

Itemized Facts and Unnecessary Comments

Notes for Bringing That Time Back, Once More

Koki TANAKA

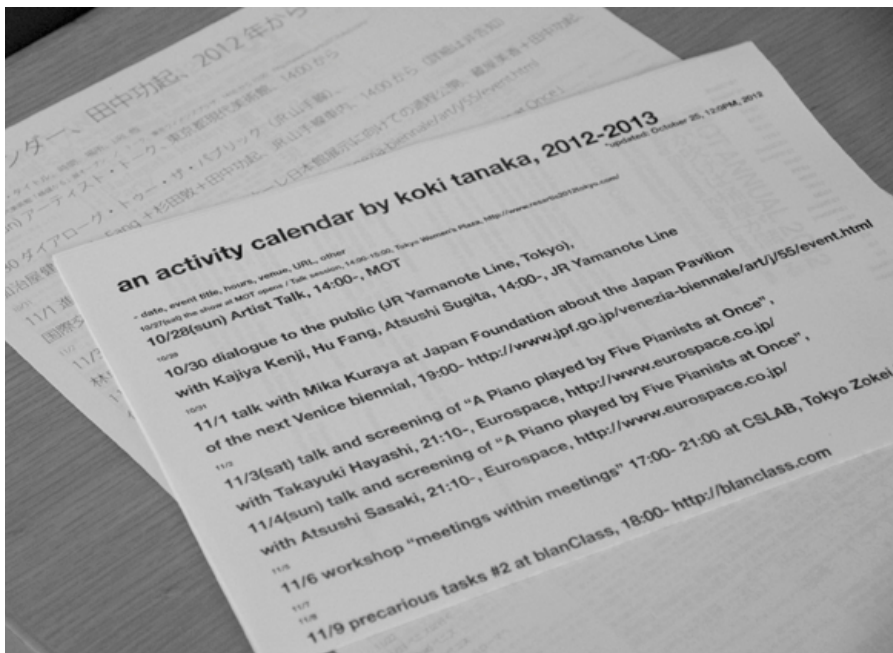


MOT Annual 2012 Making Situations, Editing Landscapes

curator: Mihoko Nishikawa

date: october 27, 2012 - february 3, 2013

venue: Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo



1-1, fact

Viewers are handed this calendar at the exhibition entry. The calendar shows my schedule of talks and events. Normally, viewers only receive information related to the exhibition, but in this case, they are provided with information on varying events having no relation to the exhibition (including my birthday). The scheduled events in the calendar are updated several times during the exhibition period so as to provide a general picture of my ongoing activities.

1-2, unnecessary comment

An art exhibition has various aspects as a system, one of them being the “exhibition period.” Exhibitions are held for a limited period (from October 27, 2012 - February 3, 2013, for example). For the most part, though, an artist’s activities spill over this time framework, which is based on social custom and routine (because we are involved in so many activities that transcend the “exhibition period”). The creative activities of an artist, furthermore, are not always premised on participation in the exhibition framework.

