Specifically designed for use on a range of undergraduate and graduate courses, *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture* is a comprehensive textbook offering an up-to-date overview of a wide variety of media forms. It uses particular case studies as a way into examining the broader themes in Japanese culture and provides a thorough analysis of the historical and contemporary trends that have shaped artistic production, as well as politics, society, and economics. As a result, more than being a time capsule of influential trends, this book teaches enduring lessons about how popular culture reflects the societies that produce and consume it.

With contributions from an international team of scholars, representing a range of disciplines from history and anthropology to art history and media studies, the book's sections include:

- Television
- Videogames
- Music
- Popular Cinema
- Anime
- Manga
- Popular Literature
- Fashion
- Contemporary Art

Written in an accessible style by a stellar line-up of international contributors, this textbook will be essential reading for students of Japanese culture and society, Asian media and popular culture, and Asian Studies in general.

Alisa Freedman is an Associate Professor at the University of Oregon and Editor-in-Chief of the *U.S.–Japan Women's Journal*. Her publications include *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (2010).

Toby Slade is an Associate Professor at the University of Tokyo. His publications include *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History* (2009).

ASIAN STUDIES / POPULAR CULTURE

Cover image: © 2010 kumamoto pref. kumamon

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
www.routledge.com

COMPANION WEBSITE
www.routledge.com/cw/Freedman

Routledge titles are available as eBook editions in a range of digital formats

an informa business

ISBN 978-1-138-85210-5

INTRODUCING
Japanese Popular Culture
EDITED BY
ALISA FREEDMAN
AND TOBY SLADE
ROUTLEDGE

INTRODUCING

Japanese Popular Culture

EDITED BY ALISA FREEDMAN AND TOBY SLADE

First published 2018
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-85208-2 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-138-85210-5 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-72376-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by codeMantra

Visit the companion website: www.routledge.com/cw/Freedman

To our students

Contents

Contributors

Alan Cholodenko is an Honorary Associate of The University of Sydney. He is the editor of *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (1991) and *The Illusion of Life 2: More Essays on Animation* (2007).

Jayson Makoto Chun is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Hawai'i–West Oahu. His publications include *"A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots"?: A Social History of Japanese Television 1953–1973* (Routledge, 2007).

Ian Condry is a Professor in Global Studies and Languages at MIT. He is the author of two books: *The Soul of Anime* (2013) and *Hip-Hop Japan* (2006).

Adrian Favell is the Chair in Sociology and Social Theory at the University of Leeds. His work on Japan includes the first history in English of Japanese contemporary art since 1990, *Before and After Superflat*, as well as art critic writing for *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *Bijutsu Techo*, *Impressions*, and *ART-iT*.

Alisa Freedman is an Associate Professor of Japanese literature and film at the University of Oregon and Editor-in-Chief of the *U.S.–Japan Women's Journal*. Her books include *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (2010), an annotated translation of Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (2005), and a co-edited volume on *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan* (2013).

Michael Furmanovsky teaches popular culture and fashion history at Ryukoku University. His work focuses on the role of Western music and fashion on Japanese youth during the first two postwar decades.

Patrick W. Galbraith is a researcher in Tokyo. He is the author and editor of many books on Japanese popular culture and media, most recently: *The Moe Manifesto* (2014), *Debating Otaku in Contemporary Japan* (2015), and *Media Convergence in Japan* (2016).

Kendall Heitzman is an Assistant Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at the University of Iowa. His articles include "Parallel Universes, Vertical Worlds, and the Nation as Palimpsest in Murakami Ryū's *The World Five Minutes from Now*" (*Mechademia* 10) and "The Rise of Women Writers, the Heisei I-novel, and the Contemporary *Bundan*" (in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, 2016).

Kathryn Hemmann is an Assistant Professor in Japanese literature and popular culture at George Mason University. She runs the blog, *Contemporary Japanese Literature*, where she reviews recent translations and posts essays on gender issues in Japanese popular culture (japaneselit.net).

Kyoko Hirano has taught cinema studies at several universities worldwide, including New York University, New School University, University of Ljubljana, Keio University, and Meiji Gakuin University. She was film curator at the Japan Society of New York (1986–2004).

Rachael Hutchinson is an Associate Professor in Japanese Studies at the University of Delaware. She edited *Negotiating Censorship in Modern Japan* (Routledge, 2013) and co-edited *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature* (Routledge, 2007) and *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature* (Routledge, 2016) and authored *Nagai Kafū's Occidentalism: Defining the Japanese Self* (2011).

James Jack, an artist and writer, was a Crown Prince Akihito Scholar and is currently an artist research fellow at the Social Art Lab, Kyushu University. He has exhibited socially engaged art works at Busan Biennale Sea Art Festival, Setouchi Triennale, Honolulu Museum of Art, TAMA Gallery, and Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore.

Eun-Young Jung served as an Assistant Director for the Center for East Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison (2008–2009) and was an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego (2009–2015).

