Shuji Okada's oil paintings depict the natural landscape of Japan as well as close-ups of the botanical life that fill it. In his recent Waterscape series, Okada paints from photographs taken of the withered plants and leaves that float on the surface of a lake near his residence in Moriyama. Employing the Grisaille technique, a method of working in which the minutely detailed paintings are entirely composed of fine brushstrokes of differing tones of grey, he reproduces this tiny natural ephemera across his vast canvases. The completed images appear so true to life that the audience can often initially mistake them for conventional monochrome photographs. Yet closer inspection clearly shows they are not an image captured in an instant but the result of a long and methodical working process in which these inherently ephemeral pieces of nature are slowly transformed into artworks set in perpetuity. The viewer can almost visualise the artist leaning over the canvas as he gradually fills its prior blankness. Each painting slowly and painstakingly brought into existence, appearing where otherwise there would be nothing. A working method that is an interesting counterpoint to the contemporary trend of alleviating the artist's labour through modern technology and the employment of studio assistants and professional fabricators.

I am delighted be able to present Shuji Okada's absorbing paintings in London as part of a series of creative and academic collaborations between the staff of the Fine Arts Department at Seian University, Japan and the Music Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom.

Neil Jefferies
November 2012
“Tracing over Surface, Gliding over Memories” ver. 03

Shigemi Inaga

Why do we humans try to project, condense, and permanently etch the trajectory of our own existences onto the membranes of surfaces? Various dimensions of Being spanning time and space are to be woven into flat surfaces, accumulating and intruding upon one another there. The surface of the skin, which on first glance seems to be deprived of any depth, retains in reality the traces of our multilayered world. On this watery planet, Earth, the surface of water is like a movie screen filled with depths of the most complicated sort.

Water is a transparent liquid, but beams of light are bent by its surface. Another screen—that of the air of the skies above—is reflected on that translucent mirror and the phenomena present in the Earth’s atmosphere project their shadows on it. Thanks to surface tension, petals and bits of pollen float on the water, subtly bending the surface with concave depressions while currents carry them away. If we further inspect it with a magnifying glass, the physical features of that watery surface become apparent; it turns out to be turbid and sometimes even viscous. When you peer into the shadowy water, objects at the water’s bottom can be seen through it. However, as the waters get deeper, it all of a sudden loses its transparency and the objects slip from sight. Ecology teaches us that this singularity for water to absorb light is intimately connected with the fostering of life.

Furthermore, the water’s surface is also the interface for evaporation; it is also the boundary where liquid turns into a solid when the temperature falls below freezing. Owing to one of H2O’s special properties—it expands when it is on the verge of freezing, at temperatures of 4 degree Celsius—water always starts to freeze from the layer in direct contact with the air. Were it not for this peculiar physical characteristic, the Earth’s possibility of bearing life would have been hampered considerably. Furthermore, a non-freezing zone is kept intact under the ice layer, as the water’s surface is the contact-zone between the atmosphere and the hydrosphere.

The surface of the water is the contact-zone between the atmosphere and the hydrosphere. Changes in air pressure make their mark on it with each passing moment. Temperature differences stir up winds and produce waves on the water’s surface. Air pressure fluctuations trigger swells on the ocean. The gravity of the Moon, the Earth’s satellite, promises the ebb-and-flow rhythms of the tides. The bio-sphere took form upon this composite of cosmic pulsations. The interactions between the outer Universe and the Earth’s face produce ripples on the water’s surface; humankind imitates that in molding its symbols, visually as well as verbally.

Human consciousness is like the surface of water. The waves that rise from the depths of the soul come into contact with the external sensory stimulus and sketch out patterns on the mental “water surface” through their interaction thereon; they incessantly change form in each passing moment like a weather map. The patterns translate the flow of consciousness and tick down its “minutes” in chronological order. Poet Paul Valéry said that we have no organ deeper than the skin; and the soul also resides at the surface. The Earth has mothered Life, and its nourishing environment has been ever since handed down to posterity: initial vital conditions are transmitted through the liquid that envelopes embryos. In mammals, too, the memory of the ancient seas rests within the amniotic fluid that envelopes the fetus when it resides in the uterus. The vertebral and nervous system are produced owing to the fact that the ectodermic surface of the embryo, touching this “sea inside the womb,” subsides toward the inside. The nerve center is also developed as an extension of this. The brain as well as consciousness is born from the membrane of the wrinkles of the folds in the skin, where the outside is woven in and brought into the inside.