Itemized Facts and Unnecessary Comments

Koki Tanaka

1: Concerning the Activities

title: *An Activity Calendar*

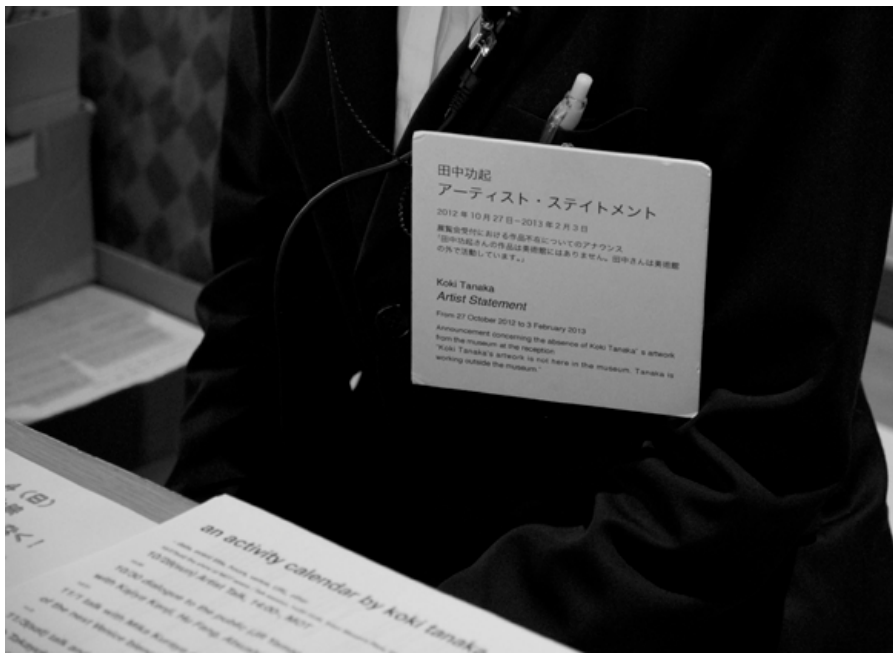
year: 2012-2013

form: calendar

duration: from October 27, 2012 to February 3, 2013

note: the calendar updated time to time when new things and events occur.





2: Concerning Attitudes

title: *Artist Statement*

year: 2012

form: announcement about absence of Koki Tanaka's artwork in the museum at the reception

venue: the museum reception

2-1, fact

When viewers receive the various handouts at the exhibition entrance, the following statement is spoken to them by the reception person: "Koki Tanaka's work is not here in the museum. He is active in outside."

An artwork label normally used in MOT is furthermore fastened to the reception person's jacket.

2-2, unnecessary comment

After notifying viewers of the absence of an artwork in a museum, I left a question them to contrast artist's "activity" rather than to the existence of artworks in a museum. What, really, is the difference between an artist's artwork and an artist's activities? What, furthermore, is the different between an artist's activities and his activities as a person? What is the artist's attitude in making this statement?

3: Concerning Society

title: *Dialogue to the Public(JR Yamanote Line, Tokyo)*

year: 2012

form: public talk

duration: about one hour while a train goes around tokyo

date: October 30th, 2012

participants: Kenji Kajiya, Hu Fang, Atsushi Sugita and Koki Tanaka

venue: JR Ymanaote Line Tokyo

rehearsal date: October 18th, 2012(50th from pre hi-red-center's event)

participants: Mihoko Nishikawa, Atsushi Sugita and Koki Tanaka

3-1, fact

3-1-1, 10/18

October 18, 2012—fifty years after the event by group of artists - who would initiate Hi Red Center soon later-, the "Yamanote Line Incident" in 1962, on Tokyo's commuter railroad-loop. Calling



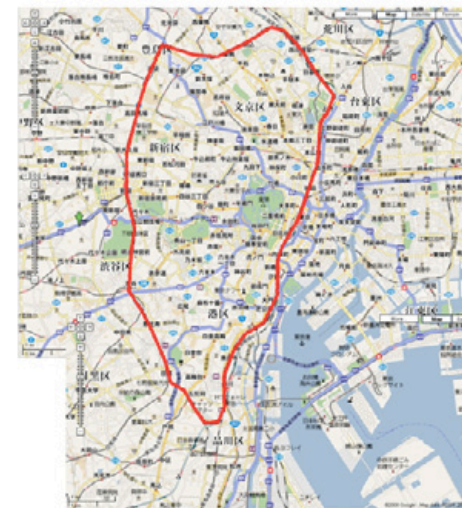
it a rehearsal, I boarded the Yamanote Line at Shinagawa Station at around 2pm together with Atsushi Sugita, Mihoko Nishikawa and, in the role of my assistant, Ayumi Takahashi. (The “Yamanote Line Incident” involved a 2:04 pm train.) Until the train’s arrival at Ueno Station, I held a discussion with Sugita. The train was crowded, so we were unable to sit and had to talk standing up. Having not really settled on a discussion topic, we ended up talking about the absence of a political viewpoint in most of Japanese contemporary art recently, in continuation from a dialogue I had held with Sugita at blanClass, alternative art space in Yokohama a little before. From Ueno Station to Takadanobaba Station, I talked with Nishikawa, and from Takadanobaba Station, all three of us talked together. Holding our talk in a moving train was an odd experience and caused us to feel hurried. This was probably because, in a moving train, the passage of time is visually experienced. We also put up, inside the train, an artwork label normally used at MOT.

