

## Eyes on the Street: Modernology and Beyond

### Modernology, Not Archaeology—The Innovative Studies of Wajiro Kon The People’s Lifestyles, Creations, and Other Forms of Expression That Lie Hidden on the Streets

Scholar of folklore and architecture Wajiro Kon, along with Kenkichi Yoshida and others, founded ‘modernology [*kōgen-gaku*]’, or the study of the current state of lifestyles and customs of the people from a variety of different angles, with a particular focus on the city of Tokyo and its people. This new approach can be described as the acquisition of a new point of view that shifts attention to the creativity of the masses, which had yet to be considered in the context of art, by reexamining the lifestyles and creations of the people.

### The Changing Times and the View of the City: The Masters of Observation and the Unknown Masters’ Masterpieces on the Streets

From the mid-1960s to the 1970s, groups formed by young architecture students—such as “Conpeito”, named after a type of Japanese sugar candy, and “Iryuhin Kenkyujo”, literally “Research Institute for Things Left Behind”—took part in activities based on fieldwork done in the city. In 1986, Genpei Akasegawa, Terunobu Fujimori and others formed the “ROJO Society”, or the Roadway Observation Society, and discovered unique objects in urban spaces. These groups are further succeeded, for example, by Kyoichi Tsuzuki, who introduces the lifestyles of everyday people and creativity that lies hidden in everyday life through photographs, film, and text, and Atelier Bow-Wow, who have performed studies on architecture by unnamed designers/users. These successors have turned observing objects on the streets and documenting them into forms of expression in a variety of different fields.

This exhibition re-introduces the creations that these observers have discovered on the streets, from the postwar era to the present, and examines how the act of observing/discovering becomes a form of expression in itself from different approaches. By interpreting both the observers and the observed as those that pose the important question of what artistic expression is, the exhibition ultimately presents a reconsideration of the definition of art.

**Exhibiting artists/groups:** Wajiro Kon, Kenkichi Yoshida, Taro Okamoto, Conpeito, Iryuhin Kenkyujo, Thomasson Observation Center, ROJO Society, Shinro Ohtake, Kyoichi Tsuzuki, Team Made in Tokyo (Atelier Bow-Wow+ Junzo Kuroda), Rogues’ Gallery, Motoyuki Shitamichi and others

- **Duration:** Saturday, January 26- Sunday, April 7, 2013
- **Opening hours:** 10:00-17:00 (Last Admission 16:30) \*Open until 19:00 from Mar. 26 to Apr.5.
- **Closed:** Mondays (except February 11), February 12
- **Admission charges:** Adults 1,000 (800) yen, College Students 700 (600) yen, High School Students 500 (400) yen \*Figures in brackets ( ) are the charges for advance-purchase and groups of 30 or more persons. \*Junior high school students and younger and adults over 65 years of age: Free admission
- **Organizers:** The Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, The Chugoku Shimbun
- **Supported by:** Hiroshima Prefecture, Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education, Hiroshima FM Broad Casting Co., Ltd., Onomichi FM Broad Casting Co., Ltd.



Mituo Arai, *Analysis of self-portraits drawn by school girls* (from *Inquisition (Modernologia) Exhibition*), 1926. Coll. Kogakuin University Library.



ROJO Society Founding Ceremony, 1986. Photo: Akihiko Iimura



Kyoichi Tsuzuki, *Hanibe Gankutsuin* (from *Roadside Japan*), 1994. Coll. Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography. © Kyoichi Tsuzuki

## Keywords and artist profiles

### Modernology

After the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, a group led by Wajiro Kon (1888–1973) and Kenkichi Yoshida (1897–1982) carried out studies on barracks and other similar subjects. These studies were eventually extended to a variety of aspects of the people's lifestyles, and came to be known as 'modernology'.



### ROJO Society (Roadway Observation Society)

The ROJO Society was founded in 1986 by a group led by Genpei Akasegawa (b. 1937), Terunobu Fujimori (b. 1946), Shinbo Minami (b. 1947), Joji Hayashi (b. 1947), and Tetsuo Matsuda (b. 1947). Through this society, the founding members' activities including Akasegawa's Hyperart Thomasson, Fujimori's Architectural Detective Agency, and Hayashi's manhole cover collection became loosely connected and were brought together as one.

The ROJO Society observed and appreciated objects that are typically overlooked, such as buildings and signs that are hidden in the streets, as part of the landscape. The society attracted attention for their amusing discoveries in familiar environments and enjoyed great popularity.

### Taro Okamoto

In "Rediscovery of Japan: Topography of Art", his column in the magazine *Geijutsu Shincho*, Taro Okamoto (1911–1993) reinterprets the fragments of daily activities and inherited customs that he found in his travels as art.



### Conpeito and Iryuhin Kenkyujo

Groups founded in the latter half of the 1960s by young architecture students that performed studies related to the urban space of Tokyo, which were subsequently published in magazines.

**Photo/ A:** Mituo Arai, *Analysis of self-portraits drawn by school girls* (from *Inquisition (Modernologia) Exhibition*), 1926. Coll. Kogakuin University Library.

**B:** Taro Okamoto, *Squid being dried above a stone pagoda in a cemetery* (from "Rediscovery of Japan: Topography of Art"), 1957. Coll. Taro Okamoto Award for Contemporary Art. © Taro Okamoto Memorial Foundation for Contemporary Art **C:** Kyoichi Tsuzuki, *Hanibe Gankutsuin* (from *Roadside Japan*), 1994. Coll. Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography. © Kyoichi Tsuzuki **D:** Motoyuki Shitamichi, from *Bridge*, 2011. © Motoyuki Shitamichi

### Kyoichi Tsuzuki, "Roadside Japan"

In his "Roadside Japan" series, renowned editor Kyoichi Tsuzuki (b. 1956) introduces the bizarre designs found in theme parks and public facilities located all over Japan through photographs and text. Tsuzuki presents these designs, which have been



considered to be both outdated and lacking in the air of Japanese tradition, as those that are unique to Japan and full of originality.

### Team Made in Tokyo

Architecture unit Atelier Bow-Wow—Yoshiharu Tsukamoto (b. 1965) and Momoyo Kaijima (b. 1969)—formed a team with Junzo Kuroda (b. 1968) and performed fieldwork on the strange architecture, borne from various usages and geographical conditions, that comprises the chaos of the city of Tokyo. Their work was presented to the public through exhibitions and publications.

### Rogues' Gallery, Farmer's Car Production Project

Rogues' Gallery was formed by Yasuhiko Hamachi (b. 1970) and Yukihiisa Nakase (b. 1971) in 1994. Their ongoing *Farmer's Car* project is based on their research on the vehicles that the farmers on Awaji Island custom-made for specific purposes in their line of work.

### Motoyuki Shitamichi, Connection

Motoyuki Shitamichi (b. 1978) takes interest in the landscapes created by the ingenuity and traces of people, and presents them mainly in the form of photography. *Connection* is a series that investigates "bridge-like things" all over Japan.



#### Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art

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