
Round-Table Discussion About Mono-Ha
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Suga Kishio
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Nakamura - I should first of all thank you, gentlemen, for coming here on this day while you are so busy. Our gallery is presently holding a MONO-HA exhibition and on this occasion, for the people of the future generations who are curious to know about MONO-HA, we would like to hear you, the artists, voicing various opinions about 'What is MONO-HA', so we asked you to take the trouble to come here. Last time our gallery composed a publication similar to a textbook which includes nine artists chronologically. This time we would like to ask you, the artists, about your own opinions and ideas.

Lee - Is this going to be published?

Nakamura - Yes, definitely. This the very reason why I begged you gentlemen to gather here today, to have something to leave to posterity in a written form as a textbook together with the exhibition catalogue. As we often receive inquiries from a lot of people like, "What is MONO-HA?," "What is Minimal Art?," "What is Conceptual Art?," "What is the relation to 'Arte Povera'?", "What is the relation to the 'concrete'?", and how do we discuss MONO-HA now. There are also questions about the criticism of "MONO-HA" and reproduction of some works. I wish I could hear about those from you today. In addition to that, I would like you to talk freely about whatever you want to discuss as well.

Lee - It should be made clear, first of all, that we do not represent here what is called MONO-HA, nor that one could decide only on the views expressed here. I would rather say that as the respective opinions of the three of us are rendered, we should maintain a certain latitude and start here by each of us describing our individual personal story, and proceeding gradually to the related issues, maybe would it be possible to follow somehow. That all three here may embody the entire concept is quite unthinkable, and I even doubt that we may reflect the phenomenon satisfactorily.

Nakamura - Consequently, as the three of you happen to be gathered here, let's say that I pray for each of you to voice his own opinion.

Suga - Don't you have the impression these days that although we remain rather placid, there is a lot of fuss made about us? "That's MONO-HA" or "No, that's not MONO-HA!". I can't figure out myself why it's like that. Actually, those who have carried on with their work right down from the 1970s, don't think any more. Should one of these people try to think now, I am pretty sure that it would appear objectively. The fact is that, in connection with the work, he accomplishes it apart from that. This is why, myself, for instance, although I can hear myself continue replying something like 'Oh, isn't it fine like that?' anytime I am told that, I never go to the trouble of explaining things one by one. But, as more and more excitement is involved, I startle myself. Then, perhaps it's not only a problem in the fine arts, because it exists also as a cultural element. In fact, I got the impression that it has many aspects that would be impossible to grasp without regarding of as some cultural element in general, may it be fashion, various literary elements, perhaps philosophy, the same things also applying of course to architecture, for instance.

- Enokura - And also it should be said that a considerable amount of time has elapsed since the so-called MONO-HA has been perceived. All the same, owing to this time factor, there must surely be artists whose works are fairly distant from all that which had been produced so far, because it is a fact that there are many different life styles among people. Entangled with this element, in that sense, I feel a kind of mood, a pretty strong mood, also among people for instance who never really saw the what kind of background in which we are constructing our works, wondering what's really going on. That's why, in fact, to speak properly, I cannot refrain from thinking "What's really going on here?"
- Suga - that's what we all want to say. Really.
- Lee - It is also an issue of culture. Overall interests are focusing on the seventies. I feel that the reappraisal of the seventies in various fields is prevailing now, under which trend MONO-HA is again being questioned.
- Suga - In the stream of art, starting from about last year, as I never stop feeling all the while that there was a necessity that the seventies period should be caught, that somebody had to do it — and in some sense, I can see from the present state of things that it is naturally turning out that way — and not only under the form of a revival, but, within the fine arts, during the seventies, there are shortages among achievements that have been accomplished somehow, even among ourselves. These days, when I start reflecting seriously on that, it appeared suddenly to me that we came to a state of things where it is necessary to grasp the entire concept once more. For example by striving for a variety of things.
- Lee - I think that various interpretations will emerge little by little, because it is manifesting a phenomenon that showed a certain expanse around the seventies. Speaking of time, this is not something that could be strictly assigned. For instance, if we look back around 1968, I feel that there would be no exaggeration to find a part of a dawning. Among this, works of the kind Sekine had done at Suma were spotlighted, as well as various other similar works. Needless to say that, according to individuals, since two or three years before we had already seen things presenting similarities in other parts. Many people talk about various things, and it should be noted that they know what they are talking about fairly well. However, in the sense of a phenomena similar to seeing it come out in one breath, I wonder if it would be normal to consider that 1968 was the year where such conditions were witnessed.
- Suga - Then until what year was it then? As for me, if you say, for instance, 1975, I'll feel rather unhappy. And if you say on the other hand, 1972, or something else, my dissatisfaction will remain all the same because, then, I feel it's too early. Furthermore, as for putting the beginning later on, I don't see really the point, and even by assigning it to around 1968, and to also know what the movement became towards its end, I have the impression that nobody can understand it. What's your impression? In short, if we have to put an ending to this matter, shouldn't we say 1974 or 1975 or so as a suitable period?
- Enokura - As for me, talking from Sekine's work Lee just quoted, I think that the beginning of its current period is just fine. Myself I remember quite clearly the movement that started around 1968. For its ending, I find it perfectly convenient to consider that it has continued to the present while linking itself to a rich variety of forms. Therefore, I must say that I do not feel like having a sense of a period with a distinct beginning and an end. Therefore, and I think that we are going to talk about that progressively, if we talk about the year 1968. So, let me remind you that 1968 was the year I had just earned my postgraduate degree from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts.
- Suga - You were so young then...?
- Enokura - Certainly Sir! That's why I made the trip to Suma^{*1} to see Sekine's work, and I can't deny that me to I felt tremendously spurred by its sight. But the fact is that I witnessed various pieces of work that were successively produced afterwards. Did I witness them or did I just see them, I cannot say. But anyway, there is no doubt about that. For myself, I should say that from college up to graduate school I was producing 'surrish' (or 'surrealismish' i.e. 'works having a smack of surrealism') works. I raised myself from the plane level up to relief, so I gradually turned myself towards works

^{*1} October to 10 November 1968, The first Kobe Suma Rikyu Park Modern Sculpture Exhibition

surrealism') works. I raised myself from the plane level up to relief, so I gradually turned myself towards works using the floor and this became what we call 'installation'. Therefore, within such this flow, I was surely influenced by Sekine's work at Suma. However, I have always felt that the method of interpretation was fairly different from those so-called Mono-ha artists. And I still feel this way to this day. As for setting a time for a starting point, well, I would say around 1968, as far as I am concerned. At the time I was a fresh post-graduate student. As a starting point, I have the feeling that it is about right like that. However, as Suga previously pointed out, the question of allocating a division is quite a laborious one. No doubt that this topic shall be raised later here, but it's my impression that while going through the process of various methods of succession, it is still a viable question even today.

Lee - In the similar aspect, it has been noted quite often that people who are engaged in the process of elaborating themselves, for some reasons, loathe putting up partitions. Of course, however 'that time' is different from 'now', I think that both present very subtle points. Moreover, if we get to the bottom of this, one should wonder what is the final single work are we going to include in this period? For these reasons, the opinion that considers that the start of that period should be assigned to 1968, is a rather precarious one.

Suga - Since it is not that the people who are really acting were performing with the MONO-HA, I cannot see the reason why it turned out to be like that. In addition to this, I consider that there is quite a gap between the elements who form the nucleus and those who stay at the periphery. For that reason, in my case, I was really concentrating hard on my work for some time, upon its core, evacuating it from all its elements that had anything to do with thoughts, meanings or even symbols. There were people many people to accept it, quite a few people in fact, and the number who were influenced increased rapidly. I had strong feelings about this situation. Extending into 1975, these proliferating numbers of people went further, close to 1980, or pursuing even further, who knows? On the basis of these facts, I am convinced that the works like the one the MONO-HA possess more than one element deserving to be valued, not as a single phenomenon but as something pertaining to a somewhat higher level. Consequently, it shouldn't be the feeling of something that has been distorted in fine arts, nor just the impression of something protruding, but rather something that has been retained within the stream of a specific context. In the final analysis, even with respect to the individual who gave up fine arts, or for the one who is pursuing something else while carrying on with this — perhaps is it that he is after all incapable to completely jettison the entire concern with some shape or other? — Should I say that this factor is inevitably influencing what will remain? Anyhow, I have the feeling that this kind of interpretation could be more accurate.

Enokura - Of course, but this is not only in Japan. There were also examples to follow the movement in the States, like Minimal Arts.

Suga - Yes, we had the same with the "Arte Povera," and also the "Earth Work".

Enokura - When I think of it, amid such a relationship that has something in common, I feel that I can understand it perfectly.

Suga - That's why on this part I have an impression of shortages. It is true that within the personal history, the problem at the individual level, consisting of having to remain in Japan working very intensely at fiddling around with various materials, "Why not?" I can understand it. However, as soon as this individual acquires a certain opening toward society, or the toward the world, or if he fails to consider through his own outlook, the way he approaches things should be understood, then I'll say that this outlook is too limited, in terms of many aspects.

Enokura - I don't think we should touch on that point too much.

Suga - But I am touching on it precisely. It isn't a question to determine which could be better, since to know how one should manage to cope with that sort of situation undoubtedly depends upon the individual. But, when one contemplates the matter on a broad sense within the stream of the arts, it always keeps on flowing with its same shade of color. Now, what I want to say is, "Do we feel such coloration or not?"

Lee - Of course, to me it's obvious! I can perfectly imagine that one wants to consider such a point. Why do people find it awkward to say "Just because starting from it we see people quit or take another direction."

Suga - And it's all right like that!

Lee - Not working by presenting 100% of one's own personal thoughts sealed into a capsule, but on the contrary, to try to seek out if there could be crossing points within elements other than those contrived by one's own thinking. Trying combinations, assemblages with heterogeneous elements, checking if there is not an 'outside', I wonder if the main characteristic is to be found at this point. The basis of the fine arts up to that time was that, by enclosing their expression into an overall inwardness, there was no space allowed for any outward feeling. In short, what was requested here was a kind of encounter with the 'unknown' that was external to oneself. Doesn't it happen that a piece of stone that recoils from meeting the artist's definitions, or a piece of clay to be ambiguous and can, for instance, also become a mediator. Many things can turn into agents such as the body, or even the voice. At least, I think that these are people that have turned themselves toward work offering an expanse, a breakaway having an outward feeling that no internal structure could achieve whatsoever. On that point, it wasn't too much of a destructive affair, was it?

Enokura - Destructive? Are you taking this word in its avant-gardist sense?

Lee - Yes, yes! But not quite so I should say. May it be the 'Earth Work' that took place abroad, the 'Support-Surface' in France, or even the 'Arte Povera' in Italy, although we couldn't always understand very clearly what it was all about, all of us felt a kind of allusive premonition, because I think that we had a kind of consciousness of the backgrounds of the time.

Enokura - What I feel in front of Sekine's earth works, his 'Phases'^{*2}, for instance, that Lee was referring to a while ago, is that they are not exclusively the product of Sekine's originality. But, to link it up with our topic, I would say that they retain a fair amount of the influence of Takamatsu's tricky works, for instance, in the visual sense I mean, and moreover a lot of freshness within its combinations with what appears to me a frequenting of minimal art. That's the way those works appeared to me, full of

Lee - It's still a distinctive feature, I consider.

Enokura - Yes, that's why there is not only an influence of that American minimalism. For instance, suppose even that we obtain an influence from Sekine himself, one of the starting points of the MONO-HA movement, obviously it is not Sekine, nor his surroundings, that has generated that situation as it is. As far as I am concerned I keenly recognize that these are works that gushed from an accumulation of various streams. And that's what makes me encounter some controversial points of contemporary modern art in Sekine's work.