3-1-1, 10/30

As we did on October 18, we began by meeting at Shinagawa Station in emulation of pre-Hi Red Center. On this day, I served as host with Kenji Kajiya, Hu Fang, and Atsushi Sugita as guest speakers, and with Takuya Miyake as my assistant. Ayumi Takahashi meanwhile made on-the-spot Twitter reports, and Keigo Saito took documentary photos. As on October 18, we held a discussion inside the train and put up, in the train, an artwork label normally used in MOT again.

Boarding the train at Shinagawa Station at around 2pm, Kajiya and I sat down in a space for two that was available. Kajiya being an art historian, I had him talk about the “Yamanote Line Incident” and other past art projects held inside trains, such as Ko Nakajima and Video Earth Tokyo’s “Video Picnic” (1975) and off-museum activities in the Sixties and Seventies, in general (ex: Hiroshi Nakamura and Koichi Tareishi’s Sightseeing Art Institute, “walking open air gallery” (1964)). He also talked of how this project of mine was different and emphasized that it was not a simple parody of historical art project.

Next, at Ueno Station, we had Hu Fang sit down. He talked about the experience, itself, of holding a talk on the Yamanote Line. The other train passengers maintained an appearance of indifference to our discussion, and this was a beautiful scene, we felt. Finally, at Takadanobaba Station, Sugita sat down, and we talked about how our experience this time was different from the previous time on October 18. Having held a rehearsal already, Sugita and I were accustomed to the situation and felt comfortable. These three talks of October 30, as well as another talk in which I did not serve as host, were written up in a documentary leaflet during the exhibition period. On both occasions,



JR Yamanote Line, Tokyo

furthermore, these events were held without announcing details. Please refer to my “unnecessary comment” for the reason.

3-2, unnecessary comment

In this project, at least two categories of viewer took form: people who coincidentally observed us in some manner as train passengers and people who grasped the character of the event from the documentary leaflet at the museum (plus the fact that it was an unannounced event).

Experience of this project in above way thus had two aspects, both of which omitted an essential part of this project. Having train passengers coincidentally present gave the project the character of a “happening,” but their observation of the project was fragmental, and hence, what they heard of the discussion was fragmental, as well. The passengers, this is to say, were unable to know the details of what this project is all about. Viewers at the art museum who received the documentary leaflet, on the other hand, could grasp the overall character of the project, yet they did not experience the project as a “happening” like the passengers who coincidentally witnessed it on the train.

On this basis, what can we say about our sense of having sufficiently “appreciated” an artwork at an art exhibition? Did you actually appreciate the artwork you saw?



4: Concerning Relationships

title: *Correspondences*

form: e-mail correspondences between Koki Tanaka and curators, critics and other artists in Japanese since 2009

duration: From September 2012 and for about 3 months (8th session)

Participants: Mihoko Nishikawa for this 8th session

venue and cooperation: ART iT, online art magazine (www.art-it.asia)

