

ARAKAWA Shusaku/Madeline GINS's Film Screenings

In conjunction with the ARAKAWA/GINS's exhibition two films, «Why Not (A Serenade of Eschatological Ecology)» (1969, 110 mins) and «For Example (A Critique of Never)» (1971, 95 mins) produced by the artists around the same period as «The Mechanism of Meaning» series, were screened at the ICC Theater, at a long interval of 27 years in Japan.

In «Why Not (A Serenade of Eschatological Ecology)» one is reminded of Marcel DUCHAMPS for the use of a bicycle and a door. But according to ARAKAWA, "DUCHAMPS has nothing to do with it." Rather, he emphasized, "This film is attempting to create imitation."

This seemingly cryptic statement is made clear as we watch the heroine, sitting on a table, attempt to trace its rim with her finger, try walking on her hands with her feet up on a chair, or dive under a sofa to suffer its weight--all attempts at imitating those objects. We find a key to the work in how ARAKAWA explains their architectural oeuvre--by giving the example of how a long-term resident becomes nostalgic about the walls of his home, and this nostalgia, carrying on in his place even after death, becomes a space for a new life to be born--we find the same intimate and fresh atmosphere pervades their films.

Yet towards the end of the work, right after the scene where the door repetitively opens and closes, we find the heroine in a mysterious scene implicit of death. Someone's hand (a metaphor for "the author's hand"?) opens and closes her hands and her eyes by the commands "Open"/"Close" and "Up"/"Down." This "Open/Close" which

occurs at the border between life and death reminds one of "cleaving," a concept about life which the pair discussed in one of their books, *Pour ne pas mourir/To Not to Die*. Hence, the door hinge in this film is an imitation of the reversibility of destiny of life and death, both for the heroine and ARAKAWA/GINS.

The other piece, «For Example (A Critique of Never)» is, according to their manuscript, "A Melodrama Derived from «The Mechanism of Meaning»", in which a young street vagrant is doing experimental psychology. The protagonist walks along the sidewalk as though dividing it into rectangles and circles, mimics the movements of a drunken man and practices peculiar skills with playground equipment--which are physical explorations for a new arena for meta-levelled meanings (or semantics) in these banal spaces. Yet, such street experiments are never easy. He nearly gets punched by the drunk, glared at by a child on the next swing for casually giving him a push and rebuffed by a passerby when he tries to grab the man's hand.

Near the end of this tale of experiments we come to the climactic scene where the protagonist hurls himself repeatedly against the four thick glass walls of a telephone box. Finally he crawls out, bearing the pain and injury, while the glass remains unaffected. This persistent act of hurling against the glass--a metaphor for homogeneous space--arouses a vivid physical sensation in the viewer, a new form of perception.



INTERCOMMUNICATION CENTER

ICC Report

Since moving to the States in 1978, KONDO Toshinori has preferred performing in foreign lands. His current base activity is his studio in Amsterdam. (In fact, his former band was named IMA--International Music Activities.) So most of his fellow performers are "foreigners," which inevitably makes KONDO himself a "foreigner," while at the same time heightening his own awareness of being a Japanese. This manifests itself in his many criticisms of Japanese society and the Japanese mentality often heard in his daily speech and proclaimed in his writings. ARAKAWA Shusaku is another Japanese

**KONDO Toshinori Blows across «Reversible Destiny City»
March 20, 1998. ICC Gallery A**

who left--he went to the States in 1961. He has also been consistently critical of his own country and has held it up as a thing which must eventually change. This recent collaboration between the like-minded two experimented with the interchange between music and architecture. KONDO himself became part of the exhibition environment, his electric horn blowing

across the «Reversible Destiny City» in varied vivid tones and overwhelming volumes, as if taking a stand against the imaginations of ARAKAWA/GINS's. He improvised on his electric trumpet, employing various technologies to loop sounds and groove them around, or using a base of DAT-recorded backing sounds to weave a wall of sound.

KONDO didn't use any special lighting, or other stagecraft. Instead, he used the exhibition space as a stage, taking his performance cues from the cycle of the spotlights in place--another day in the City. The performance was made of two parts divided by an intermission and in roughly one and a half hours it was all over.

Just as the technology and structure of ARAKAWA/GINS's City aroused a physicality and awareness in the visitor, KONDO's performance took the technology called "trumpet," and took a stand, waking up everybody in the house, everybody in the City.



