# University of Alberta

Japanese Anti-Art: Japanese Society and Influence from the West

by

Satomi Tozawa

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**Abstract**

Some artists like to create works which do not look and sound like traditional Western art and music. People call those works “anti-art” often, and they were especially popular in the 1960s in Japan. The 1960s was a very important period for Japan because the country was striving to recover from the damages caused by World War II. How did this social and historical background in the country affect anti-art movements in Japan? How did Western culture affect Japanese anti-art movements? These questions will be discussed in this thesis. In contemporary Japan, there are also some works which have very similar characteristics to anti-art works created in the 1960s. However, society in Japan now is very different from the 1960s, and the purposes of those works are different as well. This thesis explores why anti-art artists and musicians adopted unusual methods to create their works, and considers the relationship between society and those anti-art works.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis will discuss Japanese society and anti-art movements in the 1960s and today, specifically in the 2000s and the early 2010s. Works created by anti-art artists and musicians look and sound very different from traditional Western music and art. I would like to explore why they tried to express works in untraditional ways, and invent something totally different from the stereotypical artistic methods. I will compare anti-art movements in Japan in these two different eras, and also consider the relationship between anti-art artists and musicians in Japan, and those who were active in the West, specifically New York. The first section of this thesis will mainly consider their messages to society and the world in the 1960s, focusing on two Japan-based anti-art groups, *Hi Red Center* and *Group Ongaku* (Group Music), and also *Fluxus*, which was an international organization containing many Japanese artists and musicians. It is important to consider how each group approached society after World War II and what they conveyed through their works.

In contemporary Japan, from the 2000s to the present, anti-art artists and musicians have created works that look and sound very similar to those of the 1960s. However, their purposes may be different from the earlier period. Therefore I will also consider how the 1960s anti-art movement has influenced current Japanese society and anti-art works of the new generation, and how the purposes of anti-art artists and musicians in these two generations are related to and different from each other.

While the period between the 1960s and 2010s in Japan will be a core part of this thesis, I would like to mention, briefly, some historical background preceding these eras. Although Japan surrendered in 1945 and the war ended, damages caused by the war affected Japanese society for a long time afterwards. Japan underwent many difficult situations starting from 1945 such as occupation by a foreign power: Japan was run by outsiders for the first time ever. Besides occupation by the United States, the economic situation in the country was unstable as well, and people were all wondering when good times would return. (Huffman 2004: 159) However Japan's quick recovery from the war was remarkable: they cooperated with the invading forces and devoted themselves to rebuilding the country. As a result, Japan returned to the community of nations when the Olympic Games were held there in 1964 (Kingston 2011: 4), and Japan became an economic giant by the early 1960s. (Huffman 2004: 161)

After that, Japan was influenced by the worldwide energy crisis in the 1970s, economic difficulties in the late 1980s, and the Heisei Era[1] started in 1989. By the early 2000s aspects of Japanese culture, such as sushi, anime and automobiles, started to spread throughout the world as a part of the common international heritage. (Huffman 2004: 187) The Heisei era can be called "the era of achievement of peace" (Huffman 2004: 201), but it is also true that the political and financial situation has not been very stable, and many youth are struggling to find a job, while people in older generations also worry about their future.

Regarding music in Japan, there is a feeling that the whole music world is much influenced by Western traditional music. Many genres in popular music such as rock, folk, and pop are also influenced by Western music, and enka is one of only few popular musical genres which reflects several features of Japanese tradition. (Okada and Groemer) Japanese music education is also dominated by Western music at the present time. (Malm 2000: 276) Schools did not teach students their own traditional music very often until the Japanese Education Ministry introduced a plan to let all students learn a Japanese traditional instrument during three years of their school life in 1998. (De Ferranti 2002: 198) Therefore Japanese students mainly study European classical music such as Beethoven and Mozart at school, and Western instruments privately, or in brass band club. Sadly, there are just a handful of people who are learning Japanese traditional instruments like *koto* or *shamisen*. The majority of people are more interested in Western music and instruments.

I myself studied piano since I was three, and learned Western traditional music in school as many Japanese do. I also pursued music in my undergraduate degree and my master's degree. Therefore I have performed European classical music on many occasions. However, when I was in my master's degree in piano performance a couple of years ago, I started to question the role of the music which I had learned because European music is not from my culture, and I felt that all I do there is reproduce music written by somebody from the West. I was wondering where my feelings are expressed and how I can convey my feelings and ideas more directly in my own way in the performance world. I wanted to know more possibilities and new methods which do not follow European traditional ways. I was aware that there were some musicians who used chance operations for their compositions, who were interested in improvisation,

[1]Heisei is one of the names of a Japanese era. The Heisei Era started in 1989, continuing until now, August 2011.

and there were also some artists who combined music and art and created their own artistic works in the 1960s. I became very interested in those people who tried to express their ideas outside of the world of traditional Western high art, and wanted to know more about them. Therefore, I decided to work on this topic for my master's thesis.

Luckily, I had a chance to talk to Toshi Ichiyanagi who was a key figure in the anti-art movement in Japan in the 1960s, and also obtained many articles about anti-art movements, artists and their innovative works written by him. I visited the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo, where many anti-art artists and musicians presented their works in the 1960s, and I was able to access some materials, periodicals, recordings and archives which they preserved in the library at the center. The Research Center for the Arts and Arts Administration at Keio University includes several archives housing materials which were related to anti-art movements in Japan in the 1960s, and I was able to read those materials for the research. The library at the University of Alberta contains many books about anti-art movements both in Japan and the West. Another great opportunity for me was that I also had a chance to interview a young Japanese composer, Yuichi Matsumoto, via e-mail. His ideas about music are very innovative even in the 2010s. I analyzed interviews and archival material and compared similarities and differences between anti-art movements in Japan and the West, and how skills and methods anti-art artists and musicians have adopted have been developing and changing from the 1960s to present.

Before I start to discuss issues in these anti-art movements, it is very important to clarify the definition and background of the terms which I will often use in this thesis. The first term is 音楽 (*ongaku*), which means "music" in Japanese but this term originally came from China. The Chinese character, 音(on) means sounds and noise, and 楽(gaku) indicates enjoyment. Another important word often used here is 芸術 (*geijutsu*), meaning art. It refers to aesthetic works created for enjoyment such as the fine arts, music, and dance. *Geijutsu* education in Japan mainly includes the fine arts and music, and these two categories in Japan have been dominated by European art and music since the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Japanese students learn about works by well-known European artists in art class and classical music by famous European composers in music class. Thus a majority of Japanese people mainly study Western high art and consider them *geijutsu*, and as a result, most people naturally think about Western art or music when they hear the word, *geijutsu*.

One of the most important terms in this thesis is 反芸術 (*han-geijutsu*) meaning anti-art in English. 反- (*han-*) means "anti-", therefore if the term "geijutsu" indicates Western traditional art and music as indicated in the previous paragraph, 反-芸術 (*han-geijutsu*) naturally implies something which opposes 芸術 (*geijutsu*). According to Kokuritsu Kokusai Bijutsukan in Osaka (The National Museum of Art), *han-geijutsu* "demanded freedom from established concepts of art, and they inevitably opened up a new possibility that everything can be art." (Havens 2006: 135) In Japan, the critic Yoshiaki Tohno was the first person who used the term, *han-geijutsu* when he reviewed the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition held in 1960: he described works created by artists who used discarded everyday items as *han-geijutsu*. (Havens 2006)

Although Tohno was the first person who used the term *han-geijutsu*, another critic, Shuzo Takiguchi also identified "a certain Dada-like or anti-art tendency" in the scribbled graffiti images displayed by young artists at the same exhibition. (Havens 2006: 135, 136) After that, works submitted for the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition and created by *Hi Red Center* and *Neo Dadaism Organizers*, which will be discussed in the following chapters, started to be labeled "anti-art." However, general ideas of the term "anti-art" were very vague, and any specific artists or trends were identified by using this term, therefore it generated controversy in the art critique world. (Miyagawa 2009) Despite the unclear definition of the term, this has been used to describe works containing elements which were not seen in established concepts of art, and used since the 1960s.

