

Perspectives

The Japan Foundation London Newsletter

YOKOHAMA 2001 International Triennale of Contemporary Art

"Now it is the time to establish our own place for transmitting a message to the world, a place for communication between artists.... and between Japan and other regions." Akira Tatehata

Japan strides boldly into the global contemporary art arena later this year when in September it will stage the first Yokohama Triennale. "Yokohama 2001" will be the largest international exhibition of its kind ever to be held in Japan, a huge contemporary art show that promises to become a firm three-yearly fixture in the international art calendar.

Supported and sponsored by the Japan Foundation, the City of Yokohama, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) and the Asahi Shimbun, the Yokohama Triennale 2001 will take place from 2 September to 11 November. Approximately 100 international artists, including exciting and young talent from Japan's vibrant contemporary scene, will be invited to exhibit their work in a thematic way. There will be ancillary events such as symposia, workshops and gallery talks.

The Triennale is spearheaded by four artistic directors: Shinji Kohmoto, senior curator at the Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art; Nobuo Nakamura, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Kitakyushu; Fumio Nanjo, independent curator, and Akira Tatehata, Professor at Tama Art University. Professor Tatehata, who was the Japanese commissioner for the 1990 and 1993 Venice Biennales, sees the event as a unique opportunity "to explore new ways in which different regional and historical identities can be formed..."



YOKOHAMA 2001

We would like to rethink the nature of the artist's identity in the so-called 'global' society. Professor Tatehata and his colleagues also regard the event as a timely reminder to the world of the increasing role Japanese artists are now so actively playing on the international stage. For so many years Japanese artists have been represented at major exhibitions abroad and have been well received. "Now it is time to establish our own place for transmitting a message to the world".

So what sort of exhibition will it be? Fumio Nanjo, Turner Prize judge in 1998 who worked for the Japan Foundation before becoming an independent curator, has curated countless international exhibitions, including Japan's contributions to the Venice, Sydney and Taipei Biennales. He is a frequent visitor to this country and recently in 1999 gave two lectures

in London and in Birmingham on Japanese contemporary art. He hopes that the exhibition will help people "to become more aware of other world views... and that it will motivate them to look at more new art". Driven by two principal ideals, the exhibition will attempt first to present to the world the most current and cutting-edge trends in international contemporary art. Secondly, it will aim to take contemporary art beyond its conventional, limited framework and bring it into "an adventurous interaction and dialogue with science and philosophy as well as with other forms of art".

The four artistic directors have chosen "MEGA WAVE - Towards a new Synthesis" as their general theme aiming to create a new vision of synthesis between art and society "to develop a more comprehensive vision of art for the future, a vision that creates a close relationship between art and society and that will transcend national or disciplinary boundaries". Using the port city of Yokohama as a backdrop, the main section of the exhibition will be housed in the Pacifico Yokohama Exhibition Hall and Warehouse in the wharf side development in the heart of Yokohama. There, the invited artists from all over the world will present a diverse selection of painting, sculpture, photography, film, installations and other art forms. Outdoor sculpture will be set up in the vicinity, and local galleries will be encouraged to present related exhibitions.

More information can be found on the Yokohama 2001 website: www.jpf.go.jp/yt2001/ Along with general information on the exhibition itself and a list of the participating artists, it provides regular news and updates on the run-up to this new and exciting international art triennale.

JAPAN 2001 Update

Japan Foundation Travelling Exhibitions

In previous issues we gave you details of three Japan Foundation Travelling Exhibitions that were available for loan during the JAPAN



TAMURA Shigeru
An Antique Moon - I, Yakan hiko Phantasmagoria, Kakusha, 1989

2001 period. They will be shown at the following venues:



SPOTLIGHT: Film

As a major event for JAPAN 2001, the Japan Foundation in collaboration with the National Film Theatre is planning an *NFT Season of Japanese Films*. Large areas of modern Japanese cinema still remain more or less unknown in the UK and the season will comprise a selection of "unseen gems from contemporary Japanese cinema...", titles from the last 20 years, most of them never before screened in this country and representing all sectors of contemporary Japanese film-making. The season is scheduled for one month in summer 2001 and more details will follow in future issues.