Hirofumi Katsuno is an Associate Professor in the Department of Media Studies at Doshisha University, Kyoto. His recent publications include "Branding Humanoid Japan" in *Assembling Japan: Modernity, Technology and Global Culture*, edited by Griseldis Kirsch, Dolores P. Martinez, and Merry White (2015).

Izumi Kuroishi is a Professor at the School of Cultural and Creative Studies, Aoyama Gakuin University. Her publications include an edited volume on *Constructing the Colonized Land: Entwined Perspectives of East Asia around WWII* (2014). Her curated exhibits include *Kon Wajiro Retrospective* (2012).

Tong Lam, Associate Professor of History at the University of Toronto, is a historian and visual artist on science and technology, media and spectacle, ruins, and empire. He has exhibited his photographic and video works internationally. He is the author of *Abandoned Futures* (2013) and *A Passion for Facts* (2011).

Thomas Lamarre is a Professor of East Asian Studies and Communications Studies at McGill University and the author of *The Anime Ecology: A Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media* (2018).

perverse, emotional, funny, and impenetrably British. Indeed, Aida even looks a little like her in his transvestite photographic work, *Self Portrait: A Girl of Sea Breezes* (*Shiokaze no shōjo*, 1989).

The reference in the video work, as in many others, is to Immanuel Kant: the eighteenth-century philosopher who laid out for all time the universal sources of beauty in human judgement in his *Critique on Aesthetic Judgement* (1790). Twentieth-century critical philosophy, from Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche to Michel Foucault and Edward Said, was supposed to have made impossible this kind of belief in the transcendental sublime. Yet global curators marched all over the planet during the 1990s and 2000s, armed with clever postcolonial theories, while in practice assuming a facile universalism, in which they could recognize, select, and put value on works in every country, after just a few interviews with key art world figures (Stallabrass 2004). Thankfully, Aida has never been much understood by these curators; he has not been colonized. He is not so much a nationalist, as obdurately resistant to such globalist processing. He has always spoken of this as a kind of self-defeating mechanism: the last laugh of the "apathetic continent"; the "monument for nothing."

Murakami's Superflat movement, on the other hand, triumphed because it was the perfect vision of Japan to market during the heady years before the global financial crisis of 2008, in which "flat world" globalism seemed to be all triumphant (Friedman 2005). Superflat succeeded by reducing the Japanese nation to cartoon images and a simple digital code: easy to consume, like salmon sushi, for those looking for an imaginary "Cool Japan." But, as the gloss on Murakami's smiley flowers begins to pall, it is not surprising that the world has started looking for other visions of Japan, more in tune with a darker, more complex political and economic moment. The global era of the 1990s and 2000s is over; nations and their perverse, peculiar cultures and misunderstandings will just not go away. Aida paid little attention to the globalist fashions and ambitions that drove Superflat to success and so now stands as a much better guide to what happened in and to Japan since 1990. As the funniest man in Japanese art and a much-loved vaudevillian mainstay of the inner Tokyo art world, many artists, curators, and students in Japan have been ready to follow Aida, despite the frequent bad taste and sometime duff works that pepper his catalogues. For them, he has been the artist who best expresses their world, in all its beauty and joy, frustration and bile. Aida, meanwhile shows little sign of repenting or changing course: articulating the squeamish discomforts of the Japanese condition, with a shrug and a wry laugh, while blithely awaiting an international recognition which may or may not someday arrive.

Note

1 This refers to an incident at the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly in June 2014 when a female politician was heckled during a speech urging more support for pregnant women. The incident was reported internationally as a new nadir in Japanese gender relations (Alter 2014).

40 Art from "What is Already There" on Islands in the Seto Inland Sea

James Jack

Embarking on a journey to an island in the Seto Inland Sea requires a change in pace. Departing from Tokyo on the bullet train (*shinkansen*) at 300 km per hour—passing the cities of Nagoya, Osaka, and Kyoto to the slow ferry at 25 km per hour—the scenery shifts from a forceful blur to a soft landscape dotted with islands. There is time to notice the small wooden boat floating in the harbor since only one ferry departs every few hours to the islands in the Seto Inland Sea. It is difficult to occupy time since most of the shops are closed at 11 a.m. This is far away from opulent boutiques in Tokyo's Roppongi district and endless stores on the back streets of Shibuya. Here, a shop with earth-toned clothing that appears to be from the 1980s. Next to it a dingy coffee shop—is it open or closed? This is where a global view of two islands in the Seto Inland Sea is born: a soft tidal harbor connecting maritime history with today's social landscape.