Lee - First, and was it a certain image, or should we consider the thing as a mental distortion? There was that exhibition, 'Tricks & Vision'.^{*3} Suga, you also you exhibited works that resorted to tricks. Sekine wasn't the only one. I myself tried my hand at it, though without much conviction I must

^{*2} Exhibited in the above mentioned "The first Kobe Suma Rikyu Park Modern Sculpture Exhibition" by Nobuo Sekine "Phase - Mother Earth" (Awarded the Asahi Newspaper Prize) photo-

^{*3} 10 April to 11 May, 1968 Muramatsu Gallery, 30 April to 18 May, 1968 Tokyo Gallery "TRICKS & VISION - A Stolen Eye" Exhibition

conviction I must admit, but anyway I somehow have produced this type of work. Moreover, a moment ago Enokura, for instance, was talking to us about 'surrish' (or 'surrealismish' i.e. 'works having a smack of surrealism'), but in this case it isn't a matter of tricks, because we see people that enter into it through mental items that are distortions. Or even, and it should be noted here that at the beginning I criticized this, even in the case of those people who went so far as incorporating the spoken word into their works, Matsuzawa in Nagano, for instance. Even in such cases, I consider that there is always something relating to the subject. It doesn't fit well immediately, it should be noted, because although it uses the speech it is never limited to it. There are also verbal tricks that make you think that one has integrated, beyond the words, an actual space, and that numerous external elements are intervening with it. This occurred to such an extent that you were always wondering if it was not just air that had been elaborated upon there. Though this was perhaps yet to be attributed to...

Enokura - As for me, in fact, after Sekine's works at Suma, while looking at Lee, Suga and others, beginning to present their works, I started wondering if, in order to produce my own works, wouldn't it be better for me to submerge myself more intensively into more everyday life realities, such as my own body, flesh, the location, and other factors, rather than to exclude, with minimalist tropism (directionalism), the various cognitions towards objects. If anything, I felt that I was prompted by a critical aspect, and, I should add, I think that all those elements were already contained within Sekine's works.

Suga - This I understood, in some sense, however. It was the time were the people of Tamabi (Tama Art University) were meeting Geidai's (Tokyo National University of Fine Arts) people and talking and working together. Obviously, in a sense, also they were observing different aspects, in some respect it can be said that they had many things in common.

Lee - Not uninteresting, that idea!

Suga - Everything was all jumbled up at that time. Awfully! Me, for instance, and here perhaps I should go back a little to the past, but when I started thinking about the reason why a movement like MONO-HA arose from the sixties, it obviously appears that the miscellaneous elements of the fine arts in Japan of those days were tremendously under the influence of Americanization or Europeanization. These influences were positively inundating Japan, and I would imagine that the kind of saturation state that followed from that, well, stretched as far as to the periods of 'Minimal' and 'Primary Structures'. But when this had reached its limits, something flashed across my mind. Let's say that what I was feeling then was a kind of humanism. In short when I say humanism, it's in the sense of a level. The problem of man's consciousness precedes it. Ultimately, in Europe or the States, the fine arts are a work that is to be performed by man. In which case, only the consciousness involving humans is going to advance, and this is what induces people to paint pictures upon canvas, to carve sculptures, to model certain kinds of forms. Or should I say to give form to things one cannot see? I think that this was the very period where that kind of consciousness prevailed absolutely. At least up to 1968, or around that time. Then, very likely, when it reached a state of having no way out, for the first time we were really at a loss and didn't even know what to do. All the same, it was not a question of only humanism or consciousness. It might have been at a level of a reality from a slightly previous stage? The 'mono', the object, exists from the beginning, then man making some kind of acknowledgment of it, gets down to some kind of work, if I may describe the process like this. First there is the state where there is the first 'mono' (object), something that exists in the beginning, and for the first time maybe one became aware that if one does not carry this reality to the beginning, the next step would never come. Therefore, up to that time, no connection was seen with that fact, as it was regarded as natural that things should be like that. It was not before the surroundings of 1968 that this fact was admitted for the first time. What was been ignored before that time was the fact that that in the very beginning there is a reality, a reality that is the object in itself, i.e. the 'mono'. And I get the impression that it is at that time, that the question to know where the consciousness was coming from was taken up again without making a problem of it. That's why there's a sort of concrete problem at the daily level that precedes it. Rather, this is essentially very close to a serious state of a setback. I consider that the fact of taking recognition of the question of knowing which thing stands at the outset is a rather unsophisticated one for man's consciousness. And there, first of all, there is a problem, I think, that is have we come back to the beginning and should we have come back at all?

back at all?

Lee - Now, there are premises about what Suga has just said. Coming in the second half of the sixties, with the Olympic Games in 1964, joining the United Nations, and the World Exhibition in 1970, Japan started gaining tremendous confidence. Then, a distance in consciousness occurred that was visible between America and Europe. The period of mass demonstrations started in 1970 with the campaign against the Japan-US. Security Treaty, as if Japan was questioning itself. From the second half of the sixties we see a variety of events emerging, like the Zenkyôtô (All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee, ultra-leftist students movement). The famous words of Kazumi Takahashi 'My Dismantling'^{*4} powerfully symbolizes that period. Because it advocated that if we do not try to dismantle all those things that were controlling conditions up to now, nothing will appear. As our GNP grew substantially, we acquired a kind of social maturity and in this condition, I think that the general situation was that, with the conceptions that prevailed before, certain things became impossible to see, and couldn't fall into place any more. In this situation, similar phenomena occurred in various fields, such as music, fine arts, literature, etc. In the case of the fine arts, we didn't suddenly jump to a realistic look at the things in front of us, but in the first step, we adopted these 'tricks and vision' as a means to verify the way we were used to looking at objects up to now. Therefore, what we intended to realize with these 'tricks and vision' wasn't to try to enjoy ourselves with tricky things, it was simply that we had forms which appeared that were designed to probe the way man used to look at objects up to now, and how he was managing these things. For instance, when Sekine realized this concretely in the earth, far from being something tricky, wasn't it rather, I think, that such a viewpoint had emerged, having appeared out as a reality, so as to look, not at things, but at the world? Then, among such discrepancies that showed that the connections of reality were full of cracks, a world of various objects and spaces had protruded. That's the way I feel about whole thing.

Suga - I wonder if Sekine could even figure out the ultimate consequences of what he had done. Having started from trickery, he ended up in a completely different direction. I guess that he himself was astonished. But in some sense, such a feeling contains elements that are very useful.

Enokura - That's exactly what I tried to say just a short moment ago, that Sekine brushed off the dirt from the nominal aspect of the 'mono', the object, and this corresponds to Suga has just said. Moreover, as for the historic background, the situation as Lee has depicted it, it was certainly a period where, because of the Campaign against the Japan-US. Security Treaty and the student demonstrations, the social hierarchy was crumbling down. Consequently one had to ascertain one's own position, exactly as objects in daily life had to be ascertained... with objects. But what is then an object at last, I wonder. In short, it's its 'noun aspect' I rather use myself the term 'denomination aspect'. This means that when a name is attached to an object, one keeps wondering what it is, why in fact has it a name? That was the kind of intense uneasiness at that time, in the social sense of the term. This is the reason why there were problems that had to be ascertained, and these occurred where the actions involved into the works that we produced then. As for myself, whether it be 'noun aspect' or 'denomination aspect', one may wonder how I came to acquire this awareness? You remember that I said a moment ago that I had produced some surrealist works. Well, at the very basis of my awareness toward the present day, Duchamp still lives within me. During the process of creating his works, Duchamp frequently uses the word 'delay'. In Duchamp's quotations, it conveys the meaning of delaying the awareness toward the objects. I took a tremendous interest in such a word, this delaying of the awareness toward the objects. For instance, when Duchamp uses glass and lead for his glass paintings, it is for the purpose of gradually shifting the awareness toward the things that he uses these neutral materials for while he is at work, and this sounded terribly attractive to me. In my case, It is my impression when I am doing a work that shall I call it elimination of the 'denomination aspect', and through the fact that by removing the name, I get a fairly neutral material, or a method of neutral perception, and that's where I am starting from. Therefore, I know that there is of course also a bit of social situation in it, but in my case, I have the impression that I was involved with objects while taking very personal recognition inside myself of that stream. Therefore, this should be slightly different than tricky or deceptive structures.

Lee - It also depends on the individual, I think, because one can not say that it is not one of the

^{*4} Kazumi Takahashi "My Dismantling" Kode Publishing

- Lee - It also depends on the individual, I think, because one can not say that it is not one of the processes for the illusion.
- Suga - If we think about the words themselves, yes.
- Lee - But this is originally surrealism itself.
- Enokura - Well, put into words, it is surrealism, but quite different however from the world as an illusion narrated to us by the painting and materials themselves.
- Lee - Because one can also adopt quite a zigzagging course. However, it is certain that it is not the route toward the 'trick & vision' version. There were some codes maybe, but it seems to me evident that there were routes. That's why when we use the same concrete object, or even when we use the space, the difference between each route is indubitable, but at least it can be said that there is a similar world to what we perceive. As Suga said previously, it had become impossible to harbor such optimism as to believe that since the expression is the artist's proper image in itself, it allowed him to wrap himself completely with its own consciousness. And so, I think that we started questioning the origins in order to know what the various relationships in the world, becoming concrete circumstances, space objects or even words consisted of and also what was in fact the materialization of the expression. At that time, the most important concern was that everybody was really considering a return to his own individuality. We were not acting as a system in general, and this was the difference with a movement in a broad sense. Anyway, we had there a certain attitude of inquiry into things, and there was almost no place left to return. In whatever meaning, to not possess a place to go by, that is the MONO-HA. It is imperiling, but certainly it is strong. The greatest shortcoming or weakness of the fine arts in the eighties was having a place where one could immediately return, and that everybody did in fact return. Everybody was brilliant, spectacular and beautiful, tender and yielding. It was extremely felicitous and made one feel at ease. However, not continuously having various things to question, as anything will do, instead it become worthless. In the beginning, the works from around the seventies were questioned : could they be sustained by one's bare thought, at the lowest limit, becoming body, act, or responding in some way in concert with the objects. How could they materialize, was the question. And so, since ones own image could not be covered, people wondered what could be the thing that they observed before their own eyes, and consequently this inevitably made the relation of correspondence stronger. Now, like Enokura, becoming one's own action, one's own body, in a word, making corporeality mediate, there are people who develop the expression. We also observe people curious to see the expression in that kind of recombination, like in a fairly neutral assortment of objects, or in their shifting, etc.
- Enokura - And, during that period, running parallel with Minimal Art, we saw people like Beuys emerging in Germany. It could be the influence of people like Beuys, but in my case, as Suga or Lee said previously here, watching the activity of Sekine, I decided that I had to do different things, and also that I was going to do them with a different interpretation. To take an example, even Takayama or Haraguchi, likewise, while he had that kind of situation, when it failed to form into a shape, you see, we saw then coming out something like the work of Beuys. There are also all kinds of people, people who... who were accompanied with an extremely mundane character, which is after all very different from the minimal art. Perhaps I say a movement accompanied with a "action" character? anyway, as a directionality came out, whose interpretation about the substance appears to be very different, for me is it Beuys's influence. When I start thinking that I realized that there was a great deal of stimulation in that area.
- Suga - It might sound like I said that I noticed something that was extremely different in Enokura's work. However I can remember that I saw things that had a different feeling from what I am doing. Because, when I saw that work by Enokura it was at a Biennial,^{*5} if I am correct with cement

^{*5} 24 September to 1 November 1971 The 7th Paris Youth Biennale

plastered between trees,^{*6} when I saw that work I had at once the impression that it was definitely not my way of associating objects. I am far from being the type of man who goes the royal road and automatic actually more the man who maintains a guerrilla way of thinking, munching here, gnawing there. However, with Enokura I got the terrible feeling, was it on account of his attitude toward art, was it his way of thinking? that he was walking on the royal road. Because, stuffing cement between trees, though proposing of course a theory of space, it also indicates that there is a problem of quality that comes first. Generally speaking, if there should be a sculptural concept of quality and quantity, is it the way of dealing with the object in a very fundamental sense that changes the impression of quality in that connotation. If it is a solid, with the sense of making quality and quantity change, and having filled a space between trees up with cement where there is nothing, he converted an object that was "there with nothing" into some object having a certain significance. That "certain" object is cement. The perception that I felt then was something like an impression of quality that changed the concept of 'nothing there' into an object of 'there is something there'. No doubt it was a kind of creative sphere, like the case where the concept of sculpture, which had evolved all the long way directly from ancient times, had advanced rapidly, so it was only as a matter of course that it should have reached this point. I had the terrible feeling that Enokura was walking on the royal road. It's a work that I love tremendously. I love it though I feel that I could not do that kind of work. I understood that he was elsewhere. That is why at the time, however great the field was, a huge variety of people had different ways of coping with objects. As for me, for example the Mixed Media, or the Anti-Form that Lee was quoting a moment ago, there are things that I feel uneasy about in regarding these kinds of symbols, how should one interpret them, and what would result from it? This is one point. Moreover, at that time, in a situation where many things were taken apart, and upon occasion, all sorts of things came out as material. We were obliged to reconfirm each one of them and to stuff one's own words into them, or the symbolic aspects or significance and reconfirmation in using Mono. Thus the situation, where both dismantling and construction are carried out at the same time, was presented to me, and quite often applied immature meanings, or symbols or added something too unintelligible. Therefore, my works of those days are received with comments saying "just too difficult to understand." For that I can only say "That's right." I think I was indeed involved a tremendously busy situation where both Mono itself and the level of the meaning started moving and I had to mix them together sometime and somewhere.