Besides *han-geijutsu*, there is another term which is often used for introducing works by anti-art artists, "avant-garde" which is the term also often used in this thesis. In Japan, the avant-garde emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a leading edge or shockwave in the arts. The essential point of theorizing the avant-garde is the idea that art should transcend convention, be marginal, inspirational and prophetic (Eckersall 2006: xiv). Conceived of as a revolution in aesthetics and in culture, the avant-garde is an attack on the status of art as autonomous in the bourgeois society. (Eckersall 2006: xiv) 前衛 (*zen'ei*) is the literal Japanese translation of the French term avant-garde. (Yoshimoto 2006: 26) In Japan, the term *zen'ei* was originally received with reservation by Japanese artists and critics because of its association with the Communist political left both in Japan and Europe, but it later became accepted in the Japanese art world to refer inclusively to those artists not

belonging to established art organizations, or to artworks that challenged established notions of beauty by utilizing unconventional styles and media. (Yoshimoto 2006: 26)

In the 1960s, many Japanese artists and musicians challenged the art and music world by adopting unconventional methods in their works. Besides considering the relationships between social situations and those anti-art works in Japan, it is also important to discuss how Western anti-art artists and musicians influenced the Japanese anti-art scene. One of the most important figures here is John Cage (1912-1992) who took Zen Buddhism courses with Dr. Daisetz Suzuki in the United States in the 1950s, and adopted ideas of Zen in his compositions. His musical ideas influenced not only Western composers and artists, but many Japanese artists and musicians as well. Japan historically absorbed foreign cultures, especially many cultural features from the West after World War II. It will be important to discuss how those Western ideas have influenced the Japanese art scene through the examples of John Cage and artists who worked with him.

As an example of the first anti-art movement in history, I will discuss Dadaism in Europe and Japan in Chapter 2. John Cage and his connection with Japanese artists and musicians will be the main focus of Chapter 3, which will also consider the relationship between Cage and Zen Buddhism. Chapter 4 will discuss anti-art movements in the 1960s. *Fluxus,* an international anti-art organization strongly influenced by Cage, and two Japanese based groups, *Hi Red Center* and *Group Ongaku* will be the main topics. I will also talk about the role of the Sogetsu Art Center which gave young artists opportunities to express their works to society and the world in the 1960s. Chapter 5 is about the art and music scene in Japan in the 2000s and 2010s. Besides the artists and musicians who have been active in this generation, discussion will center also on the Tokyo Wonder Site, which has provided young artists places to perform their avant-garde works.

Through the entire thesis, I would like to focus on the relationship between art and society in Japan. I will consider how World War II affected Japanese artists, musicians and their works in the 1960s, and how these works affected Japanese society after the war in turn. It will be an essential point to consider how Western anti-art movements influenced Japanese artists. In order to compare two different eras efficiently, the main issues to consider are differences

in anti-art works and their meanings, how different anti-art has been between them, how the artistic skills and methods of expression have been developed from the 1960s to this generation, and how works created by anti-art artists and musicians in the 1960s have affected anti-art movements in contemporary Japan.

## Chapter 2: History of Anti-Art; Dadaism

The first anti-art movement in history is Dadaism, which was founded in 1916 in Zurich. (Ades and Gale 2010) Dada was "an international, multi-disciplinary phenomenon, as much a state of mind or way of life as a movement" (Dempsey 2010: 115), and it was also a nihilistic movement in the arts which was based on the principles of irrationality, anarchy, and cynicism and the rejection of laws of beauty and social organization. (Ernst 2009: 41) Dadaists aimed at not only the political and social establishment, but also the art establishment and bourgeois society (Dempsey 2010: 115), and tried to define what art should be. Because the year 1916 was right in the midst of World War I, this generation suffered the pain of a chaotic world. (Kristiansen 1968: 457) Therefore increasing fears of the war also proved the failure and hypocrisy of established values, and young artists united to express their disillusionment and anger at the war.

Many international refugees from World War I in Zurich, in the neutral country of Switzerland, launched the original Dada at Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 (Ernst 2009: 37), and the movement spread to independent groups in New York, Berlin, and elsewhere all over the world. The major characteristic of Dada was the deliberate employment of extraordinary and unconventional tactics, and Dadaists attacked traditions of art, philosophy, and literature in their demonstrations, poetry readings, noise concerts, exhibitions and manifestos. (Dempsey 2010: 115) As one of the characteristics of Dada, there was the persistent desire to destroy art and the intent to stamp out existing concepts of beauty. Dada art sneered at traditional culture and furthermore it was "opposed to everything that exists." (Kristiansen 1968: 459). Dadaists experimented with theater, music and art created by chance, collage and political propaganda to create their works which we can also see in some anti-art works in the 1960s. (Hapgood and Rittner 1995: 64) They held nightly performances of music, singing, dancing, puppetry and recitations, and even included poetry which was read simultaneously in three different languages with noise music accompanying it at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. (Dempsey 2010: 116) Since they used multiple elements to express their feelings here, it seems to be impossible to categorize their works in only one genre. In other words, they crossed the boundaries between genres and created something new.

One of the most important Dadaists was the French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) who invented one of the typical categories of Dada art, the readymade. Duchamp was born and grew up in a family of artists. His grandfather was a painter of still life and an engraver of local village scenes; his two older brothers began their careers as illustrators, and his younger sister became a painter. (Naumann 2011) Duchamp started painting at the age of fifteen with a series of landscapes in an Impressionist style. However, he gave up the traditional tools and techniques of painting in 1913 because he had a desire to make art more than just visual. He was curious if it was possible to make works which were not motivated by aesthetic preferences. As a result, he invented the readymade, "an existing manufactured object deemed to be a work of art simply through its selection by an artist" (Naumann 2011).

One of Duchamp's important works is *Fountain* which is just a urinal with the signature of Duchamp's pen name, R. Mutt. (See Figure 1) He wrote, "Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He chose it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object." (Chalupecky and Wilson 1985: 131) Another example of his readymade is *L.H.O.O.Q.* which was made in 1919. Duchamp simply added a moustache and a beard on the reproduction of the famous *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo da Vinci, and announced it as *L.H.O.O.Q.*, his own work. Both *Fountain* and *L.H.O.O.Q.*, suggested to us the new ways and directions of looking at art, and they also showed iconoclastic attacks on the obvious heroes of the art world. (Chalupecky and Wilson 1985: 116) As we can see in Duchamp's readymade, he rejected the idea that art objects are an expression of an artist's emotions. (Bernstein 2002: 122) In other words, he showed us that everything could be art when he declared it was, and there does not seem to be a clear line between art and life.

Figure 1: *Fountain*, Marcel Duchamp (1917) (Dempsey 2010: 115)

Besides the readymade, there were also other categories which escaped and dismantled the language of painting, and assemblage is one of those categories which many Dadaists used. Artists assembled found objects and man-made objects into three-dimensional structures, and those works do not have any obvious traditional artistic significance. (Boström 2010) An Italian theorist of architecture and the avant-garde, Manfredo Tafuri has stated that assemblage was a positive acknowledgement of the world's materiality and a means of reclaiming value from the ephemera of daily existence, a way of producing significant values from a world which was more and more characterized by nihilistic anti-value. (Day 2003: 312) Therefore, while there is a clear line between everyday life and Western traditional art as the elite culture, these skills which Dadaists adopted facilitated the blurring of art and life. (Molesworth 2003: 178)

Far away from Europe, Dada was also happening in Japan in the late Taisho period (1912-1926). Japan experienced a national isolation for a long time during the Edo period (1615-1867), but it quickly started to introduce European cultures in the Meiji period (1868-1912) in order to enhance Japanese economic strength so as to avoid foreign aggression against Japanese independence. (Sapin 2004: 318) Therefore the Taisho period, which followed right after the Meiji period, was when various elements of everyday life were introduced from the West including fashions, customs, and ideas, and they were absorbed and integrated into the lives of the urban populace. (Ellis 1999: 723) As Tokyo started to physically resemble the major modern cities of the West, Japanese urbanites

and intellectuals obtained an international identity, and they embarked on a series of projects which represented Japanese versions of the variety of avant-garde artistic movements that were sweeping through Europe in the 1920s, such as Dadaism. (Ellis 1999: 724) Although Dada was a foreign importation in Japan at first, it was eventually integrated into the Taisho avant-garde movement, specifically the *Taisho-ki Shinko Bijutsu Undo* (Modern art movement of the Taisho period). (Omuka 1996: 223)