As an artist, I see the Seto Inland Sea in the first person. It is not a government statistic or an image in the popular media, but a friend coming to meet me as the ferry slowly approaches the dock. While zooming from the consumer culture landscape of Tokyo to the slow maritime life in the Seto Inland Sea, materials from the past have lives that continues beyond their original intentions. In his study of industrial ruins, Tim Edensor (2005: 830) finds modes of "social remembering" at work in marginalized spaces. The orderly commercial aims of the popular culture industry shift in the disorderly spaces of the islands in the Seto Inland Sea. I utilize "orderly" and "disorderly" to refer to a trend in art production to be organized within fixed exhibition spaces in highly-polished and professionally-marketed galleries with commercial aims in the making of the art itself, as objects or as gift-shop souvenirs, consumable and shaped by the structure and order that requires. Placing art on islands far from Tokyo, that cannot be consumed, only experienced, and incorporating elements of the past rather than just present-focused production and sales, disrupts the imposed commercialized order on art production and forms instead disorderly spaces for art. Here, I examine the social impact of two art sites where disorderly elements of the past are collaged with contemporary realities.

Figure 40.1 Ohtake Shinro, *Naoshima Bath "I ♥ YU,"* 2009.
Source: Photograph by Watanabe Osamu. Courtesy of Fukutake Foundation.

More specifically, I re-examine the orderly presentation of popular culture through alternative art projects that re-envision cultural trends occurring in Japan today. Contemporary artists often adopt anthropological approaches (Nakamura et al. 2013: 7), and I actively reflect on the perspective of participants in the production of artwork. I show that participants are more than just the producers or consumers, as the orderly aims of industries investing in popular culture might desire. Instead, they create an alternative vision of popular culture.

Just a few minutes' walk down a narrow alley from the main port of Miyanoura on the island of Naoshima is a vibrant bathhouse. This artwork *Naoshima Bath "I ♥ YU"*[1] (2009) (Figure 40.1) includes pillars painted in disparate patterns, plants hanging from countless verandas, rainbow stained glass, reassembled ship parts, gigantic palm trees, and much more. The construction of *Naoshima Bath* explodes onto the street, each material charged with a stunning presence yet impossible to isolate from the mix. Ohtake Shinro (b. 1955) is an artist who obsessively collects scraps, photos, lighters, and other objects from his travels which become part of his artworks. His artistic ventures include music, forming the noise band Puzzle Punks with the Boredoms' Yamantaka Eye during the 1990s (see Chapter 16). His collages fill one notebook after another and expand into room-size installations featured in exhibitions of his work across the globe. *Naoshima Bath* shares the collage aesthetic

yet is different. It is a functional bathhouse in the community; a place where residents are employed and a space where people gather. With the closure of public bathhouses and schools across Japan, loss of community gathering spaces has become a recurring form of social remorse. This bathhouse engages with the community as part of a longer relationship begun decades earlier.

In the late 1980s, Fukutake Tetsuhiko, then head of the Benesse Corporation (leader in correspondence education and educational publishing), met Miyake Chikatsugu, then Mayor of Naoshima. Together they came up with the idea for a "Global Camping Site" as part of the tourist vision for the southern part of the island opening in 1989 (Kaida et al. 2012). After his untimely death, his son Fukutake Soichi developed the vision based on the idea that "economy is subordinate to culture" (Yamada 2013). In 1992, he built the Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum (now named Benesse House) to show his collection of contemporary art on the stunning oceanfront property above the campground. During the 1990s, the young Fukutake invited artists, curators, and architects to make new works in response to unique aspects of the island.

In 2004, the Kagawa Prefectural government proposed the idea of an art festival to Governor Manabe Takeki. A partnership between the Fukutake Foundation, Kagawa Prefecture, and curator Kitagawa Fram produced the first Setouchi International Art Festival (now Setouchi Triennale) in 2010. The Triennale was designed to be a large-scale showcase of internationally renowned artists to be compared with exhibitions of a similar scale, including Venice (established 1895) and São Paolo (1951). However, rather than emphasizing the participation of artists in national pavilions, the mission of Setouchi Treinnale is closer to Documenta (1955) in Germany for its focus on new works made in response to the place, its history, and its residents. It also cherishes cooperation with the local community utilizing methods that can be compared with the Busan Biennale (1981) in South Korea, where "learning councils" comprised of local residents work together with artists in the creation of their works. Based on a model from Kitagawa's Echigo-Tsumari Triennale (2000) in Niigata Prefecture, the volunteer organization Koebi-tai (Little Shrimp Squad) was established for the Setouchi Triennale to link artists, local residents, and supporters. This cooperative aspect has become one of the distinguishing factors of art activities in the Seto Inland Sea compared to the growing number of biennial/triennial exhibitions.