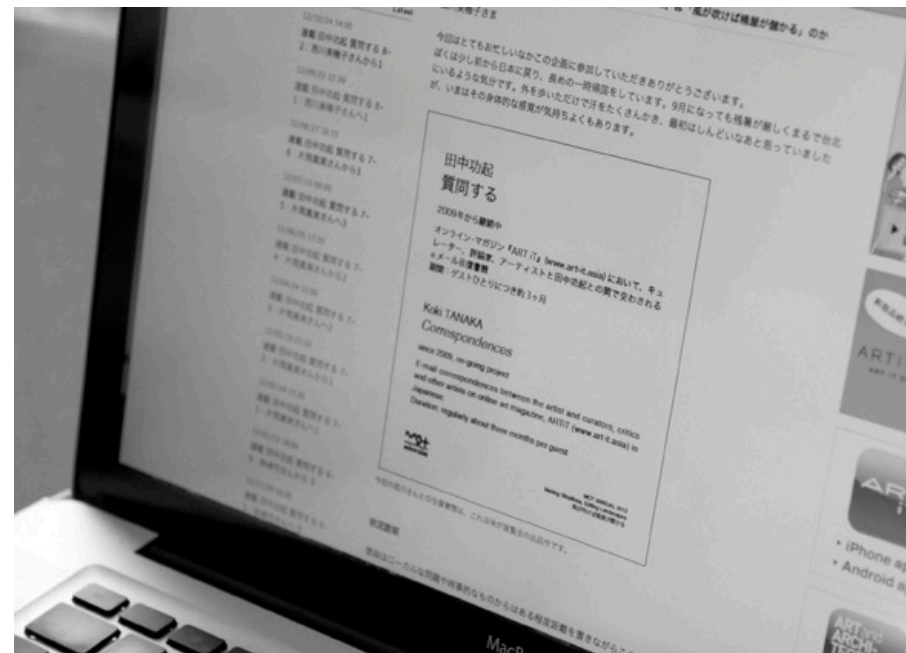
4-1 fact

Before the exhibition's start, I engaged in email correspondence with the curator, Mihoko Nishikawa from September 2012. (The entire series Correspondences had been posted on ART iT since 2009). In our exchange, we spoke frankly of our doubts about the exhibition system. I sent the first email about one month before the exhibition opening, and Nishikawa replied with the second email just before the opening. The exhibition then started, and amid the appraisals, impressions, comments it aroused, the exhibition planner and a participating artist have since carried on a self-critical exchange.

Also, an artwork label normally used in MOT was post on the website.

4-2, unnecessary comment

This email project is being held away from the museum venue and, furthermore, using an existing website of ART iT, an entirely different venue form. The project's aim is produce a critical exchange between the exhibition planner and a participating artist, concerning exhibitions in general and this exhibition in particular. Here, the relationship of "requestor" and "requested" is reversed.



5: Concerning Places

video screening and public talk at Eurospace, Tokyo

date: November 3, 4, 2012

work shown: "A Piano Played by Five Pianists at Once (First Attempt)", 2012;

participants:

Takayuki Hayashi, Koki Tanaka (November 3), Atsushi Sasaki, Koki Tanaka (November 4)

cooperation: Eurospace

5-1, FACT

First, A Piano Played by Five Pianists at Once (First Attempt) (hereafter, "Piano") was shown, and afterwards, a discussion was held for about an hour, on both days. An artwork label normally used in MOT was attached to the venue door. "Piano" is a video work documenting the process by which five pianists of differing background (UCI students) go about collaborating to perform on one piano.

5-1-1, 11/3: Discussion with Takayuki Hayashi, art critic

In my discussion with Hayashi, “music” first arose as an issue. How do people who have a musical foundation see this process? In other words, the fruits of a task like this are fairly limited, aren’t they? Next, our conversation moved to how “the task (the performance) ends” and how “the medium (a video) ends.” The ultimate aim of this task of having 5 pianists perform was to create and perform one piece of music together,” yet in the performance for the video, the end of the video shooting is always followed by the end of the “task”, the performance. I had resisted, in myself, the idea of doing “Piano” as a public performance, but I was unsure why. On hearing Hayashi’s point, however, I realized that “double endings” are involved and that these double endings are necessary to the production.