One of the Japanese anti-art groups was *Mavo*, active from 1923 to 1925. Their activities had a strong Dadaist character and were intended to provoke and disturb. (Asano 2011) According to Gennifer Weisenfeld, Tomoyoshi Murayama (1901-1977) is generally recognized as the leader of the group because of his forcefulness and charisma. (Weisenfeld 1996: 64) Murayama studied in Berlin for one year from 1922, and met a host of influential avant-garde artists and writers there. For example, he painted Dada-Constructivist schemes in the manner of German Dadaist Hannah Höch's collages (Clark 1994: 42), and his possession of new information from Europe gave him a reputation among young Japanese artists. (Weisenfeld 1996: 64) Besides Murayama, some Japanese futurists also joined this group. Futurism originally started in Italy in 1909, and Mirai-ha Bijutsu Kyokai (Futurist Art Association) was active from 1920 to 1922 in Japan. (Clark 1994: 52) Toshiharu Omuka stated that there is "a prehistory of Dada in the futurist movement in Japan which was accelerated by the Russian artist David Burliuk." (Omuka 1996: 225) Therefore *Mavo* included some characteristics which Japanese futurism had, such as encompassing poetry, theater, painting, sculpture and architecture and transcending conventional artistic distinctions. (Omuka 1996: 224)

One of the features of *Mavo* was to question the validity of existing artistic methods exclusively used by the art establishment. Since they wanted to break down the boundaries between art and daily life as we saw in several of Dada's artistic categories, they expanded their art materials to include found objects, industrially produced materials, and reproduced images, and combined them with painting or printmaking in order to evoke the feeling of daily life. (Weisenfeld 1996: 66) One of Murayama's works, *Construction That Is Difficult to Name* is a good example of how Dadaists tried to use daily materials in their works. (see Figure 2) He assembled an assortment of everyday items such as

small bottles and a spring, and combined them with many overlapping mass-media picture fragments displaying the faces of Western women. (Weisenfeld 1996: 66)

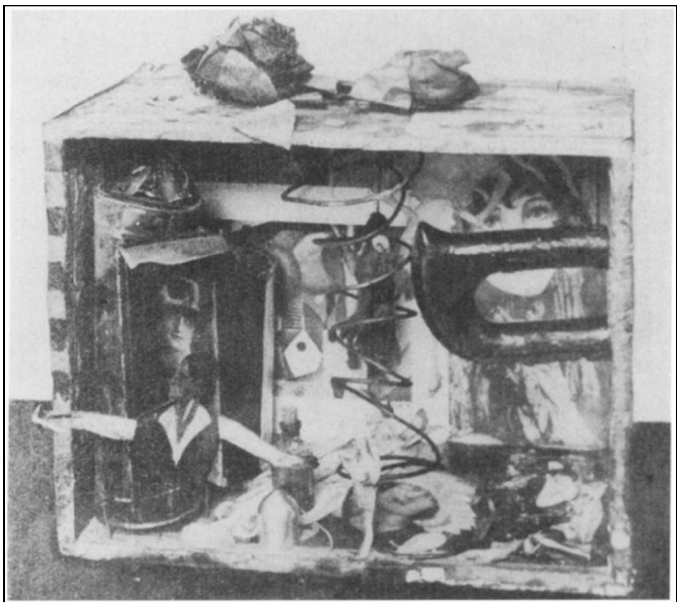

Figure 2: Tomoyoshi Murayama, *Construction That Is Difficult to Name* (1924) (Weisenfeld 1996: 66)

Another example is a poet, Shinkichi Takahashi (1901-1987) who called himself a Dadaist and is often referred to as one of the first Dadaists in Japan. The earliest Japanese articles about the Dada movement in the West appeared in the Tokyo newspaper, called *Yorozu Choho*. The first article appeared on June 27th 1920, and the second one was on August 15th in the same year. Takahashi was greatly inspired by them and was prompted to write the first Dada-like poems in Japanese. (Omuka 1996: 226) In 1923, Takahashi wrote *Dadaisuto Shinkichi no Shi* (The Poem of Dadaist Shinkichi) which was sixty-two lines long. Here are the first few sentences of his manifesto, as translated by Toshiko Ellis.

> DADA asserted everything and negates everything.
> Infinity and nothingness- they sound the same as cigarettes, petticoats, or a word.
> Everything that emerges in imagination exists
> The entire past is enclosed in the future of fermented soybeans.
> Things that are beyond human imagination- ladles and cats

imagine that they can be imagined by stones and sardine heads
DADA sees the ego in everything.
In the vibration of the air, in the hatred of bacteria, in the smell of the word "ego," it sees the ego.
Everything is one and the same. From Buddha's enlightened vision, the phrase everything is everything emerge.
One sees everything in everything.
Assertion is everything. (Ellis 1999: 730)

Although he made a sensational debut as a Japanese Dadaist in 1923, he left Dadaism a few years later, and took a serious interest in Zen Buddhism. He also published Zen poetry in his later career. This seems to be a strange combination at first glance, but the negation of oppositions and the emphasis on being one with all other universal existence which we can read in his manifesto is one of the best understood principles of Zen Buddhism, (Ellis 1999: 731) and Takahashi himself also claimed that Dada was "an elementary form of Zen". (Ellis 1999: 731) Interestingly, one of the founders of Dada, Tristan Tzara also proclaimed in his manifesto that "the most acceptable system is on principle to have none" (Brill 2010: 125) which is also an idea very close to that of Zen Buddhism.

Although Dada mainly existed in Europe, "avant-garde" seems to mean something different for European Dada and Japanese Dada. As Japan started to absorb European cultures in this period, Japanese artists and poets were able to respond to the features of the avant-garde in the West. (Ellis 1999: 724) However, the causes and meanings of avant-garde's trajectories in these two cultures in those days were very different, due to socio-cultural differences between Europe and Japan. While originally Dadaism in Europe emerged out of the growing conviction that civilization encountered a serious period which was strengthened by World War I, the war and strong feelings evoked by the war were not closely related to Japanese Dadaists. Although originally Dadaism also targeted institutions of bourgeois civil society, such institutions were not yet built up in Japan, therefore it had nothing to do with Japanese Dada. (Ellis 1999: 731) As one of the most important reasons why this gap emerged, the original Dada in the West was opposed to traditional Western art and music, in other words, their own tradition. On the other hand, Japanese Dada occurred under the influence of the West, and they were not able to completely be opposed to Western high art, which was not their own tradition, but imported to Japan. Thus, "avant-garde" cannot be

the same in Japan and Europe because the notion of the avant-garde is based on a Eurocentric point of view, and the definition of the Western avant-garde is not appropriate to non-Western reality. (Inaga 1993: 69)

It seemed that Japanese Dadaists sensed the fact that their Dada was different from the original one in Europe, and that they were frustrated at the gaps between their Dada and the original Dada in those days. Ellis even hypothesized that it might have been one of the reasons why Shinkichi Takahashi left Dada and moved to Zen Buddhism. (Ellis 1999: 731, 732) Compared to Dadaism which was born in Europe and based on cultures and the social background there, Zen Buddhism is part of Japanese culture for Takahashi. In order to get a foundation to continue his poetic pursuit, he might have moved away from Dada which did not suit the Japanese social background, and concentrated on Zen Buddhism.

Although Dada had been active since it was born in Zurich in 1916 and flourished in many different places in the world, it came to an end in the middle of the 1920s. It had already started to be dismantled when the war ended in 1918 and major artists in the Zurich group went back to their original countries, where they began to create Dada subsidiaries. Eventually, several of the initial members of Dadaism became the leaders of the Surrealist movement. Tzara stated that "Dada is a state of mind. That is why it transforms itself according to races and events. Dada applies itself to everything, and yet it is nothing, it is the point where the yes and the no and all the opposites meet, not solemnly in the castle of human philosophies, but very simple at street corners, like dogs and grasshoppers." (Ernst 2009: 56) This statement shows that Dada as an anti-art movement might have been finished, but Dada as a concept might be still alive.

