

## Measurement in the Impermanence: Contemporary Japanese Avant-Garde Film

Thursday, September 24, 2009—San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
co-curated by Tomonari Nishikawa & Vanessa O'Neill  
presented in association with the Center for Asian American Media

In tandem with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art visual arts exhibits *The Provoke Era: Postwar Japanese Photography* and *Photography Now: China, Japan, Korea, Measurement in the Impermanence* consists of contemporary Japanese experimental works that display an interest in the frame as a unit of time, constructed either sensuously or methodically, in order to produce ephemeral phenomena. The program includes Makino Takashi's ***Resolution, Synthesis, Re-composition*** (with a score by Carl Stone), a voyage through a strata of images and sounds; Akira Mizuyoshi's ***Like Flowing, Like Spinning***, a lyrical visual of obscure images in motion; and Ryusuke Ito's photogrammed sound and visual collage film ***A Flat, Split Reel***. Stom Sogo's ***Sync Up Element*** is a soothing flicker video with a refrain of illusory memories, while Ichiro Sueoka's ***Marching On*** unveils a discovery of traditional customs and patterns in decay. Yo Ota's ***Inclined Horizon*** is a playful visual choreographed by on-and-off time-lapse technique. Time-lapse in Takashi Ishida's ***Reflection*** is utilized towards an investigation of the planet's rotation to give birth to an organic creature on the interior. Yuiko Matsuyama's ***Lens on Lens*** is an exploration in the world of flux and Daichi Saïto's ***Trees of Syntax, Leaves of Axis*** (with music by Malcolm Goldstein) provides a sensuous experience through a landscape in a different dimension. (Tomonari Nishikawa)

***Resolution, Synthesis, Re-composition*** (2009) by Makino Takashi; digital video, color, sound (by Carl Stone), 23 minutes, tape from the maker

A philosophical duet between a filmmaker utilizing multiple-exposure and a musician mainly using sampling, both focusing on the keywords resolution, synthesis, and re-composition. We first destroy sound (pedal steel guitar sound from an old western film) and everything the eye sees (sea, trees, landscapes) then confer new meanings and repay it all as film. Amid the gentle sampling music which invokes respiration, a multiple-exposure tempest formulates a scene on the back of one's retina. An identical match is sometimes achieved though the image and music, both made from the same idea, as they advance mutually and in parallel. (Makino Takashi)

***Like Flowing, Like Spinning*** (2009) by Akira Mizuyoshi; 16mm, color, silent, 6 minutes, print from the maker

At a time when digital motion pictures are attempting to resemble the plasticity of the cine film, I make "an attempt that I can express only with a cine film". That is to say that my work is daringly leaving from the approaching digital movie. I drag a 16mm negative film in a darkroom, improvisationally adhere it with the developed 16mm positive film and expose the film with a flashlight. Using this so-called *photogram* technique, the image fixed on the film is hardly recognized since it is excessively overexposed due to a mixture between the high sensitivity of the negative film and brightness of the light. Delicately each screen has different rays. I intentionally let a film reproduce the phenomenon—"fog"—which is usually considered a mistake of too much light in the film. I throw the light of the lamp of the film projector to the film, which is almost see-through, and use a lens in order to project its transmitted light on screen as an image. The audience's experience in the dark space becomes closer to what they would experience staring at the sun at daytime.

The film flows from a camera, developing solution, a film projector to retina and spins the images in our mind. (Akira Mizuyoshi)

***A Flat, Split Reel*** (2008) by Ryusuke Ito; 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes, print from the maker

*A Flat, Split Reel* is part of Ryusuke Ito's plate series, of which he describes : "In order to investigate the necessity of film as a medium for moving images, I have focused on its materiality. First, I created a collage with found footages of various formats. This collage, a montage that exists as an object, lets the light go through its surface. I then used it as 'the original plate' and repeated the process of contact printing on a film including the optical soundtrack, thus emphasizing the accidental nature of placement of perforations and exposure, as well as the image as 'sound'. The result is what I call 'the image print', that is, using the moving images as the material for the print just like a piece of wood is for a wood cut print." (Ryusuke Ito)

***Sync Up Element*** (2009) by Stom Sogo; digital video, color, sound, 23 minutes 30 seconds, tape from the maker

This is about the dreamlike images I saw while having epilepsy seizures, as they quite often happened in the past years. (Stom Sogo)

The films of Stom Sogo are incantatory and self combustible. An erratic master of low tech do-it-yourself sortilege, he puts his works through seemingly perpetual remakes. (Mark McElhatten)

***Marching On*** (2009) by Ichiro Sueoka; 16mm, black & white, sound, 11 minutes, print from the maker

In 12th April 1931 an amateur cineaste who lived in Kyoto went to see a huge festival, "SENSHOKU-SAI " (Festival of Dyeing and Weaving). This film is based on a film sketch that described the beautiful spring days of 1931, a temporarily peaceful era between the two world wars. The fading flowers symbolized the end of this era. This is one of "Re-interpretation for the private films" series work, which seeks to re-read the history of avant-garde film including a re-working of found footage. (Ichiro Sueoka)

***Inclined Horizon*** (2007) Yo Ota; 16mm, color/ black & white, sound, 8 minutes, print from the maker

My attempt at a filmic interpretation of Haraguchi Noriyuki's "Inclined Horizon ", a three-dimensional physical work featured in the "Dance Hakushu 2006" exhibition...Haraguchi's work was modeled out of earth that would return to its original form after about a month. My aim was to resurrect the concept of this work on film. Just as people standing on a slope will unconsciously try to right themselves, people watching a titled image will try to make a gentle correction . (Yo Ota)

***Reflection*** (2008) by Takashi Ishida; digital video, color, sound, 6 minutes 30 seconds, tape from maker

I was to do a painting on the wall of a gallery near the sea. I walked along the shore, all the way to that space. But there was already a painting done in light on the wall, so my task became nothing more than tracing it. This is a small piece, but important to me as my first use of many colors. (Takashi Ishida)

***Lens on lens*** (2009) by Yuiko Matsuyama; digital video, color, sound, 4 minutes, tape from maker

Lens (eye) on Lens (camera) +Lens (Icicle). (Yuiko Matsuyama)

***Trees of Syntax, Leaves of Axis*** (2009) by Daïchi Saïto; 35mm, color, sound (by Malcolm Goldstein), 10 minutes, print from maker

*Trees of Syntax, Leaves of Axis*, is Saïto's second collaboration, after *All That Rises*, with composer/violinist Malcolm Goldstein, who composed and performed the film's original structured improvisation score. The film explores familiar landscape imagery Saïto and Goldstein share in their neighbourhood at the foot of Mount-Royal Park in Montréal, Canada. Using the images of maple trees in the park as main visual motif, Saïto creates a film in which the formations of the trees and their subtle interrelation with the space around them act as an agent to transform viewer's sensorial perception of the space portrayed. Entirely hand-processed by the filmmaker, *Trees of Syntax, Leaves of Axis*, with the contrapuntal violin by Goldstein, is a poem of vision and sounding that seeks certain perceptual insight and revelation through a syntactical structure based on patterns, variations and repetition. (Daïchi Saïto)