the background of family unhappiness and poor childhood. Also, some artists are manual laborers while concentrating on artistic creations. My interest and estimation of UEMAE Chiyu are caused firstly by his excellent accomplishment of artworks themselves and secondly by his progressive life career with integral mind toward art and beauty. Without idea of beauty and art, presumably he may have completed his life as, for instance, a mafia member or someone like that.

He may never be called a saint or master-artist. Still, my appreciation for him is also derived from my liking for Kobe as an ideal type of human life, in which almost all citizens have gathered from the outside seeking jobs at an open city of porttown, being diligent on his/her work and enjoying their life modestly. We should remember those virtuous actions Kobe citizens showed at the time of the greatest HANSHIN earthquake and disaster in 1995, when there occurred almost no robbery and vandalism, and instead sufferers helped each other with a lot of volunteers'help from abroad and other parts of Japan.

To provisionally conclude, I'd like to borrow Hanna Arendt's ideas. According to her in *The Human Condition* (1958), the concept of <action> of <vita activa> should be articulated to make clear the meaning of action. As has been usual in history of philosophy, <vita contemplativa> has been regarded as superior to <vita activa> as <contemplation> is evaluated as the best humane mental attitude. Human beings are requested to work for survival and to be public, social and political as a public figure.

However, for the purpose of upgrading the quality of life, to obtain the order of humanity superior to animals, to live well means the most desirable way of life which is to be away from secular public and political activities to meditate and contemplate nature and the universe. Presumably, however, to Arendt, such secluded mind of contemplation mostly by intellectuals had led to let the Nazi raise to get power. That was why she reconsider the meaning of actions and <vita activa>.

Arendt classifies three kinds of activities: labor, work and action. Labor is "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself." [Arendt, 7] Then, work is "the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of

human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings." [Arendt, 7] And lastly, action "corresponds to the human condition of plurality" [Arendt, 7], and "while all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition <...> of all political life." [Arendt, 7]

In my interpretation, labor for earning food of daily life is indispensable for survival. UEMAE, who was born fortuneless, was obliged to labor from his juvenile years. Generally, art creations mean activities for leisurely time to get divertissement from frustration and depression caused by labor. Labor and work differ from each other in quality of action and mind. Similarly, life and art are distinguishable from each other. But, in UEMAE's case, we can find the continuity from labor to work, life to art, probably because he has had roots in life and land, then cultivating his art. We will see an existential model in Uemae, and Kobe may have nourished him. As one of the most famous <GUTAI> artists, Uemae's activities for art has contributed to world art. At the same time, we should keep in mind his local position and appreciate him as a <glocal> artist. It may be suggested that the comparison of life and art is similar to that of local and gloval.

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UEMAE and HAMASHITA, June 7, 2014