I expand on the orderly characterizations of popular culture in urban centers by drawing a more nuanced landscape that includes overlooked elements of the past. While working on the permanent artwork *Sunset House: The House as Language of Being* (commencing in 2010 and completed in 2013, hereafter referred to as *Sunset House*), (Figure 40.2) I have come to see disorderly aspects in the production of popular culture. Culture is not singular nor is it produced by one industry; instead, it includes multiple participants who are continually redrawing its shape. Historically, the Seto Inland Sea has provided raw materials for urban development while being

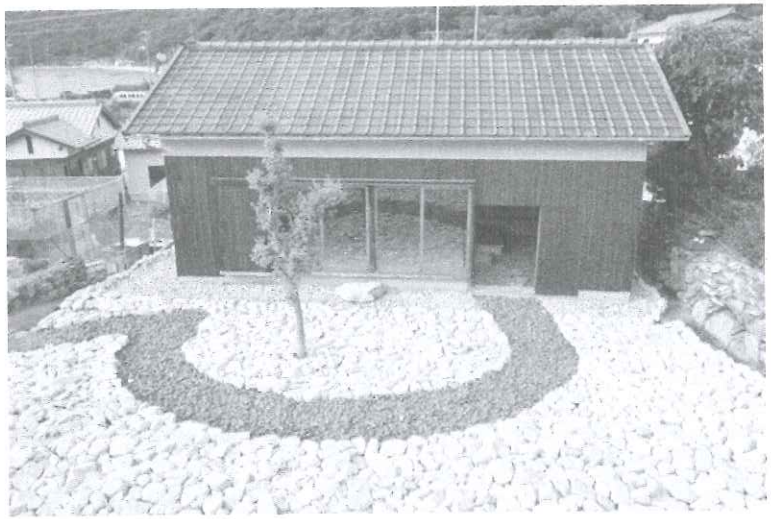

Figure 40.2 James Jack, *Sunset House: The House as Language of Being*, 2013.
Source: Courtesy of the Author.

the recipient of toxic industrial waste from commercial businesses from the Honshu mainland, byproducts of Japan's high-speed postwar growth. For example, stones from islands have been used in dams, roads, train tracks, and reclaimed land across Japan. Stones from Shōdoshima were used to lay the ground beneath Haneda's International Terminal (completed in 2010). These serve as an interesting counterpoint to the toxic automobile-industrial waste dumped on Teshima and nearby islands during the 1970s and 1980s. Today the islands are experiencing a new-found fame through art activities, contributing to a shift from urban centers of orderly culture production towards eclectic rural areas.

Unpopular Culture

What happens to out-of-date cars, houses with no residents, and schools that have been closed? Structures constructed for education, residence, and transportation are left in various states of disrepair. "Unpopular culture" refers to the culture of places, items, and ideas from the past that are no longer fascinating to the orderly trends of society today. The potential for aspects of unpopular culture to be transformed is expressed in artworks. For example, today public bathhouse culture is unpopular in Japan. I recall a visit I made to Tokyo's Tsuru no yu bathhouse on the last night before it closed and remember the lively community chatter that filled the changing room. The memory of a bathhouse which closed in one's own neighborhood across Japan may easily enter the mind of other visitors to *Naoshima Bath* as they re-experience unpopular culture in a lively form. These memories are further triggered by

images of Japanese popular television stars of the 1950s and 1960s appearing on the walls and floors of the bathhouse. Scenes of female sea divers are painted on tiles in both the male and female sides of the bath, as well as appearing in a video erotically placed inside of a bench that bathers use while undressing.

According to one of the earliest curators of contemporary art in the islands, "Naoshima is a place that has a history and a culture that is now seen as old-fashioned" (Akimoto 2002: 220). In this context, a mixture of images from past decades stimulates new experiences. Ohtake fills surfaces of the bathhouse with an assemblage of colorful images, objects, and botanicals. Particularly vibrant are those sealed into the resin floor of the hot bath—vintage photographs, magazine pages of airbrushed women, along with book pages yellowed by time. An elephant replica upcycled (reusing discarded items to make a product of higher value than the original) from a closed *hihokan* (sex museum) in Hokkaido presides on top of the wall between the male and female bathing areas. This art accumulation overflows with disorderly remnants that might otherwise have been left behind. Ohtake intentionally turns his eye to those items being thrown away to make room for the latest trendy items consumed in popular culture. An observer of his work describes them as "intense travel scrapbooks crammed with discarded cultural artifacts—scavenged tickets, snapshots, tags, currency, newspapers, and other mass-produced printed matter shrugged off by popular culture" (Ohtake 1996: n.p.). His art activities in the Seto Inland Sea point towards a new twist on unpopular culture within the seemingly unsightly but increasingly rich fodder of the deep sea of the past.

Recent images of the Seto Inland Sea in the mass media have become visible on the global stage through artworks such as those by Ohtake.[2] Other artists, including Kusama Yayoi, James Turrell, Sugimoto Hiroshi, and Olafur Eliasson, also attract crowds. Just under one million visitors came to the first Setouchi Triennale (Benesse Holdings, Inc. 2010), with even more in 2013 when the Art Festival increased to three seasons (Hirano 2013). But there are easier places to see these artists' works: why travel to these quiet, inconvenient islands? Dilapidated houses, boarded-up hotels, and abandoned boats abound in the island landscape. Here it is easier to find closed schools than open ones. Population decline can be felt on all of Japan's islands: for example, on Shōdoshima, inhabitants are half of what they were in their postwar peak and on other islands only one-tenth of the postwar peak (Shōdoshima-chō 2010). Part of the success in the promotion of the Seto Inland Sea is thanks to global media images, which provide both an idyllic vision of the rural past and notions of the region as a trendy place with a bright future (Ellwood 2010; Williams 2011; Kaun 2015).

