

REMEMBERING MONO-HA:  
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ENCOUNTERS

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# Remembering Mono-ha

## The Recreation of Encounters



Lee Ufan, Sekine Nobuo, Suga Kishio, Koshimizu Susumu, Yoshida Katsuro (Left to right)

*Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha*

The Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo

June 25, 1987

Photograph by Anzai Shigeo

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# Abstract

This thesis presents multiple perspectives on the Japanese Postwar art movement Mono-ha. These artworks engaged in international discourse relying on new associations with the common Japanese word *mono* (things) in the period from 1967 to 1973. The aim of this thesis is to diversify perspectives on Mono-ha, drawing upon primary texts, original interviews and photographic archives to develop accounts of events and their meanings. Throughout this thesis, emphasis will be placed not only on things but also on the Encounter, historically important to the movement. Conventionally this refers to the “encounter” of the viewer with a thing, the space the meeting takes place, and the philosophy that formed the structure of the movement. The concept of an “extended encounter” facilitated by photographs will point toward the positioning of photographers in debates on *mono* as part of a framework that offers a method for understanding Mono-ha artworks in multiple presents.

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# Introduction

In summer of 2008, I set off to Tokyo to investigate the concerns of Mono-ha artists. After immersing myself in visits to artists' studios, imbibing photographic archives, conducting over a dozen interviews and experiencing numerous exhibitions I came away with a sense that the whole idea of Mono-ha as a movement was a contested zone. I was faced with the same question art historians face in the study of many contemporary art movements: What is the difference between a subjective term retroactively applied by an art critic to describe a heterogeneous assortment of artists, and the artists' own feelings about their involvement?

To answer this question I amassed primary resources on the topic, including contemporaneous exhibition reviews and panel discussions published in newspapers, catalogs and journals; but most importantly, I interviewed key players such as Sekine Nobuo, Takayama Noboru, Haraguchi Noriyuki and Anzai Shigeo. The evidence I amassed suggests a mutual influence between artists, critics and audiences that is not easy to attribute to a neatly packaged art group. In my case the term Mono-ha has served as a door through which to open the issues while developing a reflective and critical eye.

Exhibitions inside and outside Japan, from the 1960s through to today, present Mono-ha as a cohesive art movement composed of artists who had a shared philosophy, practice and vision. Nevertheless my research confirms what others, including the artists themselves, have said: Mono-ha is a concept that includes multiple approaches to art making that focused on a new approach to *mono* (もの, things) and a consideration of the relationship between space and raw materials that occurred in the late 1960s and early

1970s. Thus two narratives of Mono-ha exist, Mono-ha as a cohesive group (dominant but problematic) and Mono-ha as a concept (which reflects my own understanding, based upon the evidence I have gathered). As faulty as the dominant narrative of Mono-ha may be, however, it is important to analyze where it came from and conjecture why it developed when and how it did. Once the construction of the art historical concept of Mono-ha becomes visible the possibility for deconstructing this concept is revealed. I will present Mono-ha as a concept and a movement co-constructed by artists, photographers and art critics, rather than a centrally organized group sharing a collective agenda as other postwar art movements were.

The synergy between material, concepts and theory is crucial for understanding contemporary art. Artistic perspectives are crucial to any study of any contemporary art movement because artists play a significant role in their own historiography. Artists are not only producers of artworks, but also producers of systems for understanding their work in new philosophical frameworks. Artist Lee Ufan has been particularly involved in the historicization of Mono-ha, serving as the theoretician and spokesperson for the movement. On his artworks, Lee stated, “From close up, it is a material condition. From far away, it is a system of concepts.”<sup>1</sup> This relationship between the material condition of the artworks and a system of concepts is integral to the working definition of Mono-ha that will be used for the rest of this thesis. From here onward, the term Mono-ha will refer to a tension between artworks which express the physicality of *mono* and artistic concepts that are entangled with philosophical discourses of *mono*.

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<sup>1</sup> Lee Ufan, *The Art of Encounter*, (London: Lisson Gallery, 2004) p. 210.

Early discourse on the topic of *mono* will be addressed in Chapter One, beginning with oral accounts by and about the artists before they were considered to be part of an art movement. The first use of the word “Mono-ha” will be discussed, defining this pejorative term that later accumulated common meaning. Closely connected to defining the movement is the creation of its borders and the negotiation of these borders. The working definitions of Mono-ha proffered in articles will be assessed along with the etymology of the term. Dialogue between the artists themselves will be addressed, such as that which took place in a panel discussion organized on the occasion of a special feature for the important Japanese contemporary art journal *Bijutsu techō* in February 1970.<sup>2</sup> During this discussion, a critical but often overlooked moment in the broader conceptualization of the Mono-ha movement, six of the artists then closely associated with Mono-ha explicated their approaches to *mono* in theory and practice, demonstrating the differences in their approach and undermining the idea of a collective group, that was nevertheless ignored in the dominant narrative of Mono-ha that developed in the late 1970s and 1980s. Finally, alternative views of Mono-ha at play both during and after the period when the movement is historically bracketed (1968-72) will be discussed. These alternative views focus on artists whose work, in my opinion, qualifies them for inclusion in broader discussions of Mono-ha, but who are typically left out of the picture.

A single artwork, *Phase-Earth* created in October 1968 by Sekine Nobuo, which is considered to be the catalyst of the Mono-ha movement, is the topic of Chapter Two.

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<sup>2</sup> The art magazine *Bijutsu techō* started just after World War II ended in 1948 and still continues to be the most widely distributed art periodical in Japan. It is also significant to note that this article “<Mono> ga hiraku atarashii sekai he” was selected for reproduction in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Bijutsu techō* published in December 2008, an act that testifies to the continuing significance of Mono-ha in Japanese contemporary art discourse.

This chapter addresses how the work triggered a new perception of materials, place, action and relationality, all qualities that became central to Mono-ha. The chapter also considers the work as an event, and an ongoing one. Although the original work no longer exists, it was recreated four times after its inception. Due to this fact, *Phase-Earth* functions as a site where significant debates on the nature of Mono-ha artworks arise, including the degree to which Mono-ha-associated works are specific to a particular site, historical moment, or other essential elements, and the use of photo-documentation as well as oral reconstructions of the events and their significance. This analysis emphasizes the performative aspects of the work that were not necessarily part of the artists' original intentions but are clearly revealed in its reconstructions, both in the sense of "rebuilding" and "remembering" *Phase-Earth* in association with *mono*.

Building on the analysis of *Phase-Earth* and photographic images, Chapter Three will discuss the importance of photographs in the origination, development and memory of Mono-ha as an art movement, focusing on photographs taken by Anzai Shigeo. As this thesis relies heavily on primary interviews conducted by the author, the subjectivity of remembrances by artists, their relatives and other key players who participated in events are an important part of this thesis. These remembrances of Mono-ha will not be utilized as memories of the "past," instead they will be addressed in multiple presents over time.

The agency of photographs in mediating the materiality of the artworks will also be considered in Chapter Three as an alternative type of encounter with art works via images, distinguished from the encounter with the works themselves. The paradox of representing an encounter with raw materials in photographs will be addressed by examining specific artworks, mostly from three significant exhibitions in 1970, a crucial

moment in the development of Mono-ha. Also discussed will be artists who have been included in critiques of Mono-ha, identified by such terms as Post Mono-ha and Non Mono-ha. Artists work displaying threads of Mono-ha concepts in the early 1980s will be discussed as the final contribution to the overall effort of this thesis: to correct, broaden and enrich understandings of the Mono-ha movement.

Rather than searching for an alternative definition of Mono-ha according to a new list of artists, this thesis presents multiple perspectives on what Mono-ha meant in order to show that borders are malleable. In this investigation the “school” is not as important as the concepts and aesthetic experiments conducted by artists who were interested in a new consciousness of *mono*. The assumption here is that the task of defining the movement in its totality is not possible or useful. To show Mono-ha in the plural, it is necessary to engage with image archives and statements related to key events and art works in order to weave multiple perspectives simultaneously. In so doing, this study positions itself in the interaction between existing discourse on the topic and new reflections on those issues based on current remembrances by the artists.

## Chapter One

# Debating *Mono*



*What goes from “here” to “over there” and comes from  
“over there” to “here” meets at the artwork, which  
opens up as an ambiguous place. This situation is the  
source of what the word Mono-ha means.*

—Lee Ufan<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> Lee continues, “Actually this is not quite correct. I and the [sic.] Mono-ha grew as we were attracted to and rejected each other, resulting in the creation of works of art as the movement was formed...” In Lee, Anderson (tr.) *Art of Encounter 1967-1986*, p. 198. Originally published in the catalog “LEE UFAN” as “Fragments I,” published by Bijutsu shuppan, 1986.

## *Mono in the Air*

The term Mono-ha もの派 (School of Things) emerged in conversation during the late 1960s but did not appear in print until 1973. Since no printed records of the term exist before 1973 oral memories are crucial to understanding the etymology of the term Mono-ha. Artist and philosopher Lee Ufan 李禹煥(1936- ) recently reminisced about the climate in which the artists emerged: “In that time, I felt Mono-ha style as one component of all culture...when others saw myself along with Sekine, Koshimizu, Suga, Yoshida and others, they would jeer ‘hey there’s those Mono-ha guys,’ very ironically making fun of us as crazies.”<sup>4</sup> Lee speaks about Mono-ha as a term that arose in the context of the times without an author and emphasized that no one thought of Mono-ha as related to traditional Japanese art at the time.

Acknowledgement of the vague origin of the term, with no author in an indefinite moment in time, is crucial to any effort to define Mono-ha. Art critic Nakahara Yūsuke 中原佑介 (1931-2011) can be seen as one of the earliest to notice the keyword *mono* arising around 1967, but he felt it was not easy to distinguish artists by “Such-and-Such-isms” so he avoided using the term.<sup>5</sup> His remembrance of the early emergence of the term is as follows:

I remember the name ‘Mono-ha’ appearing in around 1967, but it has never been verified exactly what month of what year it was. Moreover, even now it is not

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<sup>4</sup> Lee Ufan interview by Nakai Yasuyuki and Kajiya Kenji. *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*. December 18-19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. <[http://www.oralarthistory.org/archives/lee\\_u\\_fan/interview\\_02.php](http://www.oralarthistory.org/archives/lee_u_fan/interview_02.php)> (March 4, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Nakahara Yūsuke, *What is Mono-ha?* (Beijing and Tokyo: Tokyo Gallery + BTAP, 2007), p. 18. Even though Nakahara was writing about the artists and art works that were deemed Mono-ha he recalls, “I did not think that these movements were distinguished by ‘Such-and-Such Art’ or ‘Such-and-Such-isms’ they were, and that in any case they were simply not easily distinguishable.”

clear who came up with the name or what they had in mind when they created it.”<sup>6</sup>

The ambiguity of the term led Nakahara to steer away from it in 1970 when he organized the exhibition *Between Man and Matter (Ningen to busshitsu)*.<sup>7</sup>

Another artist Enokura Kōji 榎倉康二 (1942-1995) held a different perspective on the beginning and end of Mono-ha. He does not see it as a finite movement with a beginning and an end:

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 I do not feel like having a sense of a period with a distinct beginning and an end.<sup>8</sup>

Artist Lee Ufan also has qualms on the meaning affixed to the movement by others, stating that it was not a “back to Japan” trend or a “postmodern” movement at all, instead seeing the debates over meaning themselves as the most important aspect of Mono-ha, “...criticism itself is an extremely good thing. That which is not debated is not necessary.”<sup>9</sup>

Based on these remembrances, Mono-ha can be viewed as a conversational term referring to artworks expressing a new consciousness of *mono*, or things. The artworks exemplified by this school were composed of materials such as stone, steel, glass, rope, paper, cotton and wood displayed in a natural or raw state. Additionally the relationship of one material and another was a concern central to Mono-ha, for instance a stone on

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<sup>6</sup> Nakahara, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> This exhibition will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three of this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> Enokura Kōji, Suga Kishio, Lee Ufan. *MONO-HA, Discussion October 14, 1994* exh. cat. (Tokyo:Kamakura Gallery, June 1, 1995) p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Lee Ufan interview. *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art.*

top of a sheet of glass or raw cotton packed inside of a steel tube. The artwork that became the renowned origin of Mono-ha was created in October 1968 consisting of a circular hole in the ground with its cylindrical counterpart standing next to it. (Fig. 1) This work, *Phase-Earth* by Sekine Nobuo 関根信夫 (1942- ) accumulated more commentary than any single Mono-ha artwork and became a significant reference point in the larger trends of Postwar Japanese art.<sup>10</sup>

During the time he produced *Phase-Earth* Sekine was discussing a consciousness of *mono* informally, but it was fellow artist Lee Ufan who published exegeses placing this new consciousness into a philosophical context as a “near exception” to the “human-centric worldview” of modern society.<sup>11</sup> In the end of Lee’s philosophical treatise “The World and Its Structure” (Sekai to kōzō) he wrote the following observations of Sekine’s work:

What was taken in by conical shaped earth, that was completely “surpassed” to the side “placed” in an uneven manner at first, expressing a world of structure, opening a door for us, that was nothing different from the viewpoint on the things of today in its most suitable form.<sup>12</sup>

Lee framed the work as a door opening toward a new philosophical approach to the world through art and became so obsessed with Sekine’s work that he saw it penetrating reality in many other places. He recently stated, “it etched such a strong impression that

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<sup>10</sup> For a complete bibliography of next to one hundred articles written on *Phase-Earth* see *Reconsidering Mono-ha (Mono-ha: Saikō)*, Osaka, p. 70-71.

<sup>11</sup> The terms “human-centric worldview” and “near exception” are from Lee’s article “Sekai to kōzō,” Lee, “The World and its Structure: The Collapse of the Object” (Sekai to kōzō: taisho no gakkai) *Dezain hihyō*, (1969) p. 131-2. Lee also discussed Sekine in the article, “Sonzaï to Mu wo Koete: Sekine Nobuo” (Transcending Existence and Nothingness: Sekine Nobuo) 1968 for which he won the Mainichi award for young art criticism. Lastly he wrote, “In Search of Encounter” (“Deiai wo motomete”) *Bijutsu techō*, February 1970.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, “The World and its Structure,” p. 132.

it is as if whenever I look at things in reality they turn out to be *Phase-Earth*.”<sup>13</sup> Sekine invited Lee to see the work and had a close relationship with Lee, but didn’t see the work as limited to aspects of *mono*. Sekine recently told me that while using the word *mono* is a convenient way to describe his work, the actions and process such as actions (shigusa, 仕種) need to be considered part of the result itself.<sup>14</sup>

Artist Yoshida Katsuro 吉田克朗 (1943-1999) shared this approach to action and saw the power of *mono* as a means to show reality. He expresses this approach in the following terms: “While reality is just as it is, to show things that have transcended everydayness they must be revealed by *mono*.”<sup>15</sup> For Yoshida, his use of common industrial materials indicates his search for a new world in the everyday world.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Lee’s approach to *mono* as a philosophical concept, Yoshida’s approach saw everyday detritus as the catalyst for a new awareness of everyday things. Thus for him, it was the artists’ *noticing* of things that turned them into objects. It was not so important what the thing was, but the sensitivity towards the thing that mattered to Yoshida.

The artists engaged in intense discussions at bars, cafes and each other’s apartments during the mid 1960s. Many of the artists studied together at Tama Art University in Tokyo during the mid 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Two other important contributors to the construction of Mono-ha as an art movement, Lee Ufan and Minemura Toshiaki 峯村俊明 (1936- ), did

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<sup>13</sup> Lee Ufan Interview. *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

<sup>14</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview by the author on February 2, 2010 in Yukigaya, Tokyo

<sup>15</sup> Yoshida, “A New World Revealed by ‘Mono,’” p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> For example, everyday ugly things on the roadside, not at all philosophical, walking around the town even though its just dirty garbage there is something appealing about it: something a crow ate up, the shape of it on the pavement or something. You or I walking around, noticing these sort of things is the same feeling my father had.” Yoshida Narushi interview with author in Shinjuku, Tokyo. 2 March 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Sekine, Yoshida, Narita and Suga all studied together.

not study there but were simultaneously teaching at the same University.<sup>18</sup> It was there the artists studied with Saitō Yoshishige 斉藤義重 (1904-2001), a professor and abstract artist who was deeply interested in phenomenology and believed the goal of art was not only to make things, but equally important was the *perception* of those things. He encouraged the young artists to read philosophical texts including the latest theories of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Levi-Strauss, encouraging them to debate their artworks and ideas in a wider context.

The eldest participant in the movement, Lee Ufan, took a different approach from Saitō. Although he had enjoyed art since he was a child in Korea, especially calligraphy, after immigrating to Japan he studied philosophy at Nihon University. His artistic approach placed emphasis on the existence of things rather than perception of things. Although Lee did not overtly refute Saitō's approach, he was critical of human-centric worldviews from the Renaissance to today in Western thought. He argued that a focus on the object as a product of human thought fails to pay attention to the thingness of the object, discovered in the simple act of *just seeing*.<sup>19</sup> Instead he presented the "Encounter" of the mind with materials over the perception of things in a phenomenological sense. He also pointed toward the deeper significance of raw materials in opposition to the emptiness of modern technology and its logic. This concept of the Encounter is central to discourses of Mono-ha in the 1960s and has been redefined many times up to and including the present day.

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<sup>18</sup> Those who did not study at Tama Art University, for example art critic Minemura Toshiaki photographer Anzai Shigeo and artist Lee Ufan subsequently taught there, and thus all of the main contributors to Mono-ha were associated with Tama Art University in one way or another.

<sup>19</sup> Lee, "The World and Its Structure" p. 126.

Lee Ufan was encouraged to publish his ideas while also displaying his artworks by cultural critic Ishiko Junzō. Together with art critic Nakahara, Ishiko was curator for the exhibition *Tricks & Vision*, (トリックス・アンド・ヴィジョン, April 10-May 18, 1968) which included an emphasis on the perception of objects.<sup>20</sup> This exhibition included Sekine Nobuo's work *Phase No. 5* (Fig. 2) a painting of a cylindrical shape that was half-painted and half protruding off the surface of the painting. Ishiko and Nakahara's early narrative of these artists' works emphasized visual perception over the thing itself. Lee says it was around this time when the word "Mono-ha" came into wider usage,<sup>21</sup> but there were many other terms circulating in the discourse on the same artists' works. Besides "tricks" and "vision," another term that was being used to describe some of the same artists' work was "Empty Art" (ボソットアート, Bosotto āto). First used by art critic Tōnō Yoshiaki to describe Narita Katsuhiko's 成田克彦 (1944-1992) artwork *Charcoal* (*Sumi*, 炭) in 1969 (Fig. 3) the same term was also used to refer to Takayama Noboru's 高山登 (1944- ) sculptural works such as *Railroad Tie Experiment* (*Makuragi jikken*, 枕木実験). (Fig. 4) Although these terms reflected aspects of the artists' work they were not a part of the discursive tapestry of the period, nor did any of the art critics become their champion in the way Minemura was to narrate Mono-ha.