When we gaze at the water’s surface at an inland lake and quietly contemplate in our mind’s eyes the foam as it floats and then disappears, our breathing falls into sync with the gentle repetitive movements of the water, our souls soften with the stillness and the flow, and, without noticing it, we begin to sway. In this mental state, we lose consciousness of the “gazing self” in our intensive absorption; countless phenomena begin to lose the individual contours of their everyday appearance and we are swallowed up in a reckless experience as if we had been merged into the Rules that control them. The lives of all things in nature penetrate this place, come and go free of constraint, and communicate with each other.

Okada Shuji’s “Mizube” (Waterscape) series puts right in front of us an actual setting where objects (“mono”) and the soul (“kokoro”) interreact to manifest themselves into “an event” (“koto”), showing the modality of that intermix. Two-dimensional pictures contain limitless depths precisely because they have no depth. They play the part of a permeable surface boundary where that latent force can become manifest. Along a footpath on Lake Biwa, at the waterfront of secret edges, the artist takes photography of microscopic scenes of vegetation in close-up. Countless images are overlapped and condensed into one pictorial plane which serves the “seed” (in the Buddhist sense): the whole Universe is drawn together into a single scene of Nature. A silent, yet-to-be-named scene reveals itself by way of recognizable figures and forms. Unconscious memories, since the Genesis of Life, now take root among the layers of translucent pigment of colors and drop anchor there. They slowly float up from the picture’s recesses like a reminiscence of the fragrance of burnt incense. After not inconsiderable time and effort spent in creating these works, such memories unexpectedly “return” as if they were obsessive remnants of departed souls. Time has removed the original color from these transferred images. Reduced into a vague grisaille, floating like “the apparitions coming back home” (“retour des revenants”), these images have miraculously grown. One hundred and eight times larger than their original size, these haunting images literally “possess” whoever views them with their overwhelmingly dignified appearance, saturated with immemorial nostalgia.

Shigemi Inaga

Professor, International Research Center for Japanese Studies · Professor, The Graduate University for Advanced Studies
(Translated by Shigemi Inaga)
なぜ人は平面という膜のうえに自己の生存の軌跡を投入し、凝縮して描き留めようとするのか。平面には、存在のさまざまな次元が時空を跨いで織り込まれ、堆積し、互いに干渉している。一見深みを象徴したかにみえる皮膚の表面には、実際には多層の世界が、その痕跡を残している。水面は、水の惑星たる地球にとって、もっとも錯綜した深みを孕んだ映写幕だろう。

水は透明な液体だが、その表面で光線は屈曲し、半透明の鏡には上空の大気という、もうひとつのスクリーンが映し出され、大気圏に存在する物象がその陰翳を投射する。表面張力のおかげで花びらや花粉は水面に浮かび、表面に微妙な屈曲を授けつつ水流に運ばれる。さらに拡大鏡で観察すれば、ときおりとした質感をさえ渦殺した水面の物理的相貌が現れる。水影を覗き込むと、水底の物象が透けて見える。だが水深が増すにつれ、水は不意に透明度を失い、視野から逃れる。この光線吸収の特性が、生命の涵養と密接に繋がっていることも、生態学の教えているところだ。

さらに水面とは、そこから水蒸気が大気中に立ち昇る界面でもあれば、気温が摂氏零下となるならば、液体を固体へと変貌させる界面でもある。氷結寸前、摂氏 4 度以下で膨張する H2O の特性ゆえに、水はかなり大気圏と接触する表層から凍結する。もし奇異な物理特性がなければ、地球に生命が生まれ得ない可能性も著しく阻まれたことだろう。また水塊が必ず水面から発達するかこそ、その下の不凍層に生命活動の余地が保たれてきた。北極海や南極洋の豊富な生命がその証となる。

大気圏と水圏との接触面である水面。そこには大気圧の変化が刻々と印を刻む。気温差が風を呼び、水面に波を立てる。大気圧の高圧が大洋をうねりを招く。そして地球の衛星である月の引力が、潮の満ち引きの律動を約束する。こうした波動の複合のうえに生命圏が成立する。宇宙と地表との交信は水の表面に波紋を投げ、人類はそれに肩を並べて象徴を作り出してきた。

人の意識もまた水面のようなものだ。心の深みから届く光と、外からの感覚刺激が水面で交わり織る模様は気象図のように刻々と変貌し、意識の流れとなって時を刻んでゆく。皮膚はもっとも深い器官といは、詩人、ポール・ヴァレリーの言葉だったが、心もまた表面に映る。地球が誕生し、生命が育まれて以来の母なる環境は、生命の胚を包む液体のうちに継承された。哺乳類にあっても、子宮に宿る胎児を包む羊膜を満たす羊水に、太古の海水の記憶が残っている。この胎內海に接した胎の外胚葉表面が内部へと浸透したところから、脊椎と神経系が発生する。脳中樞もその延長上にある。外部を纏込んで内部へと取り入れる皮膚の褶曲の裏の膜から、脳髄と意識が誕生する。