Framing this trend is Benesse Art Site Naoshima's idealistic goal:

> to present art in a way that makes visitors more aware of the fascinating qualities of the region and instills pride in the residents, encouraging them to think positively about the future and the possibilities of a more desirable way of life
>
> (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2014: 2).

As one of the largest educational publishers in Japan, Benesse Holdings disseminates images of the artworks widely; yet the impact of Fukutake Foundation's art activities can also be found on a more intimate scale. Often it is difficult for individuals to appreciate the landscape closest to one's home for its banal familiarity. This was the sentiment of curator Mohri Yoshitsugu, who was born on the island of Shikoku, one of the main gateways to the Seto Inland Sea. However, through art activities, he began to see the "rhythm of each island and its landscape, not just as landscape but all that enters the senses … absolutely fascinating" (Mohri 2014). People are traveling to the islands for stays ranging from one day to one year or more, praising the nature, food, and people.

However, the increasing visibility of the region does not occur entirely *because of* art, but rather it occurs *together with* art. Models for cooperative artworks developed after the downfalls of public art in the 1980s (Lacy 1995), which too often saw society as an empty receptacle that could only view (read: consume) artworks. I focus here on the "cooperative approach," building upon the nuanced definitions of *kyōdō* (literally, "working together") studied in collaborative artworks produced in Niigata (Klein 2010). I refer to "cooperative" as the process in which participants are actively involved in multiple stages of the artwork.

In addition to the record number of visitors, people from urban centers are now moving to smaller islands. Many express the desire to become part of an alternative culture where participants are not satisfied with consuming television broadcasts, Internet releases, or magazine publications. They want to create their own collage of disorderly ideas actively striving for a more appealing future culture (Abe 2012). This ideal should not be seen from only one perspective. In playing with wasted, sidelined, decentralized, and forgotten aspects of Japanese culture, art activities in the Seto Inland Sea region are re-envisioning the unpopular to create new community gathering places.

A Meeting Place

Two doors down from where *Naoshima Bath* now stands, there was a general store where villagers used to gather—after work, waiting for the ferry, or just stopping to chat. In a story familiar to Japan's aging society, elderly proprietress Ms. Ochiai moved to the mainland so that her relatives could care for her, causing the store to close. For *THE STANDARD* (2001) exhibition, Ohtake revived the Ochiai General Store by adding posters, calendars, magazines, newspapers, bottles, red lights, and more to what was already there. A memorable jukebox with a playlist that included Bob Dylan, Ishikawa Seri, EMA and Leadbelly was played by visitors, bringing the electric guitar suspended from the ceiling to life. Ohtake's obsessive collection of memorabilia fit so well with the store that it was hard to tell where he had intervened. This spatial collage exemplifies Ohtake's (2005) philosophy of utilizing "*sude ni soko ni aru mono*" (that which is already there). Here, he reassembles popular

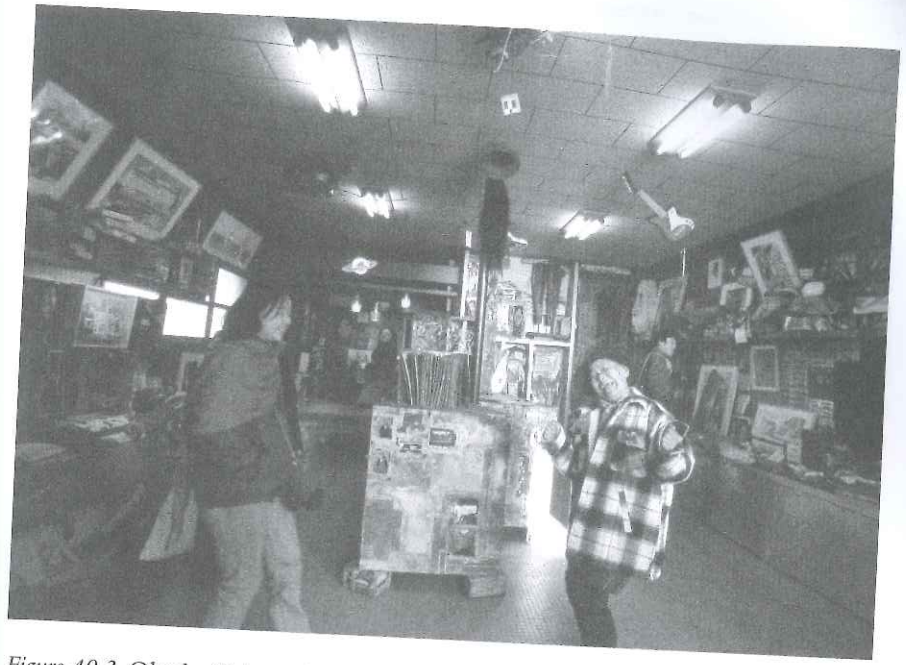

Figure 40.3 Ohtake Shinro, *Ochiai General Store*, 2001.
Source: Photograph by Fujisuka Mitsumasa. Courtesy of Benesse Holdings, Inc.

culture from past decades into a new form of art. Yet this was not Ohtake's first creative encounter with the islands.