A younger colleague of Lee who often displayed his work in the same group exhibitions and galleries, artist Suga Kishio 菅木志雄 (1944- ) also published articles that became primary source materials for the concept of Mono-ha. Under the alias

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<sup>20</sup> Exhibition took place from April 30-May 18, 1968 at Tokyo Gallery and Muramatsu Gallery. Ishiko was involved in the formation and activities of the art group *Genshoku*, or Tactile Hallucination (c. 1966-71), who influenced many Mono-ha artists.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Ufan interview, *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

Katsuragawa Sei he began publishing his ideas in 1969 including the article, “World that cannot be seen, Words that cannot be seen” (“Mienai sekai no mienai kotoba”).<sup>22</sup> A few months later he was using his real name and contributed an article to the *Bijutsu techō* feature “Horizons of Non-Art” (“Hi-geijutsu no taira kara”) that also included the first presentation of *mono* in the context of contemporary art. Suga’s article “Transcendent Situations” (“Jōtai wo koete aru”) provides new concepts for understanding *mono* such as their potential to express a “transcendent” state of affairs.<sup>23</sup> Suga was less concerned with perception than Saitō and instead of emphasizing the concept of the Encounter as Lee had done, he was focused on “situations.” These situations were composed of unadorned materials in relation to each other, but they were not ultimately about the objects or things. He discusses *mono* not just as things; but as an interrelationship stating, “A thing and an other thing, or a thing and a person, a thing and a phenomenon placed equally.”<sup>24</sup> Suga’s artworks were sparse and almost unnoticeable without a deeper appreciation of space and everyday situations. These works relied on the space in between objects, such as sticks carefully balanced between pillars or stones suspended inside of a chained link fence draping from floor to ceiling.

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<sup>22</sup> Published in *SD*, October 1969.

<sup>23</sup> Suga “Transcendent Situations” (“Jōtai wo kote aru”), *Bijutsu techō* (February 1970) pp. 24-32.

<sup>24</sup> Suga, *ibid*, p. 30.



## A New World

Two exhibitions from 1969 included many of the artists that were to be later called Mono-ha artists. These were the 9<sup>th</sup> *Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition* at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art (May 10-30, 1969) organized by art critic Tōnō Yoshiaki and the annual *Developments in Contemporary Art* exhibit held at the Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art (August 19-September 23, 1969). These exhibitions provided a common site where discourse on *mono* could be engaged. Both included all of the six artists from the “New World Revealed by ‘Mono’” panel discussion. The works displayed by these artists were dramatically raw and unprocessed, often in their industrial state with very few signs of intervention by the artists’ hand. From Lee’s perspective all of these six artists’ works left things just as they are, allowing the world to be seen just as it is.<sup>25</sup> These two exhibitions and their subsequent continuations in 1970 were to become crucial sites for understanding the role of perception, the Encounter and the situation as they were expressed in Mono-ha artists’ works.

The first published dialogue on *mono* by contemporary artists was a round table discussion published in February 1970 under the title, “A New World Revealed by ‘Mono’” (“Atarashii sekai wo hiraku <mono>”).<sup>26</sup> Art critic Nakai Yasuyuki and Lee Ufan

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<sup>25</sup> One of Lee Ufan’s most often quoted lines, “Everything just as it is, learn how to see that world just as it is.” (“subete aru ga mama, sono mama no sekai wo miru koto wo manabu koto de aru”). Lee “The World and its Structure,” p. 128.

<sup>26</sup> Koshimizu, Suga, Yoshida, Sekine, Narita, and Lee, “<Mono> ga hiraku atarashii sekai he” (The New World Revealed by “Mono”) *Bijutsu techō*, No. 324, February 1970, pp. 34-55. This issue of *Bijutsu techō* featured section that was to have a significant impact on the development of Mono-ha titled, “Dispatch of Newcomers: From the Horizon of Non-art” (Hasshin suru shijintachi: Hi geijutsu no chihei kara). This section featured Lee Ufan’s article “In Search of Encounter” (Deai wo motomete) followed by Suga Kishio’s “Transcendence of Situation” (Jōtai wo koete aru) and finally the roundtable discussion referred to above.

both agree this article turned the term “mono” into a keyword of the times.<sup>27</sup> This new consciousness of *mono* was extracted from the artists’ discussion and articulated by *Bijutsu techō* editor Fukuzumi Haruo in his introduction to the article.<sup>28</sup> This panel discussion appeared as a featured section of the magazine *Bijutsu techō* entitled, “Horizons of Non-art,” which presented these emerging artists prominently in the larger trend of Non-art. Not confined to national trends, the artists’ awareness of global trends such as site-specific, conceptual and process artworks can be seen in their discussion.

The artists included in the discussion were Sekine, Lee, Suga, Narita, Yoshida, and Koshimizu Susumu 小清水進 (1944- ). In their dialogue, topics such as the “power of things” are discussed in relation to each of the artists’ creative process. Additionally the artists conversed on topics such as, “Plans are cool, process is cool,” and “Don’t fall in love with artists, fall in love with *mono*.”<sup>29</sup> The artists’ perspectives on *mono* are multiple and complex. Yoshida suggests that *mono* are not just seen or perceived but *felt*. He uses the verb *shibireru* in a peculiar sense that refers to the resonance of things, most often found in everyday life, reconsidered with an artistic eye.

Artist Sekine Nobuo spoke of “wiping the dust away from mono,” and “doing *mono* just as *mono*.”<sup>30</sup> This idea of “wiping dust” from mono became a keyword in other writings by Lee and Sekine. In this panel discussion in early 1970, Sekine re-performed this phrase for a wider public (*Bijutsu techō*’s readership was much larger than *Dezain hihyō*’s, the journal in

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<sup>27</sup> Lee Ufan Interview, *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

<sup>28</sup> According to Lee and Sekine it was *Bijutsu techō* editor Fukuzumi who most likely came up with the title “A New World Revealed by <Mono>” for this round table discussion. Lee Ufan interview, *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art Project*.

<sup>29</sup> Sekine, “A New World Revealed by ‘Mono,’” p. 39/52.

<sup>30</sup> Sekine, *ibid*, p. 40.

which Lee's previous article appeared). His point was not the dust, but that the wiping of something away that led to the discovery of something. This is related to "doing mono just as mono" in the sense that the thing is left to look just as it is, but in actuality that appearance requires the labor of "wiping," i.e. digging, carrying, carving, cutting, fabricating, and so on in order to be transformed into an artwork capable of altering consciousness.

The usage of the Japanese word *mono* in contemporary art overlaps with and yet diverges from its common usage. Most often translated as "thing" the term *mono* refers to things ranging from the most literal object to the most metaphysical concept. The tension between the physical and the metaphysical is one of the most salient aspects of its usage in the realm of contemporary art. The term is very direct in one sense, since the artworks were often composed of chunks of wood, steel plates, blocks of charcoal, sheets of paper, raw cotton and other unprocessed materials in a raw state. Other aspects of *mono* are very difficult to define with words, particularly its metaphysical aspects. Artist Suga Kishio takes an extreme view, "The language of *mono* lies in the realm of silence. And *mono*'s essence is nameless: *mono* is nothing but *mono* with no name corresponding to it."<sup>31</sup> This ambiguity and contested meaning of words is none other than the substance Mono-ha has been woven from.

Interpretations of Mono-ha are constantly changing and evolving according to new perspectives on the artworks. For example in 1998 art critic Sawaragi Noi has analyzed Mono-ha according to the principles of *mono no aware*, or an awareness of the

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<sup>31</sup> Suga Kishio "Namelessness Beyond Namelessness" in Alexandra Munroe, *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky*, (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994) 378. Originally published as "Mumei-sei no kanata no mumei: Naze 'mono' nanoka?" in *Bijutsu techō* 355 (May 1972) pp. 299- 310.

pathos of things.<sup>32</sup> This commentary links Mono-ha to the terms used in literary criticism of works such as the Tale of Genji. The ongoing evolution of the etymology of the term Mono-ha is a part of the movement itself. Artist Sekine sees an exploration of the Japanese language itself to be crucial when considering *mono* because of the ambiguity of “mono” and the faults in translating it into a simple term such as “things” in English.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps it is precisely the ambiguity of this polysemous term that has provided the space for so many different interpretations of the term Mono-ha by artists and art critics over time. There is also a warning sign here against translating the term into another language in a literal way since there are far deeper discursive webs of *mono* that need to be acknowledged.

The visual evidence for defining *mono* is made clear in the photographs of the artists included with this panel discussion in *Bijutsu techō*. These images show an often-overlooked aspect of the artists’ relationship with *mono*: the artists at labor, the activities of arranging, moving and placing their materials. Although not explicit in the panel discussion nor the scholarly literature on Mono-ha, a closer investigation of these photographs reveal a constant image of the strong, able and masculine artist depicted in direct contact with *mono*. On the surface, photographer Nakajima Kō has simply captured each of the artists in the process of making or preparing their work. A photograph of Sekine Nobuo shows him lugging a hefty rope wrapped around his shoulder, while charging toward a horizon off in the distance with a glint in his eye. (Fig. 5) In another

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<sup>32</sup> Sawaragi Noi. “Mono-ha and Mono no Aware” (Mono-ha to mono no aware) in *Japanese•Contemporary•Art (Nihon•Gendai•Bijutsu)*, (Shinchō-sha: Tokyo, 1998) pp. 141-171.

<sup>33</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview by the author on February 2, 2010 in Yukigaya, Tokyo.

illustration, Koshimizu is also stricken with a sparkle in his eyes, standing solidly behind a chain that stands firmly in front of his body, seeming to fuse with his upright posture, as he stares contemplatively towards the sky (Fig. 6). In all of the portraits, photographer Nakajima has exaggerated the artists' materials by zooming in so that these objects are enlarged in the foreground while the artist's body is revealed only in relation to the material, most often in the background of the frame.

Another image shows Lee Ufan calm and focused on his task of lifting heavy rocks with a cloth support on his own. (Fig. 7) Although the hefty boulders dominate the foreground of the image, Lee appears to possess an intention to place them, no matter how difficult, in just the right position. A photograph of Narita Katsuhiko (Fig. 8) shows him in a speculative pose sitting just behind his work, flaring his hands behind a giant block of charcoal. Yoshida Katsuro's portrait (Fig. 9) is the most believable as a process photograph, showing him kneeling down on the pavement, stuffing raw cotton into an iron tube. In the second photograph, the finished work *Cut-off 8* (Fig. 10) is shown in the middle of a city street, displaying *mono* in an everyday urban environment.

Alongside the first published discussion of *mono* were these revealing images of the artists' able bodies. In these often-overlooked images, the artists are implicitly depicted as strong men who are contemplative and capable of demanding physical labor. Fulfilling this dual role was also a topic of their discussion, in a subsection titled "Is not creating anything 'making' something?"<sup>34</sup> Thus it was in the context of making *mono* and yet "not making" objects that these masculine artists entered the "Horizon of Non-art."

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<sup>34</sup> The heading for this subsection reads: "Is not creating anything 'making' something?" (Nani mo tsukuranai koto ha "tsukuru" koto?) a section in which Lee, Sekine and Suga discuss the idea of "not making" as a form of "making." In "A New World Revealed by 'Mono,'" pp. 54-55.

## A Mistaken Beginning

Before appearing in print in 1970, intense discussions between the artists occurred on the topic of *mono*, the Encounter (deai, 出会い) and the situation circa 1967-69. These conversations took place off the page at a bar named Top in Shinjuku as well as cheap dinners at Lee's apartment.<sup>35</sup> Here, even artists who did not go to the same art universities met each other and debated issues that were central to their creative works and ideas. These discussions continued until the early 1970s, but waned by 1973 when many of the artists travelled abroad, changed their artistic media and found new approaches to their work. Yoshida left to England to pursue printmaking. Sekine journeyed across Europe studying public parks and started the Environmental Art Studio shortly after returning to Japan. Lee became enthralled with the world of painting on canvas. The artists' intense conversations dispersed into different directions as increasingly divergent views of *mono* were expressed.

At this moment, the term "Mono-ha" first appeared in print (March 1973) with art critic Fujieda Teruo's article "Mono-ha's Mistake" ("Mono-ha no sakugo").<sup>36</sup> The attachment of *ha*, or school, signifies the labeling of a "school of *mono*" referring to a movement of artists whose ideas and artworks share a common approach. As Tomii notes, affixing "ha" was often used in premodern painting movements such as Rinpa and Kano-

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<sup>35</sup> The discussions at Top are often referred to but the dinners at Lee's apartment were recently discussed in Lee Ufan interview, *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

<sup>36</sup> Fujieda Teruo, "Mono-ha's Mistake" (Mono-ha no sakugo), *Bijutsu techō* (March 1973) pp. 8-11.

ha.<sup>37</sup> In this article Fujieda discusses the “strength of objects” (“*buttai no tsuyosa*”), a remarkably similar phrase to the artists’ earlier phrase “power of things” (“*mono no chikara*”) although more of a derisive term in Fujieda’s view. For instance, he accused Takayama Noboru’s sculptural railroad ties of being too strongly dominated by the objectness of his materials.<sup>38</sup> Ironically, just as the term Mono-ha appeared for the first time in print, the common tapestry woven by the artists was being unraveled in favor of individual threads of expression.

Shortly thereafter art critic Minemura Toshiaki 峯村俊明 (1936- ) engaged the term Mono-ha for the first time in a positive light, discussing the exceptional nature of their approach in postwar Japanese art. In his article from late 1973 “‘Repetition’ and ‘System’—The Moral after ‘Mono-ha’” (“<Kurikaeshi> to <Shisutemu>—“Mono-ha” *igo no moraru*”), he sets the groundwork for positioning the artists in opposition to modernist ideologies. In it he states, “...together they asserted to change the modernist assumption that art is created by the power of man’s thought and skill.”<sup>39</sup> Instead he argues for the centrality of a unique East Asian aesthetic sensibility expressed by the artists’ in their works, disseminating a unified approach in the artists’ ideas and art works.

By the end of the 1970s, Minemura was clearly becoming a spokesperson for the historicizing of Mono-ha by producing a neatly packaged narrative of the artists as a group. In another article by Minemura from 1978 titled, “Regarding Mono-ha” (Mono-

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<sup>37</sup> Reiko Tomii, “After the ‘Descent to the Everyday’: Japanese Collectivism from Hi Red Center to The Play, 1964-73.” In Blake Stimson *Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination After 1945*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> “If one adheres to the words “the power of things,” its strength does not lie in the object.” Fujieda, “Mono-ha’s Mistake,” p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Minemura Toshiaki, “<Kurikaeshi> to <Shisutemu>—“Mono-ha” *igo no moraru*” (‘Repetition’ and ‘System’—The Moral after ‘Mono-ha’), *Bijutsu techō*, no. 375 (December 1973) pp. 170-175.

ha ni tsuite),<sup>40</sup> he claims to be “telling the story” of Mono-ha in the context of “*mono* according to our country” (“waga kuni ni okeru mono”).<sup>41</sup> This article solidified a context for the historiography of the movement according to a clear framing of Mono-ha as a group. In the 1980s and 90s this frame was readily adopted by other curators both inside and outside Japan.<sup>42</sup> Minemura’s claim to have invented Mono-ha stems from this period in the late 1970s when he introduced the artists’ works as a coherent package to domestic audiences and to international spectators in the 1980s.

During the Bubble Period of the 1980s Minemura’s claims regarding the ideology of Mono-ha were validated in the context of theories of Japaneseness (*nihonjinron*, 日本人論). Minemura’s framing of Mono-ha is what has drawn wider attention to the artists and artworks outside of Japan continuing into the present day,<sup>43</sup> yet it is also what needs to be revised, refocusing attention on the initial discussions as well as current remembrances of these discussions. Nevertheless Minemura’s important role in cataloguing, recording and describing the artists’ work has been instrumental in the field, inserting a crucial tension into the weaving of the tapestry of Mono-ha. But this tension is exactly what needs to be reassessed in the field of scholarly research on Mono-ha. The methodology for accomplishing this is to closely examine artist statements, image archives and other primary evidence from the period.

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<sup>40</sup> Minemura, “Regarding Monoha” (Mono-ha ni tsuite) *Bijutsu techō*, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> Minemura, *ibid*, p. 226.

<sup>42</sup> Chiba Shigeo’s writings on Mono-ha *History of Deviant Contemporary Art (Gendai bijutsu itsu datsu shi)*, 1986; Barbara Bertozzi’s *The Object School (La Scuola del Cose)* 1988; and Alexandra Munroe’s chapter on Mono-ha *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky*, 1995. Both co-opt Minemura’s story, thus constructing a dominant narrative of the artists as a cohesive group on the global stage.

<sup>43</sup> Minemura Toshiaki, “Landscape of Criticism: From the Window of Mono-ha” (“Hihyō no fūkei: Mono-ha no mado kara”) in *Fine Art Criticism and Postwar Art (Bijutsu hihyō to sengo bijutsu)*. (Tokyo: Brücke, 2007) pp. 225-250.



Sometimes included in Minemura's narrative was Enokura Kōji, an artist whose approach emphasized the body in relation to materials. He often discussed the sensations of *nikutai* (肉体, body), in relation to *ba* (場, place), as a crucial element of his artistic approach. Enokura was also one of the most particularly vehement critics of Minemura's hierarchical narrative of Mono-ha.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore Enokura felt that Minemura's "mass theory"<sup>45</sup> overemphasizes the materiality or mass of their works over the relationship of the work with the viewer and space. Artist Haraguchi Noriyuki 原口典之 (1946- ) was also firmly opposed to the construction of Mono-ha as a group of artists who shared the same approach. In a recent interview I conducted, Haraguchi emphatically stated that Mono-ha is not a philosophical or idealized school as Minemura thinks it is.<sup>46</sup> Haraguchi shared his thoughts on the definition of *mono* in a broader sphere than other accounts of the period:

Of course on that level its not just about those visual *mono*, also performance, its become more about bodily actions. By means of bodily actions its not just the placement of an artwork, for instance starting something, that kind of action, part of one's body, including society, industrial *mono*, and things like industry.<sup>47</sup>

Haraguchi presents an expanded definition of *mono* that includes performance, society, and industry. For Haraguchi the word *mono* conjures a remembrance of societal clashes during the 1960s when student demonstrations expressed fiercely opposing cultural forces

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<sup>44</sup> 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...Or else, in case we have the 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. [sic]" Enokura Kōji, Lee Ufan and Suga Kishio. (Discussion) *MONO-HA*, (Tokyo: Kamakura Gallery, 1995) p.66-7.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> Haraguchi Noriyuki Interview by the author on April 10, 2010 in Zushi, Japan.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

and economic tensions in Japan. *Mono* both expresses those forces and embodies them. This less common approach to *mono* is very different from Lee's philosophical approach and Minemura's mass theory.

The active role of artists in indicating alternative Mono-ha(s) can be seen in a lively anecdote told to me by Haraguchi. It occurred at a press conference held on the day before the opening of the exhibition *Reconsidering Mono-ha (Mono-ha: Saikō)* in late 2005.<sup>48</sup> All of the living members of Mono-ha: Sekine, Lee, Suga, Koshimizu, Haraguchi, and Takayama were there plus artists who have not previously been considered part of the movement. In total ten Mono-ha related artists were present.<sup>49</sup> A reporter asked a question of all the artists seated in the front of the room: "This exhibit has been titled "Mono-ha," but who among you thinks of yourself as included in Mono-ha?" Nine of the artists raised their hands indicating they felt they were part of the movement, as ambiguous as the term is. One artist did not raise his hand. It was pugnacious Haraguchi Noriyuki.<sup>50</sup>

This anecdote demonstrates the spirit of discussion and debate that characterized the origins of Mono-ha including its contested borders. As remembrances such as this are considered in the present, this thesis takes a particular theoretical position. In analyzing

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<sup>48</sup> This symposium took place at the Osaka National Museum on October 24, 2005 and the exhibition took place from October 25- December 18, 2005. This dialogue has been reconstructed based on an interview by the author with Haraguchi Noriyuki on April 10, 2010 in Zushi, Japan as well as a review of the symposium published on the Art Navi Kansai website accessed on February 20, 2011. <http://plaza.harmonix.ne.jp/~artnavi/05-artscene/00-mus-exhibition/171024-kokusai-monoha/00-kokusai-monoha01.html>

<sup>49</sup> Of those artists previously discussed those who were at the symposium were Sekine, Lee, Haraguchi, Takayama, Suga. In addition Inumaki Kenji, Nomura, (3 of 5: Maeda Morikazu, Niwa Katsuji, Suzuki Yoshinori, Koike Kazushige, and Iida Shoji) were present.