内陸の湖の水面を見つめ、心象に浮かんでは消える泡沫を静かに観照していると、いささか呼吸が水面の緩やかな反復運動に同期し、渦をかき、流れに沿って心がときどき、ただうれしい。濃密でありながら、もはや眺める我を意識しなくなるこの境地にあっては、個々の事象がその日常的な象徴の軸を失いはじめて、あたかもそれを食べ物のうちに隠し込んだように、無分別な体験に包まれる。森羅万象の生命がそこに浸透し、運離無得に往来し、互いに感応しあう。

岡田修二の《水辺》は、モノとココロとが交差してコトとして立ち現れる現場、その交錯の様相をそのまま現前させる。2 次元の画面は、深さを欠いているがゆえに無限の深みを宿す。それは構成が顕現するための透明性の界面の役割を果たす。琵琶湖湖畔の秘密の水辺で接写された微細な水面の植生を種子として、自然の一画のうちに宇宙が祭壇され、名付けられる以前の沈黙の光景が、認知可能な形象で発現する。生命誕生以来の無意識的な記憶も、何層もの透明な絵の具の積層のうちに湿りを抱き、そこに鎖を降ろす。あたかも曇り込まれた香のように、それは画面の奥からおぼろに漂ってくる。短くはない制作の時と手間を経て、それはたましさか、荒雲の面影よろしく、回帰を果たす。グリザイユの淡彩に脱色され、幻のようなに再来して浮かび上がる転写像は、今や実物の 108 倍に成長し、圧倒する偉容をもって、観る者に憑依する。

（いながし み ・ 国際日本文化研究センター・教授、総合研究大学院大学・教授）
Waterscape 58  2010  oil, canvas  174 × 218cm
水辺 58  2010 年  油彩、キャンバス  174 × 218cm
Waterscape59  2011  oil, canvas  174 × 218cm
水辺59 2011年 油彩、キャンバス 174 × 218cm
Waterscape 60 2011  oil, canvas  174 × 174cm
水辺 60 2011 年 油彩、キャンバス  174 × 174cm

Waterscape 61 2011  oil, canvas  174 × 174cm
水辺 61 2011 年 油彩、キャンバス  174 × 174cm
Waterscape 65 - SHIZENGAKU-  2012  oil, canvas  174 × 348cm
水辺 65 -自然学-  2012年  油彩、キャンバス  174 × 348cm
Shuji OKADA
1959 Born in Kagawa, Japan
1987 Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music (Aichi Japan)
MA in Fine Arts
Dentsu inc (~'94)
2006 Seian University of Art and Design (Shiga Japan) Professor Ongoing
2007 Kyoto Municipal University of Fine Arts and Music (Kyoto Japan) PhD

(All in Japan Unless Stated)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
1986 Ginza Surugadai Gallery (Tokyo)
1990 Galerie 16 (Kyoto) ('97)
1991 Gallery Haku (Osaka) ('92 '93 '94)
1992 Gallery Lovecollection (Aichi)
1993 Shinanobashi Gallery (Osaka)
1994 Gallery Lunami (Tokyo)
1995 Gallery MOCA (Aichi)
Norimitsu Iwao Memorial Hall, Espace 21 (Ehime)
1998 "Art Today 10" Kyoto Municipal Shijo Gallery
1999 "New Works" Dai-ichi Life Gallery (Tokyo) ('01)
2004 "Chance Image" YAEMON (Kyoto)
Galleria Finarte (Aichi)
2006 Galerie Tokyo Humanite ('12)
2007 "Shuji Okada With Monet, Memory of Water" OHARA Museum of Art (Okayama)
2010 "Waterscape-Silence Passes into Nirvana" MATSUO MEGUMI+

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
1990 "Artists of Next Generation" Hakone Open-Air Museum (Kanagawa)
1993 "Artists in Hyogo '93" Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art
1994 "Painting Toda '94" Osaka Contemporary Art Center
1995 "New Photographic Image '95" Gallery Lovecollection (Aichi)
"The Skin of Art" Kirin Plaza Osaka
1996 "VOCA '96 The Vision of Contemporary Art" The Ueno Royal Museum (Tokyo)
1997 "Contemporary Artists' Vision ~Crossover 10 Contemporary Art~ Okayama Prefectural Cultural Center
1998 "VOCA '98 The Vision of Contemporary Art" The Ueno Royal Museum (Tokyo)
"1999 Kyoto Arts Festival ~SKIN-DIVE~" Defunct Tatsuike Elementary School (Kyoto)
2001 "Everywhere or Not" O Gallery eyes (Osaka)