Ohtake's creative work in the Seto Inland Sea began on Naoshima with *Shipyard Works* (1990), a boat frame half submerged into the earth related to the former shipyard where he established his studio in Uwajima on the other side of Shikoku. But it was through his work in the *Ochiai General Store* (2001) that he became truly immersed in the life of the community (Figure 40.3). This work included paintings of objects from Waikiki, Hong Kong, Egypt, and Jajouka as well as many items Ms. Ochiai had left in the store. The site became informally known as "Ochitake" store, combining "Ochi" from the owner's name and "take" from the artist's. Here Ohtake's approach of working with what is "already there" synchronizes with the views of artist Akimoto Yūji, who began working as a curator on the island of Naoshima in 1991. Akimoto went on to shape the direction of artworks with a sensitivity to the social history of Naoshima for over a decade, particularly evident in the Art House Project (opened 1997).

The cooperative production process utilized in many of the new artworks has been met with mixed reactions from the community. Naoshima resident Tanaka Takako explains, "It's not quite the peaceful and beautiful island that it used to be" (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2014: 7). Yet there are few who

doubt the need for change to the Seto Inland Sea region as it attempts to redefine itself after the environmental catastrophes of the 1980s and amidst current issues such as aging population. Toxic waste dumped on Teshima is being processed at a treatment facility on the north side of Naoshima that has operated as a smelting facility for a century. For the first *THE STANDARD* exhibition, sites at the facility included a clinic, barbershop, and ping-pong center, all used by past employees. Akimoto wants people to look at the island "from a different point of view and bring it to life" (Akimoto 2002: 220).

After the exhibition *NAOSHIMA STANDARD 2* (2006–2007) museums and art projects were also commissioned on nearby islands, such as Inujima and Teshima, drawing influence from the social history of each site; some artworks included significant community participation. Visitors traveled in surprising numbers to these once "inconvenient" islands by boat, bike, car, and on foot. Along their way through the countryside, they inevitably get lost. The rural countryside then becomes part of the playful journey from one artwork to another. In this way, both local and non-local visitors see beyond previous images of the region. In these newly created meeting places, past elements and stunning landscapes are discovered and rediscovered.

A House for Being

Art Setouchi is also a personal story. ("Art Setouchi" is the title for the year-round art activities, while the title "Setouchi Triennale" initiated in 2013 is used to refer to 2010 and 2016 as well.) As an artist, I have experienced these issues up close while working on *Sunset House*. When first encountering the raw mud walls of a half-century old shed on Shōdoshima, I felt they were full of stories. While listening to the elderly island residents, I learned the building had been a gathering space for stone quarry employees between 1930 and 1980, when the town prospered. Basalt stones from this now defunct quarry were laid underneath the tracks of the *shinkansen* that carried travelers from Tokyo to the Seto Inland Sea. Beginning with re-painting these deeply cracked mud walls with soil, I derived a way to paint open arc shapes into the interior with two shades of dust from local stones. I then began to envision ways for the stories of the community to be re-circulated in the site as a permanent artwork.

In the second year, I invited the community to insert their feelings into the tattered structure. While renovating the exterior walls, memories, dreams, and hopes were layered inside vernacular building materials. These words were only visible while the artwork was under construction, emphasizing the active process of remembering that occurs in the present. Afterwards, words inscribed within must be felt rather than seen. The disintegrating walls were empowered with words of hundreds of participants to stand once again as a gathering place. In the process of working with local materials and the

community, links between social networks and material objects become visible. The language of participation is the responsibility of both artists and community, a process Tom Finkelpearl describes as "cooperative, participatory and coauthored" (2014). These links show new directions in overlooked aspects of Japanese culture from the past. Furthermore, they show contemporary Japanese culture is not only formed by popular images but also includes multiple stories occurring over time in diverse regions.

For example, granite stones have been integral to these islands' local economy and culture—in particular Shōdoshima, Teshima, and Inujima. In 1934, the same year the Seto Inland Sea was established as the first national park in Japan, a stone quarry opened in the town of Kōnoura on the southern tip of Shōdoshima. These two simultaneous events emphasize the duality of life in the islands, which, along with productivity and turbulence, come measures to help protect nature. The political and economic value of stones in the past is no longer relevant; now they have cultural value. Shōdoshima, once famous for supplying stones to build the original walls at Osaka Castle in the late sixteenth century, now invites tourists to come see Tofu Rock, Book Rock, and other natural sights. Amidst the façade of historic stones and the olive industry that also draws visitors, the less traveled north shore of Shōdoshima contains numerous granite quarries where mountains are carved into massive staircases. This is true on many islands: there is a light side that includes artworks and cafés along with a dark side that contains the spoils of industry.