<sup>50</sup> Although most of the Mono-ha artists have been remembered as independent and strongly opinionated, Haraguchi is particularly ferocious. As the youngest member in the group and the only member who went to Nihon University he stands apart, but his story is tumultuous beginning with his upbringing in Yokosuka, the city where the American military has maintained a strong presence since World War II. Although his work often appears to be very minimal it is rife with violent tensions that express political turmoil and the underbelly of industry.

memories of past events a Benjaminian analysis places importance on seizing past images in the present: “For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”<sup>51</sup> Rather than *recount* the history of Mono-ha, this thesis examines the role discursive memories have played and continue to play in the remembering of the group in multiple *presents*. Oral records are crucial to discursive analysis as resources that display the active remembrance of what occurred and is presently occurring. Alternative narratives of events and artworks contribute to a wider view of the tapestry composed of multiple perspectives on Mono-ha.

Contested definitions of Mono-ha have been and still are being debated by all those who have been and are discursively involved in the movement and its meaning. Likewise, discourse surrounding the concept of *mono* in contemporary art has undergone considerable flux. The ambiguity in the early origins of the movement has led to contested definitions from the late 1960s to today. The discursive fabric of *mono* is woven out of statements and image archives that include multiple perspectives on the movement. Furthermore, alternative narratives of Mono-ha occurring in multiple presents enact the spirit of debate and intense discussion in which a new consciousness of *mono* occurred. Throughout this thesis, multiple viewpoints on Mono-ha will be shown in the artists’ statements as well as photographic images from the period.

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<sup>51</sup> “Walter Benjamin has a poetic manner of describing this circumstance: ‘The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.’ But then he adds: ‘For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.’” Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, Thesis V in *Illuminations*, ed. and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, New York, 1976, p. 255. Quote from, “Reading, Writing, Filming, Dreaming, Dressing: Michael Ann Holly and Mieke Bal,” *Art History*, Vol. 30 No. 3, (June 2007) p. 410.

## Alternative Mono-ha(s)

The most vocal alternative to Minemura's narrative comes from the artists who were part of the new consciousness of *mono*, but have never been affiliated with Tama Art University. Haraguchi Noriyuki considers Mono-ha to be a part of the landscape of the period, so it would have existed no matter what because the issues were important.<sup>52</sup> In the period it is clear there were many intersections and overlaps in the artists' works: shared use of materials such as stone, steel, cotton, wood and a common language of usage: raw, unadorned, floor heavy, geometric shapes. Both Haraguchi and Lee often use iron plates in their work, most often in undecorated square shapes that are displayed outdoors. (Figs. 11 + 12) Haraguchi's *Untitled* work was also displayed on the same stage in Kobe as Sekine's *Phase-Earth: the Sculpture Biennale* held in Kobe. Perhaps it was because their works appeared so similar that their ideological disagreements came to the fore.

Woven up with Mono-ha and yet sharply distinct from the "narrow" definition of the movement is artist Takayama Noboru. While discussing this topic with me, Takayama explained that he is less concerned with philosophy and raw materials and more concerned with "human issues," including clashes of modernity in Asia and the pungency of industry.<sup>53</sup> Takayama experimented with outdoor works and performances with Enokura at *Space Totsuka* in the period of early Mono-ha development 1968-70 and he has been very critical of Mono-ha as a label even while often being included in the movement. Sharply

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<sup>52</sup> Haraguchi Noriyuki Interview by the author on April 10, 2010 in Zushi, Japan.

<sup>53</sup> Takayama Noboru Interview by author on January 14, 2010 in Ueno, Tokyo.

differing from Lee's philosophical approach in which "the world all always and everywhere, is revealed just like that just as it is,"<sup>54</sup> Takayama constructs objects that appear as if they were found when in fact they were carefully sculpted to look as if they were preexisting railroad ties. This paradoxical activity of creating something that appears to be found and simply reassembled permeates Takayama's oeuvre.

A work Takayama created at *Space Totsuka* in 1968 titled *Railroad Tie Experiment* displays this paradox clearly. For this work his fabricated railroad ties are laid out in two accumulations, stacked one on top of the other to form a small but bold structure. (Fig. 4) Each tie is stripped, carved and soaked by the artist, an act that is labor intensive but largely invisible in the final display. Each of these dark wood ties has a strong presence of its own, soaked in creosote, and stacked in an arrangement that echoes the foundation for a square building. When Takayama performs with the railroad ties his intimate and changing relationship with his materials becomes visible. In holding up a heavy black tie, standing one against a nearby tree (Fig. 13) or placing his body amidst them during a live performance Takayama expresses a relationship with his material that is not necessarily raw or unprocessed.

At the same location *Space Totsuka* スペース戸塚, Enokura Kōji soaked an area of the ground with oil, demarking a square shape with dry and wet areas left by a stain on the earth's surface for a work made in 1970. (Fig. 14) Utilizing used and raw industrial oil in his works integrate the element of time into materials, as the oil seeps and stains other materials it comes into contact with. In this work Enokura's oil is spread into a square on

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<sup>54</sup> Lee, "The World and Its Structure," p. 132.

the raw soil surface of an empty lot in Totsuka, south of Tokyo. It was here that Takayama, Enokura and other artists experimented with installation, performance, process and bodily experience just after graduating from Tokyo University of Arts.

Together their use of raw, singular materials overlaps with other Mono-ha artists, but their use of creosote and oil expresses their direct concern with modern technology and the problems of modernity in Asia. As industry and transportation was rapidly growing in Tokyo, Takayama and Enokura chose not to remain philosophically aloof from these shifts, but instead they immersed themselves in its materials with a different aim, utilizing them as materials for critical expression. But Takayama, Enokura and the other artists who Takayama invited to *Space Totsuka* were building far more than physical foundations; they were constructing an alternative to the definition of *mono* as a raw, unadorned philosophical concept by overtly incorporating industrial materials and explicating the corporeal significance of their works.

The narration of Mono-ha outside of Japan has been primarily dominated by Minemura's interpretation of the artists and artworks. Exhibitions of Minemura's Mono-ha have taken place in Rome and Paris, but the United States has yet to host an exhibition devoted to these artists.<sup>55</sup> In the early 1980s Mono-ha became a lively topic in Japan as other art critics engaged with the topic in Japan,<sup>56</sup> but exhibitions inside and

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<sup>55</sup> North American exhibitions have placed Mono-ha in larger surveys of Japanese postwar art, but have not devoted themselves to the topic of Mono-ha. Lee Ufan has now become the focus of both European and North American exhibitions on the topic of Mono-ha. See Yamawaki Kazuo's essay "Aspects of Japanese Art: Centered on Lee Ufan" in *Seven Artists: Aspects of Japanese Art* exhibition catalog, Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1991 and the exhibition catalog *Marking Infinity: Lee Ufan*, a retrospective that opened at the Guggenheim Museum in New York on June 24, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Critics such as Chiba Shigeo and Sawaragi Noi engaged with the topic of Mono-ha in their larger texts on Japanese Contemporary Art, but Minemura's fervor for remaining the spokesperson for Mono-ha is evidenced by a recent comment he made to me that he was the "inventor" of Mono-ha at Tokyo Publishing House on April 13, 2010.

outside Japan were dominated by Minemura's interpretive framework of the artists.<sup>57</sup>

Minemura proffered a pro-Japan framework for Mono-ha in the essay, "A Blast of Nationalism from the Seventies" as an introductory text for an exhibition sponsored by the Japan Foundation.<sup>58</sup> In this essay Minemura framed Mono-ha as the first counter to Euro-American movement in postwar Japan, therefore identifying them as distinct from imitative tendencies of other postwar Japanese artists. He positions them as "the first to venture to espouse the cause of a nationalistic art," which in his usage, refers to "art based not on anything Western but on a Japanese or Asian sensibility."<sup>59</sup> Although he claims that his perspective is not linked to political nationalism or ethnocentrism, Minemura points toward the "characteristically Japanese sensibility"<sup>60</sup> and references the artists included in the exhibition as possessing an "ethnic priority" based on their individuality.<sup>61</sup>

In this article Minemura endorsed Suga as the only artist who has continuously produced "forms proper to Mono-ha," explicating a hierarchy where Suga was seen as the "conceptual core of Mono-ha."<sup>62</sup> This hierarchy reveals just one of the subjective remembrances of events that are constructed by narrators of the movement. Minemura also mentions artists who have taken an approach similar to Suga, namely Kawamata Tadashi and Hoshina Toyomi 保科豊巳 (1953- ), discussing their commonalities with Mono-ha in utilizing wooden planks and space as a constructive material. The term "Post

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<sup>57</sup> *Mono-ha* held at Kamakura Gallery in three parts, 1986 and *Mono-ha to Posuto Mono-ha no Tenkai* held at the Seibu Museum of Art and Tama Art University in 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Minemura Toshiaki. "A Blast of Nationalism in the Seventies," Exhibition catalog essay, *Art in Japan Today: 1970-1983*, Volume II (1984) pp. 16-24.

<sup>59</sup> Minemura, *ibid*, p. 16-17.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*. p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*. p. 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*. p. 19

Mono-ha”<sup>63</sup> appears for the first time in print in this article, used to refer to younger artists who were influenced by Mono-ha’s Japan-centric approach and yet also critical of Mono-ha artists for ignoring the “historical and social background of art.”<sup>64</sup>

Minemura uses a circular logic to argue for the inherent superiority of Japanese art works that have been produced during periods when Japan was more introspective, as opposed to periods when Japan has been excessively focused on Western art and culture. Since the 1980s Minemura’s ethnocentric interpretation of Mono-ha became the dominant perspective in the field.<sup>65</sup> Although Minemura had been writing on Mono-ha since the 1970s his rhetoric became more overtly nationalistic in the 1980s during Japan’s bubble period when theories of Japanese superiority flourished. Although his contribution has expanded the field of Mono-ha studies exponentially, this narrative needs to be deconstructed and alternatives need to be explored.

Curated by Minemura, a three-part exhibition of Mono-ha artists was held at Kamakura Gallery, still located in Tokyo’s central district, Ginza, at the time. This series of exhibitions contributed to the memory of Mono-ha as an art movement that was composed of not only a group of artists, but also subgroups of artists according to designated categories. In organizing a series of exhibitions with three artists each, all under the heading of “Mono-ha” Minemura presented a seemingly coherent art

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<sup>63</sup> Post Mono-ha will be discussed in the end of Chapter Three of this thesis.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 18

<sup>65</sup> I owe a great debt to Mika Yoshitake for this interpretation of Minemura and Munroe’s narration of Mono-ha. In her Master’s thesis, “Speculating Modernism in Postwar Japanese Art: Mono-ha and the Practice of Artistic Detachment” (UCLA, 2004) Yoshitake points toward an alternative reading the group as not only critical of western tendencies but also critical of nationalist tendencies that were resurging in Japan circa 1970, thus completely undercutting Minemura’s narrative of Mono-ha based in cultural nationalism. By extension she also argues that Munroe deferred to Minemura’s interpretation of Mono-ha in the only major exhibition to include Mono-ha works in North America.



movement by displaying important original as well as recreated works in a series of exhibitions held in 1986. In a controversial act, Minemura toted many of the same works for the larger exhibition that soon followed at the Seibu Museum in Tokyo during the following year. In the same decade, literature on Mono-ha diversified, as art critics including Chiba Shigeo and Sawaragi Noi both included a chapter devoted to Mono-ha in their respective books on contemporary Japanese art. Building upon the tensions laid out by Minemura, Sawaragi's new theoretical perspective and Chiba's presentation of key details in the historical development of the movement provided alternative interpretations of the artists and their works.

Minemura's hierarchy for Mono-ha was reinforced with a follow up exhibition devoted to Mono-ha also held at Kamakura Gallery in 1994. By this time most of the artists had grown skeptical of Minemura's hierarchical three tiered structure for the exhibition: part one included Sekine, Lee, and Yoshida; part two included Narita Katsuhiko, Koshimizu Susumu, and Suga Kishio; part three included Enokura Kōji, Takayama Noboru and Haraguchi Noriyuki. Tiers one and two were the Tama Art University affiliates while tier three were those from Tokyo University of the Arts and Nihon University. In exhibiting Mono-ha the topic of which artists are considered to be part of the movement and which are not has always been a controversial issue. Debates over which artists are in the center and periphery reveal deeper questions on the shared approach and common themes of the artists and their work.

The existence of multiple remembrances of artworks and concepts that were later termed “Mono-ha” contribute to the contested nature of the term today.<sup>66</sup> The mnemonic agency of images and oral records of Mono-ha shapes discursive debates on the movement over time. Historical analysis shows the borders of Mono-ha have clearly expanded and contracted over time, but the flexibility of borders is a key aspect that attracts attention from artists and scholars alike. Curators took issue with other curators for their inclusion or exclusion of various artists when exhibiting Mono-ha. Displaying Mono-ha artists’ works was certainly not confined to displaying their works as a group, as all of the artists were simultaneously exhibiting their works separately as well as together. Nonetheless, Minemura’s assessment of the borders of the movement wove a narrative of the artists and their work that gave the issues the artists were engaged with a crucial tension, one that could be exhibited and debated in print.

In the 1980s Minemura identified key exhibitions and artworks as well as names of the artists included in his “narrow” definition of Mono-ha and those who were part of his “broad” definition, thus reaffirming boundaries. Minemura’s hierarchical definition of Mono-ha was based on the universities where the artists studied: including Lee, Sekine, Koshimizu, Suga, Yoshida and Narita in the “narrow” group affiliated with Tama Art University and Enokura, Takayama, and Haraguchi in the “broad” group since they had studied at Tokyo University of the Arts and Nihon University. Although Lee did not

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<sup>66</sup> This is distinct from other postwar Japanese art groups such as the Gutai Art Association whose members were explicitly documented by their leader, Yoshihara Jirō.

graduate from Tama Art University, he has taught there at the same time as Minemura, therefore making association with each other at the same university as the artists.<sup>67</sup>

Contrary to this definition the artists have a very different opinion on who was a part of the movement. In a subsequent catalog published by the same gallery, Enokura ridiculed Minemura's definition of the group according to which University the artists studied at by stating,

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.<sup>68</sup>

As seen in this comment by Enokura, the artists' perspectives on the borders of Mono-ha are fluid and resistant to categorization. In their viewpoint, *mono* was a crucial keyword from their discussions, but it was the *ha*, or "movement, school or group" that didn't suit them. The borders of Mono-ha as a school or movement are still being negotiated today, on a global stage in exhibitions that are increasingly held outside Japan. Therefore it is important to examine Mono-ha(s) in the plural rather than a singular art movement composed of certain artists.

For the first exhibition dedicated to Mono-ha outside of Japan, Minemura's narrow definition of the movement was adopted, which means the artists who graduated from Tamabi plus Lee Ufan were included. This exhibition held in Italy (1988) was titled *Mono-ha: The Object School (Monoha: La Scuola delle Cose)*. Photographs were very

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<sup>67</sup> It is also significant to note that photographer Anzai Shigeo also teaches at Tama Art University.

<sup>68</sup> Enokura, MONO-HA (1995), p.68. Both catalogs were published by Kamakura Gallery that was located in Tokyo at the time, Minemura's essay in 1986 and a panel discussion including Enokura published in 1995.

important for installing and recreated seminal Mono-ha artworks for this exhibition.<sup>69</sup> Barbara Bertozzi's essay, "The Language of Things: Theory and Artistic Production of the *Monoha* Group" ("Il linguaggio delle cose: Teoria e produzione artistica del gruppo *Monoha*") was the first contribution by a scholar outside of Japan to describe Mono-ha artists and artworks. The exhibition was critiqued for adopting Minemura's hierarchy<sup>70</sup> and not including the artists' perspective on Mono-ha. In other words, this exhibition can be read as the first significant introduction to Minemura's interpretation of Mono-ha outside of Japan.

In 1994 Mono-ha gained wider exposure in a travelling exhibition that surveyed Postwar Japanese art entitled *Scream Against the Sky: Japanese Art After 1945* organized by the Yokohama Art Museum. Curator Alexandra Munroe provided the first comprehensive survey of postwar Japanese art in the United States, and also the first representation of Mono-ha in North America. The section of this exhibition devoted to Mono-ha presented many of the artists' works first in Yokohama and then travelling to New York and San Francisco. The exhibition catalogue included several essays on Mono-ha artists, their story narrated not only by Munroe but also by other critics in the field. Munroe's essay "Mono-ha and Beyond the Sculptural Paradigm" presents the group in the larger context of postwar art, comparing the group to simultaneous developments such as Arte Povera, Minimalism and Earthworks. Munroe deems Lee as the "architect of Mono-ha theory" and credits him for defining the group's artistic and philosophical

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<sup>69</sup> This point was made clear to me while discussing the topic of photographs and exhibition of works with artist Haraguchi Noriyuki in an interview I conducted with him on April 10, 2010 in Zushi, Japan.

<sup>70</sup> Enokura was the most vocal in his criticism of the hierarchical approach adopted by Bertozzi in Rome and Munroe in Yokohama/New York/San Francisco. *MONO-HA* (1995), p. 69.

approach. Furthermore she deems Minemura “The Mono-ha chronicler” and narrates the story of Mono-ha according to his same borders with the addition of one artist, Honda Shingo.

Curator Okada Kiyoshi’s travelling exhibition *Matter and Perception 1970 – MONO-HA and the Search for Fundamentals*<sup>71</sup> included heterogeneous narratives on *mono* and matter, or *bussuitsu*. Okada included artists on the threshold of the group such as Enokura, Haraguchi, and Takayama but also artists Minemura hadn’t even considered on the periphery such as Inumaki Kenji and Nomura Hitoshi. By including a wide range of artists that didn’t fit into Minemura’s neatly packaged construction, Mono-ha was presented as a polysemous term that encompassed many different approaches rather than a cohesive group of artists. Many seminal Mono-ha works were recreated for this touring exhibition, enlivening debates over the life of the artworks in the past versus the present. These issues will be further engaged in the discussion of Sekine’s work *Phase-Earth* and the issues over recreation of artworks. In summary the exhibition *Matter and Perception* presented a diverse array of artworks and artists who were engaged in the wide issues and debates of the time when Mono-ha emerged but was not yet known as Mono-ha. If multiplicities of meaning are included in this art historical investigation, Mono-ha can be seen from more than one perspective at the same time.

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<sup>71</sup> *Matter and Perception 1970 – MONO-HA and the Search for Fundamentals*, Japanese Title: 1970 nen—bussuitsu to chikaku: Mono-ha to konngenn wo tō sakkatachi, French title: Japon 1970 Matière et perception, le Mono-ha et la recherche des fondements de l’art “Visions des choses.” Exhibition held 17 February - 26 March, 1995: The Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu; 15 April - 28 May, 1995: Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; August 19<sup>th</sup>- September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1995: Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art; October 7- December 17, 1995: The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama. A selection of works was displayed at the Musée d’Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne, France from June 26<sup>th</sup>- September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

## Chapter Two

# Encountering Dirt

*We are dealing with the reality of a work that doesn't exist except for the photograph. I want people to see the real thing but it's not possible. However there is also the opposite result, because the real thing is not here many things can be imagined.<sup>72</sup>*

—Sekine Nobuo



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<sup>72</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview by author in Yukigaya, Tokyo on December 3, 2009.