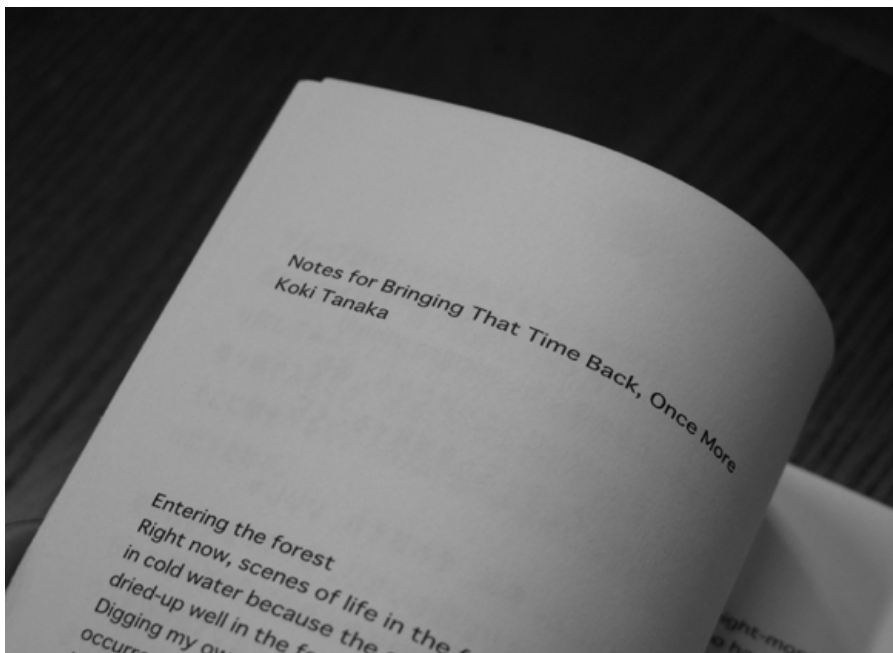
5-1-1, 11/4: Discussion with Atsushi Sasaki, critic for music and culture

Sasaki spoke of how he sees my artwork as the “incidental-ness” of an incident. An umbrella flew away by a wind gust, and that event itself is recorded, for what it is, in a video work. Sasaki says that minimalism has three elements as a method (reiteration, continuation, and display). My “Umbrella” work, then, “displays” a situation as it is. In “Piano,” a single inquiry develops in continuation. A situation of creating a collaborative performance at the site is steadily recorded and displayed as a video. The aspect in which “Piano” differs from “Umbrella” is that people are involved, so the incident displayed grows exceedingly more complicated.

5-2, unnecessary comment

Giving multiplicity to experience of the artwork—by showing a video at the exhibition, where viewers freely come and go; showing a video also on YouTube and Vimeo, where people can see it any time they like; and showing a movie from beginning to end in an environment where a great number of viewers can gather at one time. In this way, the same video/movie is experienced from different views. The movie theater I chose, this time, can seat 100 people for sharing an experience of the movie. The sound, the visuals, the seating, and the space itself all become united in the aim of seeing a “movie.” Moreover, viewers gathering the movie theater will have come with a different intention from when they watch video art in an art museum. In the theater space, then, the artist/director also has an audience for a talk afterwards.

In the movie theater, I felt a sense of intimacy that I rarely feel in an art museum. In a gallery, several people usually share the space together, without a sense of intimacy with others. This is because, in an art museum, people freely come and go in the exhibit spaces. Then, it is also different from the conventional movie showing, which is more public. In a sense, it’s like a preview, for there a sense of unity among the audience, born from sharing a space and a time. Naturally, these might be just my own feelings.



6: Concerning Production

title: *Notes for regaining that feeling once again*

year: 2012

material: text in the exhibition catalogue of "MOT Annual2012 Making Situations, Editing Landscapes" at Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo.

6-1, fact

At first, the curator, Mihoko Nishikawa, asked me to write an essay for the exhibition catalogue. Thereafter, I became a participating artist, but the request to write for the catalogue stayed, and I chose to write about my current perspective on my experience of participating in a workshop in Poland in 2006. (Please see the essay, which is included in this catalogue.)