I used two varieties of local stones to build the garden surrounding *Sunset House*: light granite stones from the northern tip of the island and dark basalt stones from the southern tip. Granite became the medium for each participant to write one fear, difficulty, or concern. Each stone was subsequently inverted so the text faced the earth, creating a stone garden imbibed with the challenges of the community. A garden once filled with burnt garbage and waste became an open space for new possibilities. To complete the garden, a meandering pathway was designed with crushed basalt stones, creating a contemplative pathway out of local materials.

Working in the Seto Inland Sea region, I see organizers, artists, and volunteers struggling, just like I do, with a confusing relationship to the local land. One of the tenets of Art Setouchi is a site-specific philosophy: artworks are made with an intimate relationship to the site where they are exhibited. Becoming more intimate with local culture is possible with enough time and motivation, but these efforts could be misdirected. Artworks can change people's minds and provide new views of what is already there. But what role can artists play in shifting societal trends? I have experienced shifts in the islands and residents while creating *Sunset House*. However, as an artist, I do not cause these shifts, rather I circulate existing tensions in words that temporarily appear then become an invisible part of the artwork. With the language of community participation, *Sunset House* is one way to reflect on the trend of cooperative culture production.

Can Art Change Society?

Not only in the Seto Inland Sea region but around Japan, art festivals are promoting alternative views of the countryside and its historical popular culture. Since 2000, curator Kitagawa Fram has attempted to rebrand images of rural Japan through radical art projects (Kitagawa 2005). Kitagawa established the Echigo-Tsumari Triennale in 2000 and directs the Setouchi Triennale (begun 2010), Ichihara × Art Mix (begun 2014, Chiba Prefecture), Japan Alps Art Festival (begun 2017, Nagano Prefecture), and Oku-Noto Triennale (begun 2017, Kanazawa Prefecture). This is based on a belief shared with Fukutake that culture should be prioritized above economics. In addition, Kitagawa firmly believes artists can serve as both motivators and mediators in local communities. However, urban centers remain a crucial base for these projects, as the flow of capital and media promotion still operates almost entirely in Tokyo. Nostalgia for rural Japan increases amidst the larger trend of people moving to cities for study, work, and employment.

One ambitious question posed by Art Base Momoshima, established in 2012 by artist Yanagi Yukinori as the successor to the Hiroshima Art Project (2006) and one of the more sustainable rural art projects in the Seto Inland Sea region, is relevant here: "What can art do for a better society?" (Yanagi 2014).

Art festival organizers' and benefactors' attempts to redirect cultural trends often have been met with success, but the effects of art making a better society are hard to quantify with data. Nonetheless, one figure from 2014 stands out: that year, the first school in Japan was officially re-opened on the island of Ogijima. With an average of forty schools closing in Japan every month (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology 2014),[3] this example is rare but noteworthy. As an island with a population of just 184 residents (Takamatsu-shi sōmukyoku 2015) where art activities have been occurring since 2009, Ogijima could be seen as a qualitative shift in showing how art can change cultural perceptions of the countryside.

The Setouchi Triennale is most often highlighted with artist names and sponsors, but the thousands of volunteers and paid staff who sustain the festival embody its potential to change society. The aforementioned Koebi-tai started in 2009 to support daily activities of the festival. Members of this nonprofit group help prepare and maintain artworks as well as explain art sites during the festival. At my artwork, Koebi-tai volunteers included a broad range of people of all ages, including a city bus driver, a convenience store clerk, university students, and a train conductor. There were over 2,500 active members of Koebi-tai in 2010 and over 7,000 members in 2013, with an average age around thirty years (Koebi 2013; Setouchi 2010). The relationships fostered between local and non-local participants continue during the years in between each Triennale, as select artworks are kept open, musical events held, and local festivals flourish. These youthful members spark energy in the aging countryside and represent a reverse migration of young people away from urban areas.

The "cooperative dream" described by Kitagawa (2005) is realized by these volunteers, many of whom seek alternative lifestyles. Yasuda Chihiro, a young woman who moved to Naoshima from Tokyo just before the second festival began in 2013, explains, "In Tokyo I got money, but my heart wasn't fulfilled." While employed at a department store popular for its youth fashions, she felt, "I was killing myself [working so hard] … Other staff were having mental issues or health problems, so I felt like I should quit before that happened to me" (Yasuda 2014). On her first visit to Naoshima, she felt like she was taking a trip to Disneyland. Soon after, she quit her job, moved to the island, and found work just before the Triennale. For many visitors, including Yasuda, art is the first impetus to come to the Seto Inland Sea region, but the cooperative networks retain their interest. Linked with the vision of the festival, these networks support alternative methods for culture production outside of commercial activities centered in urban areas.