## The Dirt Sculpture Episode

A cylindrical hole just over two meters deep dug into the earth composed the foundation of the work *Phase-Earth* (*Isō daichi*, 位相-大地). (Fig. 1) Although artist Sekine Nobuo planned to leave the soil in a pile next to the hole, he carefully sculpted the unearthed soil into exactly the same shape based on the suggestion of his fellow artists. When the wooden mold was pried off the upright cylinder the impact of the erected soil cylinder was soon felt. The work was encountered by many visitors in Kobe, disseminated in photographs and then re-encountered in various sites as it has been recreated.<sup>73</sup> This chapter will examine varying interpretations of the work *Phase-Earth* by investigating textual, photographic and oral records related to the work. The most common interpretation is typified by one artist who assisted Sekine while making the work, Yoshida Katsurō: “For me it has now become the art work that gave birth to the origin of the word ‘Mono-ha.’”<sup>74</sup> This chapter examines the work as an episode that has been experienced and re-experienced multiple contexts with contested meanings in order to show the work is less of an origin and more of a strand in the web of Mono-ha.

Drawing upon primary texts, original interviews and photographic archives this chapter builds upon art critic Nakahara Yūsuke’s concept of the work as an “episode” to investigate expanded encounters of the work facilitated by photographic reproductions and subsequent recreations of it. Emphasis will be placed on the historically important

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<sup>73</sup> The *Phase-Earth* has been recreated four times: Osaka World’s Fair in 1970, Ōtani Memorial Museum Exhibit in 1996, Wako University project in 2003 and most recently for the Tamagawa Art Line Project in Tokyo during 2008 according to *Reconsidering Mono-ha (Mono-ha: Saikō)*, (Osaka: The National Museum of Art, 2005) p. 70.

<sup>74</sup> Ōtani Memorial Art Museum. *Isō-Daichi no kōkōgaku (Archaeology of Phase-Earth)*. (Nishinomiya: Ōtani Memorial Art Museum, 1996) p. 13.



concept of the Encounter, explicated by artist and philosopher Lee Ufan.

Conventionally this term refers to the philosophical “encounter” of the viewer with a thing and the space the meeting takes place. In conclusion, the concept of an “expanded encounter” provides a framework for analyzing artworks and their recreations in multiple presents.

Just a few months after graduating from Tama Art University in Tokyo, Sekine Nobuo was invited to participate in a Sculpture Biennale held in Kobe (October 1–November 10, 1968). Given his background in oil painting and unfamiliarity with sculpture, he enlisted the help of a classmate and friend who had studied sculpture, Koshimizu Susumu. This Biennale exhibition was part of a trend exhibiting sculptural artworks in outdoor parks, giving artists a new official stage to present their works. Although artists such as those in the Gutai Art Association had held impromptu outdoor exhibitions in the previous decade, the scale and organization of new outdoor exhibitions held in museums and parks was becoming a bold new stage for artists by the late 1960s. Director of the Kobe Biennale Hijikata Teiji<sup>75</sup> was also hired to start similar outdoor exhibitions on more permanent grounds in Ube and Hakone, displaying a wider interest in the relationship of sculpture and outdoor environments. The eccentric site of the Kobe Sculpture Biennale, the former detached palace of Suma (Fig. 15), retained many of its historical features even as it became a stage for contemporary art.

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<sup>75</sup> Hijikata was also the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura. See Tomii, Reiko. ““International Contemporaneity” in the 1960s: Discoursing on Art in Japan and Beyond.” (*Japan Review* 21, 2009) p. 127.

After agreeing to participate, Sekine received a phone call he received from the organizers asking when they should arrange for his work to be picked up.<sup>76</sup> He then realized sculptures were usually prefabricated and then sent away for exhibitions, but he informed them it would not be necessary to pick up his work in Tokyo because he would make it on site in Kobe. Not only was this his first sculpture, but it was also his first site-specific work. The influence of artist and professor Saitō Yoshishige emphasized the perception of the work over sculptural aspects. Just before he was invited to exhibit in Kobe, Sekine had been making works such as *Phase No.5* composed of a cylindrical protrusion from a work that otherwise appeared to be confined to the wall. (Fig. 2) Similar to other works Sekine was engaged with at the time, this work distorts the viewer's perception of the a round form so that it looked flat from one perspective and three-dimensional from another. For his first big public sculptural experiment he chose to make a similar work entirely with the site-specific material of soil.

While riding the circular Yamanote subway line in Tokyo, Sekine realized that a circular hole cut into the earth would make a cylinder, the same shape he had been striving for in his paintings. He set off to Kobe with two friends who shared a studio in Yokohama, Koshimizu Susumu and Yoshida Katsurō, along with their partners Oishi Momoko, Kushigemachi Yoriko and Uehara Takako. Yoshida encouraged Sekine to pile the soil from the hole into a cylinder of the same shape nearby. Sekine agreed this would increase the illusionistic aspect of the piece, juxtaposing the positive alongside the negative hole. While working they realized how difficult the task was as they lifted each

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<sup>76</sup> Sekine Nobuo artist lecture at Den-en-chōfu Seseragi Park Club House, Tokyo on November 9, 2008.

shovel full of dirt out of a hole. Although they did not consider the actions of digging to be the artwork itself as Group-I had done in Kobe three years previously,<sup>77</sup> they did record the process in casual photographs. The result was a cylindrical hole in the earth with a cylinder of soil in the same proportions standing right next to it. Among those who visited the exhibition site were art critics, artists and architects who recorded their impressions of Sekine's work.

Shortly after Sekine was awarded the Asahi prize for *Phase-Earth* it was the topic of numerous publications. Many short reviews of the exhibition mentioned Sekine's work including one in the Asahi newspaper by Ogawa Masataka as well as another in the magazine *Sansai* by art critic Honma Masayoshi who was to become the chief curator of the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. But one article published a month after the exhibition stands out from the others: art critic Nakahara Yūsuke's article, "Dirt Sculpture Episode" ("Tsuchi no chōkoku no episōdo").<sup>78</sup> This is because Nakahara discussed Sekine's work outside of the common definition for "sculpture" in place at the Kobe Sculpture Biennale. He emphasized the *process* of digging and the challenges of negotiating with the organizers in an object-centric Biennale while creating an ephemeral work made of available materials. Nakahara places emphasis on the process of making and negotiating the work, notably referring to it as an "episode." It is not accidental that Nakahara did not refer to the work as *mono*, as he overtly

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<sup>77</sup> For a further description of the hole dug by Group-I see essay by Otani Shogo "Seiza wo tsukuru hito" ("A Person Who Makes Constellations") in *Kawaguchi Tatsuo: Kotoba, jikan, seimei* (*Kawaguchi Tatsuo: Language, Time, Life*). (Tokyo: National Museum of Modern Art, 2009) 10 + 26; and Tomii, "International Contemporaneity," p. 135.

<sup>78</sup> Nakahara Yūsuke. "The Dirt Sculpture Episode" ("Tsuchi no chōkoku no episōdo"). *Geijutsu shinbō*, October 1968.

resisted titles such as “Mono-ha” or “Arte Povera” because he “had no interest in giving labels to art.”<sup>79</sup> But how did others experience Sekine’s work in Kobe?

Other visitors who saw *Phase-Earth* reveal varying aspects of this episode. Some saw it as a site where a new relationship between art and the world was expressed. For example architect Andō Tadao had a strong impression of the power Sekine’s sculpture had over the landscape. He saw the work as controlling the environment surrounding it:

The impact at that time was the sense that an entire hill (Suma Park) was being controlled by only one sculpture. I felt that the final powerful ray, an incredible centripetal force with the power to catch the entire environment at the time of the sunset in the west and I was immensely shocked.<sup>80</sup>

Although the park included many other artists’ works and the decorative architectural remnants of the detached palace, Andō saw Sekine’s work as boldly dominating the entire Park. In this way he remembers Sekine’s work to be both in control of its surroundings and yet beautified by its outdoor environment, in particular the dramatic sunset described above. For Andō it was more than *mono*, the work opened the beauty of the surrounding environment to a new poetic experience. Far from exceptional, this subjective interpretation of the work shows one of multiple meanings ascribed to the work by different viewers.

Another visitor to Kobe, artist and philosopher Lee Ufan experienced *Phase-Earth* in another way. Although he was not able to see the work in progress, after reading an article and receiving a phone call from Sekine felt he had to go see it for himself. Lee did

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<sup>79</sup> Nakahara, *What is Mono-ha?* p. 19.

<sup>80</sup> Mizuma Toshitaka, “Mono-ha yokohama monogatari” (“The Story of Mono-ha Yokohama”), essay in *Sekine Nobuo: Isō—daichi kara 40 nen ima, isō kaiga de kataru (Sekine Nobuo: 40 years after Phase-Earth Talk on Phase Paintings)*, (Tokyo: Gallery- BS, 2008) p. 21.

not interpret the work as controlling or being controlled by the surroundings, but rather saw it as a device that revealed the world “just as it is.” Even though he remembers experiencing the work as if it were a “happening” in process,<sup>81</sup> Lee did not see the work in progress, but during the exhibition after the work was completed. Therefore his vicarious experience of the process of making the work relied on printed media, oral stories and photographs. These records contributed to the work as a larger “episode,” a discursive string that was woven into the web of Mono-ha.

During 1969 Lee wrote theoretical explanations for Sekine’s work, placing the work in the conceptual terrain of “Non-sculpture.”<sup>82</sup> His interpretation of Sekine’s work as “non-sculpture” highlighted a non-object centered encounter between the viewer and the artwork that downplayed the importance of the sculptural object. In his emphasis on the encounter of the work, he refers to the space between the idealized viewer, the work, and nothingness as a profound experience of *mono*. These writings not only shaped the impact of *Phase-Earth* but also linked the philosophical basis of Mono-ha with Sekine’s work. In the same year, Lee published “The World and Its Structure”<sup>83</sup> (“Sekai to kōzō”) which became the philosophical basis for Mono-ha. In this article he discusses the state of technological development in Japan and the inadequacy of Western philosophers due to their emphasis on the world constructed by human consciousness. In the conclusion of this text, Lee discusses Sekine’s work in Kobe as a prime example of the possibility for

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<sup>81</sup> Lee Ufan interview. *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

<sup>82</sup> Lee wrote two articles devoted to Sekine’s work in the year following the Biennale: “Beyond Existence and Nothingness: Theory of Sekine Nobuo” (“Sonzai to mu sonzai: Sekine Nobuo ron”) *Sansai*, June 1969; and “From Sculpture to Non-Sculpture” (“Chōkoku kara hi-chōkoku he”) *Japan Interior*, October 1969.

<sup>83</sup> Lee Ufan. “Sekai to kōzō: Taishō no gakkai” (World and Structure: Collapse of the Object), *Design bihyō* 9 (June 1969) pp. 121–133.

a deeper “encounter” with “things just as they are,” seeing it as a rare exception to the human-centric consciousness of the world that is so common in Western philosophy.<sup>84</sup>

Lee has actively mythologized Sekine’s work over the past forty years, contributing significantly to the historical importance of *Phase-Earth* in the remembrance of the period. In a recent interview conducted by the Oral History Archives of Japanese Art, Lee recently described the work an instigator for a universal shift in thought:

It wasn’t a place for eliminating or evading expressive action, nor was it not taking in politics completely, but pulling in all sorts of societal factors, the expressive action itself was fascinating, can I say a higher dimension of the political, learning to think of holding to a kind of universality. The instigator of that was Sekine’s *Phase-Earth*.<sup>85</sup>

The active involvement of Lee not only in describing the impact of Sekine’s work, but also creating the philosophical framework for the work is significant. The “universal” issues Lee thought were instigated by Sekine’s work shape experiences of it as it is reproduced in photographs and encountered in recreation. While examining multiple interpretations for this work it is crucial to keep in mind that recollections of events are not fixed, but rather exist in multiple presents.

One driving question in this investigation is: can another kind of encounter, albeit displaced, also be *mono*? As seen in the quote that opened this chapter by Sekine, “We are dealing with the reality of a work that doesn’t exist except for the photograph.”<sup>86</sup> An art publisher active in the archiving of Mono-ha artists’ works,

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<sup>84</sup> Lee, *ibid*, p. 132.

<sup>85</sup> Lee Ufan interview. *Oral History Archives of Japanese Art*.

<sup>86</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview by author in Yukigaya, Tokyo on December 3, 2009.

Yokota Shigeru, agrees with Sekine but notes how the significance of photographs supplant the concept of the work over time, “Only photographs remain. Installations are made and then they just end. So the photographs, and the way they are taken become the very concept of the work. But of course it is completely vague.”<sup>87</sup> A closer examination of photographic ephemera from this period is necessary to understand how multiple encounters of the work occur in time.

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<sup>87</sup> Yokota Shigeru interview by the author at Tokyo Publishing House on April 13, 2010.

## Expanded Encounter of *Phase-Earth*

A crucial issue supplementing Lee's theorization of *Phase-Earth* is a detailed analysis of the way photographs mediate and create new experiences of the work, or the expanded encounter of the work. Lee described the Encounter as a philosophical ideal: "Complete open consciousness—precisely that which is in the nature of the world just as it is, an "encounter" becomes a movement that makes one self-aware, perhaps."<sup>88</sup> Lee emphasizes the encounter of the encounterer (*deaisha*, 出会い者), or person who encounters, in relation to the time and place whereby all different kind of things change to exist clearly.<sup>89</sup> Drawing upon Lee's idea of the Encounter, this analysis will also investigate the encounter of viewers with photographs and recreations of Mono-ha artworks as expanded encounters. I argue that the site in Kobe was not only experienced or encountered in person, but was and is encountered via photographic images. Therefore it is crucial to examine what happens to the artwork when it is encountered as a photograph, most often in exhibitions or in publication. This investigation considers photographs not only as records of what happened, but more importantly as important contributions to the episode itself. Various photographs of *Phase-Earth* contribute to the contested zone where multiple narratives of the dirt sculpture episode were developing. By examining photographs, Sekine's work can be seen as an episode, less of an origin and more of a strand in the web of Mono-ha.

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<sup>88</sup> Lee, "In Search of Encounter," p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 21.



By November when the Sculpture Biennale had ended, the artwork *Phase-Earth* was already being reproduced in numerous periodicals. The most widely reproduced images were installation photographs taken by the reporter assigned to document the exhibition. Despite the air of objectivity in these “official” photographs, their subjective perspective is revealed by analysis of the less frequently reproduced images taken by artists. Photographic documentation was a highly debated issue in global contemporary art discourse during the late 1960s. For instance, another Mono-ha artist, Takayama Noboru, had mixed feelings about photographing his artworks. At first he considered them to be inadequate records of an actual event or artwork as it was performed, but at one point he realized: “If person A, B, and C all take pictures they all see different things.”<sup>90</sup> This realization led to a shift in perspective that spurred him to take photographs and short films of the artistic experimentation that he was organizing in the late 1960s at *Space Totsuka* just outside of Tokyo. In other words, he realized photographs were just as subjective as the artworks they were creating, not more or less than the episode, but *part of* the episode.

Architectural photographer Murai Osamu 村井修 (1928- ) was hired by *Bijutsu techō* to document the exhibition in Kobe. His images of Sekine’s work are devoid of human figures presenting *Phase-Earth* as a seemingly isolated geometric form. (Figs. 1 + 21) Murai’s images served as a synecdoche for all that came to be characteristic of Mono-ha in the following decade. Although these iconic images came to stand in for the work after it could no longer be experienced in person, they were in fact just as

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<sup>90</sup> Takayama Noboru interview by author in Mita, Tokyo on April 14, 2010.

subjective as any other interpretation of the event. These images were reproduced most frequently as they depicted the work in what seemed to be a straightforward or “objective” manner. Since the work was difficult to reconstruct all but a few subsequent exhibitions of Sekine’s work used photographs to represent *Phase-Earth*.

One of the earliest reproductions of the work was the illustration included with Nakahara’s article “Dirt Sculpture Episode.” In this small black and white photograph, Sekine’s circular hole and its counterpart are easily discernible. (Fig. 16) The negative space of the hole and the its erect cylindrical counterpart stand-alone largely divorced from any sense of scale, size or indication of the surrounding environment. This aspect is emphasized due to the lack of human figures and the near exclusion of any elements from the former palace. For some, perhaps the inclusion of viewers or the staircase that stood behind the work would place the work in a place and time and detract from its universal significance. In the custom of journalistic reporting the photographer’s name notably missing, thus the photograph appears to objectively stand in for the “real thing” which no longer existed.

In contrast the photographs taken by the artists show the *activity* of physically moving soil. These performative aspects of the work are absent in the official photographs. In the artists’ images the work is less of a geometric product and more of a series of activities including measuring, lifting, digging and sculpting soil. One image taken by artist Yoshida Katsurō was reproduced as the cover page of the special feature “Emerging Artists Talk: From the Horizon of Non-art” in *Bijutsu techō*.<sup>91</sup> (Fig. 17) This

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<sup>91</sup> This feature included a panel discussion “A New World Revealed by ‘Mono’” (“<Mono> ga hiraku atarashii sekai e”) with many of the artists who would later be considered Mono-ha as well as an article by Lee Ufan “In Search of

black and white image shows Sekine and Kushigemachi peeling back the wooden mold from the soil, revealing the naked soil cylinder for the first time. As the only image taken by the artists' published at the time, this photograph gave a rare view of *Phase-Earth* in accord with Nakahara's earlier description of the challenging process involved in making the work. This image includes elements of the surrounding environment such as trees, the ground and the rope used to hoist and the lumber, supporting the soil as it was drawn from the earth and packed into the wood mold. Their photos do not dramatize the cylinder nor isolate it from the surroundings as Murai's images and the reproduction from Nakahara's article do, and whether the artists intended it to or not, place their process on center stage.

Those images taken primarily by fellow artist Yoshida Katsurō while creating *Phase-Earth* reveal the subjective aspects of documenting the work, placing it in corporeal space and time. In one image the shadow of the photographer is cast onto Sekine as he stands inside the partially dug out hole in the ground. (Fig. 18) In this photograph Yoshida's shadow is cast directly onto Sekine as he actively shovels dirt out of a circular boundary. As mentioned previously, shadows were also an important part of official photographer Murai Osamu's images of *Phase-Earth*. (Fig. 1) I contend that the subjectivity of the photographers' viewpoint is clearly expressed in these shadows. In Murai's photograph the shadows of two figures standing just outside the camera frame, calculated to create a visually engaging photograph out of the positive and negative space at work in *Phase-Earth*. In contrast, Yoshida's shadow serves as less of a referent for scale

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Encounter" (Deai wo motomete) and Suga Kishio's article "Beyond being a State" ("Jōtai wo koete aru") in *Bijutsu techō* (February 1970) pp. 12-55.

and more of an indicator of his direct involvement in the creation process itself, as he was helping Sekine make the work while taking photographs. His shadow is cast directly onto Sekine's half-naked body in the center of the frame, indicating his subjective involvement in both the making and the recording of *Phase-Earth*.

In contrast to this image taken by Yoshida, the images disseminated in print were predominantly the official ones taken by Murai. The most commonly reproduced black and white image distorts the cylindrical hole gigantically in the foreground, with the cylinder behind it. Important to architectural photography but often overlooked in installation view photographs of artworks is a reference to scale. The only reference point for discerning the scale of *Phase-Earth* are the shadows of two figures standing just outside the camera frame. (Fig. 1) Without these two shadows it is very difficult to discern the proportions of the work, providing visual support for Andō's claim that the work "controlled" the surrounding environment. This is markedly different from the experience of walking around the piece, viewing the hole and its upright counterpart in a fluid relationship of varying scale, changing as the viewer's position changes in relationship to both component parts. For the visitor experiencing the work in person, the protruding cylinder was visible from far away, while the matching hole aroused only those visitors who approached the work up close.<sup>92</sup>

Recalling Takayama's approach to photographs as part of the creative work itself, the artists' photographs of this site also reveal the subjective role of the photographer in the creation of the work. Yoshida's shadow appears plainly across the frame due to the

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<sup>92</sup> These observations are based on the author's observations of visitors who came to see the work when it was reconstructed at the Tamagawa Art Line Project in 2008.

eye-level angle he held on Sekine as he became submerged into the earth. (Fig. 18) This shadow also shows the reflexive process of performing before the camera. After all, the only image taken by the artists reproduced at the time shows them consciously performing in front of the camera as the wooden mold was halfway pulled off to reveal the soil cylinder. (Fig. 17) Although its remnants are still plainly visible, less suggestion of physical work appears as the actors engage in more self-conscious role-playing in front of the camera. Although the artists did not view the work as process art nor as a happening, this image shows the performative aspect of the work in progress, as the artists play with the framing of their bodies and the hardened soil that formed the body of the work.