6-2, unnecessary comment

This essay is perhaps the most private of the artworks, projects, and ideas I have submitted in this exhibition. In it, I have written concerning a workshop for "forgetting trying to be an artist" (my in-

terpretation). Naturally, I do not intend to give up being an artist. But, I probably will give up "trying to become / trying to be" an artist. I first of all want to stand up as an individual human being. This, in mind, is "being" an artist.

0: No artwork number/Untitled/A room with the lights turned off

0-1, fact

Obtaining a small room on the second floor of Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo as my own exhibit space, I turned off the lights. The location of my space is shown on the gallery map of this show, but no "works" are listed for this room in the list of works. Viewers, for the most part, ignore the room and proceed down the elevators to the ground floor from the exhibition floor above of my small space.

0-2, unnecessary comment

Darkening the space serves to emphasize the aperture on the far side of the room where exterior light enters. A handful of viewers enter this room and proceed to the aperture and the light. From there, the museum entrance hall and Kiba Park can be seen. Their action of looking outside, even if unintentional or unconscious, perhaps appears as if they are responding physically to the world outside the building / an art museum / an art exhibition / a system.

(translated by Gavin Frew)



Notes for Bringing That Time Back, Once More

Koki Tanaka

Entering the forest

Right now, scenes of life in the forest appear in my mind. Having to shower in cold water because the girls used too much heated water. Discovering a dried-up well in the forest. The mountain of dishes in the kitchen sink. Digging my own grave and spending the night in it . . . All are things that occurred when I stayed in Plochcinek in rural Poland.

In the spring of 2006, I was with Pawel Althamer and a dozen other artists at a summer house owned by one of Pawel's friends.

In this short text, I originally intended to set down my memory of that time in as much detail as possible. By doing so, I thought I might be able to recreate in this text my actual experiences with the artist, Pawel Althamer, aspects of my relationship with him, and what I learned from him, and to share it all with readers using data and introductions. I therefore listed up, one by one, the things I could remember and did research, looking at the catalogue from that time and so on, trying to fill out my English understanding of just who had been there and what actually had happened.

As I began to describe in detail the background for my experiences with Pawel, however, I began to realize that what I wrote down was somehow entirely unlike what I had actually experienced. Did the things in my list really capture the events that had occurred? Our experiences fade into uncertainty in the past, and our memory is ambiguous. Still, even then, the true essence of those events will be found within that very uncertainty and ambiguity, I believe.

Pawel was always telling us, "First, let's give it a try." I balked at such invitations, in the beginning, but with time, I became the one who responded to them the most enthusiastically. Let the others hang back, I decided; for the time being, I would go ahead and give it a try.

I will try writing here, in a fragmented form, my experiences of that time. But no, they are not really "experiences of that time" but rather experiences taking place within me at this very moment. I received something from Pawel, and I continue now to see that "something" as belonging to me. I am, right now, still walking intently through that forest.

In the Forest

In 2006, I took part in a residency program called "Pavilion" at Palais de Tokyo, Paris. It was an

eight-month project, a kind of practical training program for young artists who had finished graduate school. Just when that residency programing was coming to a close, I heard that Pawel was recruiting artists and decided to take part.

Pawel had been invited to do a solo exhibition at the Centre Pompidou. For this, he originally schemed to connect the two roads on either side of the Centre Pompidou with a tunnel. The two places having become separated by Renzo Piano's building, he would construct a tunnel between them at ground level, enabling people to pass through the building without going inside.

Such a proposal was of course impossible to realize (although Pawel did later use this idea in his solo exhibition at the Secession in Vienna. Entering the Secession building through its main entry, visitors encountered a long narrow corridor that took them all the way through the building to a park in the rear. A café had been set up there, and the people who came walking through the Secession building simply sat down and relaxed there.)

As a substitute proposal, Pawel apparently settled on collecting young artists in Paris to do a workshop-style project. The original purpose of the recruiting was to produce a group exhibition for young artists. At least, such is why we all took part—because we would be able to show at the Centre Pompidou.