KONDO Toshinori Blows across «Reversible Destiny City»



Newschool '98: "Reflections on Communication and Media"
February 11-15, 19-21, 25-27, 1998. ICC Gallery D

For the first time since the opening of the ICC, the Newschool—now in its fourth phase—ran a series of lectures on "Reflections on Communication and Media." The focus was on the importance of "words" as communication tools, reflecting the following background: What we call today "multimedia," a new technology of expression interweaving texts, images and sounds by means of computers and telecommunications networks, is proliferating remarkably. When we look back over Japanese history—at the use of *kanji* (Chinese characters); the invention of *kana* (phonetic syllabary in Japanese); the mixing of *kanji* and *kana*; the change from writing with brush to pens and pencils; the translation of foreign concepts into *jukugo* (Japanese compounds); and the use of katakana (the later phonetic syllabary in Japanese) to introduce foreign words—we can see that media and language have expanded throughout history. On the other hand, however, there are things that have gotten lost along the way in the development of the literate culture. For instance, *Yamato kotoba* (*Yamato*, the ancient Japan; *kotoba*, language) transformed when *kanji* was introduced. In the days of the writing with brush, there (apparently) was no such concept as good or bad writing, but today writing style will be evaluated as good or bad media. Conversely, there was a time

when the flavor and expressiveness of letters (calligraphy) was favored and cultivated.

So, how will we proceed with the expansion of media in this age of multimedia? The Newschool '98 was programmed to explore this question, based on the presentations of hypotheses and substantiated facts in eleven lectures (one a workshop). How would we be able to reconstruct the world surrounding our language today from the standpoint of computer media?

The first stage of the Newschool sessions—from February 11 through 15—was

a series of lectures under the overriding theme of "An Invitation to Text Engineering," based upon the research findings of Intelligent Communication Laboratory at NTT Communication Science Laboratories (CS Lab), to which UTADA Akihiro posed questions as the series' main inquirer. Also, guest speakers were invited to present each day, followed by plenary discussions.

Feb. 11—Under the theme of "The Horizon of Text Engineering" MATSUZAWA Kazumi, Senior Research Scientist, Supervisor at CS Lab, explained the thinking behind Text Engineering, outlined the surrounding technologies and defined the term. Then, the program for the next four days was introduced.

Feb. 12—"The New Realm of Semantics Opened up by Text Engineering: Common

Sense for Man, Common Sense for Machine" was the theme. What is common sense for a computer? Is it possible to make a computer understand human common sense? MATSUZAWA Kazumi examined how common sense is grasped in engineering. KASAHARA Kaname, Research Scientist at CS Lab, introduced "Concept Base" (the basic technology of Text Engineering, where the meanings of words are made into a database) which is automatically built up from the electronic dictionary.

Feb. 13—IIDA Toshiyuki, Senior Research Scientist, Supervisor at CS Lab, lectured on "Visualization of Relationships Based on the Applications and Significations of Text Engineering: 3-D Information Search." He introduced a technology that efficiently sorts and selects large amounts of information using a method of 3-D representation of relationships among information, based on their meanings.

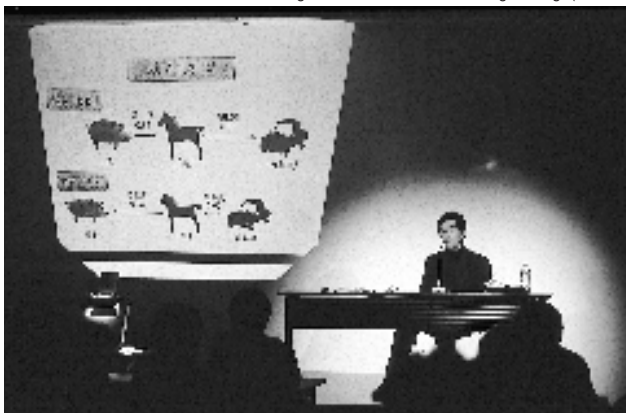
Then, under the theme "Language as Seen from The Machine: A Japanese Lexicon" OYAMA Yoshifumi, Senior Research Scientist, Supervisor at CS Lab, spoke about the computer dictionary, *A Japanese Lexicon*, which was developed as a part of the Japanese-to-English machine translation technology; the idea behind its architecture; its technological system; and some episodes behind its development.

Guest speaker of the day, TANAKA Yuichi of Just System Corporation's Digital Culture Research Department, talked about the history, current status and problems of Natural Language Processing technology. Finally, all participants discussed what Concept Base basically is and the future direction of Natural Language Processing.

Feb. 14—On "Development of Text Engineering: Computers That Think in Words" ISHIKAWA Tsutomu, Professor at Engineering Faculty of Takushoku University, introduced a flexible formula of syllogism using Concept Base, which enables a computer to utilize common sense making up for a lack of information, just like human beings, to find the answer.

The second presentation of "Development of Text Engineering: Computer That Plays with Language" was given by KANASUGI Tomoko, Staff Researcher at NTT Advanced Technology Corporation. She

MATSUZAWA Kazumi, Senior Research Scientist, Supervisor at NTT CS Lab, lecturing on "The Horizons of Text Engineering" (Feb. 11)



demonstrated the technologies that allow computer users, via Concept Base, to play with crosswords, word chains and other word puzzles.

The final presentation was made by MATSUZAWA Kazumi who, after summing up the debates and presentations over the four days, discussed the current situation and future perspectives as to the handling of common sense, the complementing for lack of knowledge and the behaviors of computers.