The selection and publication of photographic images changed dramatically as scholarly attention to Sekine's work claimed it as the most exemplar artwork of a movement that became known as Mono-ha in the 1970s. By 1978 a full-color photograph taken by Murai (Fig. 19) appeared on the cover of *Bijutsu techō* in conjunction with a panel discussion of art critics outspoken on Mono-ha. In the same issue art critic Minemura Toshiaki published an exegesis of the movement titled, "Regarding Mono-ha" ("Mono-ha ni tsuite") which provided the first narration of the artists and their work as a coherent movement.<sup>93</sup> Although the work had been reproduced once for the Osaka Expo in 1970, the large illustration of *Phase-Earth* reproduced in Minemura's article (Fig. 20) was the same official photograph taken by Murai Osamu in Kobe, but this time in full color. The dramatic geometric form of the

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<sup>93</sup> Minemura Toshiaki, "Regarding Mono-ha" ("Mono-ha ni tsuite") *Bijutsu techō* 30:436 (July 1978) p. 227.

cylinder stood as the hallmark artwork for Minemura's exposition of Mono-ha as one of the most significant Postwar Japanese art movements.

In this photograph the shadow of a leafy tree in the foreground fuses with an open view of the park's surroundings. The angle of the photographer frames the work with a deep blue sky surrounding the upper half of the cylinder, making the compacted soil appear to protrude toward the sky. This analysis of subjective framing in photographic representations is not restricted to Sekine's *Phase-Earth*. The notion of an expanded encounter is a methodology whereby further analysis could be done on a range of artworks. A similar analysis can be used to deconstruct interpretations of other Mono-ha artworks produced in the same period. For example Narita Katsuhiko's work *Sumi* could be analyzed not as a sculpture but as an installation that exists in multiple contexts based on the relationship of the work to its surroundings as they are seen in photographs of the work. (Fig. 3) This approach intentionally sees the work as less of a thing made of charcoal and more of a site for experiencing the rawness of a material such as charcoal. In this way photographic analysis deconstructs the apparatus whereby the *rawness* of materials such as wood, stone, paper, and cotton, said to be "just as they are" in Mono-ha philosophy, as seen in relation to their surroundings as depicted in photographs taken by multiple viewers of the same work. With this methodology artworks and photographs of artworks can be seen not self-evident arrangements of materials, but rather they are sites for encountering and re-encountering experiences.

## From Recreating Artworks to Revival

In the case of Mono-ha photographs are especially important because artworks were impermanent so photographs recorded works that only briefly existed. This is compounded by the fact that the movement was not constructed until after it ended. In constructing a narrative of Mono-ha as a cohesive art movement in the early 1970s photographic evidence was a crucial but overlooked aspect in discussions of the artists work. Important aspects of Mono-ha artworks are also revealed in recreation (*saiseisaku*, 再制作) of artworks. A deeper analysis of recreated works and photographs leads to a re-examination of events that have been overlooked in research on Mono-ha as a cohesive art movement.

Photographs not only document installations but they also engage with debates over the meaning of artworks. Although photographs are often used as an objective record of the work, they are in fact subjective interpretations of the event that contribute to its memorialization. Analysis of photographic documentation of recreated artworks reveals issues that are crucial to the artwork and its discursive significance. For example, Sekine's *Phase-Earth* has been recreated four times since it was made in Kobe.<sup>94</sup> Each time the work is recreated it accumulates new meaning in the present tense. Most recently the work was re-created for the Tamagawa Art Line Project held at Den-en-chōfu Seseragi Park in southern Tokyo. This and the three recreations of the work that preceded it may all physically appear as the work was created in 1968, but in re-performing the episode of *Phase-Earth* each one stands out as a separate event. Thus the

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<sup>94</sup> In 1970, 1996, 2003 and 2008 according to *Reconsidering Mono-ha* catalog (Osaka: National Museum of Art, 2005).

work exists in multiple presents beyond its common reference as the origin of Mono-ha as an art movement.

In sharp contrast to the photos presented thus far in this chapter stands a promotional image from 2008 used to advertise the recreation of Sekine's work in Tokyo. (Fig. 21) The background for the work was entirely "blued" out: no more detached palace, trees, bridge, or people, just brown dirt, blue sky and the two familiar shadows. The site has been reduced to nothing more or less than Sekine's soil inversion. The drama of this photograph is particularly ironic since the actual work created in 2008 was executed in a small field closely surrounded on all sides by a thick forest, making the cylinder impossible to photograph with a blue sky in the background. (Fig. 22) The eccentric site for the Kobe Biennial included remnants of the palace including water fountains, large white columns, elaborate gardens and dramatic stairways. These elements were in the background of the work no matter what angle it was photographed at. The Suma Park in Kobe was a site far from the tabula rasa depicted in this promotional image for the recreation of the work where nothing but a gigantic blue sky surrounds *Phase-Earth*.

Another crucial difference is the photographic documentation of the recreated work in progress. This time it was not Murai Osamu nor was it a fellow artist who photographed the work, but another colleague of Sekine: Anzai Shigeo. Although Murai's photographs strive for objectivity, Anzai makes no such claim, clearly revealing his involvement in the framing of the work. For the 2008 version, Anzai witnessed the digging of the hole with a backhoe instead of shovels and immediately reacted negatively. (Fig. 23) He captured these contradictions in the process of remaking the work, for



example in an image of Sekine gazing into the hole while it was being constructed. In this image Sekine jovially looks into the hole after it has been dug out. (Fig. 24) In stark contrast to earlier images of the artists in physical labor and stories of them not changing their clothes the whole time they were fabricating the work in Kobe, now Sekine is clothed in a white suit staring into the hole with a crowd of onlookers. He is not directly involved in the digging nor the sculpting of the cylinder or its hole, but observing the work just as the other viewers. Although the shape and structure of the recreated work were made to exactly the same dimensions as the original, the debates over the work in 2008 were very different from 1968.

In analyzing contested meaning in the recreated work issues that are crucial to Mono-ha arise as artists, critics and photographers express their views on the work. The first issue is whether the recreated work can still be considered the same work. This issue is shared among almost all of the Mono-ha artists as very few of their works from their early careers in 1967-73 still exist in the same condition. Therefore in order to be exhibited historical works have to be reassembled and in many cases fully recreated. The next issue has to do with the relationship of the work to the context where it was originally encountered. To what extent do the physical, social, and historical surroundings create the work? In this case the stage for public sculpture set in Kobe, as well as the surroundings for the work not only exist in relation to the work and early photographs, but also contribute to the impact of the work in a way that is not always felt in later recreations.

Perspectives on the recreation of Mono-ha artworks are heterogeneous and related to debates over defining the movement itself. On one end are artists who believe

artworks can never be recreated, while others believe recreation is fundamentally a good thing. Artist Koshimizu Susumu, one of the artists who helped Sekine construct the work in Kobe, believes *Phase-Earth* was a one-shot artwork: “*Phase-Earth* is a work that cannot be recreated. The big bang can only happen once.”<sup>95</sup> He sees the uniqueness of the circumstances in which the original work as unrepeatable in other contexts. I engaged with Sekine in a series of studio visits on the meaning of *Phase-Earth* shortly after it was recreated in 2008. When I asked him what he thought of Koshimizu’s opinion on the oneness of the work, he responded by pointing out that the context for the work would never be the same as it was 1968, and that is likely why Koshimizu says that this work can never be recreated.<sup>96</sup> I wondered what his motive was for recreating an artwork. We continued to discuss the meaning of recreated artworks and Sekine explained himself confidently: “That work holds something like a fundamental power, that is why I think recreation of art works is fundamentally a good thing.”<sup>97</sup> Although Koshimizu sees recreations as less than the original, Sekine sees them as sites for increased viewership of the work in accord with its “fundamental power.”

An opponent of recreation, photographer Anzai Shigeo believes that events only happen once, making recreation completely impossible. Distancing himself from professional photographers who will take photographs of anything if they are hired to do so, he claims to only take photographs of artworks that he is personally engaged with.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Sekine, *Archaeology of Phase-Earth*, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview with the author in Yukigaya, Tokyo on February 3, 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> In a recent interview Anzai stated: "I'm not really a professional photographer at all...Not in the sense that people pay me to take photos, and I take them as a job." Edan Corkhill, "Shigeo Anzai: Faces of youthful ambition," *Japan Times*, October 4, 2007 <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fa20071004a2.html>> (4 April, 2011).

In fact Anzai first developed his angle of distinction while recording artworks after being encouraged by Lee Ufan to document Mono-ha artists' works. Therefore his attitude on the singular experience central to the work was influenced by and exerted influence on Mono-ha artists. When I recently asked Anzai for his opinion on recreating artworks such as *Phase-Earth*, in his distinctively raspy voice he exclaimed: "I think Mono-ha artists recreating their works is pretty much 100% nonsense."<sup>99</sup> He feels that new places, times and other factors change the work so much that it is nonsense to call it the same work.<sup>100</sup> In other words he values the original artwork and the experience of the work as a unique encounter that cannot be recreated, no matter how similar to the original it appears.

Although very different in their approaches, official photographer in Kobe, Murai Osamu, holds a similar attitude to Anzai on *Phase-Earth*. He recognizes Sekine's goal of sharing the works with a wider audience, but fails to see the same freshness in a recreated work:

Although those actions convey the work to a wider audience, I'm not so interested in the remaking of past artworks. The freshness of the work is lost for me.<sup>101</sup>

Although Murai is not opposed to the recreation of past artworks, he just doesn't feel as stimulated by the freshness of the original. Koshimizu, Sekine, Anzai and Murai all take overlapping but different stances on the possibility of whether *Phase-Earth* existed in one place and time or whether it can be recreated. In summary Sekine thinks it is a good

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<sup>99</sup> Anzai Shigeo Interview by author at Mizuma Gallery, Kagurazaka, Tokyo on March 24, 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Murai Osamu, Email correspondence with author on June 16, 2010.

thing, Koshimizu and Anzai are fundamentally opposed to it, and Murai thinks the recreated work is just less interesting. These differing viewpoints create and contribute to the discursive significance of the work while enlivening past debates over the origin and meaning of the term Mono-ha in multiple presents.

Perhaps the question of whether or not a recreated work can be considered the same work needs to be reassessed. An artist who exposes the shifting borders of Mono-ha as a movement, Takayama Noboru, provides a dynamic approach to issues of recreation. In a series of interviews I conducted, he expressed firm opposition to trends in Mono-ha and provided alternative frameworks for thinking about issues of recreation. Takayama considers the recreation of artworks as revival (saigen, 再現), opportunities for activating new aspects of the work in the present. He also believes that in relation to the space and time of a new place, the “same” work becomes a new work whenever it is recreated.<sup>102</sup> He emphatically stated:

It's impossible to make the same work. Even with the same materials the space, environment and circumstances all kinds of problems arise. But these are not so important. Its best if the works are made in the present tense.<sup>103</sup>

Faced with the impossible task of recreating a previous work, Takayama sees all recreations not in the past but in the present moment. He also refutes any one consistent narrative of what happened, taken from a single perspective. Most significant to the current investigation is Takayama's framework for considering recreated artworks not as recreations, but as revivals. With this framework past artworks are revived in the present

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<sup>102</sup> Takayama Noboru interview by author in Ueno, Tokyo on January 14, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Takayama Noboru interview by author in Mita, Tokyo on April 13, 2010.

in relation to but not in similitude with past words. Additionally the artworks are not simply viewed as recreations of a concept or material, but as events with a life of their own revived in more than one time and space.

The question of whether a work exists in one time and place or not is mediated by images that function together with the retelling of stories that re-perform the work. Takayama's perspective on photographing events as subjective records noted earlier in this chapter, as well as his framework for understanding recreated artworks, provide new perspectives on the dynamic relationship between the artwork and the viewer, the photographer and the event, and the photograph and the viewer afterwards. I argue for a new term, the expanded encounter, which is revealed most clearly in the agency of photographic images in facilitating multiple encounters with artworks. Capturing interesting things is not enough for Anzai, it is the interactive relationship of sender and receiver that creates a performative experience of the work:

But those things I thought were interesting, the question of how many images were interesting, just that doesn't reach an explanation. On the side of the sender as well as the side of the receiver, flowing together in time as it passes, in the midst of that, a kind of experience was interesting in what could be called a good performance isn't it?"<sup>104</sup>

Based on Anzai's argument for the centrality of photographic experience as a kind of performance, the expanded encounter is seen in motion, weaving a mutually constitutive web of multiple encounters in the present.

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<sup>104</sup> Anzai Shigeo in dialogue with Tōnō Yoshiaki and Akasegawa Genpei, "Body in the midst of Urban Space: Things expressed by Performance" ("Toshi kūkan no naka no shintai: pafōmansu ga hyōgen suru mono") *Yuriika* 16:9 (1984) p. 158.

The artistic perspectives of Sekine and Takayama place the artwork in the present, providing a view that allows photographs to play a dynamic role in reviving the spirit of an artwork. Photographic images facilitate the story of the artists in ways that the actual works cannot. They allow the topic of the “work” to be discussed far beyond the actions and exhibition itself. Revisiting the quote by Sekine that opened this chapter, a new perspective on existence and absence can be seen in light of the alternative frameworks just outlined:

Obviously we are dealing with the reality of a work that doesn’t exist except for the photograph. I want people to see the real thing but it’s not possible. However there is also the opposite result, because the real thing is not here many things can be imagined.<sup>105</sup>

In summary, Sekine believes that although photographs exist, it is the *absence* of the “real thing” which opens new imaginative perspectives on the work. When the artwork does not exist, photographs serve as a medium for expanded encounters that create new meanings for artworks. In other words, Sekine is saying that *because* the real thing is absent viewers are free to imagine various meanings for the work in the present. If this is true, then photographs could be thought of as instigators responsible for provoking the re-imagining of a work in multiple presents.

The importance of images in the remembrance of Mono-ha cannot be overlooked since oral and written memories of events are inextricably linked to visual records.

Another response to photographs is that viewers can feel a sense of regret if they were not able to experience it in reality. In a panel discussion on photography and performance art which included Anzai, art critic Tōnō Yoshiaki commented, “Things like that remain as

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<sup>105</sup> Sekine Nobuo interview by author in Yukigaya, Tokyo on December 3, 2009.

photographs so the photographs come to have a strong aura, and one totally regrets that which has not been seen in actuality.”<sup>106</sup> This aura is expressed in the temporal gap between the physical place the work used to occupy and the mental space the work now occupies. In this chapter, I suggest that how the works were *felt* according to a new consciousness of *mono* does not only happen in the past, but also in the present viewership of images. Although the encounter of a photograph of *mono* is different from the encounter of *mono* as an artwork, new frameworks grant an imaginative agency to the photographs that distinct from the direct encounter of the work itself.

Since most early Mono-ha works were ephemeral and short-lived, there were few people who actually experienced the works in person. In contrast, those who have experienced the photographs of artworks are abundant and it may be argued that the works have gained discursive significance due precisely to the interrelation of images, texts and memories. Analysis of photographs taken of *Phase-Earth* and its recreation show discourses of Mono-ha occurring not only in the past, but also evoked in multiple presents. Examining the work as an episode in Kobe and has been revived four times opens the door for imaginative perspectives on the work. In this analysis photographs can be seen as contributions to the expanded encounter of the work and a lead-in for contested meanings of Mono-ha actively occurring in the present. The alternative frameworks for examining images as strands in a dynamic web contribute to shifting definitions of Mono-ha artworks as more than “things just as they are,” but more appropriately “things as they are experienced and re-experienced.”

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<sup>106</sup> Quote from a section of a panel discussion titled “Oneness and Memory” (“Ikkansei to kioku”) from Anzai Shigeo, “Body in the midst of Urban Space,” p. 158.

## Chapter Three

# Encountering Photographs



*In other words, the essence of my work is not how things relate to photography,  
but how I relate to all of the things I encounter through the medium of photography.*

—Anzai Shigeo<sup>107</sup>



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<sup>107</sup> Anzai Shigeo et. al., *PROOF: Ten Photographers*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: New Langton Arts, 1984) p. 5.

## Anzai Shigeo's Angle of Distinction

This chapter will show the importance of one photographer's involvement in debates over *mono*, as a significant contribution to the art movement that later became known as Mono-ha. Starting with issues of framing these photographic works, this chapter will investigate the earliest photographs of Mono-ha artists' work, revealing a subjective record that places emphasis on photography as an activity. Furthermore I will argue that the selection, display and reproduction of photographs show the importance of underlying *frames* present in Mono-ha discourse.<sup>108</sup> The agency of photographs will be shown to support an expanded definition of Lee's idea of the Encounter to include encounters with artworks via photographic records. The negotiation of encounters via photographs will be addressed in an examination of Anzai's photographs from three of the most important exhibitions related to Mono-ha that occurred in 1970. These photographs show the works to be less about *mono* as objects, and more about the importance of the space surrounding the works on display, an important aspect to the meaning and practice of Mono-ha.

Anzai Shigeo 安齋重男 (1939- ) is a photographer who is obsessed with recording and hates editing. For exhibitions of his work, he would display every photo he has taken if he could: including countless artists, installations, performances, parties, happenings and much more from the past four decades. He refuses to use a digital camera or computer even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although his oeuvre has been the subject of two

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<sup>108</sup> "There is frame, but the frame *does not exist*" 86 (il y a du cadre, mais le cadre *n'existe pas*)." Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod, Chicago, 1987, 81. In Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson. "Semiotics and Art History" *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 73, No. 2 (June, 1991), p. 192.

retrospective exhibitions,<sup>109</sup> an examination of his earliest engagement with the camera provides a critical perspective on the early development of Mono-ha. Furthermore Lee Ufan's role as an instigator in the visual documentation of early Mono-ha artworks evidences the agency of images in defining Mono-ha as an art movement.

Unlike other Mono-ha artists, Anzai never went to an art university, studying applied chemistry in high school and then working in the Japanese oil industry for five years. During this time he educated himself in painting and drawing. He started showing paintings in a group exhibition at Muramatsu Gallery (1967) and Tokiwa Gallery (1968) as well as the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum (1968 + 1969). He held a solo exhibition of his paintings Mudo Gallery (1968) during the same year Sekine was creating the work *Phase-Earth*. Anzai had another solo exhibition the following year at Tamura Gallery, the location where he most likely met Lee Ufan. The same year he met Lee he bought his first camera, two of the most important events that were to impact the chronicling of artists activities in postwar Japan.

A photograph of the work *Phenomenon and Perception B (Chikaku to genshō B)* (Fig. 25) from Lee Ufan's solo exhibition at Tamura Gallery (January 12-24, 1970) is one of the first images Anzai ever took of another artist's work. This image, considered the starting point for Anzai's photographic career, is a telling example of his subjective involvement in documenting artworks that was to have a significant impact on how Mono-ha works were seen. Standing at eye level Anzai frames Lee's stone and cotton

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<sup>109</sup> *ANZAI: Personal Photo Archives 1970-2006*. National Art Center, Tokyo (2007) and *Anzai Shigeo's Eye: 1970-1999* National Museum of Art, Osaka (2000).

floor sculpture into the camera with a bordering space around it. In this photograph the work is innocently shown in the gallery without adornment.