Several of decades after Dada had ended, the concept of Dada came back agai in the late 1950s. A book, *The Dada Painters and Poets* which chronicled the evolution of Dada, was published in 1951, and galleries and museums organized a number of art exhibitions which focused on Dada. (Hapgood and Rittner 1995: 64) According to Susan Hapgood and Jennifer Ritter, Tzara stated "Art is not the most precious manifestation of life… Life is far more interesting" in a Dada poem in 1922, and his concept was revived through John Cage's courses in experimental composition at The New School in the late 1950s. Artists "rejoiced in everyday routines, in mundane activities and objects that by their very nature denied any possiblity of artistic elitism, removing art from its isolation on a pedestal." (Hapgood and Rittner 1995: 69)

There was also a desire to escape the dominance of Abstract Expressionism among young artists in the 1950s, and a new label called Neo-Dada emerged. This term, named by an American critic, Harold Rosenberg, originally applied in the visual arts, to describe artwork which had similarities in method to the initial Dada movement, but it is now considered a transitional phase which led into Pop Art. (Ernst 2009: 63) Neo-Dada arose in New York after the mid-1950s, and it used ideas, materials, and chance encounters from everyday life. (Havens 2006: 138) Some Japanese artists were also influenced by this approach, and *Neo-Dada Organizers*, a group of ten young avant-garde figures appeared in Tokyo in the 1960s. They were mainly associated with elite art schools. Some members were interested in surrealist and dadaist aesthetics, and others in exhibitions and street happenings to attract notice. (Havens 2006: 139) Thus this trend of the art world led anti-art movements in a new generation, and several anti-art artists started to create unconventional works in the 1960s.

There was also an important key point in a relationship between Japanese society and anti-art movements. A Japanese musician, Toshi Ichiyanagi, who used to be a member of *Fluxus*, stated that experience of the defeat in World War II made young artists and musicians in the 1960s long for an ideal art world. (Ichiyanagi pers. comm. 2010) Although Japan lost everything in the war, they received “the liberty of imagining a new, ideal, and at times utopian society”. (Merewether 2007: 1)

**Chapter 3: John Cage and Japan**

One of the important artists for the anti-art movement in the 1960s both in Japan and the West was John Cage who was strongly influenced a Japanese philosophical idea, Zen Buddhism, and who also had a strong connection with Dadaist Marcel Duchamp. Cage's philosophical ideas about art encouraged young artists and musicians in the United States, and his ideas about music and life, and his compositions have influenced not only many composers in traditional Western musical art, but also anti-art movements and avant-garde artists all over the world. He was connected to ideas from one of the initial Dadaists, Tzara, and his philosophical thoughts about music were also related to Duchamp. These were all very important aspects which affected his ideas about music, art and life.

One of the important techniques Cage adopted for his composition was the "prepared piano", which was related to his early career having worked as a poet and composer with dance groups. (Gordon 1996: 523) Because he wanted to create multi-timbre accompaniment for dancers economically, he started to experiment with changing the timbres of the piano, which was the beginning of the prepared piano. For example, he would place objects such as strips of rubber, screws and bolts on the strings of the piano so to produce a percussion-like sound of indeterminate pitch or complex timbre when the appropriate keys were played. His earliest prepared piano piece was *Bacchanale*, written for a dancer, Syvilla Fort, in 1938, and he wrote several other pieces for prepared piano in the 1940s as well. (Gordon 1996: 523)

Besides his prepared piano technique, there are two main experimental moves which Cage made within the sphere of music making. The first one is his use of sounds and duration which happen completely by chance, and the second one is the adoption of noise into a composition as equivalent to conventional and musical sound. (Kaprow 1993: 12) Before Cage, Mozart used dice throwing to determine time signatures when he wrote dance music (Musical Dice Game, K. 294d), and other composers have also attempted several other indeterminate techniques as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries. (Cope 2001: 82) However, none of them had the philosophical implications of indeterminacy before Cage. (Cope 2001: 82)

Another important factor which influenced Cage was his interest in Eastern philosophy and mysticism, especially Japanese Zen Buddhism, which affected his musical style and philosophy. (Bernstein 2002: 119) Cage was

studying the philosophy of Zen Buddhism with Dr. Daisetz Suzuki in the United States, and a new attitude toward music occurred to him through one of Suzuki's lectures.

> Suzuki had gone to the blackboard and had drawn an oval shape. Halfway up the left-hand side he put two parallel lines. He said the top of the oval was the world of relativity, the bottom was the Absolute, what Eckhart called the Ground. The two parallel lines were the ego or mind (with a little m). The whole drawing was the structure of the Mind. He then said that the ego had the capacity to cut itself off from its experiences whether they come from the world of relativity through the sense perceptions or from the Absolute through the dreams. Or it could free itself from its likes and dislikes, taste and memory, and flow with Mind with a capital M. Suzuki said that this latter choice was what Zen wanted. (Cage 1988: 7)

After this lecture, Cage decided not to discipline his ego by sitting cross-legged but to find a means of writing music as strict with respect to his ego as sitting cross-legged. (Cage 1988: 7) Thus, applications of Zen philosophy gave him a new approach to music and made him think about what music should be. What Cage exactly attempted to do in his music was to remove his intention from compositions and allow sounds simply to be themselves. (Sansom 2001: 29) He began to change his attitude toward the perception of what can be experienced as musically important, and the role of the composer in relation to ideas of music. Besides Zen, he also developed an affinity for chance techniques by using the *I Ching*, which is a book of wisdom, philosophy, and oracles attributed to Fu Hsi, 2953-2838 B.C. (Cope 2001: 8) One of the systems of divination in China, which indicates action as a result of six tosses of three coins. Cage acquired an English translation of the *I Ching* and used it to write *Music of Changes* (1951) which is "a lengthy work for piano solo that applies chance to charts of sounds, rhythms, tempos and dynamics". (Pritchett and Kuhn 2011)

There are strong ideas about indeterminacy especially in Cage's *4'33"* written in 1952. We do not have any control in a piece like this because it is operated completely by chance. This work looks very simple and easy to perform because all you have to do is go on the stage, sit down on the bench with your instrument, and do nothing. Although it might also look senseless, his purpose was to let people pay attention to natural sounds such as people walking and cars

running outside of the concert hall. For people accustomed to Western traditional music, understanding his chance music could be very difficult.

One of Cage's achievements was that he revived an idea from Tristan Tzara that art was not the most precious manifestation of life, but life was far more interesting. He passed on this concept through his lectures at the New School for Social Research in Greenwich Village in the late 1950s. This was an experimental composition course, but he did not teach using aspects of Western art music. The contents of the course were closer to philosophy instead of specific musical skills or techniques, and he gave students interesting assignments such as devising a notation of silence. They often performed works composed by classmates with instruments from Africa or Asia, and also went out for fieldwork where everyone listened to natural noise in the open air, and collected mushrooms.[2] (Ichiyanagi 1992) Students from several different areas such as composition of electronic music and avant-garde dance attended this class, and it was always filled with a free and stimulating atmosphere. (Ichiyanagi 2002: 164)

One Japanese composer who joined this experimental composition course at the New School for Social Research was Toshi Ichiyanagi (b.1933). Ichiyanagi became greatly influenced by Cage and introduced Cage and his music to Japan. He was born in Kobe and studied cello, piano and composition in Japan. He went to New York in order to study at the Juilliard School in New York from 1954 to 1957 and later entered the New York avant-garde world where he joined a group of artists, which later became *Fluxus*, discussed in the following chapter. In 1958, he attended a concert which celebrated twenty-five years of Cage's musical career, and was attracted by his thought process. Shortly after this concert Ichiyanagi met Cage through a pianist named David Tudor, who was often associated with Cage and premiered some of his works. When Ichiyanagi and his wife, Yoko Ono, moved to Manhattan in 1958, Ichiyanagi began to meet Cage more frequently. (Galliano 2006: 251) In my interview with Ichiyanagi, he reflected that Cage was very different from any other teachers he had ever studied with. He stated, "普通の先生と生徒の関係では全くない。教える教えられるではなく、そばにいてやりたいことを一緒にやる。まるで友達のような感じ。" (There is usually a clear line between master and disciple, but the relationship between me and Cage was different. They were almost like friends and did what they wanted to do together instead of Cage teaching something to

[2]Cage was also an enthusiastic mycologist, and had plenty of knowledge about the fungal world.

me.) (Toshi Ichiyanagi, pers. comm. 2010, my translation) When Ichiyanagi returned to Japan, it became possible for Japanese people to get to know Cage and chance music through him. Ichiyanagi performed American chance music and his own pieces, which also adopted concepts of the music of indeterminacy in Japan, and significantly he asked the Sogetsu Art Center which actively supported the avant-garde music and art scene in those days to invite John Cage and David Tudor to Japan.

The Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo was an important venue for the anti-art movement in the 1960s. It opened in 1958, directed by Hiroshi Teshigawara, who was the son of the founder of the Sogetsu School, Sofu Teshigawara. The purpose of this center was to give a place for young artists and musicians from various genres to gather, create and present their works, and to criticize freely. They used the system that artists and musicians produced their own works, which protected them from commercialism. (Sogetsu Foundation 2010) Many events such as lectures and workshops of new music, dance, films and art as well as concerts were often held there, and it was also an ideal place for artists who were interested in the avant-garde scene to meet and stimulate each other. These events were intended not only for professionals but also for the audiences who thirsted for the new productions, especially from abroad. (Havens 2006: 108) The Sogetsu Art Center also published the *SAC Journal* which reported events held at the Sogetsu Hall in the basement of this art center, and informed the public of up and coming events which would be held there. It also contained articles and criticisms about past events and performers who were invited there. Right before Cage and Tudor came to Japan, the center published a special issue of *SAC Journal* which talked mainly about Cage's music and profiled both Cage and Tudor. This fact shows us how much excitement and expectation Japanese composers, artists and musical critics as well as music fans had in anticipation of their visit to Japan in order to get to know new types of music.

Cage and Tudor's Tokyo concert was held in November, 1962. Most pieces performed there were very new and shocking for Japanese musicians and audience members, but one of the pieces Cage performed in Japan, *0'00"* especially made a huge impact. *0'00"* is Cage's second silent composition after *4'33"*, and Cage himself premiered it at the Sogetsu Art Center. This piece was dedicated to Ichiyanagi and Ono, although the couple officially separated in the same year. (Galliano 2006: 253) The score of the piece is not notated, but there

are simple instructions which performers have to follow. This piece is a "solo to be performed in any way by anyone", and the instruction simply says: "In a situation provided with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action." (Reville 1992: 203) For the premiére, Cage placed a desk on stage, and various daily necessities on the desk. During his performance, Cage sat at the desk, wore his glasses, took a pen, wrote something down on a sheet of letter paper and smoked a cigarette. All of the actions he performed on stage were amplified. During this performance which lasted for 40 minutes, all you could hear were the amplified sounds that Cage made. (Tone 1963)

There have been many different interpretations of this composition, and one Japanese composer, Joji Yuasa even commented that no other composers seemed to be interpreted in as many different ways as Cage was. (Yuasa 1962) His performance was not what Japanese audiences were used to hearing, and it was totally different from what they considered music. Therefore, the experience of this music was completely new for the audience members in Japan. Kuniharu Akiyama, a Japanese composer and critic, stated: "That long weird event was definitely not music which consoled me. It was an empty and boring 40 minutes." (Sato 1963, my translation)

After the concert, several critiques about Cage's *0'00"* appeared in *SAC Journal* after the concert. Yoshiaki Tohno stated, "If all the performances played until now were simply reproducing the calculated, refined and composed world of order and harmony through musical scores, there is nothing written on Cage's musical score like a transparent camera lens. You have to decide what you capture with your lens. It is entirely your choice." (Tohno 1962, my translation) Japanese anti-art artist Yasunao Tone stated in his article that it did not seem that Cage wrote this piece to express himself, but wrote it to let music "exist". (Tone 1963) One of Cage's ideas about his music was to remove boundaries between music and everyday life by accepting all the sounds and noise in his work. He tried to express this idea through performing his everyday life on the stage. As shown in his performance, all the audience members have to do here is simply be oneself purposelessly. (Sato 1963)

It might be very difficult to understand what is going on when you just listen to his performance without seeing anything. If audience members all know what instructions he gave to the performer, then listen to the performance, they might be able to get some ideas about what the performer is doing on stage finally. When we think about our everyday life, we notice that we do not rely only

on sounds, but need our five senses. If Cage expressed everyday life on stage, we do not have to rely only on hearing, but we may also want to "feel" the performance. Therefore, regarding this specific piece, we might want to "experience" it rather than just listen to it.

In *0'00"*, we can strongly see an idea from Zen Buddhism, "penetrating and being penetrated by all others," (Bernstein 2002: 126) which were consistent with his musical ideas. Most people have been taught that music is self-expression (Kostelanetz and Cage 1987: 109), but the question is whether the audience members can feel Cage's self-expression through this piece or not. He believed that emotion should fit in each person and in their own way, therefore everybody expresses themselves differently and adopts various ways to compose their own piece, and interestingly, he tried not to put emotions into his works unlike most composers have done in the past. (Kostelanetz and Cage 1987: 109) This idea of Cage is very close to the way Duchamp used to think about art. He also rejected the idea that art objects are an expression of an artist's emotions. (Bernstein 2002: 122)

Now it is necessary to consider who is controlling the performance of chance music if the composer is not in charge of expressing himself through chance works. As mentioned above, there is nothing performers can do for this type of music besides simply follow the instructions the composer gave you and let things happen. It might apply for any kind of music in an aspect of following what composers have written on the score in order to perform the piece, but if the piece is notated, each performer can interpret it in their own way, and know what your performance will be like before you start performing on stage. In this case, it might be possible to say that performers have some freedom to express themselves through notated music. On the other hand, it might be true that performers have less freedom to interpret chance pieces because all the noises and sounds made in performance can be part of the work, and performers cannot know what happens in their performance until it actually starts. In this case, it might be more proper to say chance operations control all the important factors in the performance. There are no emotions expressed by the composers; once composers adopt chance operations, it is very difficult to control those compositions by their intentions. As Duchamp did, anything can be art when artists declared that their works were "art." In other words, everything can be accepted as art if you accept it as art. We can see the same concept in Cage's musical ideas. He accepted all the

sounds and noises in his work. Therefore everything can be music if you accept it in your work.

Thus Cage and Tudor's concert had a big impact on Japanese audiences and musicians, and this phenomenon is often called, "John Cage Shock" in Japan. (Sogetsu Foundation 2010) However there is one thing which confused Cage in Japan, which was the attitude of the audience members, as Tohno introduced Cage's comments in his article after Cage left Japan. It was very clear that the audience members did not like his music in other countries, but it was difficult to see what audiences were actually feeling and thinking about his music in Japan. (Akiyama et al 1963) When Cage performed one of his pieces based on indeterminacy, *Winter Music* in Europe, he was not able to play more than 5 or 10 minutes at the longest because the audience started to make a fuss during his performance. On the other hand, Japanese audiences including pure music fans and professional musicians did not make a fuss during his performance, but just listened to the performance and applauded him after the concert as they always did for any other musicians. (Akiyama et al 1963) Tohno believed that Japanese audiences tended to think it was their fault if they could not understand a new type of music, therefore they patiently listened to the concert and tried to understand what it was. (Akiyama et al 1963) Cage, who got used to the fuss and opposition from audiences in Europe, found the attitudes of Japanese audiences surprising, confusing him because they simply listened to his music without expressing their emotions. Not only in Cage's and Tudor's concert, but also at a different concert where several works by Ichiyanagi and Cage were performed, the Japanese audience behaved the same way. Instead of complaining and making a fuss in order to show their hatred or disagreement toward the music, they were trying to listen to those pieces carefully and understand new music.

Tohno stated that Japanese audiences had a virtue which was a mixture of complexity and diligence. Because of that, they never made a fuss at new types of music, but Western audiences did because they got stuck in their tradition and history. (Tohno 1962, my translation) According to what Tohno stated here, it could be seen that Western audiences did not want to accept new types of music because it was not performed in their own tradition before. Although the Japanese did not make a fuss at the performance, it does not necessarily mean that they all liked that performance, or that type of music either. Their attitudes could be seen as tolerance, and such an attitude could help new types of music to develop in one way, but composers and performers need to

know what audiences felt and thought about their music for further development. Although no clear opposition toward Cage's music was shown at that concert, several musicians and critics wrote reviews about Cage's and Tudor's performance in music magazines including *SAC Journal*, and discussed the pros and cons in this concert. Thus, "John Cage Shock" gave the Japanese musical world a huge impact. (Yamamoto 1998: 247)

**Chapter 4: Anti-art Movement in Japan in the 1960s**

The years right after the end of World War II were full of the inauguration of new museums and the formation of new arts organizations and performing groups. (Merewether 2007: 1) When Japan was trying to recover from the damage done by the war, several Japanese anti-art artists and groups were also emerging and building up an artistically spirited era. Some of them were very active in Japan, but some left Japan and temporarily joined anti-art movements overseas. Although there were many unique anti-art artists, musicians and groups in this era, I will focus on three: *Fluxus*, *Group Ongaku*, and *Hi Red Center*.