In conjunction with the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) we shall be co-organising a seminar and screening, *Japanese Independent Feature Production and the Global Market*. Scheduled for September/October 2001, it will combine leading producers in-conversation, with a seminar which will bring together producers from Japan with potential partners in

production, sales and distribution and programming in the UK. It will explore the key questions facing the independent production sector in Japan and film showings will be arranged to coincide with it.

With financial support from the Japan Foundation, the ICA will also be holding a long overdue *Yasuzo Masumura Retrospective* in Autumn 2001 and the 10 to 12 titles to be shown will astonish audiences never exposed to Masumura's work before.

We shall also be giving financial support to the Barbican for the first ever film season in the UK dedicated to the work of Studio Ghibli, Japan's leading animation studio. *Studio Ghibli: The Art of Animation* will run in late October to early November 2001 and will present a number of the Studio Ghibli's theatrical feature films including those by Miyazaki and Takahata. A Barbican Cinema Screen Talk series will also be arranged in conjunction with it.

Painting for Joy: New Japanese Paintings in the 1990s

Piece Hall Art Gallery, Halifax
2 June to 29 July 2001

Millais Gallery, Southampton Institute
4 August to 1 September 2001

Storey Gallery, Lancaster
September to November 2001 (provis)

Mac, Foyle Gallery, Birmingham
12 January to 3 March 2002

Japanese Manga Exhibition

Cornerhouse, Manchester
11 May to 24 June 2001

Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby
7 July to 2 Sept 2001

Millais Gallery, Southampton Institute
15 September to 6 October 2001

University of Brighton Art Gallery
11 November to 22 December 2001

The London Institute Gallery
9 January to 8 February 2002

Work 1991-1995: a photographic exhibition by George Hashiguchi

Warwickshire Museum, Warwick
4 to 15 July 2001

Oxford Brookes University Arts Centre, Oxford
September 2001

Desmoulin Gallery, Newbury
1 to 21 October 2001

Yeovil Community Arts Association, Yeovil Arts Centre
18 February to 16 March 2002

Stop Press

Study Tour for UK journalists

Fourteen journalists from leading newspapers and publications in the UK were invited to Japan between 17 and 24 February on a special Tour funded by the Japan Foundation. The aim was to introduce them to some of the most significant events happening in JAPAN 2001 so that maximum publicity can be generated both prior to and during this nationwide celebration of the culture and lifestyle of Japan.

Education at a Crossroads

Seminar on Comparative Education Policy at the Institute of Education 24 October 2000

This seminar was a follow-up to a previous one held in May 1998 which had itself arisen from a joint research project involving teams of researchers from Japan and the UK. The results had been highly constructive, and had succeeded in dispelling a number of myths that had arisen from national perspectives, typically held by education researchers and policy-makers viewing practices in other countries. That research and the subsequent seminar, however, had left a number of questions in the air. How far are the similar policy rhetorics in the two countries differentiated in practice by the different national contexts and how will the reforms in the two countries actually lead to convergent outcomes?

The first address was by Professor Hidenori Fujita, Professor of the Sociology of Education and Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Tokyo. He outlined the principal reform proposals in higher and secondary education in Japan, characterising them as a combination of deregulation, liberalisation and measures to increase accountability. The various policy measures in schools - including curriculum

reform, the five day week, six-year secondary schools and increased 'school choice' - were seen as a response to real problems of exam competition and school phobia and bullying as well as to fundamental processes of globalisation and social change. Professor Fujita expressed support for increasing diversity and flexibility in higher education and schools, whilst questioning whether increased school choice would be enough to reduce competition and tension.

Japan was moving from a 'bureaucratic' and 'professional' model of school regulation to one based more on the market. This was more in line with changes in the UK but it was ironic that these changes should occur at a time when many policy-makers in the UK were increasingly interested in how whole class teaching and traditionally centralised approaches to curriculum control in Japan might be contributing to the high average standards in core curriculum areas which international surveys suggest are achieved in their schools. Professor Fujita emphasised the complexity of these issues and called for sociologists of education in Japan to take a more societal approach to understanding the

effects of different policy reforms.