In the same solo exhibition Lee also displayed the work, *Structure A*, photographed by an unknown photographer and reproduced inside of Chiba Shigeo's book *History of Deviation in Contemporary Art (Gendai bijutsu itsu datsu shi 1945-1985)*. Sharing the use of raw cotton with the previous work, this cube had a presence much stronger due to the steel plates that were suspended to the surfaces of the cotton cube. In this photograph, (Fig. 26) it is as if the photographer attempted to back up a bit farther in the small gallery space, but found this was impossible. The photographer was then faced with the tough decision of whether to cut the top or bottom corner of cube. In this situation the photographer's selective framing of the artwork is clear, as he is unable to pack the dimensionality of the work into the frame. Furthermore the anonymity of the photographer in Chiba's reproduction evidences the focus on the object, supporting my claim that there is a photographic frame, "but the frame does not exist" in the literature to date.<sup>110</sup>

Anzai's personal engagement with artists was a crucial part of his early photographic activity. Just after taking photographs of Lee's work at Tamura Gallery the two of them went to a nearby soba noodle shop. Lee discussed the importance of *mono* and place (ba, 場) in the works he and others were producing as well as the lack of collectors who would preserve and care for their works after they were displayed.<sup>111</sup> Lee

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<sup>110</sup> Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 192.

<sup>111</sup> Just after Anzai came to take a few casual photos of his exhibit at Tamura Gallery in January 1970 Lee recalls, "...Then we went out for soba at a shop nearby the gallery and started to discuss all kinds of things, like the relationship of *mono* and *ba* in direct relation, finding a fresh new world that could be seen together as the beginning of

felt that with no artworks and no photographs remaining their ideas could disappear just as quickly as they had appeared. This was one of the first moments when Anzai saw his place in the contested issues artists were dealing with in ephemeral installations occurring in galleries, museums and outdoors.

As a point of comparison an undated image taken by Lee of his own work *Structure A* (Fig. 27) reveals a different perspective. In this angle the work appears much smaller than in the previous photograph due to the higher perspective of Lee's camera. There is also less distortion of the work's cubical structure, which makes it appear more objectively in front of, or just below the line of sight of the viewer. The work now appears pristine in relation to the outdoor environment on a paved street. This is sharply contrasted by the white gallery setting where the work was displayed in 1970. In both photographs the cotton appears to be bursting out around the steel plates, showing a dynamic relationship between one material and another. In these two photographic angles on the same work, the relationship of the surrounding space and the lens of the camera can also be seen as a dynamic space.

Anzai was alongside the artists in the formative debates over *mono* at their inception. According to Lee, Anzai's first involvement was juvenile but persistent:

Because he was so poor, you couldn't really call him a photographer, and he had come so far and volunteered to take pictures, ... I encouraged him on the one

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a movement, it was becoming a unique Japanese contemporary art thing. But recently we realized works that were limited to a place were getting more frequent, and there were no collectors who wanted to keep those works, and there weren't any people taking pictures of those things, so afterwards there would be no art works and no photos of those works. This became clear to their vision, so I mentioned all this to Anzai." Lee Ufan "Dynamics of Photographic Space" ("Shashin kukan no rikigaku") *Mainichi Camera* No. 358 (July 1983), pp. 139-40.

hand, but on the other, I felt that since this was something I hadn't asked him to do, there wasn't any reason to egg him on.<sup>112</sup>

During this time Anzai started taking photographs but didn't quit painting. It was in the intense conversations he had in with Lee, Sekine and Yoshida that ignited him to devote himself to photographing their works. From the start he was not just an observer, but an active participant and co-creator of the intellectual atmosphere in which Mono-ha ideas developed.

In contrast to other photographers who strove for objectivity and were often hired to take installation photographs of artworks such as Osamu Murai, Anzai was involved in the creative process itself: from creating and installing the work, to attending parties and social gatherings as well as live performances. He went to these events not because he was paid to be there but because he was invested in the artists' ideas. Since he started out as an artist he sees himself as less of a photographer and more of an "art accompanist."<sup>113</sup> According to Lee his creative approach (almost) makes him a member of the Mono-ha movement itself:

By taking photographs Anzai Shigeo must be said to be an artist typical of Mono-ha for showing the world of the 1970s to us. ... In my thoughts he lived alongside Mono-ha, taking pictures of Mono-ha, making it known in the world and that world known in it, thus more than anything attaching an angle of distinction to it.<sup>114</sup>

It is precisely this "angle of distinction" (i.e. viewpoint) Anzai attached to Mono-ha that has not been investigated in previous literature. The question posed by this chapter is:

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<sup>112</sup> ANZAI: *Personal Photo Archives*, p. 18.

<sup>113</sup> Hirai Shoichi. *ANZAI: Personal Photo Archives 1970-2006*, unpaginated.

<sup>114</sup> Lee Ufan "Dynamics of Photographic Space" ("Shashin kukan no rikigaku") *Mainichi Camera*, No. 358 (July 1983) p. 140.

How did Anzai frame the artists' work and ideas, furthermore how did this framing impact debates on the meaning of *mono* that would later come to be known as 'Mono-ha?'

The tension between capturing the artwork and being involved in the activities that lie in what I call the "extended frame" are revealed in the discursive records of January 1970. In the same month Lee asked Anzai to photograph his solo exhibition at Tamura Gallery, Lee also moderated the panel discussion "A New World Revealed by <Mono>," the article which became the foundation for artistic perspectives on Mono-ha as discussed in Chapter One. Anzai's photographs of the work *Structure A* come from an important moment when the relationship between the artists, their statements and a photographer can be seen in action. This was an important moment in the development of Mono-ha philosophy and practice. In the same month, Lee was also refining his philosophical idea of the Encounter, which he published in the same issue of *Bijutsu techō* as the panel discussion in a separate article titled, "In Search of Encounter" ("Deai wo motomete.") In this article which defines the concept of Encounter in the context of contemporary art Lee wrote, "Complete open consciousness—precisely that which is in the nature of the world just as it is, an 'encounter' becomes a movement that makes one self-aware, perhaps."<sup>115</sup> The question is: can a "complete open consciousness" be experienced in an encounter of the work in photographs?

Drawing upon Lee's idea of the Encounter this analysis will also refer to the encounter of viewers with photographs of Mono-ha artworks as well as the encounter of

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<sup>115</sup> Lee Ufan, "In Search of Encounter," p. 17.

the current reader with the images and debates on *mono* as they are occurring in the present. Similar to the reading of the extended frame for Anzai's earliest photographs of artworks, I will examine other photographs taken by Anzai focusing on those from 1970, the year Anzai began chronicling contemporary art. In this examination photographs will not be analyzed for their connotative meaning based on the pose of objects,<sup>116</sup> but in the *present* according to the pose of the photographer, the artist and the current viewer.

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<sup>116</sup> This includes scholars who have written extensively on Mono-ha works as objects and materials with profound connotative meaning including art critic Chiba Shigeo who takes a Barthesian approach to photographs, "Here we must grant a particular importance to what we might call the pose of objects, since the connoted meaning derives from the objects photographed." Barthes, Roland. Richard Howe tr., *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, (Berkeley, UC Berkeley Press, 1991) p. 11.



## Framing Encounters

When looking at Anzai's original prints compared to many reproductions, one of the striking differences is the cropping of the work. Anzai emphasizes the negative's border in print, leaving a dark black band encircling each print that says to the viewer the photographs were not cropped in the darkroom, but printed as they were taken on location. Outside of this band, hand-written text appears in the white of the photo paper. These two aspects, most often cropped from the work when it is reproduced, reveal the importance of framing, both literally and subjectively in Anzai's work. By exposing the edges of the film negative onto the final print, a result of grinding the negative carrier out in the darkroom enlarger, Anzai inscribes a visual statement saying, "I was here." Based on this inclusion his works may seem to be a pure record of the *scène en vis*, or the scene as it was understood or seen, but a deeper examination of the photographs and Anzai's subjectivity reveals otherwise. It may be more appropriate to say that rather than just taking photographs he is making them.<sup>117</sup>

The dark band included on Anzai's prints reveals not only what is inside the frame but also hints at what is not inside the frame. These photographs do not open a clear window onto the artwork, but present a subjective angle on artworks in a particular moment. The etched black frame is deceiving in this sense because Anzai's photographs are not just installation photographs, but they are framed angles on events based on his experience. In examining specific images, the photographer's involvement in events can

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<sup>117</sup> For further reference on the infinite range of meanings photographs come to possess in not only the taking of the image but also the making of the image through reproduction see Geoffrey Batchen's essay, "Taking and Making" in *Each Wild Idea*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 82-106.

be seen as a significant contribution to the debates over *mono* that became fundamental to the construction of Mono-ha as an art movement.

Anzai's "angle of distinction" is also revealed on the surface of his silver gelatin prints in the captions he inscribes around the frame of each image. These hand-written notations are done with a black pen on the white border around each image, giving the photographs the unique feeling of a hand drawing. Although most of the inscriptions describe the details of what is inside the frame, they are always selective in their descriptions. For example on the image of artists installing their work at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum he writes, "View of Installing the Mainichi Contemporary Exhibit. Air thick with enthusiasm, the young artists use all kinds of materials in defiance: wood, soil and water." (Fig. 28) Without a caption this image looks like a bird's eye view of the unpacking and setting up of various artworks but with the caption it becomes a site for defiant young artists expressing themselves with raw materials.

In another hand-written caption for a photograph taken on the occasion of the *Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha* Exhibition at the Seibu Museum of Art in 1987 (Fig. 29) Anzai writes: "Post Mono-ha's Group Show, Seibu Museum, June 25, 1987." Past events are recorded and memorialized by Anzai and the artists simultaneously in moments such as this. The captions reveal the self-conscious archiving in his work. Anzai is doing much more than just recording who, what, where or when asserting the relevance and significance of various events, artists and artworks. In recording the exact day on many of the photographs, Anzai's conscious archiving of the images into history can be seen.

The black-band encircling the images as well as the hand-written captions are part of what I call the "extended frame" of these photographs, a framing apparatus that

cannot be ignored in the study of Mono-ha. Both of these aspects are often cropped from Anzai's images when they are reproduced for catalogs and exhibitions of Mono-ha artists' work, editing out the signs of a photographer in order to show the artwork objectively. The extended frame of the photograph has thus fallen outside the scope of previous scholarly inquiry on Mono-ha and therefore the goal of this chapter is to show the role of the photographer in the development of Mono-ha as an art movement.

## “With Questions I take Photos”

One of the best sites to start this investigation is an important exhibition from the period, the 10<sup>th</sup> Tokyo Biennale '70: *Between Man and Matter (Ningen to bussuitsu.)*<sup>118</sup> For this exhibition chief commissioner Nakahara Yūsuke overtly resisted titles such as “Mono-ha” or “Arte Povera” because he “had no interest in giving labels to art.”<sup>119</sup> This exhibition was significant not only for the artists it included, but also because it was the stage where two of the most important chroniclers of Mono-ha started their careers: Anzai Shigeo and Minemura Toshiaki. Minemura worked in the management office assisting Nakahara while Anzai worked as an assistant for Richard Serra, Daniel Buren and Mario Merz.<sup>120</sup> As an assistant to the artists, Anzai was in a privileged position where he could take intimate photos of artists and artworks while they were in progress including activities that were never part of the public exhibition. These included photographs of works by Mono-ha artists such as Narita Katsuhiko, Yoshida Katsuro, and Enokura Kōji as well as of works by Arte Povera artists such as Jannis Kounellis and Mario Merz.<sup>121</sup>

For Anzai, photographing the exhibition *Between Man and Matter* was the first time he realized how things move not only on the artist's side of an artwork but also on

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<sup>118</sup> Opened at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum from May 10-30, 1970 and traveled to Kyoto Metropolitan Museum from June 6-28 and Aichi Prefectural Museum from July 15-26. The title of the exhibition was different in English and Japanese, a practice that occurs frequently in contemporary art exhibitions held in Japan. Nakahara invited 13 Japanese artists and twice as many international artists to participate in this exhibition.

<sup>119</sup> Nakahara, *What is Mono-ha?* p. 19.

<sup>120</sup> *MONO-HA* (1995) p. 77.

<sup>121</sup> In this exhibition Anzai took photographs of works by Sekine Nobuo, Koshimizu Susumu, Yoshida Katsuro, Narita Katsuhiko, Takamatsu Jirō, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Christo, Richard Serra, Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Giuseppe Penone, Klaus Rinke, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Shoji Satoru, Barry Flanagan, Horikawa Michio and Carl Andre. Lee Ufan and Suga Kishio were not included.

his side as a photographer, in his relationship to the artist.<sup>122</sup> In analyzing Anzai's photographs of the artists at work as expressions of process and site-specificity, photographs can be seen as encounters that mediate the space in *between* Man and Matter, Nakahara's title for the exhibition. A series of three photographs that Anzai took just outside the Museum in Ueno Park shows Richard Serra working on an outdoor piece for the Biennale in Ueno Park. In the first image Haraguchi is assisting Serra in measuring the dimensions for the work by holding the center point of a circle that Serra is chalking onto the black pavement.<sup>123</sup> (Fig. 30) Anzai's vantage point is the same eye level view as was seen in his photograph of Lee's work a few months earlier, now looking down at actions rather than a stationary artwork. Two onlookers also stand outside of the circle, giving clues to the public and frequently traversed site of Ueno Park. Just as Anzai is peering into the camera at this moment, one of the onlookers also peers at the scene through a camera viewfinder, revealing multiple recording angles that took place at the same event. This image shows the expanded encounter of site-specific artworks in process as the artistic dialogue that was occurring between Haraguchi, Serra and Anzai.

The last photograph taken of Serra's exhibition site is taken from eye level peering down at the pavement with the finished work submerged into the surface of the pavement. (Fig. 31) The two legs of a portable chair in the background appears accidentally in the photograph, endowing the image with a happenstance that deems it a poor installation view in the common sense of objectively recording an artwork. Using this

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<sup>122</sup> "New PhotoTheories 4: Interview Anzai Shigeo's Eye—Mono that just appear accidentally are the beginning of one person's walk—Photographs of Art" ("Shin shashin ron 4 Anzai Shigeo no me intabyu—utsutte shimatta mono ga hitori aruki wo hajimeru—A-to ni tsuite no shashin") *Mainichi Camera* 30, No. 358, (July 1983), p. 135

<sup>123</sup> This photograph was the subject of a recent article by Mitsuka Yoshitaka published in the National Art Center's newsletter on the event of preparing the Anzai Photo Archives for the public (No. 14, April 2010) unpaginated.

image as an example, unintentionally including a chair in one, and Haraguchi in another photograph, Anzai has stated it is those things that appear unintentionally in his photographs that show his individual artistic perspective.<sup>124</sup>

From this vantage point these two photographs are only partially of Serra's work, while the extended frame is composed of other contingent factors. For example, in the first image the stairway and fence in front of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum are exposed in the background. As a charged site for other performance activities before, during and after Tokyo Biennale '70 this setting also places the artists in a prominent discursive context of the period. The setting is further revealed in the signs posted on the fence behind Serra as he draws with white chalk on the pavement. These photographs emphasize the performative aspects of Serra's work and create the possibility for an extended encounter of an image that is both more and less than what Anzai hoped to capture.<sup>125</sup>

These images evidence the site-specific nature of the artists' work executed for the Biennale, as well as issues of presence that were debated by the organizers in relation to the participation of international artists. In preparation for the printing of the exhibition catalog artists were asked to send sketches of their planned work one month before the exhibition. Many of the artists depended so much on the site that they left all of the details of their work up to elements of chance that would be determined upon arriving in

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<sup>124</sup> Anzai stated, "I didn't take a picture of Haraguchi, but Haraguchi just unintentionally appeared." Anzai Shigeo, "New Photo Theory. Eye of Anzai Shigeo Interview: Things that just appear accidentally are the beginning of the topic of one individual's art photographs" ("Shin shashin ron. Anzai shigeo no me: utsutte shimatta....") *Mainichi Camera*, No. 358, (July 1983) p. 136.

<sup>125</sup> "The photographed image produced out of an encounter invariably contains both *more* and *less* than that which someone wished to inscribe in it. The photograph is always more and less than what one of the parties to the encounter managed to frame at the moment of photography." Ariella Azoulay. "What is a photograph? What is photography?" *Philosophy of Photography*, Vol. 1 No. 1, (2010) p. 12.

Tokyo. For example Serra wrote, “(Intuition) and materials, time, place, condition, in part, the nature of my activities—will arrive in Japan 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April.”<sup>126</sup> Upon arriving the artists engaged with new materials and sites in and around the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum in a way that would not have been possible if the artists were not present in Japan during the installation of the exhibition. Anzai’s photographs engage in these debates over the importance of the artists’ presence in creating and installing site-specific works as well as contributing to the emphasis on process that was prevalent in global art trends of the time. This context is crucial to understanding Mono-ha artists’ ideas and artworks.

Although the Japanese artists were all invited to install their works on site, the burden of hosting twenty-seven international artists’ was more than the organization could afford so artists from abroad were only allotted the funds to ship their works to and from Tokyo. Curator Nakahara felt strongly that the artists could not simply ship their works, but had to be *present* in Tokyo in order to create site-specific works. Eventually the organizers gave all they could to bring a few foreign artists and they helped many of the foreign artists gain funding from other sources. Some of the other artists paid for their own trip. Anzai was wrapped up in the interactions, negotiations and debates that occurred between artists and the organizers for the Tokyo Biennale ‘70. Anzai’s photographs express encounters of all kinds: artists with each other, raw materials with the setting, viewers with artworks in a way that would not be possible without being present. Anzai’s direct participation in the events, conversations and works in progress as

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<sup>126</sup> Nakahara Yūsuke, *Tokyo Biennale ‘70 Between Man and Matter (Ningen to Bussuitsu)*, (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, May 1970) unpaginated.

they were happening created a subjective record that curators, art critics and other writers could draw upon in interpreting past events.

Another work reproduced in the catalog for the exhibition reveals the international context for site-specific works in 1970 that was shared by Mono-ha artists. Hans Haacke sent a piece of paper that stated his work would “deal with the prevailing conditions of the place” and therefore must be made once he arrived in Tokyo so that it would be “sensibly tailored to the existing environment.”<sup>127</sup> This work evidences the same untransportable characteristic of Sekine’s work *Phase-Earth* executed in Kobe when he told the organizers they would not have to send anyone to pick up his sculpture because he would make it entirely onsite. Nakahara saw a shared approach between Haacke and Japanese artists, thus he chose not to label them Minimalist, Arte Povera or Mono-ha in order to emphasize the shared themes in their work.

A photograph Anzai took during the installation of *Between Man and Matter* shows a debate between the organizers and one international artist. In this photograph of a work in progress by Jannis Kounellis a pile of rocks are stacked inside of the doorway of an exhibition hall and scattered around the floor of one exhibition hall. (Fig. 32) This image of installation process shows an experiment that was stopped, as the organizers would not allow the pile of stones to block a doorway entrance to the gallery. Anzai’s hand-written caption for the photo reads, “As if the heaviness of natural stones fills the doorway...In any case they said: a project placing stones in the entrance is prohibited!”

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<sup>127</sup> Hans Haacke’s page reads: “Not knowing the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum’s premises, the surrounding park, nor the city and its people, it is impossible for me to outline a definitive proposal for my participation in the Tokyo Biennale. Since I intend to deal with the prevailing conditions of the place rather than importing a finished product, I have to wait until I have personally inspected the situation in Tokyo. Only through analysis of the local systems would it be possible to find ways to expose just these systems, or to interfere with them or to introduce new systems sensibly tailored to the existing environment.” *Tokyo Biennale ’70 Between Man and Matter*, unpaginated.