Conclusion

As I have discussed, art activities engaged with the social landscapes of the Seto Inland Sea region provide new perspectives on Japanese popular culture. Art's cultural and social value is prioritized over its economic value (Matsumoto et al. 2010) and will not necessarily save the countryside from economic hardship, population decline, joblessness, and aging. Yet art is providing options for people yearning for alternative lifestyles outside of commercial trends and fast-paced city life. Art activities in rural communities are not easily classifiable as high, low, or middlebrow culture; rather, they show disorderly components of popular culture. Art activities combining old-fashioned aspects of the past with new forms of "social remembering" have a lasting impact. Together organizers, artists, and participants diversify perspectives on the production of contemporary culture to include activities taking place outside of urban centers.

The dream of cooperatively producing culture among residents, artists, curators, and participants is being realized in Japan today. From the viewpoints I heard in the Seto Inland Sea region, commercialized popular culture arising in cities is leaving many people unfulfilled. Scholars have noted that local cultures in Asia are in danger of losing the interest of young people (Craig and King 2002), who are more attracted to the rapid influx of urban culture. Yet new perspectives on the past offer the potential to create new mixtures of old and new within this influx. I have looked outside urban borders of popular culture to find appeal in previously unpopular places. This search has led to rustic abandoned homes, cavernous school gymnasiums, and fallow farmlands, all fallen out of immediate use to society. Artistic views of these spaces ripe with potential contribute to culture formed in cooperative networks.

Stories, materials, and histories that already exist in the islands of the Seto Inland Sea are brought back into plain view through art activities. Here, new boundaries of disorderly popular culture stand in contrast to the orderly

production of culture in urban centers. Cooperative art activities serve as stimuli for both visitors and residents to rediscover the value of culture in new places. Yet the sustainability of these cooperative activities after artists depart remains uncertain. This is where cooperative networks are truly engaged, as new-found life of art sites lie in the hands of supporters. The complex social landscape examined in the Seto Inland Sea region shows a depth beneath flat images of Japan often exported abroad (see Chapter 38). The hundreds of buildings being abandoned in the countryside might teach us more about the complexity of Japanese culture than the latest city skyscrapers, shopping malls, and sports venues. If culture is just to be thought of as something commercialized, consumable, and disposable, then this constant focus on the future is understandable. But culture is more than a marketing exercise; it can come not just from the expectation of a glossy future but from art created together with what is already there.

Notes

1 "I ♥ YU" puns the Japanese word for warm water (*yu*) with the English word "you"; therefore, the title means both "I love warm water" and "I love you."
2 Examples include articles in *Newsweek*, CNN, *The New York Times*, *Euro Times*, *Financial Times*, *Lonely Planet* guidebooks, and *The Japan Times*.
3 According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology 482 schools closed in 2013 and 598 schools closed in 2012 across Japan, most of which were elementary schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology 2014).

Glossary

3/11 Triple Disaster Three disasters precipitated by a magnitude 9.0 Mw earthquake off the east coast of Japan on March 11, 2011. The earthquake is referred to as the Great Tōhoku Earthquake or Great East Japan Earthquake (Higashi Nihon daishinsai). It triggered a massive tsunami that reached heights of 40.5 m (133 feet) along the coast of Japan and traveled up to 10 km (6.2 miles) inland (USGS 2015; National Police Agency of Japan 2016). The tsunami produced three reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, causing large-scale evacuation and as yet unknown nuclear contamination of the surrounding area and food chain.

Anime In Japan, refers to any kind of animation; however, outside of Japan, it denotes Japanese originated or heavily inspired products.

Aum Shinrikyō Japanese doomsday cult responsible for the March 20, 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack (Chikatetsu sarin jiken), which killed twelve people and injured more than a thousand. It remains Japan's most serious postwar act of terrorism.

Bishōnen Literally, "beautiful boy." The most common aesthetic of male beauty in *shōjo* manga, featuring young men with slender bodies, long hair, and exaggerated eyes.

BL (Boys' Love) Also called *shōnen ai* or *yaoi* (with different nuances among the terms), subgenre of *shōjo* manga and other manga or novels featuring love stories between two boys or men. Content ranges from chaste to explicit.

Bubble Era Between roughly 1985 and 1990, a time of prosperity accompanied by greed and extravagance. The soaring stock market and rampant speculation in real estate built on cheap credit led to a rapid increase in the paper value of land assets. By 1990 the stock market and real estate bubble had burst, and Japan entered a deflationary spiral.

***Būmu* (boom)** Large-scale fad that explodes on the scene but does not last.

–chan, –san, –kun In Japanese, suffixes are usually used after family or given names to indicate social position in relation to the speaker. Among the most common: *–san*, a semiformal title of respect between relative equals; *–kun*, used by superiors addressing juniors and usually, although