The second speaker was Professor Geoff Whitty, Director of the Institute of Education. Like Professor Fujita, Professor Whitty discerned a widespread trend in Japan and the UK, as well as in many other advanced countries, towards diversity and choice in school systems. These were best described as 'quasi-markets' but they took significantly different forms in different national contexts. In the UK the situation was complex. Both the current Government and the previous Conservative administrations have significantly increased central control over curricula, qualifications and assessment, as well as in the evaluation of school performance. They have also introduced a variety of measures to increase school diversity and choice and to stimulate market competition. New Labour has put increased emphasis on 'excellence for all' and co-operation, and has revoked some previous measures such as the 'assisted places' scheme. However, the system still approximates towards the quasi-market model. The effects of all this have been much studied and

Continued on page 4

Book Review

Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema

Towards a Political Reading of the 'Tragic Hero' Isolde Standish

Curzon : ISBN 0 7007 1291 7 : 328 pp.
Illus. : Hard : Aug 2000 : £40.00

I solde Standish notes in the conclusion of this challenging book, with a deserved lack of modesty, to have studied a wide range of social and cultural theory and, most significantly, to have viewed 'some 1500 Japanese films' on the way to tracing how the figure and myth of the 'tragic hero' became a 'principal structure through which aspects of modern Japanese history have been codified and interpreted in popular film.'

From the prototypical cinematic versions of 'Chushingura', Standish weaves and reads her way through a rich slice of popular film. The particularly strong chapters open up with fresh eyes and new theoretical tools the war-retro films of the postwar and their demi-monde

cousins the 'nagaremono' and yakuza films. An interesting feature is how she has managed to include more recent work, such as the films of Kitano Takeshi.

The text is dense, given the detail of analysis, and not every reader will agree with the uses made of theoretical work (e.g., Levi-Strauss seems part of a different, past intellectual sphere) or particular interpretations of Japan's modern history.

'Myth and Masculinity' goes against the grain of much familiar film writing. It bristles with energy, generally critical energy, and has none of the cosy connoisseurship of a Sato Tadao or Donald Richie. It dramatically confronts the modernist traditional of auteurship/director-centred research. (Bordwell on Ozu, or more recently Yoshimoto on Kurosawa, seem almost to both demote and, by the detail and strength of their writing, reinstate the ghosts of the two classic directors.)

By exploring such a broad theme, involving the complex negotiations between individual imaginary and the amorphous field of popular culture -rather than the more limited field of the critical reception of canonical 'classics' - she has posed some serious questions for film studies. Transposed to the literary field, for instance, Standish's approach would involve a comprehensive mastery of popular literary forms, from pre-war 'taishū bungaku' through the rise of genres involving historical fiction, the invention of the Japanese detective, etc. Something tells me that most of us literary types are going to hug fast our tidy zenshu.

Mark Morris Japan Research Centre,
University of Cambridge

The book has received a grant under the Japan Foundation Publication Assistance Programme.

A Publisher in Japan

Despite rapid advances in information technology and the internet, the printed word remains a country's most powerful cultural asset. In November last year the **Japan Foundation** arranged its first Study Tour for overseas publishers in order to encourage editors abroad to translate and publish more Japanese titles. Chief Editor at Faber and Faber, **Jonathan Riley** was our UK participant, and the following is an extract from his report.

The surprises that Japanese publishing hold for western publishers from Europe and North America are formidable. Imagine a publishing industry where agents are marginal, in which the standard Anglo-American contract between publishing house and author, instead of being the length and complexity of a Hollywood pre-nuptial agreement, resembles the simplest and most benign letter of consent. Imagine a world where the publishers accept losses on literary magazines, in which new writers are introduced, as a matter of policy, and still survive, proudly subsidised by the private sector. Imagine a world where editorial independence is taken for granted as essential.