The first example, *Fluxus* was an "informal international avant-garde group" (Iezumi Hiro and Tomii 2007: 120) which included many Japanese musicians and artists. In late 1964, several Japanese artists were attracted to New York, especially by the concept and activities of *Fluxus*, and they started to leave Japan to join it. Therefore many Japanese members were away from Tokyo, but we often use the specific term, *Tokyo Fluxus* which indicates the Japanese contingent of *Fluxus* when we talk about Japanese *Fluxus* artists living or temporarily active in New York City, and Japanese people who were incorporated into the *Fluxus* movement. (Iezumi Hiro and Tomii 2005: 121)

The founder of *Fluxus* was a Lithuanian-born American artist, George Maciunas who aimed to organize an international network of like-minded artists, (Baerwaldt 1991: 7) The name of the group, "Fluxus" is a Latin word meaning "to flow" or "to change". Maciunas selected this name because he wanted to create "something flowing, something in motion, a continuing succession of change to promote living art." (Baerwaldt 1991: 8) As some important characteristics of this group, there were its international composition and the nomadic lifestyle of its members. (Brill 2010: 109) *Fluxus* included artists and musicians from Europe, the United States as well as Asia, notably from Japan as mentioned above, but many of them were not living in their home countries, and some of them kept moving from country to country. For example, Maciunas was born in Lithuania in 1931, but his family and thousands of Lithuanians fled the Russian army to Germany in 1944, and after that, he moved to New York in 1948, where he continued to live except for his stay in Germany between 1961 and 1963. (Brill 2010: 110) Another *Fluxus* member, Nam June Paik also had a nomadic lifestyle. He was born in Korea, and moved to Hong Kong first, then studied at Tokyo University in Japan. After that, he also studied at the University of Munich and the Conservatoire in Freiburg in Germany from 1956 to 1958,

before moving to New York in 1963. (Brill 2010: 110, 111) Besides Maciunas and Paik, other itinerant artists included Yoko Ono and Yasunao Tone, who also moved to New York from Japan at some point in their lives. Another example is Chieko Shiomi[3] who was living in Japan, but who went to New York and stayed there for a year only to attend *Fluxus*'s events and concerts.

It is unclear when *Fluxus* was officially established. *Fluxus* emerged as a group in the summer of 1962, but some individuals had already created works which were just like those produced by *Fluxus*. For example, George Brecht, who joined Cage's course at the New School for Social Research, had developed the "event" in 1959, and Jackson Mac Low, who also attended Cage's class, had been interested in chance operations since the late 1950s. Yoko Ono produced an event score as early as 1955. (Brill 2010: 108, 109) These artists eventually were known as members of *Fluxus*, but they had already started these things before they formed a group. Therefore *Fluxus* appeared as a group in 1962, but each artist had already begun to create works in the spirit of started *Fluxus* before the group was officially formed.

*Fluxus* was much influenced by John Cage and Dadaism. Ben Vautier even declared, "Fluxus would not exist… without Cage, Marcel Duchamp, and Dada" (Brill 2010: 105), as some artists and musicians who took an experimental composition course with Cage at the New School for Social Research later joined this group. One of *Fluxus*'s utopian programs was the "abolition of art", (Oren 1993: 2) as Maciunas denied art, and believed that jokes were the most important thing of all in his ideology. (Shiomi 2005: 14) Therefore *Fluxus* works did not look or sound like traditional Western art or music at all, but included works which were nonsensical, simple, and sometimes violent. According to Rika Iezumi Hiro and Reiko Tomii, the main activities of *Fluxus* were "the production of artistic multiples, the compilation of innovatively designed anthologies, and public festivals, or Fluxconcerts" which consisted of a rapid series of performances of short events of scored actions and music. (Iezumi Hiro and Tomii 2007: 120, 121)

For example, Maciunas started to assemble *Fluxus 1* in late 1964 which was a wooden box containing several different works created by *Fluxus* artists from different parts of the world. It included works by some Japanese members, such as Shigeko Kubota's *Napkin for Next Supper* which was made up

[3]Chieko Shiomi (塩見千枝子) changed her name to Mieko Shiomi (塩見允枝子) later in her career, but I will use her original name, Chieko Shiomi, in this thesis.

of several napkins with small photographs of eyes, noses, and mouths cut from glossy magazines (See Figure 3), and Takako Saito's *Music Boat*, which was an origami figure made of folded paper. (Merewether 2007: 21, 82, and 83) Maciunas also assembled a *Fluxkit* in 1965 which included several works created by *Fluxus* artists.

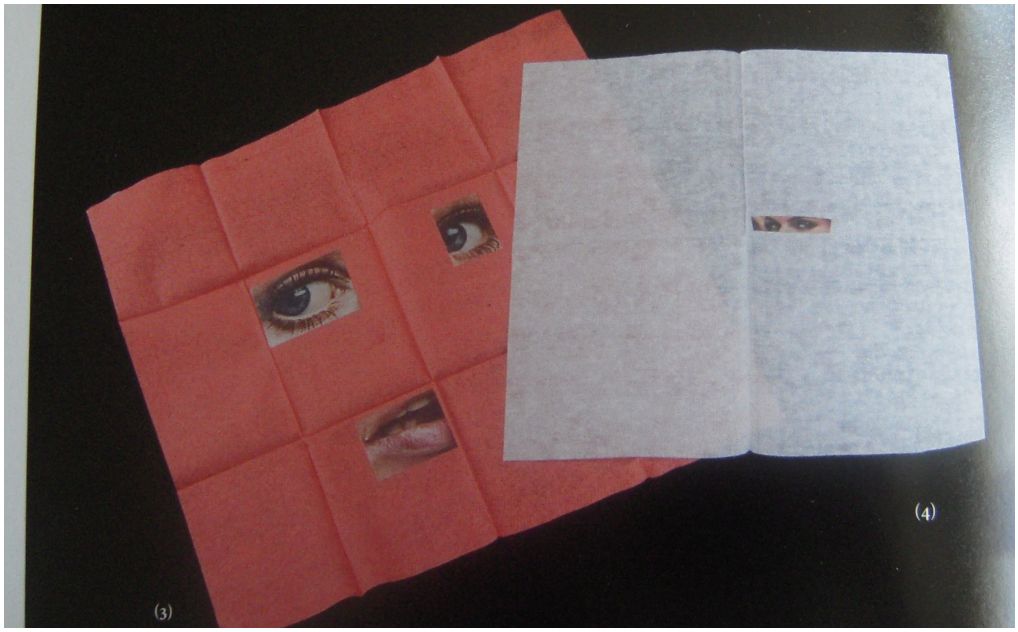


Figure 3: Shigeko Kubota, *Napkin for Next Supper* (1964) (The Getty Research Institute 2007: 82)

Maciunas also planned a series of concerts called *Perpetual Flux Fest* at the Washington Square Gallery where a concert or event was supposed to be held by *Fluxus* members every month from September 1964. (Shiomi 2005: 97) In September, the first event of the series was *Flux Sports* which was ping-pong games with irregular ping-pong table and paddles, and the October concert was Shiomi's solo concert. She performed several of her own pieces in which audience members could also join. One of the works she performed there was *Direction Event*. She was sitting on a chair, wearing gloves with ten long strings attached to each finger. Ten performers played this piece, and each of them wrote down a direction which that person wanted to aim toward on a card. After that, they attached those cards to her fingers and pulled the string in that direction. At the end, all of her fingers were aimed in ten different directions. Although the Washington Square Gallery was closed before the November concert, they resumed this series at the Cinema-theque later. (Shiomi 2005: 98)

Thus Maciunas organized happenings, events and publications of *Fluxus* as a group, but each member also created interesting original pieces which were often performed at *Fluxus* events or concerts. One example is *Piano Activities* by an American *Fluxus* member, Philip Corner, which was premiered in 1962. (See Figure 4) This piece is performed by many players around a grand piano, where performers dismantle and take away pieces of the piano. In the piece, we can strongly see an attempt to "destroy" traditional art forms. Since art is invisible and untouchable, it is impossible to destroy it physically. However this piece seemed to show their opposition to traditional Western art by taking apart one of the symbols of Western traditional music, the piano.