Lee - I understand what you two are saying. I think the starting point, or the code of each of you is after all different. I had tried at the beginning tricky work more than Suga, or entirely conceptual method; I had tried several ways, all of which I failed in. Then I entered various competitions, and experienced failure in all of them, to which I feel very ashamed.

Suga - It is the same with me.

Lee - Suga, you always win prizes, don't you. The exhibit of this time was also entered in a competition exhibition, which name I can't even mention actually, since I feel rather ashamed of myself. A lot of artists won good prizes then. When I came to pick up my work, I found it beside the litter box at the corner. I was not able to pick it up in front of everybody. I had such bitter experiences. I would like to mention something in order for Enokura and Takayama not to misunderstand, that so to speak Minimal Art in Japan is in fact quite different from Minimal Art in the States. There exists a theory of exclusion. It is, however, a strategy to be involved with wider environment. In that sense, I think that people like Enokura have also a kind of exclusiveness.

Enokura - That's true, I think I have that. In order to sharpen the expression, it is inevitable to exclude

^{*6} Exhibited in the above mentioned "The 7th Paris Youth Biennale" By Koji Enokura "Wall" (Awarded Transfer Students Prize, Since then he lives in Paris) photo-

unnecessary elements. It is, however, different kind of exclusiveness from the structure of exclusiveness in Minimal Art.

Lee - Sometimes it is done through trimming/cutting off, sometimes through economizing; there are various ways. Earth Works were placed in magazines quite often those days, and Minimal Art works were also introduced. Although I was not able to see the actual objects, I was definitely influenced by them, I think. However, Arte Povera or other European art were not introduced that much, as far as I remember. Looking at Michael Heizer's work, drawing a line on a desert, or Robert Smithson's work, putting pebbles in a line, I found them interesting, but at the same time I felt that what I aim for is somehow different. Or, an artist called McCracken placed a piece of synthetic resin board, in which I found immense impact. Honestly, I did get excited, but somehow I did not feel like following him. The reason why I want to trim or excluded is not only for the purpose of doing so, it is, in fact greedier than that, to be connected to other things by trimming, etc. A sort of contrary idea to overseas Minimal Art and Earth Work existed constantly in myself. Therefore, although I was influenced specifically and formally by their minimalism or earth works, what I am actually doing is opposing them, which I find interesting.

Suga - That's true. In addition to that, what I was most impressed conceptually was Site. A concept, site, came to the fore so obviously. That means more than just a place. If I would refer to the meaning mentioned by Lee just now, for example, there are deserts in the States, but there's none in Japan. Therefore, someone could draw a line on a desert in the States, but in Japan there's nothing to draw on in that sense. Consequently, as there's no concreteness, the concept of a site is, in the end, different between the States and Japan. Then, what should we consider a site concerning Japan? We have been thinking about it through our own works or other artists' work quite ordinarily. After all the concept of a site is attached to Mono. In other words, if the concept of expansion, which I often used those days, is used to mean simply the expansion of a space, it means there's nothing, but, for example, by adding some sort of limitation to a space, it becomes limited expansion. Limited expansion is limited, that means it has a boundary, or it has a shape as a thing. In terms of the sense that it can have limited expansion, the concept becomes almost synonym to Mono. In the end, it reaches the concept that what Mono's existence means is site. They both exist at the same time. That concept was most probably applied in some artists' works in seventies, and I was also thinking of that. I think that the very big issue for us in those days was that what sort of concept of a site or what sort of concept of a space can be created in the climate of Japan.

Enokura - As for myself, at that time I was very much interested, after all, in the sceneriatic way of thinking of the world. Again, it might be different from the issue of the place itself, however, to give an instance, there was a movement called "PROVOKE" advocated by photographer Takuma Nakahira and critic Masahiko Okada. I guess it has been one kind of urbanism, but in short, that period of time was, with reference to what has been spoken here a moment ago, we were not able to survive unless we perceived the factor of which the scenery/landscape itself was composed as well. And that situation it self evinced the way Japanese art of that time was related to the space. That is what I feel.

Suga - Very imagery, so to speak.

Enokura - I am now planning a photo exhibition, but my starting point of interest towards photography is in fact this "PROVOKE" movement. That is, by means of photography - it really doesn't matter whether the photograph is out of focus or not - in may case, in short, even an out-focused photograph can confront the world by just clicking the shutter of the camera. These matters, if we are to take them seriously, considering within my works, they become so called physicalism (as a matter of fact). That is to say, the relationship between the body and the nature of the place, or the body and the nature of the object. Within that sort of physicalistic realm, I feel that I was in search of myself as how to exist/be. In those days, poets such as Taka-aki Yoshimoto came out quite strongly with such theory as "community illusionism"^{*7} which consequently became urbanism. As for myself, then, what I occasionally quoted was what Taka-aki Yoshimoto himself has quoted in his poem "Toono Monogatari"^{*8} (The Toono Story): a story of woodcutters. What would

^{*7} Takaaki Yoshimoto "Common Illusionism" Kadokawa Bunko

has quoted in his poem “Toono Monogatari”^{*8} (The Toono Story): a story of woodcutters. What would the illusion of those woodcutters of which terror resulted in their death really be, is deeply concerned with the relation between the human body and the place or the space which they are located. Such sort of matters, I was discussing with Takayama and others when we were participating in the outdoor exhibition at Totsuka. It is in fact the matter of “place.” What we were discussing in quite an extent was how to involve oneself to the scenery/landscape which we have developed ourselves, at the times when it was urged to ascertain the issue within the interpretation of the space. And now in a completely different sense from Suga’s idea concerning the existence of MONO (object), what I feel is that the question of what would the place or the object of the space really be, as part of the physicalism, shall be the starting point.

Lee - From the outsiders' point of view, apart from where you enter, it sounds like you are not too far away from the other two.

Enokura - I am not really speaking on the basis of considering myself as being far apart from them, actually. However, I do believe that within the relationship with the outside world, the difference of the sense of physical distance shall be tremendously different.

Lee - Actually, he and I, we were both participating together at the Paris Biennale. He exhibited an art work which he stuffed the gap between the woods with blocks and plastered it with cement. This, indeed, from the quality and quantity conceptual point of view, can be understood as what Suga has just mentioned. However, if you stand on a very different viewpoint, by constructing some sort of confining wall, the surrounding space becomes visible. What you can see is not the object itself but the space that surrounds the object. This is obviously different from what it used to be. On the contrary, for instance, what Suga is trying to do is indeed the opposite way from the concept of quality and quantity. Metamorphically speaking, it is as if he is mowing a certain portion of an hay field. Then, between the portions which was mowed and which was not, the boundary is ambiguously seen and unseen. It is not the matter of the mowing action itself, but together with the surroundings of that portion, something one wants to express emerges by itself; some sort of illusionism, so to speak. In Enokura’s opinion, one may do something to it, but what he does there is that he omits some part of it, and then there emerges the nature of the space of some sort. I do believe that it is not an overstatement to say that the phenomenon of those days was expressed as a work that possessed a nature of external of that sort, not the very object itself. Whether one should grapple putting the emphasis on the sense of physicalism or not. Or whether one should start from the conceptualism. There may also be some people who enter from completely different code. There must be a variety of ways to approach. But in any case, there are some people, recently, that mutters about a certain fanaticism, or some sort of solidness. I would rather positively start from this solidness, or else any sort of expression will never come into existence. This is how I think, that, this is the very reason why they have fallen apart, distorted, or even permeated, and that these phenomena have in fact expanded in a vast manner.

Suga - In that sense, we can pick up, for an example, Lee’s works which he tied squared timbers around a museum by ropes.^{*9} The one which the columns are tied up. This too, can be said that although it is tied up to the columns, it is in fact the structure of these columns that are actually supporting the overall structure. In short, within the architectural factor of a multiple number of columns, only the invariable factor is pinned down. That is the feeling I received from his work. Therefore, there was a concept that, not only that column itself, but a variety of columns are, after

^{*8} Kunio Yanagida “Toono Story” Shincho Bunko

^{*9} Lee U-Fan “Relatum (At a Place I, II, III)” 4 August to 31 August 1970, Exhibited in “A Phase of the Modern Art” Exhibition at National Museum of Modern Art photo-

all, tied up simultaneously. So, in a way, although Enokura or myself, Lee, or any other people as well, have approached to different entrances of the expression, I feel very much that in a way we were all concerned of the way to express or to bring in the external (not the internal) to the same level and to the same range of time. This issue occupied a very important position within our concepts.

Lee - That is exactly why it turned out to be expressed with the terms such as “place” or “circumstance.”

Suga - Yes, that is so.

Enokura - As for myself, too, that theory has in a way something in common with mine. And also the MONO (object) or wall, or the work of Lee tied up to the columns, which was just mentioned now, likewise, we detect the same sort of notion within themselves. That is, to transform the space or some sort.

Suga - It still sounds foreign to me. It is odd, isn't it.

Enokura - To transform the overall space itself in connection with one solid MONO (object). In fact there was certainly the notion that, by that transformation, we are connected in a way or the other, with the sense of the place.

Suga - Also, when you speak about the space, Enokura used an expression like “physicalism” a few moment ago. However, if I am to use the term physicalism, for instance, I would use it in a sense that the body and the object are apart from each other. But on the contrary, in Enokura’s connotation, these two factors seems to be very close to each other. I get the feeling from Enokura, that the physicalism and something that surrounds it are in a close relation with each other. In my case, however, I always set them apart consciously, and create my works with such notion. That is what I feel the difference is between Enokura and I. Therefore, there emerges a concept of “ma (space)” between myself and for instance the object, as a matter of course. The idea of keeping things apart, or insert a space in between is, in fact, what I detect in Lee’s works too. Such manner as to separating the objectivity and the subjectivity, as a matter of fact, was the characteristic of that period. That is what I feel.

Enokura - I feel it is a very big difference, as I have mentioned before.

Suga - Yes, very big indeed. It is as to say, perceiving clearly in there, the difference between Enokura and myself, for instance.

Enokura - The theory of whether it may be MONO-HA or not, would be probably discussed later on. However, as Lee has mentioned before, let us take Haraguchi as an example. I am speaking about this on behalf of him, but he might have a different opinion of his own, however in any case, what I feel from him is that Haraguchi’s origin is Yokosuka; the US Navy Base where the scent of the oil emanates from the steel machines and the camouflaged uniforms moving elsewhere. His origin lays there in Yokosuka. While as for Takayama, this is a personal matter, but his father is from Korea. In the past Koreans were taken to Japan and were enforced to labour as tracklayers. This is the fact that will never disappear from his soul. It is imprinted within himself. That is why he keeps on using sleepers in his art works. As for my case, compared to him, it is something more instinctive. The circumstance is not so concrete, but embodies some sort of very physical instinct. But still, there is something in common between his work and mine in the sense of physical distance towards the outside world.

Lee - Non the less, although you talk about physicalism, the sense that Enokura and Takayama project is quite different. If you look at the photograph of a human skin, honestly speaking it is the work of instinct. And as for Takayama the imaginary aspect is very strong in him.

Enokura - As I said before, I don't think that really matters. I guess what you say is true. I do have such aspect within a special part of me. In that sense there is something in common in the sense of physical distance.

Suga - Yes, there is indeed.