Feb. 15—Under the theme "Practicing of Text Engineering: Getting Familiar with Language" a workshop was held to learn "How to Enjoy B-Class Engines, How to Play with «Kotodama Chat»." In the first half of the workshop, participants joined media artist HACHIYA Kazuhiko in an appreciation of the exhibited works that attempted to express computers' sense of language via Text Engineering. In the latter half, participants experienced *language and communication* by playing a game using «Kotodama Chat», an exhibit that was designed to allow people experience Concept Base technology.

The second stage of the Newschool sessions—from February 19 through 27—came in six parts on the theme of "The Expansion of Communication Tools." Throughout this series various examples of experiments on the forms of communication and language were introduced, according to which problematiques were clarified.

Feb. 19—On "Digital Typography" Tom White, Research Assistant in the Aesthetics and Computation Group at MIT Media Lab, examined how much digital technology could help develop the sphere of typographic design, based on traditional literate culture, using some examples of art work.

Feb. 20—"From Hypertext to Hypermedia: A Report from An Aesthetics Guerrilla" was the title to the lecture by TAKEMURA Mitsuhiro, Director of Research Center for Media Aesthetics at Kyoto University of Art and Design. While demonstrating the works exhibited during the Newschool sessions, he discussed how to apply Ted NELSON's concept of "hypertext" to contemporary cuisine. Then, he gave examples of how the new sensitivity that language gains from textual performance can be expressed in the form of moving

font. Finally, he talked about his perspectives for the construction of a digital archive, which he thinks is indispensable to the realization of those expressions.

Feb. 21—In "*Research Themes on Digital Communication Design: Exploration of Expression Methods That Would Be Best Fulfilled by Electronic Media*" FURUKATA Masahiro, Senior Research Scientist at the International Media Research Foundation, gave a lecture on changes in computer-aided design. He gave a report on the attempts to facilitate the use of expressions utilizing the characteristics of "computation," learning from how computers are actually using the metaphor of the existing design method. He also introduced, using a video, an example of a workshop which promoted the understanding of computer algorithms. In the latter half of the session, the participants debated with 1997 ICC Biennale Runner-up Prize winner, MAEBAYASHI Akitsugu, about the problems existing in the gap between artistic and technological expressions.

Feb. 25—TODA Tsutomu, graphic designer whose work in recent years has stretched beyond DTP (Desk-Top Publishing) into the sphere of videos, gave a talk on "Understanding, Designing and the Non-Verbal." He compared DTP with video, in terms of the nature of medium, perception of language and manners of expression, while also discussing their shared traits and how the two media could possibly be

merged together in the future.

Feb. 26—Computer artist ANZAI Toshihiro gave a report: "How Could We Cultivate A New Language of Representative Characters?" According to ANZAI, *kanji's* intrinsic capacity to generate new words has been impeded by the emergence of the Japanese language computer processing systems. Therefore, he pointed out, in order to expand the language sphere and promote communication, we should first try and develop a tool to revive such word-generative capacity of the language. He also demonstrated an example of system during the session.

Feb. 27—SUNAGA Takeshi, Professor at Information Design Department of Tama Art University, spoke on "The Expansion of Communication Tools." After summing up the process of this Newschool's sessions, he explored on the designing of the "form" of information as well as its teaching method.

Over the two weeks from February 11 to 28, various testcases and art works that set out to challenge new expressions with "language" were exhibited at Gallery D, fully utilizing the networks and multimedia technologies of Kyoto University of Art and Design's Research Center for Media Aesthetics, The International Media Research Foundation, Tama Art University's Information Design Department and NTT Communication Science Laboratories. For more information, see ICC's webpage.



"Practicing of Text Engineering: Getting Familiar with Language" workshop (Feb. 15)



TAKEMURA Mitsuhiro, Director of Kyoto University of Art and Design's Research Center for Media Aesthetics, presenting "From Hypertext to Hypermedia: A Report from An Aesthetics Guerrilla" (Feb. 20)

ICC's New Collection Now on Display

The three prize winning works of the ICC Biennale '97 held in October 1997 joined the ICC's collection and have been on display since April 1998.

The Grand Prix winner «Landscape One» by Canada's Luc COURSCHESENE allows viewers to converse with a figure in a multimedia screen by using a touch-sensitive panel. The Runner-up Prize winners were Japan's MAEBAYASHI Akitsugu for his «Audible Distance» and the United States' Shu Lea CHEANG for her «Buy One Get One». The former is an installation of an enclosed space in which the visitor, equipped with a head-mounted

display and headphone, perceives others via artificially created visual and audio senses. The latter is a work which makes use of a network.

All three pieces represent the leading edge characteristics of media art—they experiment with new forms of communication via interactive technologies, try to acquire new sensibilities by expanding bodily functions, or use the Internet to search for links between self and society.

On this occasion, a new edition of *ICC Concept Book* was released as part of a set with *ICC Collection 1998*, which is now available for ¥3,675 per set (tax included).