But it was Plochcinek, a tiny village in the deepest forest of Eastern Europe, that Pawel chose as the site of the art workshop. We eleven artists were to reside there for two weeks. It was a 30-minute walk to the nearest small, kiosk-like store. The house, which was used only in the summers, did not have a toilet. A hole had been dug in a small shed outside. As for hot water, water that collected in a tank was heated, so when a certain amount of heated water had been consumed, it took a long time for more cold water to be heated up. It was like living on a tiny island, far from civilization.

We thought we had assembled there to produce artworks for the group exhibition, but none of Pawel's proposals had anything to do with creating art. Finding a large, old Soviet-made tractor at a nearby farm, he proposed that we all ride around on it together; or he proposed that we build a huge dome for an Indian sauna and then all go inside stark naked in the middle of the night, or that we each dig a hole and spend the night in it. Digging one's own grave and sleeping in it was too frightening an action for the other participants, and it was only I who actually did this.

Walking the Forest at Night

One experience remains vivid in my mind: the night walk. This involved walking a great distance at night in order to go and meet an aunt of Matejka Petelska, the woman who had offered us use

of the summer house. It meant walking over and meeting her around midnight, eating a light dinner there, and then, walking home through the forest at night. After the dinner, those who wanted to could take the same road back to the summer house, and several people did go straight back, fearing they would meet with an accident.

In truth, Pawel half pushed us into having new experiences, saying things like, “Let’s go this way; I’ve never taken this path” or “Let’s cut through these woods.” The result—having to turn back and struggle through the deep mud of a swamp, then entering an unknown pasture area and walking next to sleeping cows, and finally losing complete track of where we were and simply walking determinedly in the direction where there should be a big road. And yet, the whole time, my heart was strangely calm, the moon suspended in the sky was terribly beautiful, and I could soberly look at my situation and ask myself, What am I doing in a place like this?

On our return to the summer house, the other artists, who had waited anxiously, greeted us warmly. The sun was rising when we arrived, so we must have walked about seven hours.

I felt, at the time, as if some kind of curse inside my head had been dispelled. My attention had been focused entirely on walking through the forest at night and enjoying the situation around me. The deep, dark forest had become a strange place, like an extension of my body. It felt like the forest had become a part of me.

Remaining in the Forest

Pawel always said, “First, let’s just have the experience.” We can, of course, write this off as simple empiricism. Yet, as emerging artists, we could think of nothing but making artworks for the Centre Pompidou, and his aim, I think, was to liberate us young artists from institutionalized greed.

Sure, it’s good to promote your career and look out for yourself, but hey, why can’t we try something different, for a change? There’s no one around in this forest but us. We can ride on the tractor without worrying about anyone else. Let’s walk in the woods at night and feel close to danger. We can think about the Centre Pompidou exhibition when we get back to Paris. Let’s simply enjoy what we can do right here, right now.

To be sure, when driving that big red tractor, spending the night shivering in a hole, and walking in the forest, I completely forgot about creating art and being an artist.

Probably, my reason for entering the Palais de Tokyo residency was to think about what I needed do thereafter as an artist. And it was the time I spent in the forest that loosened up my mind, which had gotten wound up tightly as a result of the residency.

Currently, half of me is busily thinking up ideas, holding exhibitions, and creating artworks here in Los Angeles. I am strongly conscious of my career. But the other half is still in this forest, gazing down into a dry well, drinking vodka on occasion, and walking in the night forest. By now, I have largely come to know the forest, and there is little fear of my having an accident. But I still get lost. And once in a while, when I get lost, I run into the other half of myself. Oh, you sometimes come here, too? You should give me a call . . . I tell myself, though both of me are aware we can’t communicate by mobile phone. And then, we walk together in the forest and get that feeling back again—that feeling of liberation from institutionalized greed.

(translated by Gavin Frew)