Lee - I also write things about human body, but as for my case, to tell you the truth it was unexpectedly more ideological. I guess one of the reasons is the fact that I am a foreigner who came from outside. If I am to bring in some concrete personal experiences or the image of some sort, I might end up with myself tripped over, or on the contrary, getting too realistic in an odd way. I was somehow influenced by the conceptual art of those days. But instead of plotting it untouched into the art work by manipulating it in my mind, what I did was, on the basis of phenomenological method, reassert the various elements such as the specific place or the object, to distort, to damage my own concept. Would it be possible to cause a gap in one's own concept? So instead of expressing the concept itself, although remaining conceptual, I thought it would be possible to go out to a different direction by relating it with the objects and the space. This is something I could not speak out until now. I could not have spoken like this in those days.

Enokura - That tells us that there are all sorts of distances, all different types, even if the term is the same. We can see that even Lee and Suga have quite different senses of distance.

Suga - This is something very personal that I am very ashamed of, but I used to be very poor in speaking in front of people until my Junior High or High School days. I presume that it is caused by the influence from my parents, but I found it very hard to interpret something I see into specific words. I couldn't speak, after all. In short it was some sort of autism. I was quite anxious to get rid of it, and as one measures, I entered the university. However, in reality I spent almost half of my university days uncured and frustrated. In those days, I happened to think of, in what extent could the parents posteriorly train their children their expressive function. Looking back to myself I do not think that I have been instilled, from my parents, the words/language. I don't have any recollection that I ever had any occasion to even talk with my parents. In that sense, even staying/living together, I haven't inherited any of the logical system that my parents had. Instead, I had to discover it on my own. I have never spoke about this before, this is my first time to speak about this that I had to make each and every decision by myself and this was really a pain for me. In other words, everything was new to me and I felt that I was learning everything from the beginning. "What is this," and "what is that," kind of feeling. It is just like teaching yourself English, a foreign language. That was what Japanese language used to be for me. Ever since I entered the university for the very first time. So, I always had a notion that certain idea or thought is to be acquired by learning. I know that this is my selfish obsession, but I believed that only by learning could you obtain the ability to think or be conscious of something. In fact I still feel that way. Since I did not have any preconception during the course of such learning, in the opposite sense, I was able to use my consciousness unpolluted in my artistic expression. I managed to keep my eagerness towards an expression unattained. Therefore, in that sense, I feel myself very peculiar, or should I say, that was the key point for me to build up my way of thinking. One other thing is that, in a sense that is connected to my works for the most, I tell everybody everywhere that my works can be categorized as one of the American Earth Work. It is not intentionally, of course, but I tell them to never mind about the previous issues any more. I always speak as if I am chopping off the past quite furiously. Old things; of course there are a lot of valuable things within the traditional objects. I surely understand that. So, as for the beginning I settled my starting point on the Earth Work and by thinking like this, I started to construct a framework of my foundation within myself. Whether it ended up as a success or not, I cannot tell, but at least for the sense of distance, as has been mentioned before, or the way to incorporate various factors, or the way to recognize the place, I think I managed to master them rather easily. Should Fine Art be in necessity of historical nature? This is only a personal opinion and I know it is a weird one, but in a sense, I think that Fine Art can come into existence without any relation with the history. I may offend Enokura by saying this but I think there can be a fine art that comes into existence abruptly. Probably, there should be a form of fine art which is necessary to inspire these new objects. And in a way, I must say that I may not be able to keep on doing without it. That is to say, without an idea to create a completely new intention or new thought, for me the fine art would become very bitter some. It must be noted that this is purely my personal opinion, but early 70's was the time when these ideas occurred in my mind.

Lee - As for me, on the contrary, it seems that the very point you mentioned is most historical. And then, I was singled out for criticism and condemned that I was completely ignoring or denying the history. But the notion of denial or alienation of the history itself is in fact history-conscious and this

history. But the notion of denial or alienation of the history itself is in fact history-conscious and this notion is the factor that creates history. As a whole, trying to sustain what is structured internally, I believe, is not the least history-conscious, but rather, it has not done anything. Keeping distance with the history; this notion is no doubt the large reason why it became very historical.

Suga - In any case, all of us actually possess such notion, do we not. Either personally, or within the social movement, there always exist some part which is very historical. To live within the society does mean that you have to accept it, after all.

Lee - It has become difficult to interpret into words/language because of the appearance of the notion of the space or the place, or to stand with somewhat distorted posture. Besides, word itself is the subject of post-constructivism. There arose a lot of nagging against us, fussing that we are no good because we denied the words, or that we destroyed the internal structure confined within the works which represent the modernness, or even denied to create such art works, etc., etc. These are at the least right; the truth is, on the contrary, one has to inevitably go through these denial for at least once to accomplish something. This is the assertion that an expressionist deserves, or in other words, where the restriction is settled.

Enokura - This is something very fundamental. It is very comprehensible if you listen to Suga's story of his past experience and then connect it to the production of his works. I find it extremely interesting.

Suga - There must be many people who have the same kind of lifestyle or circumstances like mine, but there aren't many who share the same consciousness towards the fine arts; it is in fact limited. In that sense, I happened to think of the necessity to reconsider the difficulty or diversity, esotericism of the art, in a way. It is because, in those days, I was criticized as being excessively difficult or incomprehensible. Both my writing and my works. No matter what exhibition is, I was always evaluated as such without exception. For these past 20 years, I have been thinking what on earth does this word "incomprehensible" means, what is the true meaning of this word. But after all, I still have not discovered any answer to this question. For all those people, the degree of incomprehensibility is totally different. The meaning itself is also completely different. It is impossible, of course, to explain everything. It is impossible for sure, but still, if I would somehow be able to produce or create in a way that these people could even understand for some extent, I thought that would be wonderful. But the fact is, the more I think, the more it gets difficult. Recently, I dropped by a book shop, and found out that now there are a lot of books on incomprehensibility collected as a science or within the system of criticism. They keep on coming with a term "fractal." There are a lot of books that try to explain the incomprehensibility with the term diversity. Quite recently, that is. What they state is that there are indeed a lot of things in variety, not in the single form, but the fact that there exist a variety of things, which causes the difficulty to understand. For example, when I used the MONO (objects) in the Mixed Media with stones or woods, water, et caetera, and mix them altogether, that difficulty was multiplied. But instead, if I used a single element such as just wood or canvas, then it should have become quite simple for the viewers to understand. It is because it has nothing to do with the impact to the element. One can understand it by just watching the picture, or the design, which is painted on the canvas. However, if you paste down a piece of wood, a stone, or a stick of steel on the canvas, then it becomes incomprehensible. There are, inevitably, people who insist that they cannot understand, and that makes this sort of notion to come into existence. In the form of Fine Art, I have been unconsciously dealing with this diversity for over 20 years. When it came out accidentally for the first time as a form of word, or the meaning, I started to think, spitefully, how would the people around me, or the people who received my message interpret it. I am still evaluated as incomprehensible, but I have been taking methods that are not so incomprehensible. However, no matter I take comprehensible methods, I am still described as incomprehensible. The reason for this is because people already possess a preconception towards me and what they do is that whatever I do they stick on to the impression that it is incomprehensible even if it is quite a simple one. At the beginning it has been said that the situation that a variety of things are intermingled together is incomprehensible, but then, when I simplify the situation and add a little bit of human action to it, they say that this very action is difficult to understand. This is absurd, unreasonable. I feel awfully depressed that I would not be able to keep on doing anymore. In that manner, I have been thinking about this word "incomprehensible" for over 20 years. And now at last, quite recently, incomprehensibility as an issue of one cultural level has been finally accepted as diversity. It has

about this word “incomprehensible” for over 20 years. And now at last, quite recently, incomprehensibility as an issue of one cultural level has been finally accepted as diversity. It has been understood as one conception in the era of abundance. In order to reflect and recognize the affluent culture with a vast variety of objects, it is connected with the notion to reevaluate the diversity. As a matter of course, the issue such as this diversity, Lee, Enokura, and others have been already energetically expressing it in their works unconsciously. So I guess for them there would not be a problem any longer now, but as for myself, it is still a headache. Consequently, I have started to think reversely, to give the diversity a certain form, to give the incomprehensibility a form. In different words it would be incomprehensible, but what I wanted to do is to give this incomprehensibility a form, or something that people can look at. This, in a way spiteful idea, suddenly came into my mind. Then I would incorporate it into a system. When I construct it into a system that people can look at and ask them “how about this?” what would the reaction be? What would the viewers say? I am now quite interested in observing this.

Lee - After all, this story has a long history in the background. What incomprehensibility is, I presume, is that one has become not able to express an object with just one single word. First there is a word. Artists are expected to create the works to fit in with this word so that people can instantaneously understand. But in fact artists are likely to deviate from that word when creating their works, and therefore, people end up bewildered. At this circumstance, in the background of the diversity, there is a fact that people in general do not possess a word of expression. Nonetheless, artists keep on presenting various works decomposing a variety of objects, and in the end it gets more and more difficult for them to understand. On that account, I am thinking of, instead of quoting a different spitefulness, that is the diversity, but on the contrary, to readjust it as much as possible and to thoroughly simplify it. Also with the materials I use, I extremely simplified them. At the beginning I used to bring in a lot of them, but I started to limit the materials to just stone and steel plate, for instance. As for the painting, I just drew one or two points; simple enough. None the less, ironically it became more and more difficult to understand. Even though I intended to readjust and simplify it, it became increasingly incomprehensible for the people.

Suga - It should be incomprehensible, I presume.

Lee - Not only for the people in general, I myself happened to become incomprehensible in it. After all, it was inevitably extremely incomprehensible.

Suga - I guess your works became more and more sophisticated/advanced in a spiritual sense. So, on the contrary, the incomprehensibility is involved there in a different way. It is quite severe, isn't it.

Lee - It means that the distance or the gap becomes bigger and bigger that any word cannot reach.

Suga - Yes, it helplessly gets bigger and bigger. When your work is diminished to just one dot, it becomes extremely difficult that no one can understand. Terribly difficult.

Enokura - Even though it is not supplemented by any word, if the art work is assertive by itself, if we can create that kind of structure, for me I think that is enough. So, as for me too, basically strive to eliminate whatever unnecessary from my works. I appraise a structure that exposes its abundance by eliminating the unnecessary as much as possible.

Lee - In a way, that is one type of minimalism, that is, in the opposite sense. More you eliminate, more rich it becomes. For the modernists, they may not be able to figure out what this is all about.

Suga - I guess so.

Enokura - I do not mind whether it is called minimal or not, that is not a big deal. However, I do believe that in the case of Japan, there is something more spiritual in it than just a minimal form. In that kind of action, after all, by eliminating the unnecessary, the richness stands out on its own. Richness, however, is a very ambiguous expression, I would rather explain it as one form of an active assertion. Probably it is quite unique to Japan, but it seems to me that this is very important.

Suga - I don't think that is only limited to Japan.

