

**CULTURAL TRANSFERS WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 16, 2012**

**BODIES AT WAR, BODIES AT PEACE: RETHINKING GROUP IDENTITY
IN POSTWAR JAPAN**

**Bitter Memories or Peace Education? The Visceral and the Moral in the Japanese
Antiwar Film**

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Do films that critique war educate their audiences against the concept of war in general or do they perpetrate national divisions and conflicts by creating a discourse in which the identity of historical actors matters more than their peace message? In order to answer this question I will analyze the role of peace education in two types of Japanese antiwar films: atomic bomb films: *Genbaku no ko* (*Children of Hiroshima*, Shindo Kaneto, 1952), and films representing the front line experiences in WWII: *Ningen no joken* (*The Human Condition*, Kobayashi Masaki, 1959-1963). Problematizing the universality of peace I will argue that atomic bomb films create a visceral type of education that inscribes the trauma of war on spectators' bodies. *The Human Condition* constructs a moral education based on the humanist integration of the body with emotions and the critique of institutional forms of power.

Gutai Chain: The Collective Spirit of Individualism

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This paper is a theoretical investigation of the Gutai's collective enterprise, examining the creative process of Gutai Art Exhibitions from 1955 to 1962, and looking in particular at the Outdoor Exhibitions and Gutai Art on Stage. I will argue that the group's leader, Yoshihara Jiro, engendered a collective spirit of individualism that at once embraced utopian ideals of collectivism and was suspicious of any enterprise that encouraged a dissolution of self.

Marked by this ambivalence, Yoshihara adapted the collective experience to create a community in which creativity became a dialogical enterprise based upon a foundation of subjective autonomy. Subjective autonomy, that is, as an ethical concept propounded by Postwar authors such as Sakaguchi Ango, who believed that authenticity and individualism were the only defenses against the mass psychology that enabled the militarism of the Second World War.

Despite this emphasis on the individual, I argue that the collective enterprise of the Gutai altered the creative process irrevocably, and that it is impossible to consider the work of any artist separate from the group. In his article *Gutai Kusari* (Gutai Chain) on

the tension between the individual and the collective, the artist Ukita Yôzô wrote, “The works at the Gutai Art Exhibition evolve from a state of mind and concentration exactly like that when aiming at a moving target.” It is precisely this experience of creation in dialogue with a community, aiming at a moving target that cannot be dismissed.