It is difficult to describe how other the structure, the customs and practices are. But just as ours can be justified in part by reverence to tradition, so too can the radically different ways the Japanese have of conducting business: from the way in which authors' advances are calculated to the relationship authors have with their publisher. With a few notable exceptions, we found that Japanese publishers and agents are not as aggressive in presenting their writers to Western publishers as publishers in other countries.

The study tour was revelatory in terms of the exchange of ideas and knowledge that we gained about Japanese writing and publishing and each of us came away with a feeling that we could, even by degrees, expect to respond more enthusiastically and fully to Japanese writing.

For example, we had a talk on the traditions of modern Japanese literary culture, bookselling, book and magazine publishing and found it highly informative as it quickly pointed to some of the differences that exist between our publishing worlds. One example lies in the way mass entertainment and serious culture is defined in Japan; authors such as Banana Yoshimoto and Haruki Murakami, who are popular in the west and regarded here as serious writers, are commonly seen as mass entertainment in Japan.

There were of course questions raised by the tour. For example, it would improve the chances of Japanese writers being translated if, instead of supplying foreign publishers with elaborate descriptions of books, more effort could be made to supply short sample translations. This would be very valuable not only in fostering good links between our publishing industries but it would also much facilitate the sale of rights.

Was there a concrete benefit to the study tour? I think so. As a direct result of my visit I have been able to contract, for publication in English, the work of a novelist to whom I would have paid scant attention without the

recommendation of translators, her publisher, but most influentially, editors from other houses who longed to see an international readership for a new Japanese voice. I know, too, whose opinions and advice to seek when another interesting writer claims my attention.

Meeting editors, publishers, translators and writers and exchanging ideas and information was invaluable and I thank the **Japan Foundation** for the opportunity. All of us on the tour now feel we know our way around the labyrinth of the Japanese publishing culture well enough to be able in future to communicate directly and profitably with key individuals as well as institutions.

**Jonathan Riley Chief Editor,
Faber and Faber**

Education at a Crossroads continued from page 3

debated and appear complex. On the one hand there is evidence that standards have risen in aggregate in core areas. On the other hand there appears to have been a growing polarisation of outcomes between schools as a result of school choice, and this increases differences in attainment between social groups. Choice policies have exacerbated vertical hierarchies of schools rather than increase 'horizontal differentiation' Professor

Whitty's concerns here closely echoed those of Professor Fujita with regard to the effects in Japan.

Two highly informed and thoughtful presentations prompted an animated discussion from the floor and some sharp observation about the nature of policy-making and the use of policy borrowings in that process.

Prof. Andy Green, Institute of Education

Talk on the History of Japanese Cuisine

by Dr Isao Kumakura 13th March 2001

Dr Isao Kumakura, Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, will be giving an illustrated talk on the history of Japanese Cuisine at the Japan Foundation London Language Centre on 13th March at 18.30.

Dr Kumakura has been invited to the UK to speak at conference to be held in London

by the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures "Beverages in Early Modern Japan and their International Context 1660s-1920s" 9 -11 March 2001.

Space will be limited. To reserve a place call Cassie Tait at the **Japan Foundation**.
Tel: 020 7499 4726.

Dates for your Diary

13th March 2001	6.30	Lecture by Dr Isao Kumakura on the History of Japanese Cuisine at the Japan Foundation London Language Centre. See article on this page for details
23rd to 28th March		Kanadehon Hamlet at the Battersea Arts Centre by Harue Tsutsumi, Directed by Toshifumi Sueki. Phone Battersea Arts Centre Box Office for tickets Tel: 020 7223 2223
May to June		Kabuki. Chikamatsu-za present Sonesaki Shinju and Tsuri Onna at Sadler's Wells 30 May to 9 June and The Lowry Manchester 13 to 16 June. Press contact: Jane Quinn, Bolton & Quinn Tel: 020 7221 5000
10 May to 8 July		JAM: London –Tokyo at the Barbican Art Galleries- a comparison and contrast of British and Japanese photography, illustration, graphics, fashion, art. Contact Amanda Jones at Barbican Tel: 020 7638 5403