- Suga - I don't think that is only limited to Japan.
- Enokura - However, in case of Suga, what attracted my interest was that whether he had some kind of nervousness against the situation that he has been criticized as incomprehensible. In short, what was interesting about his story was, as for myself, going back to the previous discussion, we were talking about the physicalism. And at the same time, in those past days for instance, there were a lot of publications about psychiatry and others, which I believe I have read a lot of them. Among these publication, the most basic subject of these books was about the study of the schizophrenics' way of observing the MONO (objects). Those books were reporting a lot of cases that, without giving any name to the object, are very impressive and touching. These examples have something in common with the story "Toono Monogatari (The Toono Story)" which I mentioned previously, of the story of the horror that drove the woodcutters to death. These circumstances, I am not saying that Suga was in the same kind of circumstance, however, it seems that they all had some kind of structure which was extremely generous to that sort of recognition towards the object. That is my impression.
- Suga - We must, inevitably, recognize the existences of the objects that surround us, but we are not able to call out their names as nouns at all. That is to say, these objects are all nameless. All the objects without no names are surrounding us. This is a sort of horror, I guess. So, in order to eliminate this horror, what we do is to put names to these objects or attach various concepts to them and bind them up altogether. And then, this process of binding start to form a certain system. We are able to, in fact, materialize this system in our works, and therefore, this is a very important point for us. It is critical to first release them as much as possible and then, what is important is how much could we execute the process of binding together with a numerous small ropes. We have to tackle with this effort as much as we can endure. During the course of this process we put names to the objects, summoning the concept, and then, just like in a way confining ourselves in walls, we fortify our surroundings. This was the only way we could take. But now, in reality, having all these things already in our mind, I feel that we are able to see different other byways at the same time. We have been using these terms such as anonymousness quite frequently, haven't we?
- Lee - Yes we have, indeed.
- Suga - There were certainly times that we had no other way but to use these terms.
- Lee - Reversely to this anonymousness, there was, after all, a notion that tried to confront the very things such as proper names.
- Suga - Yes, that was so.
- Enokura - Which was lead to a system. Therefore, after all, the days of 70's which have been previously discussed, was when we had to deliberate about these systematic theory, or on the issues of hierarchy within the society. As for that, the reason why I started to participate, with Takayama and other artists, in an outdoor exhibition called "Space Totsuka" is that, in short, we had to question ourselves of what the meaning of exhibiting our works in a museum or gallery would be. That was indeed a big issue for us.
- Suga - So in the same sense, specifically speaking, in case of the exhibition at the Modern Museum in 1970^{*10} for instance, Lee used columns and I used walls and aluminum materials in our works. In fact, we were complained about using the building elements as our materials in the works. We were not supposed to use them.
- Enokura - Or because it is fragile.
- Lee - I was told that I was not allowed to use the column. But what I wanted to do was to connect myself with the columns.^{*11}

^{*10} Above mentioned exhibition "A Phase of the Modern Art" at National Museum of Modern Art

^{*11} Above mentioned work by Lee "Relatum (At a Place I, II, III)"

Suga - But at that time, things were moving towards such a system that we had to obey without any question. That is why I think that there ought to be some sort of naturalism emerging as a matter of course. Naturalism which, in order to prescribe one's own art work, even the building in which the work is accommodated, as well as the nature in which that building is located, is included as part of the work. I still have a kind of feeling that magnifies from one single point and expands into infinity.

Lee - If I take Katsuro Yoshida for example, from a certain time he has quitted all the works that were connected to what is called MONO (object) or space. His work, for example, the one which he has painted a wall for a certain width and then applied the wires on it.^{*12} I liked this work very much, for it created a certain tension. But all at once, he has decided not to do it any longer. When I asked him the reason why he has decided not to produce such works, his reply was that recently he has been feeling something unsatisfying in his works. I asked him what that supposed to mean. He responded that he began to be disgusted with leaning on the place or the space. And then he started to move on to, well, by means of lithograph, first through other people's hand or by a certain equipment, and then to the tableau. He hasn't moved on directly to the tableau, though. Gradually he has shifted to an art which he decides everything by himself. Consequently, no matter whether it is tableau, or it is the place, only those people who had doubts against modernism which comes into existence only by the self-conclusive mental structure, that is, those who try to produce their works in connection with something else, only those people have happened to continue creating works which would be categorized as MONO-HA. When you do something on your own, you must realize that the binding force of such works are very small. This is a certain resignation, or an uneasiness. It is the fear of not being able to create anything beyond a certain limit. Therefore, when you have a chance to see how much you can relate yourself to a space which expands infinitely, you just grasp it. It is in fact quite greedy, so to speak. Among the people who attempt to express something, those who are called MONO-HA artists are the most greedy people I have ever known. They are not satisfied by only confronting their egos, but they have an exorbitant ambition, or rather, desire to confront themselves with the universe. It was a group of greedy people who, not only expressing out what they have inside, but by crossing the internal with the external, strived to get involved in the wider world.

Suga - I remember that Lee has put a title "Related Items" to his work which, I guess, reflected what you have just mentioned. That is, first there is a concept of in-between(ness), a relationship for example, and then the awareness of position within this relationship. If this awareness is not firm enough, no "related items" would ever exist. This position stands in a sense as a starting point of a certain image of the world. I guess this is the same in Lee's case. The position, in a way, is attached to some sort of placeness. When you get to a question of whether the first position when you recognize the space was located outside or inside, it was definitely located inside during the days before '68. However, this concept of position has been shifted to outside after '68. It became visible everywhere, attached to the MONO (objects). Then, first of all, we discover this MONO. And then after finding the MONO, we place this MONO at random; the MONO becomes MONO itself. It is the MONO itself that has been often mentioned. Then a question arises of how to maintain this MONO itself. With such question we start to require something different - that is, the related items on which title that Lee often puts on his works - something with no relation at all, but still has, in a way that is understood here, some factor that makes the relationship. With this, for the first time, the object that is located in that position stands out quite clearly. It becomes visible as a system, or comes into existence as an art work. That form or the existence of the art work is completely different between those days before and after '68, and I think the recognition of the position which is located outside is continued even now. This is what I feel.

Lee - It is exactly so. Since the late 60's there have been various doubts against the system of certain knowledge which is exclusive and self-completed. I presume that this has occurred within each and every individuals. In those days, I was totally devoting myself into the phenomenological method which Heidegger and Merlo Ponti were advocating. This is the reason why I often quote the location

^{*12} Katsuro Yoshida "Red.Wire - Rope ... Wall and others" 1971 photo-

location (place) theory of Kitaro Nishida. In short, when you gaze at some MONO (object), it is not the way that you cover it one-sidedly with your own idea, but you have to recognize that you are gazed by that object yourself. Therefore, in those days, this idea rather fitted perfectly as a sense of distance that derived from the gap between the recognition and the object. This situation of confrontation, that is, the circumstance that you were gazed by the counterpart at the same time you gazed at it, the notion of such mutual limitation did not create the art work as a massive subject, but caused the object and the space to open up. I felt, in those days, that unless I indicate the place which may constitute such kind of intermediate item, I would not be able to create a new expression. Although I endeavoured to put a meaning on it one-sidedly, or to name it, it didn't go the way I wanted it to. And so, the method I applied was to create an item that may come into existence with the mutual tension in their relation, to create a certain quotation marks.

Enokura - However, in Lee's case, after all, it can be understood by what he has said just before, that his way of indicating it was by the conceptual structure. There is inevitably something very physicalistic in even Merlo Ponti's theory. As for myself, the term I use quite frequently is something like "reflection board of consciousness." What it means is that when you throw the consciousness against the outside world, some sort of wavelength is rebounded back, and that feed-back comes into existence with the reality. This is an issue that is common with the physical relation with the outside world, which I have been saying since a while ago. Therefore, as for Lee's series of "related items" - it is very clear if you study it within the overall structure - I strongly feel that his way of involvement is quite different from others. And so, as I myself quite often use a title "interference" to my recent works, this is also a sort of vibration rate of the way to make contact with the outside world, and I kind of wish to abstract such vibration rate, or to embody it.

Lee - This is very interesting. In those days, although it was not really precise for us, we all possessed that sort of relation with the outside world.

Suga - Also around up to '68, people used nothing but the mental matters as subject for painting or sculpture. That is, people in those days were considering art as just a meaning, and believed that art is something without a shape. This was, I presume, the way they were thinking in the past. But subsequently, people started to understand that, after all, things were not the way they thought they were. Such art, no matter how much you give a shape to it, is nothing more than that. If you glance around yourself, there are, in fact, a lot more variety of things that can be given a shape. The next question is; what are we going to do with them?

Lee - It was just as if the curtain has been torn off. That is why it became visible.

Suga - If it is not as such, after all, there weren't any more space to expand in those days. As for me, in the same sense as "interference" which Enokura has just mentioned, in my case it was something like interdependence. By establishing a relationship of mutual dependence, I have been considering it as a way to capture the outside world, or to capture a certain image of the world. In those days, each of us all used to deliberate all sorts of things with our own ways of measuring physically.

Lee - That is actually the difference from the Earth Work, Arte Povera, or other concepts. That very part of it. They use various materials but still the nature of the confined image or the mental structureism is very strong in them.

Suga - That is caused by the European philosophy and thoughts, or the level of it, isn't it. And also the level of their Fine Art.

Lee - They do not have any external/outside world. Almost none. No matter how far they get, they cannot break away from the extension of themselves.

Suga - Yes, exactly. They are only concerned about the inside. That is the limit of the European ideology. No matter how much they accept the outside, they only recognize it on the basis of the state of confrontation.

Enokura - That could be said for the Earth Work as well.

- Suga - They are nothing more than that. They couldn't think the other way than separating the human being and the nature. However, we are different from them. We think that there are human nature in the outside as well as inside. There are various viewpoints of the inside as well as outside. If you think that way, everything start to circulate quite fluently. That kind of feeling. So, human being should not necessarily be the subject on which the name is adopted, but it is something that already exists over there. The initial question was that why couldn't they ever accept that. I presume there must be some reason for that.
- Lee - I feel that people who are called as MONO-HA are all pretty self-possessed. As far as I am concerned, I don't know anybody that are soaked in or drunk.
- Suga - Perhaps Takayama is the only exception. (chuckle)
- Lee - After all, we all know our own risks. When you look over the eighties, those people who were a part of communal society or who had a ground to rely on were very weak. They had no other choice but to start from recognizing their own risks, where they were standing on, or worried about being watched by the others. As for me, an art work is a form of interaction. And an interaction in a true sense is a relationship which is created when one is confronted against the difference with the counterpart, or against something other than oneself. Or else, it is nothing but a collusive/ambiguous monologue. MONO-HA only comes into existence when this ambiguity is excluded.
- Suga - If you discuss about it along with the expression, for example, in those days a certain kind of totality or entirety has been talked about. I believe that his totality has been reflected quite systematically to a lot of works. My vision towards an art work is, not partial, nor what has been completed, but a certain totality in a sense that embodies the image of the world of wider sense in which all those factors are involved. This idea is also incorporated in Takamatsu's work of the latter period. Although he exhibited the works themselves, there existed some hidden world that supported those works and these had to be appreciated together with it. In order to express this, I think, there emerged the notion of the entirety or the totality. As for myself, I have considered about it too, to quite an extent. It involves a variety of nuances; entirety, totality, or "the thing in itself". I used to use this term "the thing in itself" while Lee used an expression "itself." There were various ways of expressing it, but what I feel is that we ought to strictly verify them. We shouldn't lump them together, but rather verify each and every expression of the individuals like, "he said this," "Enokura said that," "I said this" and so on, by ascertaining each nuance, or the difference. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to capture the specific forms of thinking in the '70, or the category of the Fine Arts in those days. I feel that we are in short of concreteness up to now. In all senses, we all talk about the outline of the '70 but it seems that not all of us recognize the difference of each word, or of each symbol, of the way of thinking, which indicate the characteristics of the '70. How to explain which part, that sort of thing.
- Enokura - It is also important to recognize what it means.
- Suga - If we don't have a good understanding of this issue - even critics are no exception - we won't be able to get any answer no matter how much we argue on where the outline was emerged, or what sort of nuances there are.
- Lee - By the way, taking this opportunity, I would like to state clearly about what I feel about Minemura's works. Although he has not actually witnessed the movement of MONO-HA in those days, he is actively producing exhibitions and writing texts. By adopting such subject as MONO-HA after all these years, in such a positive manner, I think in a way he has done an extremely important job. However, there are some occasions that I feel quite embarrassed about the prescribed concept of MONO-HA. One thing that embarrasses me is the fact that MONO-HA has brought in what has been merely a material into a leading part. This is very undesirable. This is the very reason why the term MONO-HA is apt to be tremendously misunderstood. There are criticism that MONO-HA has disgraced or disposed the objects. Essentially what MONO-HA is, that is dismantles the notion as being the leading part and gives the art work a place more open to the viewers. Regardless of what is presented in front of one's eye, even if it is a piece of stone, a glass, or oil, what they do is to place them and the human being in a more intimate position, or to transfer and reassert them into a more idealistic relationship, to create a situation of intermediate or in-between the deviation. Speaking in

transfer and reassert them into a more idealistic relationship, to create a situation of intermediate or in-between the deviation. Speaking in current words, it is to post-construct the objects within the relation with the space. It has initiated from the skepticism, which has already been observed, that it would not be possible to give the traditional nature of construction to the objects by willfully adopting our own words. Therefore, if “to create” has been traditionally used as “to create a mass,” I have spoken out that I am against such creation in that sense. That is why the organization and those people who advocate the theory of the mass have denied MONO-HA stating that it is just an air-pocket phenomenon. So it is not reasonable at all for the mass theory supporters to criticize Suga. As for myself, for instance, too, have been the target of criticism for the term I used many times; “leave the obvious obvious.” Even for this, there is no need to interpret it in intentionally complicated way. It is, for example, to start from this very normal present state, as you can see here. The next plain state of obviousness is as if, for instance, transforming HIRAGANA to KATAKANA (2 types of Japanese characters). These transforming, reorganizing, or deviating are the ways for expression. It is only simple as that. I cannot understand why it is interpreted in a strange way as if it had a somehow awkward substance, but as for ourselves, we have a recognition that for an artist who tries to express something, there aren't much he can do. There is a notion of such restriction within ourselves.