"Dialogue with Nature" Haruhi Museumof Art (Aichi)
"10th International Contemporary Art Competition ~Osaka Triennale 2001~" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
"Kenjiro Okazaki + Shuji Okada ~A Possibility about Experience" Kyoto Art Center
2002 "21th Outstanding Rising Artists Exhibition Presented by Yasuda Kasai Fine Art Foundation" Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda kasai Museum of Art (Tokyo)
"Selected New Artists 2002" Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art
2003 "Water : Material and Subject" Seian University of Art and Design Gallery ARTSITE (Shiga)
"Ueno Royal Museum Grand Prize 20th Memorial Exhibition" The Ueno Royal Museum (Tokyo)
"Kyoto Painting Today" The Museum of Kyoto Prefecture
"New Perspectives from a Separate Center" Kyoto Art Center, Nijo Castle (Kyoto)
"University Drawing From Japan and United States" The MainGallery Hampshire College (Massachusetts, United States)
"6th Asian Design International Conference" Epocal Tsukuba International Congress Center (Ibaraki)
2004 "6th Maeda Kanji Grand Prize Exhibition" Takashimaya Department Store (Tokyo), Kurayoshi Museum (Tottori)
"VOCA1994~2003" OHARA Museum of Art (Okayama)
2005 "Artists graduate of Aichi Prefectural University of Art" Aichi Prefectural University of Art
"ART in CASO 2005 ART/LIFE/SCENE" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
2006 "Human's Figure Human's Body" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"The Flower of VOCA, Red (Miyuki Tugami) and White (Shuji Okada)" Galleria Finarte (Aichi)
"Photogenic" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"Art today from VOCA" Utsunomiya Museum of Art (Tochigi)
"International Art Fair ART in CASO OKAYAMA" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
2007 "Collection Exhibition of Agency for Cultural Affairs" The Japan Art Academy (Tokyo)
"Remembrance of things passing" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
"Travels Across Forest and Water" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"The Flower of VOCA, Red (Miyuki Tugami) and White (Shuji Okada)" Galleria Finarte (Aichi)
"Art today from VOCA" Utsunomiya Museum of Art (Tochigi)
"International Art Fair ART in CASO OKAYAMA" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
2008 "SEIZE-ART -21th Outstanding Rising Artists Exhibition Presented by Yasuda Kasai Fine Art Foundation -" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"20th Anniversary Memorial Exhibition" Takamatsu City Museum of Art (Kagawa)
"Twenty-first Century Contemporary Art Selections from Osaka Prefectural Collection" Contemporary Art Space Osaka
"Kobe Art Marche 2009" Crown Plaza Kobe (Hyogo)
"ART TODAY 2009" Seizon Museum of Modern Art (Nagano)
"Mid-Way Osaka Midosuji street Art Window" Keihanhin Real Estate Midosuji building (Osaka)
2010 "Mono-learning and Sense Value Society Exhibition" The Kyoto University Museum
"Colors and Forms of the Water" Takamatsu City Museum of Art (Kagawa)
"Art Fair Ultra-kyoto" Sugimoto House (Kyoto)
"Child museum of summer vacation 2010" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"It Encounters by Chaos. Tradition, Present Age, Japan, and The West" Seizon Museum of Modern Art (Nagano)
"The 80th Anniversary Special Exhibition OHARA BEST" OHARA Museum of Art (Okayama)
"Tasting Art Exhibition 02" Hankyu Department Store (Osaka)
"Monokoito Mono-learning and Sense Value Society Exhibition" Kyoto housekeeping woman school, Kyohakuin (Kyoto)
2011 "Tricks & Humor" Yokosuka Museum of Art (Kanagawa)
"ART TODAY 2011" Seizon Museum of Modern Art (Nagano)
"SITE SITE SPECIFIC Shuji Okada × Jhunji Takanashi" Sei Art center (Shiga)
"Monochrome -Memory of Color-" Takamatsu City Museum of Art (Kagawa)
2012 "The Vanguard of Japan Art" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
"SHUZENGAKU" The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
2013 "SHUZENGAKU" Goldsmiths University of London, Menier Gallery (London, UK)