Therefore this photo recorded the activity of piling rocks one on top of the other which was never displayed to the public for the exhibition. This photograph frames an encounter between Anzai and the artists' work, extending a momentary experimentation to an extended (albeit dislocated) viewership.

Anzai also photographed the work Kounellis displayed for the exhibition after this pile of stones was prohibited by the organizers. (Fig. 33) A thin wooden pole cuts across the same doorframe in a less obtrusive manner, bisecting the space without occupying it. The pole intersects with the floor in a point where a small spring was sensitively placed. Together these two contrasting photographs evidence Anzai's approach that is, "not so much about photographs as it is about the activity of photography."<sup>128</sup> They are more than documentation and they are less than perfect records of what occurred at the Biennale. Furthermore the photographs open the encounter of the artworks in wider viewership, evidencing the agency of photographs in site-specific artworks of the early 1970s.

Three of the artists from the panel discussion, "A New World Revealed by Mono" were included in this Biennale: Yoshida, Koshimizu and Narita. Anzai's photograph of Narita's work (Fig. 3) is clearly distinct from reproductions of his work that had appeared earlier (Fig. 34). The image reproduced in the *Between Man and Matter* catalog in April also shows Narita's gigantic block of charcoal from close-up perspective. (Fig. 35) Similar to the image from *Bijutsu techō* this image places far greater priority on the intricate details of the charcoal than the space that surrounds it. In

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<sup>128</sup> Anzai, "Things that just appear accidentally..." p. 137

contrast Anzai's photograph places Narita's work into a specific place on the floor, less dramatic and more of an intervention in the large space of the gallery. Anzai's image is shot from eye level view whereas the reproductions in *Bijutsu techō* is shot from an extremely low angle that makes the work appear gigantic. The cracks in the block of charcoal are emphasized in the earlier reproduction of Narita's work due to the close-up shot of the work and the stark lighting in the room. In contrast, Anzai's photograph shows the blocks of charcoal in relationship to one another and the eccentric exhibition hall including its pegboard walls and deep wood-grained floors. This rare medium format image by Anzai emphasizes the squareness of the charcoal blocks due to the format of the camera he used to photograph the work. All of the other images discussed in this chapter were recorded on 35 mm film and thus have a rectangular 2:3 proportion, but this telling image of square charcoal blocks is also "squared" by the camera Anzai was utilizing, displaying an uncanny similitude between the artworks and the photograph.

Anzai's photograph shows the arrangement of ten blocks of charcoal placed in an uneven line with two larger blocks placed behind. The eccentric shape of each log in comparison to the others is clearly shown in this photograph in contrast to the drama of one singular block shown in the earlier reproduction. Anzai's photograph displays the unevenness of the charcoal blocks, some looking as if they were cut on one end by a saw, and others looking as if they were burned in half during the process of firing them into charcoal. Also distinct from the earlier image Anzai's photograph shows the debris in front of one of the blocks on the floor, an aspect of the work that became contested in later reconstructions of the work for exhibitions. In these later reconstructions

photographs such as this one were important for the exhibition organizers as they recreated the work after the artist had died.

Another significant exhibition of Mono-ha artists' work was the annual exhibition *Developments in Contemporary Art (Gendai bijutsu no dōkō ten)* held in Kyoto (July 7-August 9, 1970). This exhibition included Suga, Yoshida, Takayama and Enokura. One seminal Mono-ha work from this exhibition by artist Suga Kishio titled *Unnamed Situation I (Mugen jōkyō I)* was photographed by Anzai as well as an unidentified photographer. In the unidentified photographer's image (Fig. 36) one window is shown as the light from the window fills the surrounding space so that the nook surrounding the window is illuminated. In contrast Anzai's image (Fig. 37) only includes two windows and is overexposed in order to highlight the scenery outdoors while the surrounding indoor space is so dark very little remains visible. Suga's caption for the work shares Anzai's concern for the outdoors, including not only wood, but also "landscape" and "building" in the materials for this work.<sup>129</sup> Thus the chunks of wood placed at an angle on the window sills are devices for seeing the structure of the building as well as the surrounding landscape, rather than objects meant to stand on their own. According to Anzai, Suga had a fight over keeping the windows open despite the fact that the museum interior was air-conditioned and the organizers wished for them to remain closed.<sup>130</sup> Anzai was enraged by the issues contested at the event, engaged in both the visual recording of the artists' activity as well as discursive records of the artists' activities.

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<sup>129</sup> Janet Koplos, "Mono-ha and the Power of Materials: Japan's New Vital Sculpture Bridges East and West." *New Art Examiner* 15:10 (June 1988) p. 30.

<sup>130</sup> Eden Corkhill "Anzai Personal Archives Exhibition Review, *Japan Times*, 2007, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fa20071004a2.html>

These new relationships, including the relationship of indoor and outdoor space, are made evident in the angle of Anzai's photograph, accentuating the openness of both windows and the scenery that becomes visible outdoors. In yet another angle for framing the same work, an unknown photographer captures the silhouette of a nearby temple-like roof perfectly lined up inside of the open window in Suga's work. (Fig. 38) From this site and its corresponding photographs, *mono* can be seen as a relationship between constructed and existing space, a concept fundamental to Mono-ha. Anzai's photographs are both of relationality and about it, opening the possibility for an extended encounter of the artworks.

Another less frequently discussed work of Suga's from the same exhibition also utilizes existing aspects of the building in another way. In Anzai's photograph of this work *Unnamed Situation I* Suga is flattening the sand as he fills the space of the last of the stairs (Fig. 39), creating a flat surface across an interior stairwell. Peering down on the staircase from high above Anzai's angle of distinction allows him to record the process of installing the sand. In this photograph Suga's tools are still lying at the top of the staircase, evidencing his careful labor of flattening the space in between each stair until it was perfectly angled from top to bottom. The stark lighting coming from a window at the top of the stairs is hardly adequate for documenting the artwork in an objective sense, but Anzai's goal was to "accompany" the artist on a journey rather than to record a destination. In the darkest shadow of the image Suga kneels down on one of the last stairs in the staircase, flattening sand to the point where it appears to have the solidity of cement, as if he has turned the staircase into an angled ramp. Here it can be seen that Suga's work is not about sand as *mono*, but about the relation of the common space of a

staircase, a material such as sand and the viewers who encounter what Suga termed the “transcendent situation.”<sup>131</sup>

Anzai’s photographs of this exhibition in Kyoto may appear to represent what was there, but in fact these photographs also change what was there into something else. With this photograph, Suga’s actions are no longer simply those that created the work *Idle Situation* for a stairwell in the museum, but they become a performative activity of flattening and shaping sand to match the contours of each stair. Suga’s focus is on the space in between each stair, one at a time, working with the situation just as it is. He does not change or alter the building itself, but simply adds a new material to modify it. Anzai’s photographs also show Suga’s materials are not just sand and wood but also include the interior and exterior spaces of the Museum.

More evidence for Anzai’s subjective involvement in the frame can be seen in his photographs taken at the exhibition, *Aspects of New Japanese Art (Gendai bijutsu no ichi rui men ten*, August 4-30, 1970) organized by Tōnō Yoshiaki.<sup>132</sup> In the heterogeneous photographs taken by Anzai an intimacy with the artists, their process as well as a new effort toward objective panoramic style of photographing the exhibition can all be seen. In one image Lee works intently on wrapping a thick strand of rope around a number of large wood timbers stacked vertically against a pillar inside the gallery. (Fig. 40) In this photograph Anzai’s perspective is so intimately close up that he could have easily been helping to hold the timbers with one hand while taking the photograph with the other, as

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<sup>131</sup> Aforementioned article by Suga “Transcendent Situation” appeared in the same issue of *Bijutsu techō* as Lee’s “In Search of Encounter” and the artists’ panel discussion “A New World Revealed by ‘Mono’” discussed earlier in this thesis.

<sup>132</sup> This exhibition included many Mono-ha and related artists including Inumaki Kanji, Koshimizu Susumu, Suga Kishio, Takamatsu Jirō, Tanaka Shintarō, Narita Katsuhiko, Honda Shingo, Yoshida Katsuro and Lee Ufan.

Lee wrapped the rope tightly. Another person's hands are visible in the background, assisting Lee with the task of suspending the timbers that encircle a prominent pillar in the center of the gallery. Again the emphasis is on the activity of wrapping, as each strand of the heavy rope stands out in the foreground of the image while Lee is focused on wrapping the rope as tightly as possible to prevent the timbers from falling down. Lee's work *Relatum (Mukeikō II)* consists of a careful balance between the tension of a thick rope wrapped around these timbers floating in the air, poised as if the rope could fall if it were slackened just a little. Here the actions of the artist are most prominently seen with very little space in the frame, displaying Anzai's intimacy with Lee and angle of distinction obtained by participating in the installation process with the artists while they installed their works at the Tokyo Museum of Modern Art.

Upon completion of the work Anzai takes a step back from it, positioning himself lower to the ground, to take a photograph that emphasizes the verticality of Lee's work. (Fig. 41) Here the timbers appear in distorted proportions that make them appear distortedly gigantic. This photograph shows Anzai's position in relation to the artworks changing from the eye-level view that was so common in many of the images examined previously in this chapter. This shift in perspective conveys a newfound relationship to the exhibition venue and the artworks framed by his camera. This image begins to reveal the central pillar in the gallery that Lee selected as the base for his work, a controversial decision that indicates one of the crucial characteristics of Mono-ha artists' works. For this exhibition Lee was supposed to hang work on the wall or display it freestanding in the conventional mode for sculpture, but he intentionally chose to engage with the architecture of the building itself. Similar to the issues Suga faced in Kyoto with his two

works which also incorporated overlooked features of the existing building, Lee also faced challenges from the museum staff for controversially attaching his work to a pillar, an action prominently displayed in Anzai's photographs.

This issue is further revealed in another installation photograph unlike any seen thus far. For this image Anzai steps as far backwards as possible to shoot a panoramic view of the gallery that included Lee's three works *Relatum (Mukeikō) I, II, III* (Fig. 42). In this photo the room appears expansive and somewhat empty, with over one-third of the space including just the ceiling and floor, giving the effect of an open space that is only sparsely occupied by artworks. This image thus contributes to the expanded encounter of existing space, by showing an aspect of the work that could be overlooked when viewing the work in person. In this photograph Anzai has carefully framed the last strand of the rope extending just beyond the knot in Lee's work, so that it appears to be dangling just barely down to the floor, curving right behind the caption for the work. The drama of his documentation is now beginning to emerge.

In this same image Anzai has also carefully positioned other works in the background of the photographic frame, giving an expansive sense of space occupied by multiple works. One of Lee's works, *Relatum III* protrudes from the back wall far into the mid-ground of the photograph. This work engages the relationship between the wall and the floor as one surface turns into another by creating a third surface that conjoins them. Differing from earlier photographs, this image portrays the gallery in what appears to be its entirety, with less emphasis on individual works and more inclusion of the existing architecture of the gallery space in the camera frame.

This photograph shows the works to be less about *mono* as objects and more about the importance of the space surrounding the works on display, a crucial aspect of the artists' works. In these three heterogeneous images taken in the same exhibition room at different times Anzai represents Lee's work in progress, standing tall, and in full panoramic drama. Without these photographs debates over *mono* would have been limited to those who were at the original site with the same "I was there" validation as Anzai. Lee observed that commentators such as Minemura Toshiaki did not experience many early Mono-ha works in person.<sup>133</sup> So without photographs the development of Mono-ha as a school would have likely never emerged. Photographs represent, mediate and extend the encounter of artworks to wider audiences.

From Lee's perspective Anzai captures dynamic moments that will never happen again: "His work presented a perspective that might be seen as the dynamics of a kind of relationship that was limited to a certain subject and place."<sup>134</sup> In examining individual photographs taken by Anzai compared to other photographs of Mono-ha artworks factors such as artistic process, exhibition spaces and existing situations are all revealed in the activity of photographing. Anzai believes photographs express the contested zones of Mono-ha and sometimes disagree with the artists and their works. In his distinctively raspy voice he recently told me, "With questions I take photos. My photos are a record, but my process of taking photos is not because I agree with what is going on."<sup>135</sup> While taking photos Anzai both agrees and disagrees with what is going on, contextualizing

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<sup>133</sup> Lee, MONO-HA, (1995) unpaginated.

<sup>134</sup> ANZAI: *Personal Photo Archives*, p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> Anzai Shigeo Interview by the author on March 24, 2010 at Mizuma Gallery in Kagurazaka, Tokyo.



issues of *mono* and *ba* in specific sites. His relationship with the artists, curators and art critics is also expressed in his photographs of processes such as negotiation over how to install an artwork. These relationships contribute visual and oral records of events in time, contributing to the debates engaged by the original artworks and their subsequent recreations. Anzai is not only recording fleeting moments but also creating new moments in the present, or multiple presents as his images are seen and re-seen in various contexts.

## Positioning Anzai

In this examination of Anzai's photographs I do not aim to privilege his perspective over others, for to analyze his photographic images only according to what he intends would propagate a false sense of objectivity or privileged subjectivity. More useful to understanding the heterogeneous archive that Anzai has produced and is still producing could come the incorporation of multiple vantage points when thinking about photographs:

The ontological framework commonly held for discussing photography, that wishes to ask what it is, is limited by the photograph – the frame – and linked to whoever held the camera. Such ontological discussions assume, as their point of departure, that the photograph is a product of one stable point of view – that of the photographer.<sup>136</sup>

With this approach Anzai's photographs are not produced from an assumed stable point of view, but instead they are points of intersection between events that are performed and re-performed in new viewing contexts. Not only do his photographs change the situation where the artistic event is happening at the moment they are taken, but they also affect the event and its remembrance over time. As works are reproduced in print and exhibited as photographic prints they become less of a record of "what occurred" and more of an active agent contributing to and shaping debates that were central to the formation of Mono-ha as an art movement.

As seen in Anzai's earliest images of Lee's work at Tamura Gallery previously, photographs evidence the intersubjectivity of artists, writers and image-makers, revealing

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<sup>136</sup> Ariella Azoulay. "What is a photograph? What is photography?" *Philosophy of Photography*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2010, p. 11.

contradictory perspectives on the debates over *mono* in philosophy and practice. His images have not only made a dramatic impact on the development of Mono-ha as an art movement, but also altered the narration of the movement throughout time. Anzai sees writings and photographs as inextricably connected to a momentary experience that is not only captured but gains a new life in the media of its recording:

In particular “live art” is really about something that if not felt instantly in that place, it can’t become a photograph or writing. More precisely, by means of photographs and writings there is also a good possibility that it goes in a completely different direction.<sup>137</sup>

Photographic works by Anzai not only record key events and artworks from the period, but more importantly they take them in a completely different direction, while contributing to the active memory of the movement. With this perspective *mono* can be experienced via the extended encounter of photographic images.

As a participant and photographer, Anzai Shigeo contributed to and was deeply influenced by these artists that would later be called Mono-ha, starting his career alongside them by showing in the same galleries in Tokyo. One significant element of Mono-ha artworks, as well as many contemporary art movements across the globe, was their concern with site-specificity that necessitated visual recording. In combination with Nakajima Kō, Hirata Minoru and other photographers who devoted themselves to capturing and engaging with art actions in Japan, Anzai can be seen as a crucial part of the shift toward non-object centered art practices that were experiential, ephemeral and often outdoors in Postwar Japanese art.

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<sup>137</sup> Quote by Anzai Shigeo from a section titled “ikkaisei to kioku” (oneness and memory) in a panel discussion with Tōnō Yoshiaki and Akasegawa Genpei titled, “Body in the midst of urban space: Things expressed by performance.” (“Toshi kūkan no naka no shintai: Pafōmansu ga hyōgen suru mono”) *Yuriika*, No. 16, Vol. 9, 1984, p. 159.

To conclude, an image by Anzai that reveals something about all of the others examined thus far. (Fig. 43) It is an image taken just after Mono-ha ended in 1974, distinguished from all of the others discussed in this chapter because Anzai reveals his own face inside the frame reflecting on a mirror inside of Kunichi Shima's artwork. Each mirror is positioned in a unique angle, reflecting scenery in and around the maze of this miniature stone garden. One mirror reflects Anzai's peering eye, flashing upon the most prominent mirror near the center of the image, evidencing Anzai's process of not just taking, but *making* the photograph. Anzai's calm facial expression reflects on this circular mirror, as the mirror in his own camera lifts to expose black and white film during a fraction of a second.

If you immerse yourself in this photograph the gaze is no longer Anzai's, but your own eye peering into one of the mirrors. While gazing into the work, the stones are no longer placed calmly at a distance, but they become animated figures with a "tiny spark of contingency" right *here* and *now* in the act of viewing that is taking place on this page.<sup>138</sup> Light refracts as it passes obliquely through the spaces occupied by the viewer, the mirrors and the camera—endlessly bouncing here and there, intensifying and releasing as it travels from one surface to the next. Although not as obvious as in this image, I argue that the same reflective apparatus is at work in all of the images by Anzai discussed in this thesis. The difference is simply that in this image the mirror provides a way to make his

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<sup>138</sup> "No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, or the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it." Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," INSCRIPTIONS, 1931, P.58. <<http://imagineallthepeople.info/Benjamin.pdf>> (April 13, 2011).

subjective position more obvious than in other works. In the study of Mono-ha to date Anzai's images have expressed fundamental characteristics of Mono-ha.

## “Just as it should be”

In the 1980s art critic Minemura Toshiaki proffered terms such as Post Mono-ha (ポストもの派) to describe alternative trends contemporaneous and following Mono-ha. Similar to the multiple perspectives on the term Mono-ha presented thus far in this thesis, there are also numerous ways to examine artistic trends related to Post Mono-ha. Some of these trends were critiquing the issues Mono-ha artists were concerned with. Minemura proclaimed Post Mono-ha to be composed of sculptors who were critical of Mono-ha: “it is correct to regard those sharp critics as the authentic Mono-ha heirs.”<sup>139</sup> As a new generation young artists saw exhibitions by Mono-ha artists and read their writings, they grew critical of their predecessors and developed their own perspectives on *mono* and *ba* (place). A brief exploration of the conceptual, material, and theoretical debates over the term Post Mono-ha question definitions of Mono-ha and reevaluate artistic influence from one generation to the next. For some artists Mono-ha was an inspiration, such as Cai Guo-Qiang who feels he learned to search for his “own method and an individual expression” from the Mono-ha artists.<sup>140</sup> Other artists are more directly influenced in the characteristics of their artwork and ideas. Hoshina Toyomi takes the spirit of Mono-ha and runs with it in new directions. He utilizes raw materials similar to those of the Mono-ha artists, but also includes live materials such as plants, soil, and wood in his installation works. His works expand the new consciousness of the world that

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<sup>139</sup> Minemura Toshiaki, “What was Mono-ha?” (Tokyo: Kamakura Gallery 1986) unpaginated.

<sup>140</sup> Cai Guo-Qiang lived in Tokyo and attended Tsukuba University at which time he encountered Mono-ha artists and artworks: “This is the lesson I learned from Japan and from the Mono-ha artists’ experience: the search for one’s own method and an individual expression.” Alexandra Munroe, *Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe*, (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2008), p. 32.

Mono-ha artists explored, drawing upon their emphasis on *ba* (place), while additionally including ecosystems and social history in his definition of place.