Enokura - I think that there is a clear hierarchy in Minemura's direction towards MONO-HA and he selects things observing the “Mass Theory” in front of him. Here we have Nakamura. When he produced MONO-HA exhibition at Kamakura Gallery^{*13} he was rather expressing his issue of relativity, but when he participated in the exhibition at Saison^{*14}, MONO-HA was completely reorganized with hierarchy. It was as if we all were deceived by Minemura. That is, we were not given any word of information that he was going to hold an exhibition at Seibu after Kamakura. Not even a hint. In that exhibition all the photographs and materials which he has exhibited at Nakamura's were used, without any notice.

Suga - Not at all?

Enokura - Nil, nothing at all. That is why we feel that we have been replaced with a counterfeit. Well, it is all the same to Takayama and Haraguchi as well. It only gave me an impression of him trying to make up. After all that he has done. But like today, having an opportunity to talk with Lee and Suga, I certainly manage to find something common with what is called MONO-HA too, and I can agree that this is something very rich/affluent. But once you have an experience of being deceived like this, it is very disappointing, but it makes all these favourable impressions disappear. Therefore, after all, I feel that, going back to the previous issue which we have talked at the beginning, we must once more, as Suga mentioned, try to create some movement to verify the sensitivity of each individual. Or else, in case we have a chance to exhibit abroad the art works which are categorized as MONO-HA in the future, if these works are to be selected by Minemura, it would probably be inevitable that only a certain type of works are partially chosen, and that may cause our effort very superficial.

Lee - That is because Minemura has a high opinion of Suga. I hesitate to say this to Suga, but I understand the process of how he became like what he is now. At the beginning, when he was about to produce the text for Kamakura Gallery^{*15}, things were still rather vague in his mind. And gradually, he became aware of the notion of the massive objects. Consequently, then, along with this notion, he started to create an image such as post-MONO-HA or some sort. This is what I think. In order to produce such image, MONO-HA subsequently became a nuisance in him. It became to be troublesome, in the viewpoint of modernism which confines the object within the mass, to accept those seemingly loose circumstances, creating a gap between the objects, or connecting itself with the outside. No matter whether it was called MONO-HA or not, this was the global phenomenon of those days. Among those which are called Modern Art, it could be explained, as a conception, one of the first sprout of post modern movement, or one of the major characteristics, or the nature that

^{*13} 8 September to 18 October, 1986 “MONO-HA” Exhibition at Kamakura Gallery

^{*14} 26 June to 19 July 1987, “Art in Japan since 1969/MONO-HA and post MONO-HA” Exhibition at Seibu Museum of Art

^{*15} “What was MONO-HA ” by Toshiaki Minemura, Inserted in the catalogue of the above mentioned “MONO-HA” Exhibition at Kamakura Gallery, 1986

characteristics, or the nature that could not be touched. Of course, I am fully aware that MONO-HA is not the post modernism. But after all these years, it seems that it is too difficult now to create a certain totality or fanaticism. Rather, what is important is the integration that contains the outside world. Just like many countries all around the world that declared independence, and other countries having equal relationship with such countries; this is a general issue which has such a vast scale of expanse. Even for the words which each individual uses, if we misunderstand them by interpreting them without any verification of the context, we won't be able to recognize the specific works. That is my most anxiety.

Suga - In case of Minemura, as I have just mentioned, when I heard his mumbling about the mass or whatever, in a way, I thought that it would be quite possible. I do not mean to offend him, but I knew that he obviously possessed such nature. What is called a mass is, so to speak - I guess I have already mentioned about it in the beginning - is about the perception of Fine Arts as a certain human level, that is, as a mental issue, an issue of internal meaning. The humanism that has been imported until around '68 has now come to an end, and then started our activity. If that was the case, then, apart from the question of how long it lasted, or whether he has understood it to some extent, he has, in a sense, become tired of it. MONO (object) is inexhaustible, you know. It is such a pain to establish all those objects as an example, one by one. I fully understand that it is very painful if, neither the artist nor the producer, but the critics have to do it. So, as a matter of course, I find no problem in ceasing it, but as for Minemura, he not merely ceased to do it, but he also started to justify in ceasing it. The mass used to have a meaning of sculpture. That means that it is much easier to enter into the world of quality and quantity.

Enokura - That is why the motif which is inside the...

Suga - Internal, that is, the necessity of the form which expresses the world of meaning. This became the theory of mass. That is why, in that sense, it is a complete retract. Therefore, it is nothing but a violence to, instead of completely transforming the traditional world of objects, ignore the situation and completely neglecting everything that were there, in spite of the fact that, along with the current of the times, a world of different sense is starting to come into existence all the way since the seventies. It must be recognized as something still continuing. That is because, as for me, the way I create an art work is, on the basis of the various concepts which derived in the seventies, by developing all these concepts. Therefore, the way that completely ignores the certain personal way of stepping forward is of course something that shouldn't be done. If one desires to make access to an artist, one has to deliberate more about what were those times in the seventies when people have produced the art works which were called as MONO-HA, or the reason why they produced such works. If one is to think about today. Not even caring for such effort, it has been simply abandoned just because it has become the way it is now. This is not a very polite thing to do for anybody.

Lee - This is not Minemura's personal problem.

Suga - We all ought to have our own basis on each motivation which we have been accumulating for all these years.

Enokura - I think that is why Minemura is criticizing those people of Geidai (Tokyo National University of Fine Arts), or those of Tamabi (Tama Art University) in his catalogue^{*16}. Which school one has graduated is not important at all as it is for the professional baseball players, you know. It is nonsense to categorize them by the school which they have graduated.

Lee - You have to respect them as individual artists.

Enokura - And also Chiba^{*17} who talks about "genuine" or "sequel." What on earth is he talking about? About the movie "Rocky" or something?

Suga - Perhaps he has established a new party, in a way.

^{*16} Above mentioned "MONO-HA" Exhibition catalogue at Kamakura Gallery, 1986

^{*17} Shigeo Chiba, an art critic

- Lee - It really sounds like a religious argument.
- Enokura - I cannot really stand that kind of frivolity. However, in a way, that became one of the pattern and, for example, it seems that those members who went abroad have somehow established their own hierarchy of some sort.
- Lee - Well, I don't think that will happen.
- Enokura - Even that, they are chosen by foreigners. First was Barbara,^{*18} wasn't it? And it is Monroe's^{*19} turn this time.
- Lee - Is that so? Do they really have that kind of notion? Really Monroe? That is amazing. Are they really doing that?
- Suga - Yes, they are.
- Lee - I guess you, Suga, you haven't read it because you had to leave early, but there was an explanation board hung on the wall at the booth of the so-called MONO-HA's works. What was written there was something like "Japanese MONO-HA is Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Shamanism, etc. etc..." They can't be serious. What are they talking about? I really got mad, but she was just grinning like a fool! Watching me losing temper!^{*20}
- Suga - That's embarrassing. You should have made an objection.
- Enokura - You can't tell that.
- Lee - I think they are joking!
- Suga - That's really embarrassing. If Yokohama^{*21} is involved, I may have to make an objection to them.
- Enokura - Yes, they are involved.
- Lee - And also this time when I was at the opening party, I was asked exactly the same questions as I was asked in Europe. Looking at my works, a guy asked me whether I selected that stone by myself. When I replied yes, then he asked me whether that stone listened to what I said. You will never get such questions in Japan!
- Suga - Did he ask whether that stone "heard" you?
- Lee - I answered that I presumed that stone would not listen to what I said. Then he asked what was I going to do. I told him that since it wouldn't listen to my words, I wished to make an art work accepting such selfishness of the stone. When we were talking about such thing, another one who seemed to be very keen like a critic came by. Despite of my poor English, while three of us were talking together, those two suddenly started to quarrel with each other, the second guy saying, to the first one, "you are a fool, can't you see that this work is interesting because it tries to bring in the factor other than yourself" and so on.
- Suga - Were you there watching them?

^{*18} Barbara Bertozzi, the curator of : "MONO-HA" Exhibition (29 April to 15 October, 1988), "MONO-HA" Exhibition at the University of Rome

^{*19} Alexandra Monroe, the curator of : "Japanese Vanguard Art after the War" at Yokohama Museum (5 February to 30 March, 1994) "Japanese Art After 1945 Scream Against the Sky" at Guggenheim Museum, SOHO (14 September, 1994 to 8 January, 1995)

^{*20} About "Japanese Art After 1945 Scream Against the Sky" at Guggenheim Museum, SOHO (14 September, 1994 to 8 January, 1995) and at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (21 May, 1995 to 3 September, 1995)

^{*21} Yokohama Museum of Art

- Lee - That was exactly the scene a MONO-HA art work ought to derive. As for the first person who asked me if this stone listened to what I said, you know, I don't think there is any chance that he would understand my art. Never. In short, it has to be as if my idea plopping right into his mind 100%, but in fact, for him, it was only something weird which looked very choppy. I guess that was the way he felt. It was indeed a very interesting experience for me, though. It seemed to me that among those foreign people, those who are interested in having a certain relationship with some factors other than themselves, that is, the outside world, and those who have no concerns, are now standing on the borderline.
- Enokura - And also, I guess those young staffs in the museums would be very active also in the year to come, but these young generations are very much interested in knowing in what kind of structure had been those so-called MONO-HA artists doing. As it is clear in this Lee's story, those foreigners are all the same. There are not much difference in them. So...
- Lee - They could be more wicked.
- Suga - If you count it backwards (trace it backwards/back in time), you will, naturally, run into something. I mean, it hadn't occurred unexpectedly, just like the bamboo shoot that sprouts up all of a sudden, but there must be a reasoning even for a bamboo shoot to sprout out where there are bamboo grooves. If you fail to recognize this logic, you won't be able to... .
- Enokura - And so, what I am intending to do now is to reconsider one more time, the reason why Minemura had to establish such an hierarchy, in a sense from my own viewpoint. As I have mentioned in the beginning, it has already been a long time now, and there must be some movement to recapture, or to reconfirm it in a general sense. And on this basis, in an occasion to exhibit the works abroad, it ought to be a big issue whether we can actually manage it in such a large vortex of the movement.
- Lee - Yes, indeed.
- Suga - In case of Minemura, the problem with him is that he always takes things in a negative way.
- Lee - Yes, right from the beginning.
- Suga - That is the problem for not only the MONO-HA, but the notion to recognize that part of those days as a negative art, in general, is in itself completely negative.
- Lee - And that notion is not linked to the action of creating the works which occurs later on.
- Suga - No, it isn't. Not even himself.
- Lee - I can see.
- Suga - For him, when that part is excluded, he could have not linked himself with his own quality, that is, the mass.
- Lee - That is exactly right.
- Suga - If he doesn't think things in a positive way, the idea that he is now advocating wouldn't have emerged. Then, why ever is he thinking negatively? This is something I can never understand. In short, nobody is required to take it negatively. Not even the critics. Even the artists, too. If they start to think like, "well, I'll leave this because everybody dislikes it now," if they think like that, in my opinion, that is not right. Even in the history of an individual, it is ought to be taken positively, and done only after it is classified as to which is necessary and which is not, and with what judgment should it be given. Otherwise, in any case, I get an impression that it would be extremely agonizing for that individual, as well as the people around him/her.
- Nakamura - Another issue I would like to propose is about the reproduction of the art works. There have been a lot of opinions, this and that, about this issue quite recently, especially from the museum side,

side, and for that I would like to hear from you briefly about it.