Figure 4: Philip Corner, *Piano Activities* (1962) (Media Art Net 2011)

Another example is a work by Chieko Shiomi, *Mirror Piece*, which was written in 1963. There are three instructions to perform this work; stand with your back to the ocean on the beach, hold a mirror in front of your face and look into the mirror, and walk toward the ocean and into the water. (Shiomi 2005: 75) There are no musical notes on the score, but instead just simple instructions. The method Shiomi used for this piece is very similar to what Cage did for his *0'00"*. Both works simply indicate what you have to do in the score instead of writing musical notes. This method is called an "action poem" or "event", and many *Fluxus* artists adopted this technique in their works.

Yet another example is *Organic Music* written by Takehisa Kosugi in 1962, which focuses on performers' breathing and which emphasizes duration and the recognition of how sound is heard within and through the body. As we can see here, Kosugi's works often involve the body as an instrument, and listening becomes a form of perception. (Merewether 2007: 21) As many works by *Fluxus* artists, as well as Cage's *4'33"*, have shown, their artistic methods often displayed

a lack of clarity as to the historical definition of artistic skill, and traditional modes of artistic labor. (Molesworth 2003: 179) While most musicians who have studied Western traditional art music need to work hard in studying one or more specific pieces for a long time in order to perform well on stage, works written by *Fluxus* do not seem to require you to take much time to master them. There is a clear difference between these two styles of art and music. The job of the artist is to demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it, and *Fluxus* artists express this idea through their works.

Although Soho, New York was a primary base for *Fluxus*, some Japanese members did not live in New York permanently and came back to Japan at some point. As mentioned above, Chieko Shiomi stayed in New York for only one year in order to join *Fluxus*'s events and concerts, but she went back to Japan in 1965. Although some members were away from New York, the base of *Fluxus*, some pieces created by *Fluxus* artists do not even require all the performers to be in the same place. For example, one of the American artists who were associated with *Fluxus*, Ray Johnson, was well-known for mailart. He started to post poetic mimeographed letters to a select list of people from the art world and figures from popular culture. (Held 2011) Shiomi also has a couple of works which are very similar to Johnson's mail art. One example is 言葉のイベント(Special Poem No.1: Word Event) in 1965. She enclosed a small white card in an envelope and asked a recipient, "Please write a word on the card, and put it somewhere. Then let me know which word you wrote and where you put it. They will be compiled on the world map, and will be sent back to all the participants." (Shiomi 2005: 108, my translation) After all, more than 70 people joined this event by sending her a letter telling her what they wrote and where they put it, and she made a board of a world map with around 70 flags saying the words and places participants reported which were all placed on her map. (Shiomi 2005: 108, 109) (See Figure 5) This type of event can allow all the performers to connect people all over the world, which can be one of the reasons why *Fluxus* was worldwide.

Figure 5: Chieko Shiomi, *言葉のイベント* (Special Poem No.1: Word Event) (1965) (The Getty Research Institute 2007: 88)

As mentioned above, *Fluxus* clearly referred to Dadaism. *Fluxus's* activities set out to challenge the construction of meaning and the definition of significance according to the established value system, as Dada did. (Brill 2010: 125) Since most members of *Fluxus* had a nomadic life and some of them were not living in the United States, it is not proper to say that it was an American movement based on the nationality. What *Fluxus* wanted to fight against was serious art and culture, as well as their institutions, and 'Europeanism.' (Brill 2010: 106) Still *Fluxus* included many European members, and Maciunas did not mean to reject them. Rather, he meant to reject Europe as cultural authority, "being the place supporting most strongly- & even originating the idea of- professional artists, art-for art ideology, expression of artists' ego through art etc., etc." (Brill 2010: 106) Therefore their anti-Europeanism becomes obvious as the locus for the rejection of a specific set of cultural values and of a cultural tradition which *Fluxus* perceives to be of clearly European origin. (Brill 2010: 106) Dorothée Brill interestingly pointed out that the audience's reactions toward performances of Dada and Fluxus were very similar. "The audience reactions were dominated by shock, repulsion, and incomprehension, and both movements were known for stirring scandal." (Brill 2010: 99)

Although the concept of Dada played an important role in *Fluxus*, Zen Buddhism was also strongly connected to it. Not only did some members of *Fluxus* study with Cage at the New School, who attended Daisetz Suzuki's

lectures in the early 1950s, some of the core members such as Mac Low and Paik were also interested in and familiar with ideas of Zen Buddhism. (Brill 2010: 125, 126) Paik created several works related to Zen such as *Zen for Head* (1962) and *Zen for TV* (1963). As the ideas of Zen indicated, Cage removed boundaries between everyday life and music by accepting all noise in his music, and the basic idea of *Fluxus* was also to remove boundaries between everyday life and art. Maciunas himself even described *Fluxus* "as being more like Zen than Dada" (Brill 2010: 126) in his last interview. Thus, the ideas of the Japanese philosophy of Zen became part of *Fluxus*, which was an American based international anti-art group.

Although *Fluxus* was "particularly active until the late 1970s," (Iezumi Hiro and Tomii 2007: 120) some artists started to leave *Fluxus* earlier than that. One of the biggest reasons was the conflict between Maciunas and several *Fluxus* artists. As a founder, Maciunas tried to make *Fluxus* work as a group and did not like the fact that some *Fluxus* artists collaborated together with other non-Fluxus artists or were involved in events held by non-Fluxus organizers. Since he tended to dominate artists as a dictator, (Shiomi 2005: 14) he continued to try to force the *Fluxus* artists to work exclusively as a group. However, many of them did not care about *Fluxus* itself as a group or as an organization, and each of them just did what they wanted to do as individuals. (Higgins 1979) Fluxus members appreciated Maciunas' devotion to *Fluxus*, but some were gradually beginning to feel differences between their attitudes and his. Shiomi had wondered how many members actually sympathized with his radical idea to deny art, and champion jokes. (Shiomi 2005: 14) Ichiyanagi was one of those who quit *Fluxus*, feeling he simply could not follow Maciunas anymore. He mentioned "マチューナスの生き方は非常にラディカルで、彼には金がなかった。稼げない、稼がないから。彼は意識が低く、約束事を守らなかった。" (Maciunas's way of living was too radical, and he was not able to earn great money because his conscience as an artist was low. Moreover, hee did not keep his promise often.) (Toshi Ichiyanagi, pers. comm. 2010, my translation) Shiomi also mentioned that the most interesting thing for artists is seeing other artists who have some common ideas, and getting opportunities to work together freely. *Fluxus* was a great network which gave those artists a chance to connect to each other, but Maciunas's ideal as an organizer of the group was different from what artists wanted to gain from *Fluxus*, (Shiomi 2005: 18) and that was why it seemed to stop working as an association, as one group.

As Maciunas's way of living was radical, *Fluxus* itself was radical as well. As Cage learned from Dada and his Zen study, art is not special, but part of life. Maciunas inherited Cage's idea, and used it in *Fluxus*. This idea made people, who are used to Western art and music, think about the role of art again, since they seemed to indicate a new way of looking at art and music from a different angle. As Cage allowed any sounds to be music, *Fluxus* allowed everything to be art, which everyone could do. (Dempsey 2010: 229) As strongly indicated in Cage's philosophical ideas, what *Fluxus* tried to do is break down all the boundaries and connect their daily lives to art.

Compared to *Fluxus* which was an international organization, the next two examples, *Group Ongaku* and *Hi Red Center* were both based in Japan. *Group Ongaku*, devoted to creating improvisational music, was formed on May 8th, 1960. Founded by six young musicians, Takehisa Kosugi, Chieko Shiomi, Yasunao Tone, Yumiko Tanno, Mikio Tojima, and Shuko Mizuno, most members were studying at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, which has been one of the prestigious fine arts and music school in Japan. As mentioned in the previous section, three members of *Group Ongaku*, Kosugi, Shiomi and Tone also joined *Fluxus* a couple of years after they took part in *Group Ongaku*. Compared to *Fluxus*, a world-wide network promoting coexistence and combination of different genres such as noise, art, dance and poems, works by *Group Ongaku* were mostly based on music and noise.