The 1980s were a time of heated debates and increased attention to Mono-ha, both in Japan and Europe. The term “Post Mono-ha” emerged in this context to describe younger artists who studied with their predecessors, shared a sculptural vocabulary of working with raw materials and those who were critical of Mono-ha artists. The exhibition *Art in Japan Since 1969: Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha (Mono-ha to posuto mono-ha: 1969 ikō no nihon no bijutsu)* included many artists who had never before been associated with Mono-ha.<sup>141</sup> Some artists were infuriated with Minemura’s handling of their works by the late 1980s and opposed the repackaging of their work for this exhibition. In particular Enokura expressed his dissatisfaction with how Minemura “over told the story” (“katari sugita”) of Mono-ha, taking his works from Kamakura Gallery without asking for permission to use at the Seibu Museum.<sup>142</sup> This criticism was not directed toward Mono-ha, but toward Minemura’s story of Mono-ha.

Four months after the Seibu exhibition closed statements by Enokura, Takayama and Haraguchi appeared in *Bijutsu techō*. In this article Takayama points out that artists’ concerns were very different from art critics in a section titled, “My Own Non-Mono-ha” (“Hi mono-ha teki hitori goto”) where he states, “From the perspective of artists, Mono-ha, Non Mono-ha, Post Mono-ha, or such and such *ba* is not the question.”<sup>143</sup> The

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<sup>141</sup> *Art in Japan Since 1969: Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha (Mono-ha to posuto mono-ha no tenkai: 1969 nen ikō no nihon no bijutsu)* Tama Art University and Seibu Museum, Tokyo, June 26- July 19, 1987.

<sup>142</sup> Enokura uses the term *katararesugiteru* (overtold) specifically referring to Minemura’s arrangement for the exhibit, *Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha* organized by Tama Art University and the Seibu Museum in 1987.

<sup>143</sup> Enokura Kōji, Takayama Noboru and Haraguchi Noriyuki, “Talk on Mono-ha” (Mono-ha wo kataru) *Bijutsu techō*, (November 1987) p. 125.

attaching of *ha* (派, school) to the *mono* was useful in defining an art movement and exhibiting their works in a cohesive manner, but its affect on the artists and their artworks has been called into question by Takayama and others.

From a historical viewpoint the term “Mono-ha” places the individual artists into a broader movement, referencing the discourse of *mono* as a school of artists with a shared approach. Artists’ perspectives in the 1980s provide a critical perspective that is closer to the activities that occurred in the period in which Mono-ha is bracketed. Artist Haraguchi Noriyuki thinks of Mono-ha as a present-day concept that shifts depending on the context set by each artist, “Even now my ‘Mono-ha’ is a fluid thing. Artworks are born from the core of the artist, and its impossible for artworks to be the result of an ascent to a method for concluding one thing or another.”<sup>144</sup>

The impact of Mono-ha in Japan after the 1970’s is seen in the next generation of artists but not necessarily in the most obvious places. One artist who can be deemed Post Mono-ha, Hoshina Toyomi, works with thin apparatuses that open space itself, making installation works that point to what is already there. He read Lee Ufan’s article “In Search of Encounter”<sup>145</sup> and was well aware of Sekine’s works that were shown in Tokyo during the 1970s. Rather than seeing it as one single thing, Hoshina sees a number of different interpretations or artistic strategies existing inside of what is often called Mono-ha.<sup>146</sup> In his view there was a conceptual side including Lee and Sekine as well as an experiential

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<sup>144</sup> Haraguchi “Talk on Mono-ha,” p. 126-7.

<sup>145</sup> This article was featured in the same section of *Bijutsu techō* from February 1970 as the roundtable discussion that was quoted in chapter four as well as Suga Kishio’s “Transcending Situation.”

<sup>146</sup> Hoshina Toyomi interview with author on March 3, 2010 in Iriya, Tokyo.



side where Enokura and Takayama stood.<sup>147</sup> Enokura emphasized the direct contact of the body with the world not in the philosophical sense, but the sensory experience of the world. Hoshina was aware of the conceptual strategies of Mono-ha artists even though he was more directly impacted by the experiential approach.

In one photographic work *Omen—Ocean• Body (P.W.-No.40)* (Fig. 44) Enokura lies on a beach perched on the line drawn between the ocean and the land. The attention to his own body in this work is telling of Enokura's distinct approach from the other Mono-ha artists. His body emulates the shape of a wave that has just begun to recede back into the ocean. Another photographic work by Enokura *P.W.-No.46 Omen; Pillar, Body* (Fig. 45) shows Enokura fitting his body to the shape of a pillar in a building, thereby making bodily contact with the architecture of the building, an action that evidences his deep interest in the relation between the human body and physical space. This represents a more tactile relationship to the building than Suga's works from Kyoto. Hoshina clearly shows signs of influence from Mono-ha in a statement he made in 1981: "Starting from the point where I stand now, a holistic contact between myself and the landscape is made just as it should be."<sup>148</sup> His operative phrase, "just as it should be" ("aru beki mono ni") resembles Lee's "everything just as it is" ("subete aru ga mama") while also including Enokura's emphasis on bodily sensations.

Although Hoshina uses many similar materials such as wood, cement, soil and steel his approach to these materials is intimately linked to the relationship of *shintai* (身体,

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Yamagashi Noburo, Introduction, Photographs by Shigeo Anzai. *Toyomi Hoshina: 1980-81*. (Tokyo: Maki Gallery and Tamura Gallery, 1982) unpaginated.

body) with *basho* (場所, place). In Enokura's approach the body was a vessel for not only understanding the world but also for understanding our place in it. The importance of place was instrumental to many of the artists' works discussed in this thesis thus far, but the key difference here is that for Hoshina place is not a philosophical or idealized one but a particular place. In a work by Hoshina's from 1982 titled *By the Shore* (Fig. 46), sheets of Japanese paper are delicately affixed to thin wooden supports with slight traces of sumi, or ink, drawn on the paper where the wooden supports contact them. Although these works were also displayed in galleries including Tamura Gallery (Fig. 47) and Gallery K, this image shows the work installed on a rocky coastline. The fragility of the installation, poised as it could be swept up by the ocean's rising tide or blown away by a sea breeze, is captured distinctly by Anzai's lens. The involvement of Anzai in taking photographs of Hoshina's work is another point in common with Mono-ha artists who were framed by and for his camera lens in the previous decade.

The title *By the Shore* indicates that the work is created for the location, on the ocean shoreline, existing only in relation to the surrounding landscape. Aspects of site-specificity were included by Hoshina, but distinct from the artists in Tokyo Biennale '70. This is a crucial distinction that makes for a distinct set of issues in relation to the recreation of a work, as addressed in chapter two. Works by Hoshina develop not only in relation to, but because of the place where they are realized. In other words the place activates or creates the work, an inversion Mono-ha artists' approach in which the work activates the place or situation "just as it is." This approach of Hoshina's opens the possibility for artworks that renew or revitalize a place, whereas the approach of Mono-ha

artists was to adjust the work in relation to the new place. This can be seen in Enokura's work *Wall* (*Kabe*, 壁) originally created for the 7<sup>th</sup> Paris Biennale in 1971 (Fig. 48), in which the concept of constructing a cement wall can be adapted for multiple exhibition sites.

In another work executed by Hoshina at *Hakushū Festival*, traces of Mono-ha can be clearly seen in his installation technique and concept. (Fig. 49) This *Untitled* work consists of two square sections cut out of a hillside in a forest. Evincing Sekine's cylindrical intervention in the soil, but distinctly opposite in its approach, this work relies completely on the surface of *this* forest floor while Sekine's work can and has been created in many different outdoor parks. Sekine's work is more of a conceptual trick, playing with the positive and negative cylindrical form as a site to assist in the contemplation of other issues. In contrast, Hoshina's work focuses on what is already there, achieving the work by removing two sections of the ground while leaving a thin outcropping of the forest floor. A singular tree stands just as it did before the ground was removed around it, and yet it has been dramatized by the removal of soil on either side of it.

This work by Hoshina relies on two steel corner plates that keep the remaining soil intact. Here the vocabulary of raw steel plates as utilized by Lee, Haraguchi and Serra is adapted to support the main crux of the work: a thin strip of land from the forest floor. The encounter of space as an actively constructive force is also a Mono-ha characteristic that was adopted and reformulated by Hoshina in this work. Combined with the language of soil and steel this work could be read as instigating new relationships while still leaving,

“everything just as it is.”<sup>149</sup> Hoshina’s sensitivity to living things, as small as just one tree in the forest, shows his emphasis on the specificity of place in a manner related to but distinct from the precedents set by Mono-ha artists.

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<sup>149</sup> One of Lee’s most commonly quoted lines, “Subete aru ga mama,” from “The World and Its Structure” p. 128.

# Conclusion

This thesis has addressed the contested meanings of Mono-ha. The polysemy of the concept of *mono* is no doubt crucial to understanding Mono-ha. Didactic interpretations of the artworks do not adequately address the richness of the artists' ideas. The impact of raw materials, awareness of place, and visual recording of events contemporaneous artists shows the limitations of previously constructed narratives of the movement that link Mono-ha to nationalistic discourse, Japaneseness and hierarchical theories. Rather than placing an umbrella over the activities of the period as some scholars have done, a turn towards the artists' words and the life of the artworks from the 1960s to the 1980s has provided a new framework for understanding multiple Mono-ha(s).

Although this thesis intentionally does not provide an alternative narrative to replace the dominant narrative of Mono-ha, it deepens the understanding of intersubjective relations seen via a web of contested meaning. This thesis contributes alternative perspectives on the movement most notably in its emphasis on the importance of photographic framing in the development of Mono-ha as an art movement. This web opens possibilities for further investigation of these artists' and their works on a global stage. The global context for Mono-ha is a topic that still needs to be more fully addressed in the future. In order to make future comparisons more fruitful I offer the following account to re-contextualize the artists and their work.

Figure 1

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase—Earth*, 1968  
Sculpture Biennale, Suma Detached Palace, Kobe  
Photograph by Osamu Murai



Figure 2

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase No. 5*, 1968. Vinyl, Wood, Lacquer  
*Tricks and Vision*, 1968



Figure 3

Narita Katsuhiko, *Sumi No. 4,5 & Sumi No. 8-23*, 1970. Charcoal  
*Tokyo Biennale '70: (between) Man and Matter*, May 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 4

Takayama Noboru, *Makuragi Jikken (Railroad Tie Experiment)*, 1968  
Space Totsuka  
Photographer unknown





Figure 5

Sekine Nobuo



Figure 6

Koshimizu Susumu



Illustrations from “A New World Revealed by <Mono>” *Bijutsu techō*, February 1970  
Photographs by Nakajima Kō

Figure 7

Lee Ufan

Figure 8

Narita Katsuhiko

Illustrations from “A New World Revealed by <Mono>” *Bijutsu techō*, February 1970  
Photographs by Nakajima Kō



Figure 9

Figure 10

Yoshida Katsuro, *Cut-off 8*, 1969. Steel and Cotton

Illustrations from “A New World Revealed by <Mono>” *Bijutsu techō*, February 1970  
Photographs by Nakajima Kō



Figure 11

Haraguchi Noriyuki, *Untitled*, 1982  
8<sup>th</sup> Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition  
Suma Detached Palace Garden, Kobe  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 12

Lee Ufan, *Genshō to Chikaku B (Matter and Perception B)*  
Later renamed *Kankeikō (Relatum)*, 1968/69. Glass, steel, stone  
Installation view: Outside Lee Ufan's studio, Kamakura, Japan 1982  
Photographer unknown



Figure 13

Takayama Noboru, *Underground Zoo*, 1970  
Space Totsuka  
Photographer unknown



Figure 14

Enokura Kōji, *Quality of Wetness (Onshitsu)*, 1970  
Space Totsuka  
Photographer unknown





Figure 15

Aerial View of Suma Detached Palace, Kobe, 1968  
Site for Kobe Sculpture Biennale (Site for *Phase-Earth* indicated by a red circle)  
Photograph reproduced in Ōtani Memorial Art Museum Catalog, 1996



Figure 16

Illustration from Nakahara Yūsuke's article  
"The Dirt Sculpture Episode" ("Tsuchi no chōkoku no episo-do")  
*Geijutsu shinchō*, October 1968  
Unknown photographer



Figure 17

Special feature  
"Emerging artists talk: From the Horizon of Non-art"  
("Hatsugen suru shinjin-tachi: Hi-geijutsu no chihei kara")  
*Bijutsu techō*, February 1970



Figure 18

Sekine Nobuo at work on *Phase—Earth*  
Suma Detached Palace, Kobe, October 1968  
Photograph reproduced in Ōtani Memorial Art Museum Catalog, 1996  
Photograph by Yoshida Katsurō



Figure 19

*Bijutsu techō*, July 1978  
Containing Minemura Toshiaki's article  
“Regarding Mono-ha” (“Mono-ha ni tsuite”)  
Photograph by Murai Osamu





Figure 20

*Bijutsu techō*, July 1978

Appeared as an illustration in Minemura's article

Photograph by Murai Osamu



Figure 21

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase—Earth*, 2008

Promotional Flier

Tamagawa Art Line Exhibition



Figure 22

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase—Earth*, 2008 (Recreation)  
Tamagawa Art Line Exhibition  
Den-en-chōfu, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 23

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase—Earth*, 2008 (Recreation)  
Tamagawa Art Line Exhibition  
Den-en-chōfu, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 24

Sekine Nobuo, *Phase—Earth*, 2008 (Recreation)  
Tamagawa Art Line Exhibition  
Den-en-chōfu, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 25

Lee Ufan, *Phenomenon and Perception B (Chikaku to genshō B)*,  
January 21, 1970. Steel, Cotton  
Tamura Gallery  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 26

Lee Ufan, *Structure A (Kōzō A)*, 1970. Steel, Cotton  
Tamura Gallery  
Unknown Photographer

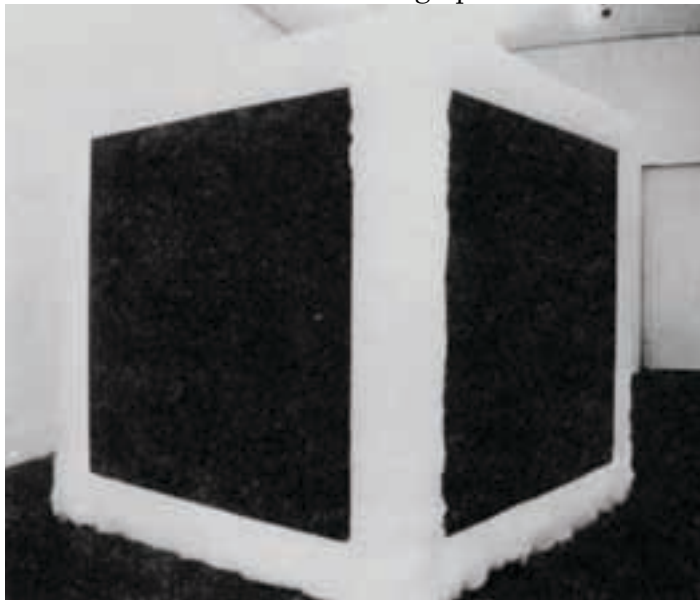


Figure 27

Lee Ufan, *Structure A (Kōzō A)* Later renamed *Relatum (Kankeikō)*  
Steel and cotton, 1969  
Installation view: Outside Lee Ufan's studio, Tokyo, n.d.  
Photograph by Lee Ufan

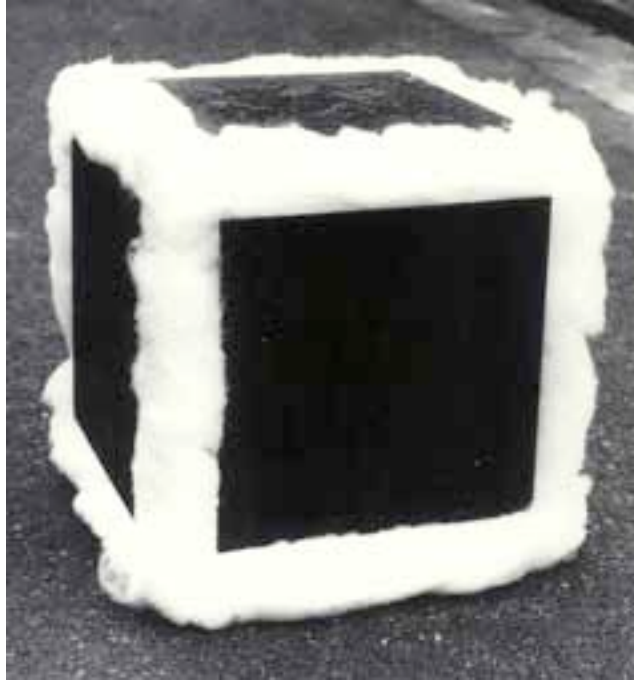


Figure 28

*10<sup>th</sup> Mainichi Contemporary Exhibition*  
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum  
May 3, 1971  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 29

Lee Ufan, Sekine Nobuo, Suga Kishio, Koshimizu Susumu, Yoshida Katsuro (L to R)  
*Mono-ha and Post Mono-ha*, The Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo, June 25, 1987  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 30

Richard Serra, Haraguchi Noriyuki, & Others  
*Tokyo Biennale '70: Between Man and Matter*  
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, May 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 31

Richard Serra  
*Tokyo Biennale '70: Between Man and Matter*  
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, May 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo





Figure 32

Jannis Kounellis  
*Tokyo Biennale '70: Between Man and Matter*  
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, May 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 33

Jannis Kounellis  
*Tokyo Biennale '70: Between Man and Matter*  
Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, May 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 34

Narita Katsuhiko, *Charcoal (Sumi)*. 1969  
As reproduced in "A New World Revealed by Mono"  
*Bijutsu techō*, February 1970  
Photograph by Nakajima Kō



Figure 35

Narita Katsuhiko, *Charcoal (Sumi)*  
Reproduction from *Between Man and Matter* catalog, April 1970



Figure 36

Suga Kishio  
*Infinite Situation I (Mugen jōkyō)*  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
Photographer unknown



Figure 37  
Suga Kishio  
*Infinite Situation I (Mugen jōkyō)*  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
July 6, 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 38

Suga Kishio  
*Infinite Situation I (Mugen jōkyō)*  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1970  
Photographer unknown



Figure 39

Suga Kishio  
*Idle Situation*  
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, July 1970  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 40

Lee Ufan installing *Relatum (Mukeikō) II*  
August 3, 1970  
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 41

Lee Ufan, *Relatum (Mukeikō) II*  
*Aspects of New Japanese Art*, August 1970  
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 42

Lee Ufan, *Relatum (Mukeikō) I, II, III*  
*Aspects of New Japanese Art*, August 1970  
National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 43

Kunichi Shima Exhibition  
Kinokuniya Gallery, July 13, 1974  
Photograph by Anzai Shigeo



Figure 44

Enokura Kōji  
*Omen—Ocean• Body (P.W.-No.40) (Yochō—umi• nikutai (P.W.-No.40))*,  
1972. Photograph (Silver Gelatin Print)  
*Artists of Today '72 Exhibit*  
Yokohama Citizens' Gallery



Figure 45

Enokura Kōji  
*P.W.-No.46 Omen; Pillar, Body (Yochō—hashira•nikutai)*,  
1972. Silver Gelatin Print  
*Today's Artists '72*  
Yokohama Citizens Gallery





Figure 46

Hoshina Toyomi,  
*By the Shore*, 1982. Wood, rice paper, Chinese ink  
Hayama Coast, Japan  
Photograph by Shigeo Anzai



Figure 47

Hoshina Toyomi,  
Tamura Gallery, June 24, 1981  
Photograph by Shigeo Anzai



Figure 48

Enokura Kōji  
*Wall (Kabe)*, 1971. Cement Block  
7<sup>th</sup> Paris Biennale, Parc Floral  
Photographer unknown



Figure 49

Hoshina Toyomi  
*Untitled*, 1993. Steel, Soil, Forest  
Art Festival Hakushu  
Photographer unknown



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