Lee - I think there are a lot of ways of thinking about reproduction in general. However, instead of speaking about the generality here, I think we should discuss, on the basis of the characteristics of the works of the artists who are called MONO-HA, of the way they think about this reproduction issue. This is one thing. In the Modern Art, there is a tendency that, in a way, reproduction is taken for granted. In the Modern Art on the whole, it is almost as if it could be said for all the works. However, it is also a difficult question as to whether the term "reproduction" is really adequate or not. For MONO-HA, reproduction is something which has to be seriously deliberated. As I said, the term "reproduction," that is to say, to produce the same art for the second time, is self-contradictory. We would, after all, never be able to produce exactly the same thing again. In case of MONO-HA, as we have been discussing all the way from the beginning, it is characterized by the fact that the art work would come into existence within the mutual relation between those factors such as MONO (objects), place, and time. On this basis, those works which have been managed to simplify the factors of which the works are composed may last, but there is no chance for the majority of works, which are concerned with specific place or space in variety, or of which several objects are related to each other in a very severe way, to last for long. They are based on an idea that the works are transformed depending on the time and the place (position), or that they come into existence according to the time and the place (position). Therefore, the reproduction for those people who produce other modern arts, or in other words, the works which the artists' internals are confronted prominently with the outside world and then confined, and the reproduction of those whose works are always established, or of which places (positions) are created, by the equivalent relationship, are obviously different in their meaning. So, the reproduced works which MONO-HA artists produce possess, from the beginning, some sort of reproductive factors. This is not necessarily the question of self-rationalization, but what it means is that it is likely to not form without such mutual relationship that constantly exists. Therefore, it is not contradictory at all to abandon something that has been specifically utilized or not to be able to conserve such something. On this basis, if you try to newly produce it now, the work will never be the same as before. I think it is fine to leave it like that. Only that that concept, or in other words, that motif is the same. I presume there are several ways for each artists to implement; to indicate the dates of production of the original work and the new work in parallel, for example. But at least, as far as the MONO-HA is concerned, the work is quite possibly a reproduction, and the idea to criticize it by saying that it shouldn't be the same as the past, in my opinion, is nothing but the denial of the conception of MONO-HA.

Enokura - I perfectly agree with you. Depending on the work, for example, there are cases of which concepts are impossible to reproduce. However, even though I think it is perfectly fine as such, if the concept is very prominent and vast enough, no matter how many times it is repeated, it must have something to assert in itself. And this is the structure which the artists should strive to create. So as for myself, I don't mind at all. In a way, if we ask the painter what the reproduction means to them, for instance, he/she would reply that it is the painting. If an artist produces 100 works, I wonder with how many of them would he/she be satisfied. I think that he/she would respond that there are less than 10. It is impossible to totally satisfy with all the works which he produced. In a way, it is a reproduction. Because he is repeating it over and over again. If he gets tired, he may stop there. It is, indeed, only a few that you can be satisfied with. I mean, including myself, that is. Lee, you would agree with me, when you think of yourself, wouldn't you. I think, after all, the situation is as such. So, on this basis, the works of those artists who are called as MONO-HA can never be impossible to reproduce. If the concept is concrete, I can accept the idea to repeat it many times.

Suga - As for me, speaking about whether it is allowed to reproduce or not, I am already reproducing as a matter of fact. Recently I have been asked to use the paraffin^{*22} too many times. I produced it in New York, Yokohama, even in Seibu. It's been already 4 or 5 times. The materials were all industrial products and so, they were of course the same all the time. So as for the reproduction, they were of no problem at all. Only thing was that structurally, even though the form was all the same, there were some differences depending on the location. That is the influence of that place to the work. That is what you have to take into account. For example, in New York, I inserted some cross pieces/frame to strengthen my work...

*22 Kishio Suga "Parallel Strata" 1969 photo-

cross pieces/frame to strengthen my work...

Lee - That was your best one.

Suga - Yes, I agree. So in every sense, in a positive way, even though the concept is all the same, the works are inevitably different each time they are produced. Therefore, the only question is, whether one can tolerate those difference for oneself. So, you should not reject all the requests for reproduction, but what I recommend is to do whatever you can do, by following your concept. Of course, you cannot do something impossible. This morning, I was thinking about what would the difference be between reproducing one art work and producing 5 same works. I was just wondering about such question. What I came up with was that it doesn't seem that you are remitted of sin if you produce one work as just one, but instead, even if you produce 5 works, after all, it is all the same, depending on the location. Then, no matter how many works you produce, whether it is only one or five, or even 20 or 100, if it is all the same in the end, then speaking about the reproduction, you must accept the reproduction. The only thing is that there may be no problem if the condition is established so that the art works are properly evaluated, even though they are somewhat different from each other when they are reproduced, plus the various factors such as, that they all have different ways of their own, or whose property it may be, where it is located, or even, how was my physical condition at that time. However, if it is not the case, and if the evaluations are deviated simply in a symbolic sense, that is, by just questioning whether it is the original or the reproduction, the artists will be totally discouraged. So, instead, there must be people who are able to properly understand the situation for the reevaluation. Apart from whether the work is new or old, after all, the works of seventies and the one of nineties are different in the quality of any industrial products, as a matter of course. What is necessary is the sense of reality. Yes, reality. I wish if my work would be evaluated on the basis of how you interpret this reality. I think the receiving party should also learn about how to understand it.

Enokura - Lee's take, for instance, my work which I am going to exhibit at the exhibition at Kamakura Gallery,^{*23} the one which a knife is protruded.^{*24} It is quite possible to mass produce it in a large amount, if I wish to. But on the contrary, I definitely want to complete with that only work. The reason is that, I have ground the blade part of the knife to use it for this exhibition, but the grid part, I have made it a long time ago with the materials I have dragged out from under the floor of my house. The glass is new, and the steel as well. Also, in the past exhibition, I took a photograph of the skin of the human being and exhibited it together with my work. The frame I made at that time, was made of waste timber which was also lying under the floor. I used that material consciously. So, strictly speaking, there is no way I can produce the work with new materials.

Lee - You did find such materials there at that time?

Enokura - Yes, there were plenty of them. And I used them on purpose. So, for that reason, I don't think I will be able to reproduce my works. Well, there are artists who say that they manage to do it. Should you have at least appropriate space for the work, you can reproduce freely, as much as you wish. But on the other hand, some say that they would never concede it, that they would never make any reproduction. There ought to be people who have such opinion, it is very natural.

Suga - As for myself, too, the materials I used in the past are not produced in the industry any more. I can't procure them any longer, even if I wish to reproduce. It is absolutely impossible even though I am requested to do. I have been evading such requests so far, but they must understand that there are things that I can and things that I can't.

^{*23} 12 September to 1 November, 1994 "MONO-HA" Exhibition at Kamakura Gallery

^{*24} Koji Enokura "The Collection for Sympton" Exhibited in "MONO-HA" Exhibition at Kamakura Gallery (Original in 1967)

- Lee - One other thing is that I would try to make my work look alike, or similar to the original as much as I can, in its dimension or the coherency with the time, but if I am required to make it exactly the same, I shall decline the request. For me, that is something I definitely refuse to do. Among the relationship between myself and the objects, the only reason why I do it is because it seems interesting, or very stimulating to see the strain in such relationship, given that I myself getting into different generation, and the industrial materials being improved or been renewed. But if I am required to produce it exactly the same as the original, that is impossible, and more than that, I don't want to do it.
- Suga - The condition up to around '75 has, if anything, some favourable elements for reproduction. There were numerous works on which basis such concept was formed, or the artist may never be able to express his goal unless his works are reproduced. That was my case, in fact. Therefore, since those works themselves do not exist any more, it is impossible to use exactly the same materials, even if I am requested to, so there is no other choice than to use new materials. And then, when I use the new materials, some complain that the work is not the same as it used to be. I cannot stop myself from saying that, that's an awkward thing to say, because up to around '75, I was not producing my works on premise that these would eventually be reproduced. I had no idea of doing such thing in those days. Therefore, such reproduction in quotation mark is, a completely different work.
- Lee - In a way, MONO-HA is denying that they are the same.
- Suga - Essentially, yes.
- Lee - It always depends on each individual.
- Suga - As I have said few moments ago, it is the issue of diversity. You can produce similar works as much as you wish, but they are all completely different works. Let us suppose that a room is full of horses. In this sense, the horses are all the same, but in fact, the horses are all different in themselves. So, if this fact is not accepted, it is impossible. I think I have gone too far, haven't I.
- Lee - Were there any other episodes...?
- Suga - What about your reproduction to be exhibited in the Kamakura Gallery?
- Lee - Mine?
- Suga - It was different for you, wasn't it.
- Nakamura - Enokura's was different.
- Enokura - Mine was an original.
- Suga - Everybody keep their own original works, don't they.
- Lee - Well for me, I have few.
- Nakamura - Nobody has any. Isn't that right?
- Suga - As for me, my works up to '75 are almost all gone.
- Lee - The one I have just exhibited,^{*25} I used to keep the original until last year. But it was all rotten. It was as if I have done so intentionally. So I decided to throw that away, with good grace. And there was another one, with which I have a very bad memory. It was the one which was rejected for the exhibition; I have a terrible recollection about it.
- Suga - But I thought that one was wonderful. Such work is very valuable, I think.

^{*25} Lee U-Fan "Relatum" Exhibited in "MONO-HA" Exhibition at Kamakura Gallery, 1994

- Enokura - I have heard from some source that in the past it was possible to cut the material with scissors, but it wasn't possible this time. This gap, you know, is quite interesting.
- Suga - You must accept the fact. You can even use some machine to cut it now.
- Lee - The means of production has been changed nowadays. You can't use the scissors any more. It used to be much easier snapping it off with your hands.
- Suga - Yes, it is in fact true.
- Lee - I do think so, as a matter of course, so I bought the scissors this time. But it didn't work at all. This reminded me that my recognition towards the materials has never been changed from the past at all.
- Suga - Your hands are getting weaker than before. You have just been writing with a pen most of the times these days.
- Lee - I guess that gave Nakamura a big trouble indeed.
- Nakamura - I managed to cut it with an electric saw.
- Enokura - Was that made of stainless steel?
- Lee - Yes, it was stainless steel.
- Enokura - No wonder you can't cut it.
- Lee - But, the stainless steel I used to use in the past can be actually cut. The quality has been completely changed. I called the stainless steel manufacturer to ask about it, and the reply was that, they are not manufacturing it in the same manner. He was actually laughing. We can see here how our thoughts are fixed.
- Enokura - So I think such matters, those realistic problems, are quite significant for us artists. Those things that are very minute for the people in general.
- Suga - That's because it is a simple question of whether you can do it or not.
- Lee - Then, while you proceed to do such things, eventually you start to want to create something different.
- Suga - Yes, indeed. That is exactly right.
- Enokura - You surely start to think like that.
- Lee - Yes. While you tackle with one work, you start to think about different things.
- Enokura - You can do it in other occasion, of course.
- Suga - The majority of the art works in the seventies were as such. We used to think something else while producing a certain work.
- Lee - Yes, that was the case.
- Suga - And then, a lot of ideas eventually emerge. Next time I should do this way or that, and so on. In that sense we have been possessing a lot of diversities within ourselves.
- Lee - We used to wish if we could hold a big exhibition on that occasion.