SELECTED PRIZES/AWARDS
1984 Special Excellence Prize at "The 2nd Ueno Royal Museum Grand Prize Exhibition"
1998 VOCA Encouragement Prize at "VOCA '98 The Vision of Contemporary Art"
2001 Mainichi Broadcasting System Prize at "10th International Contemporary Art Competition ~Osaka Triennale 2001~"
2007 Umehara Prize for doctoral thesis at Kyoto Municipal University of Fine Arts and Music
2011 "The 32nd Shiga Prefectural Cultural Prize"
2011 Daiwa Foundation Awards (The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation)
2012 The 3rd Creative Tradition Prize (Japan Arts Foundation)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
The Ueno Royal Museum (Tokyo)
Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts and Music, Art Gallery
Dai-ichi Life Insurance Company, Art Gallery (Tokyo)
Osaka Contemporary Art Center
The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga
Agency for Cultural Affairs (Tokyo)
OHARA Museum of Art (Okayama)
Takamatsu City Museum of Art (Kagawa)
Seizon Museum of Modern Art (Nagano)
岡田修二
1959 香川県生まれ
1987 愛知県立芸術大学大学院美術研究科修了
株式会社電通入社（~'94）
2006 成安造形大学教授（現在に至る）
2007 京都市立芸術大学大学院美術研究科博士（後期）課程修了
（美術）
主な個展
1986「'86新人選抜レスポアール展」銀座スルガ台画廊（東京）
1990「閉じなが らかつ開き う る も のたち」ギャ ラ リ ー16（京都）（'97）
1991ギャ ラ リ ー白（大阪）（'92 '93 '94）
ラ ブコ レ ク シ ョ ンギャ ラ リ ー（愛知）
1992 信濃橋画廊（大阪）
1994 ルナ ミ 画廊（東京）
1995 ギャ ラ リ ー MOCA（愛知）
「第 6 回アジアデザイン国際会議」つくば国際会議場（茨城）
1996「University Drawings from Japan and United States」上野の森美術館（東京）
1997「現代作家の眼展 ~ク ロ スオーバー 10 現代美術~」岡山県総合文化センター(岡山)
1998「第 9 回芸術祭典・京造形部門 SKIN-DIVE～感覚の回路を開く～」元龍池小学校（京都）
2001「愛知県立芸術大学収蔵作品展～自然との対話～」はるひ美術館（愛知）
2003「素材としての水・主題としての水」成安造形大学ギャ ラ リ ー（滋賀）
2004「VOCA 展 '98 現代美術の展望~新しい平面の作家たち~」上野の森美術館（東京）
2005「芸大を巣立った作家たち」愛知県立芸術大学芸術資料館
「ART in CASO 2005  ART/LIFE/SCENE」YAEMON、海岸道ギャ ラ リ ー CASO（大阪）
2006「人のすがた、人のカ ラ ダ」滋賀県立近代美術館
「VOCA の華 あか(津上みゆき)しろ(岡田修二)」ガレ リ アフ ィ ナルテ（愛知）
「夏休み子供美術館 2010 アー トぶつぶつえん」滋賀県立近代美術館
2007「平成 17 ~ 18 年度文化庁買上優秀美術作品披露展」日本芸術院会館（東京）
2008「自然学 |SHIZENGAKU」ロ ン ド ン大学ゴール ドス ミ スカ レ ッ ジ、メ ニエールギャ ラ リ ー（ロンドン イギリス）
主な受賞
1984「第 2 回上野の森美術館大賞展」特別優秀賞（彫刻の森美術館賞）
1998「VOCA 展 '98 現代美術の展望～新しい平面の作家たち～」VOCA 奨励賞
2001「第 10 回国際現代造形コンクール 大阪トリエンナーレ 2001」毎日放送賞
Dr Shuji Okada Portfolio for the UK exhibition 'SHIZENGAKU'
- an international/interdisciplinary project in collaboration between Seian University of Art and Design and Goldsmiths College, the University of London -

Exhibition
Goldsmiths, University of London
St James’s Hatcham Church Gallery  February 23 — March 2, 2013
Menier Gallery  March 4 — 9, 2013
Organized by: Music Department at Goldsmiths, University of London
Supported by: The Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation / Seian University of Art and Design
Cooperated by: Seian University of Art and Design, Center for Arts

Dr Shuji Okada Portfolio
Text: Shigemi Inaga
Photograph by: Seibun Katou (All the photographs of each work) / Yasushi Ichikawa
Cooperation in edit: Naomi Mtsumoto (Music Department at Goldsmiths, University of London)
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