

I.

If one has a positive interest in the movement of contemporary art, one should inquire about the expression act of the artist. In other words, to find out what kind of creative mother's womb it is sprang from. At the same time, it would lead to the possibility of change in contemporary art.

To question how to vitalize one's own expression act for tomorrow, is not a problem for only the artist who has to make the contents of his imagination visible. The problem also is deeply linked to the present moment of criticism. However, the response to the possibility of change has now reached the point, where it is almost impossible to describe with just existing critical vocabulary. It is because contemporary art has started to develop towards territory, where it does not belong to the conventional system of idea and logic.

Having appreciated this situation, I am going to set out the proposition; "A Man and Material—Return to Nature". It originates from the fact that I am not interested in an approach as a kind of evolution theory.

It is true that the present gives me confidence of a historical shift of the past and the future, although it is vague. However, when it comes to motivation in the depth, such as "Why" or "How" which is directly related to expression act, I cannot get an explanation. I have to search for it in the outlook and prospect of contemporary art.

The proposition I set out starts from a simple skepticism towards the situation of contemporary art, which I have just mentioned. The artists of contemporary art are showing the tendency of being associated with expression territory in a crossing manner. However, I think that the artists predict the mother's womb of creative concept has started to become fragile, and they began to continuously re-question the method of expression, and worry about the background of the original idea.

This is one of the reasons for re-assessing the current period in which we are living, is becoming a center of strong interest. The time is approaching a reflectionary period, that is to say, the trend is to reflect on the origins of the word (= perception), rather than making critical vocabulary sharper and more aggressive.

You can think of the situation in the following manner: When the forms of culture that were gathering into cities were on the point of suffocating, where would a man go to look for a fundamental solution? He would probably realize that unless he recovered his response to nature, his actual existence would not be guaranteed.

Contemporary art is now making an approach to the response to nature with a new sympathy. Nature, that is what artists made as their text book, in the post-structure period with versatile history and art. It is because the present time is becoming a period to re-appreciate the creative mother's womb. This is where I see the possibility of change in contemporary art. "Return to Nature" is one of the milestones.

II.

In the process of selecting artists to participate in the Venice Biennale exhibition, I placed emphasis on this point. I talked this over with several artists, and came to select two sculptors; Isamu Wakabayashi and Masafumi Maita. Both these people have sufficient ability to cope with working overseas, and are artists in their 40s with a bright future. We also thought they were appropriate as representatives of Japan.

Both artists prepared new works for the exhibition. Wakabayashi explained; "Something belonging to the green in the air -2", using up all the space in the Japanese pavilion. Maita elaborated as follows; "The revelations from natural phenomena", using the external space of the Japanese pavilion. Both artists elaborated on the work exhibited as the extension of previous works. However, both have opened a new plan and there was an atmosphere to the work which made one feel that it was going to be an inspiring work.

One of the features of course, is the point where they tried to give consideration to, "Return to Nature", as they referred to the creative mother's womb, by pursuing the association of; "A Man and Material". In Wakabayashi's work the laws of nature are clear. On the other hand, one can feel the effort of recovering sensitivity through harmony with nature, in Maita's elaboration. Therefore, we can say that Wakabayashi's work carries the philosophical nature, whereas Maita's work is linked to the world of poetry. Yet, on the point of them both having a vision of sending messages to the Universe through the agent of material, and developing a new dimension in; "Return to Nature", they are together.

Since there is a restriction on exhibiting works within a given space in the Japanese pavilion, the elaboration of the idea in the natural environment to make the relationship with nature even closer is limited. However, the experiment of the two artists to reversed the conventional symbolic outline of sculpture being dependent on cities and buildings, implies the recovery of physical energy which sculpture originally possesses. The logic of leading, "Completed Form", which always followed the concept of conventional contemporary sculpture, became invalid. They gave a feeling of re-questioning the concept of space from the foundation. In one sense it can be said that it is an experiment in demolishing "Completed Form". These works are extremely pre-cognitive in another sense which brings forth new fruit after the destruction.

III.

I must make it clear here, that when we said, "Return to Nature", it is not a new concept at all in Japan. Perhaps many Japanese will say that they think they are becoming closer to nature than any other nation in the World. However, unless we make clear the meaning of the double structure, which is the fact that Japan achieved a miracle in economic growth, which was made over the endless destruction of nature, all that people say remains an empty theory.

Since the consciousness of alienation is coming to the point where it is impossible to clarify it within a historical context, when one says; "Return to Nature", it becomes a dichotomy into getting closer to nature and neglecting nature. I would think that it is essential to acquire vision to directly recognize the modern situation that is appearing as a phenomenon, and the force that is working at the base. "Return to Nature" is a form of intensive consciousness to look an individual or a group of individuals one direction. At the same time, it is a form of consciousness that has penetrated deep into people's lives, as well as religious ceremonies. Yet, its internal pressure is hopelessly low and cooled down. It is probably because it will not revive unless a new line is opened with a kind of nature, like black art, or by changing the response to nature fundamentally. Moreover, the modern religion in which vitalization is believed to be possible only by the individual's sublimation, is casting a long shadow on people's mind. This is the point where lies one of the reasons for coming to the present situation of alienation.

Since there is no abstract idea of contemporary art in general, an "Outline of Concept" has to be constructed. As art is also an object of materialism which actualizes human life, the relationship of "A Man and Material", has to be reconsidered. Materialism in objects gets some kind of limitation of the human concept of existence as long as they are the object.

There is not art that ignored materialistic procedure, it is the same as there is no form that ignored meaning and content. On the point where art is linked to a drama of human souls, and change of the external world and change of the forms of consciousness are about to take over eternal transmigration, exists the vitalization of contemporary art to "Return to Nature", in a sense I mean. When this is looked at from the endless magic of the Universe, this might be a minute karma given to human beings. However, if contemporary art is to go beyond the wall of contempt surrounded by alienation, while holding prospects and outlook of transmigration, it will definitely create the opportunity to review a real meaning of human life.