- Nakamura - Yes, indeed. There were quite a bit of opportunities abroad, in fact.
- Lee - Everybody have heard of the term MONO-HA. During my last trip to New York, although I was not sure about the content, I found out that almost all the people I talked with knew what MONO-HA was. At least they knew about the term. However, the term itself has started to stand on its own and that is why they do not understand what MONO-HA is in a specific way. They just vaguely think that this is something to do with MONO (objects), different from something specific.
- Suga - I think their understanding is up to that extent, at the utmost.
- Enokura - Therefore, after all, it is necessary to show off with a strong energy.
- Lee - Few days ago, I have spoken with Suga over the phone, and with Enokura as well. I guess you two have already received the publicity they have produced in Gifu,^{*26} Saitama,^{*27} and Kitakyushu.^{*28} I heard that they have revised it 3 or 4 days ago.
- Suga - Did you go to discuss with them about it?
- Lee - Yes I did. And while I was talking with them, I started to loose my temper, and I ended up storming out of the room saying that I am not going to participate.
- Enokura - Could I have the latest one, as I have just received the fax today.
- Lee - Well, I have actually read it. Long time ago, when I had a talk session with him (Suga),^{*29} I utterly made an objection to the term MONO-HA, that I don't like it. I did say so yes, but, it has been quite a long time, already at that time, since this term has been used, and now it's been already more than 20 years. Subsequently, this term started to stand on its own, and yes, surely it is us that were charged with it, but we must admit the fact that it undeniably exists. There are some choices for deciding which artists are involved with it, but I should say that I am against the idea to review just the fact, ignoring the term which already undeniably exists. What they said was that this title plays a role as one aspect of the seventies. No, wait a second, it doesn't necessarily indicate just seventies, but it has been already existed from the late sixties. So I told them that I could never accept the idea of forcibly taking off the term MONO-HA. There were much wrangling as such for a while. The reason why I had to storm out of the room was that they completely lacked the sense of responsibility for the history. No matter what they would write from now on, there may be something that we can prove through our work. But still, I am absolutely against the idea to abandon the term MONO-HA for which we have been forced to take responsibility, and which has survived though the society and the history. Somebody must take the responsibility. Thus, I am not going to participate. This is what I have already said to them, but even within the groups of Ante Povera, there are a lot of artists who insist that they are not Arte Povera. Never the less, In spite of denying as such, they still participate in it. In the seventies, without Ante Povera, Italia (Italian art) would have been worthless. There are some people who abhor the expression such as 'support-surface'. In their recent visit to Japan, an artist whose name was Toni Grand did not attend the exhibition. Because, he said that, he disliked that words. But he is not that consistent all the time. On the contrary, in fact, he did participate another exhibition. Why on earth they should be particular about the background, or the intrigue, despite the unmistakable fact that there is a term which have been standing on its own for such a long time.
- Enokura - As for myself, I perfectly understand what Lee is trying to say, but on the standpoint of a form such as MONO-HA, I cannot help remembering that regulation of Minemura, which I have mentioned before.
- Lee - Well, I must say that I am against it beyond all question.

^{*26} The Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu

^{*27} The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama

^{*28} Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art

^{*29} Interview "About MONO-HA" 1978 (with Lee and Suga) Quarterly Magazine : Modern Sculpture No. 15 P. 38-63

- Enokura - Of course, if it is transformed structurally, I would be able to participate more positively. That is, only if it becomes something that could change, whether the artist or as a whole, in some way or other, but in a concrete way.
- Lee - No doubt we have to transform it in the future.
- Enokura - This is an extreme example though, there could be something like NEW MONO-HA, a new form, newly born. I am just saying this as an example; it's just a joke. But still, if it is renewed in its structure, there is a possibility that I would be able to participate. However, in reality, since I have seen such hierarchy established, as Minemura has done in such a way, it is too late for me to attend once more. It is impossible for me now.
- Suga - I can understand that.
- Lee - But you have to understand the contrary. In such a regulation, such people like myself are totally destroyed.
- Suga - In those days, in some respect there were numerous art works of that kind which you couldn't really say whether those were MONO-HA or not, and most of them were surviving together in the same atmosphere. So if they are now collectively called as MONO-HA by chance, from the opposite standpoint, I think it is just fair.
- Lee - Thus, I think we should encourage such effort as to give meanings to them.
- Suga - As for myself, in order to evaluate the accomplishments of that era, it is much easier to understand them if you go through such effort.
- Lee - I think so too.
- Suga - That is, even if Enokura has come from a completely different direction, there has been a tendency. It could be said so for the materials, too. There has been a field/background which could be discussed thoroughly.
- Lee - Yes, indeed. It is possible to discuss about it thoroughly. In other words, for the other things, it is rather difficult to speak out.
- Suga - Yes, that is right. If you take it off, we wouldn't be able to recognize what exactly was it that has accomplished such works in the seventies, in those days. It is in a reverse sense very difficult.
- Enokura - One thing I can say is that. I prefer to think on the basis of Nakahara's exhibition^{*30} which he depicted the human and the substances. And at that time, Minemura was involved in a specific way. Not as a critic, though. He was the member of the management office. And at that time, his direction was rather strongly inclined to the conceptual art.
- Suga - Yes, when he first came out.
- Enokura - He was writing quite a lot about it. So, as for him, he was very contemptuous of MONO (objects).
- Suga - He was very sensitive.
- Enokura - Yes, you can also say that, I think. But eventually he started to change his direction among the movement. In a sense there is something I cannot admit in that respect. So, as for myself, it is still right to say that my origin is both the human being and the substance.

^{*30} "The 10th Japan International Art Exhibition 'Human and Substance'"
 10 May to 30 May, 1970 Tokyo Metropolitan Museum
 6 June to 28 June, 1970 Kyoto City Museum of Art
 15 July to 26 July, 1970 Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art

- Suga - Then, all you have to do is to put a title of that kind.
- Lee - Which the term MONO-HA is included.
- Suga - I think it should have the term MONO-HA somewhere in the title. It could be included in the subtitle, or anywhere unless it is included.
- Enokura - That is exactly what I am saying in this exhibition, too. It doesn't really matter if it is not particularly a term MONO-HA unless it is a word... .
- Lee - Or it could be stated as "something that is called MONO-HA" or something.
- Enokura - And one other thing I insist is the term for substance, as the counterpart of human being. This is called as OBJECT or MATTER, the range of interpretation is varied, but I find something wrong about it. If we can clarify it more concretely, we would be able to participate with a more stately manner. This is the aspect too exclusive about it which I think has to be improved.
- Suga - I think it is the MATTER, after all, that we are pursuing.
- Lee - And again, there were nothing which we made exclusive. These all were done by the outsiders. They have confined it in such a strange way, and that was wrong.
- Enokura - And that's all. That was the only thing which went wrong. So, we should take this into consideration for the next year's exhibition,^{*31} and I presume they are already considering a title on that account. The one that was mentioned few moments ago, I think that is just a temporary title, isn't it.
- Lee - It is a temporary title, but it has been decided already.
- Enokura - Well, I believe they will change it afterwards. I haven't seen a new one yet.
- Lee - Yes, I have seen it, I have seen it.
- Enokura - Have you? Did you see that they have included the term MONO-HA?
- Lee - Have they?
- Enokura - Together with sport/surface and so forth.
- Suga - Is that in the list, not in the title? They must unify the titles.
- Lee - They can put it in the subtitle.
- Enokura - It can be something like "MONO-HA and..." and so forth.
- Suga - Yes, that is right.
- Lee - The exhibition in Japan is important, too, but there are a couple of places abroad which I specifically wish to hold the MONO-HA exhibition.
- Suga - We don't have to care about them, really.

^{*31} "Matter and Perception 1970 - MONO-HA and the Search for Fundamentals" Exhibition
 17 February - 26 March, 1995 The Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu
 15 April - 28 May, 1995 Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art
 19 August - 24 September, 1995 Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art
 7 October - 17 December, 1995 The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama

- Lee - It is all right for me if they want to deal with the seventies. I won't complain unless they deal with the era seventies of Japan in general, incorporating a variety of things. However, in my opinion, why do they have to put a title seventies even to something which is unmistakably MONO-HA? Do you remember the one that we happened to join together, all three of us? Was it last year, or the year before last? I don't really remember. The one which was titled the Seventies Exhibition^{*32} or something. That one was absolutely useless. That wouldn't expose anything. I am against it, absolutely against it. You wouldn't be able to observe anything by such thing. There was an exhibition called the Seventies held in Bologna^{*33}, wasn't it?
- Suga - It is very vague if you just call it seventies.
- Lee - I don't think that is a good solution.
- Suga - Rather, it was the era which such a variety of things emerged.
- Lee - Then, all we have to do is to interpret them in all different ways.
- Suga - Thus, we must put the term MONO-HA in some form or other. There are actually some people who are holding exhibitions taking the advantage of it.
- Lee - Speaking about MONO-HA, there are a lot of things that I would not like to speak at such an occasion as this. There was a person called Jinshoku Kaku, who has already passed away. He was also a Korean, as I am. There is a talk about him that he was the founder of MONO-HA. Hardly! It's such a nonsense, even though I broke the glass, or if they have seen his works.
- Suga - Yes, I remember they used to say such thing.
- Lee - If you say such thing, then, what about the broken glass of Duchamp which existed long before him?
- Suga - In that respect, then, Kaku was in the outskirts. They must recognize that the works of MONO-HA are firmly following the different concepts while using similar materials.
- Enokura - What I am trying to say is that, it is all right to include the term MONO-HA in the title, but it has to be MONO-HA PLUS. In my opinion, it is extremely important to add this PLUS. If it is stated as such, me too, would be able to participate.
- Suga - Yes, I understand. There are actually other things included in it. He would be embarrassed himself, if he doesn't think about the others. He shouldn't push it through by force. Takamatsu's works of the latter times, for example, that small one or the one with some wood, are after all, nothing but MONO-HA, aren't they.
- Lee - Yes, he is MONO-HA. In short, a can of paint.^{*34} He wouldn't have had such an idea in his original conception.
- Suga - I must apologize to say this, but that was the time when he was at his peak. His other works, the one of the shadow for instance, are not bad, but the ones which are associated to MONO-HA are the best. Even now.

^{*32} "Japanese Avant-garde of the 70s - From Dispute to Spiritual Discord: Exhibition, 17 March - 31 March 1993 at Setagaya Museum

^{*33} "Japanese Avant-garde of the 70s" Exhibition at Bologna City Museum of Modern Art, 12 December 1992 to 31 January 1993

^{*34} Jiro Takamatsu "Title" 1971 photo-

MONO-HA 1994

- Lee - During my visit to Guggenheim^{*35} this time, I saw his “Shadow” being exhibited there.
- Enokura - Are they exhibiting the old ones?
- Suga - There were some works similar to “Shadow.”
- Lee - There are all sorts of artists, like taking various things such as renowned baseball players or other sort and making them all into silhouettes. That is, at that time, there was something like a discussion about the virtual image that criticized a substantial work such as pop arts.
- Suga - Yes, there was something like that. Virtual image was actually the main stream of pop art, after all.
- Lee - So, Takamatsu’s “Shadow” did not appear to be too strong at Guggenheim. Rather, international must have been better to stick a paint tin or something.
- Suga - Among Takamatsu’s works, I like those he made in the mid seventies the most.
- Lee - Or the one with the wood^{*36} .
- Suga - Yes, he used the timber. Even in the small ones. The weird ones which he made in the end, you know, something that looked like a crumbled building, that one wasn’t good. The one before that one was very good. That period was quite short, though, on that account. 3 or 4 years? They were extremely good.
- Nakamura - I guess we are running out of time. Thank you so much for your cooperation.
- Lee - If this is not enough, we’ll do it again.
- Nakamura - I will make the transcription of this meeting and, of course, send a copy to all of you, well, after eliminating the unnecessary parts.
- Suga - Yes, I guess you should do it.
- Enokura - The discussion about the spiritual part of the artist was very interesting.
- Suga - You can write them all down. We can eliminate them all afterwards.
- Nakamura - I will send you everything. I may have to cut some parts which are not suitable for publication.
- Suga - perhaps this part has to be largely cut off, too.
- Enokura - Do you want to see the one^{*37} I was talking about?

^{*35} Above mentioned “Japanese Art After 1945 Scream Against the Sky”

^{*37} Exhibition About the title of above mentioned “Matter and Perception 1970 MONO-HA and the Search for Fundamentals” Exhibition

^{*36} Jiro Takamatsu “Oneness of Cedar” 1969-70 photo-

MONO-HA 1994

- Enokura - Do you want to see the one^{*37} I was talking about?
- Suga - I guess I have already seen it.
- Enokura - But I say something about MONO. Have you received the previous one, Suga?
- Suga - Yes, I have seen the previous one but I do not know anything about the new one.
- Lee - I have seen this one.
- Enokura - But it says something about it. It was not included before...
- Lee - No it wasn't.
- Suga - Where?
- Lee - What is more surprising is that...it talks about the seventies! This can't be right.
- Enokura - This is not very good.
- Suga - I mean, it is all right to include it in here, but what I want to say is that they should change this part.
- Lee - Yes, it could be even a subtitle.
- Suga - Yes, well, that is the point.
- Enokura - I think they said that they were intending to think about it. Well, anyway, we'll see.
- Lee - I guess I appear to be too obstinate for them, but looking back to these past 20 some years, it is with no doubt quite a long time. It is actually a part of history which somebody has to take responsibility for.

- end -

^{*37} About the title of above mentioned "Matter and Perception 1970
MONO-HA and the Search for Fundamentals" Exhibition