The term, g*roup ongaku*, meaning "group music" in English, was coined by Tone in 1960. As Dada used to name their anti-literature, "literature", Tone thought that they wanted to have their "anti-music" as "music," (Munroe 1994: 217) and the group "aimed to destroy compositions and technique in reaction to 'the bankruptcy of European music.'" (Munroe 1994: 217) Since the mainstream of the music world in Japan was Western music in those days, *Group Ongaku* was aware of being against European high art, and renounced European academicism. (Havens 2006: 109) They started to perform randomly and make various sounds by using musical instruments first, but gradually made noises with daily materials such as using a vacuum cleaner and making noises by running around with a pair of wooden clogs. Tone was wondering how to realize readymade objects in the form of sound, and that idea led them to use everyday items as instruments. (Tone 2007: 65) By bringing everyday materials and actions into performance, they were able to make indefinite and compound sounds. (Kosugi 2002: 157) Besides daily materials, they also experimented with a variety

of components of each musical instrument: using voice and breathing sounds, and creating sounds from the unplayable parts of instruments such as the inner structure and frame of the piano, (Munroe 1994: 217, 218) which was very close to Cage's prepared piano.

As mentioned above, most members of *Group Ongaku* besides Tone were studying music at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, which has long been one of the most prestigious music schools offering a renowned music program in Japan. Although a majority of people still admired Western music in Japan, the interesting point is that music students at one of the most prestigious music schools who were supposed to study Western high art were seeking new ways to express music outside of the traditional Western music world. This fact might tell us how strongly young musicians were craving to do something new in the music and art world in the 1960s.

On the other hand, Tone was from the Department of Japanese Literature at Chiba Japanese National University, unlike most members in *Group Ongaku*. He came to be interested in contemporary music because the Japanese national broadcasting network, NHK had many contemporary music programs in the mid 1950s. He was also interested in avant-garde art and poetry, and his thesis topic was about Dada and Surrealism. (Tone 2007: 63) Shiomi reflected that sounds made by Tone were fairly interesting and different from other members' sounds because people who had a musical background always failed to give up an aesthetic sense of music. However Tone did not have any formal training on musical instruments; he was able to create fresh sounds which were not tempered with a sense of beauty. (Shiomi 2005: 63) Kosugi pointed that out too; people who do not have any musical background or special skills at instruments are usually distressed by their lack of musical knowledge, but Tone naturally dragged in any sounds without worrying or feeling pain. As he researched Dada and Surrealism in his undergraduate education, these concepts informed his basic philosophy toward improvisation which stimulated other members. (Kosugi 2002: 159)

As one of the characteristics of the musical world in Japan in this era, Ichiyanagi said that Western music dominated musical education and there was the general cultural prestige of Europe as well. Although most composers of contemporary music in Japan since 1950 started by writing Western-style works, they began to understand the importance of traditional Japanese art and Asian arts in the 1960s. (Havens 2006: 165) Tone stated that members of this group were

also interested in many different types of ethnic music. For example, Kosugi wrote a piece which was influenced by Noh music which is one of Japanese traditional performing arts, and Tone was interested in many forms of Kabuki music. (Tone 2007: 65) Above all, one of the most important factors which influenced *Group Ongaku*, especially Kosugi, was Indian music. When they were studying at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, a Japanese ethnomusicologist, Fumio Koizumi, who had just come back from India, talked about Indian music in class. Kosugi became interested in Indian music from the story told by Koizumi by a way of comparison with European music: while European music is all calculated and fixed by scoring, the substance of Indian music is captured as something which cannot be fixed but is kinetic, which is understood to be embodied through improvisation. (Kosugi 2002: 159) This could be one of the cues which made these composers think about improvisation, in order to connect their emotion more directly to the sound without being fixed and scored as in European music.

*Group Ongaku* first played in a vacant practice room in the university, but the members started to feel that they wanted to ask society for its opinions about their performance. Their debut concert was held at the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo on September 15th, 1961, and Mizuno, Shiomi, Tone and Tojima wrote their own manifestos in the program. From their manifestos, we can strongly feel their power as they seek their ideal musical expression through their ideas and concepts about music. Mizuno has stated, "私が今のところ求めている音の動きはまづタクト的な運動では測り難い動きのカテゴリーに属するものである" (the type of sound I want at this point is something which belongs to the category of that which cannot be conducted.) He thought improvisation would be the best way to create this kind of sound because it can be connected to people's emotions more directly. (Group Ongaku 1962: 9, my translation) Music written as a score is already calculated and planned, but improvisation can allow us to be free from the composers' and musical scores' authorities. He believed that they should get an instrument and make noise first, then think about what they would do next in order to create something real, and make better sounds. (Mizuno 2002: 162) From Tone's manifesto, we can see that he has been questioning the musical world in those days. He stated that Cage's indeterminacy and collage of music would be soil for musicians who were seeking new ways of expression, but he warned that nothing would be changed if you just accepted those concepts as skills in your music. (Group Ongaku 1962: 2)

The first half of their debut concert was a performance of works written by each member, both as ensemble music and tape music, and the second half was an improvisational work, *Metaplasm 9-15*, which was performed by all the members. Shiomi vividly described attitudes of the audience members about this concert in her book, *フルクサスとは何か？-日常とアートを結びつけた人たち*. (What is Fluxus?-People who Connected Everyday Life to Art). Kuniharu Akiyama and Toshi Ichiyanagi both liked their concert very much, and Akiyama wrote a notice of this concert in the music journal *音楽芸術* (Ongaku-Geijyutsu). Ichiyanagi actually recalled that he was very surprised when he first heard their performance because he did not know there were people who were doing something similar to what he and his colleagues who studied with Cage were doing in New York. (Toshi Ichiyanagi, pers. comm. 2010, my translation) He asked *Group Ongaku* to join his concert which was held in the same year. However one of the composition teachers at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music said that their performance did not seem to express their ideas fully enough, although he understood they had much to say. One young man who lived close to Shiomi's house back then described their performance as something like making people burst out laughing, and sent her a letter saying that he wanted them to stop doing this type of performance. (Shiomi 2005: 65) As shown in his attitude, it is no wonder people were surprised or even shocked by the performance of *Group Ongaku* because their concert was probably not what most musicians normally did before then. Especially because most Japanese people did not have a chance to listen to Cage until his concert in 1962 (Tone 2007: 64), it is obvious that people were not very familiar to chance music and had not so much experience of any kinds of new music yet.

As a characteristic of improvisation by *Group Ongaku*, Shiomi reflected that their performance was very intense. When one performer played a passage, other performers answered it with similar styles of phrases with more striking notes, or they confronted it with completely different types of noise. Each individual collided with each other, and it was almost like a boxing match. (Shiomi 2005: 68, 69) Interestingly, their debut concert was the only official concert *Group Ongaku* had together. As Shuko Mizuno has stated, this group was very rough and open, therefore they sometimes performed together, but often played individually with other musicians outside of the group. (Mizuno 2002: 162)

Some features *Group Ongaku* adopted in its performance were relatively similar to Cage's ideas. For example, they started to experiment playing the unplayable parts of instruments which was very closely related to Cage's prepared piano, and they started to do this even before they came to know about Cage. Their performance styles were also similar to Cage's indeterminacy, since both of them did not follow traditionally notated scores at all, in other words, nobody could know exactly what would happen during the performance until they actually started to play. Therefore, it is very clear that neither of them followed the way of Western traditional composers and performers. However there is a clear difference between these two ideas. While Cage's indeterminacy was to remove the intention from compositions and allow sounds to be themselves, improvisation techniques which *Group Ongaku* adopted could be seen as an extension of self-expression. They still needed to decide what types of sounds and noises to create and develop during the performance. It looked like the improvisation which *Group Ongaku* often used still had some intentions in their performance unlike Cage's indeterminacy, since their performance did not happen totally based on chance. Thus *Group Ongaku*'s dedication to improvisation shows us that they were attempting to find a way to express themselves outside of the European musical system.

The next example, *Hi Red Center* which was formed in May 1963 also created something different from Western traditional art forms. This group was a small one which contained only three core members: Jiro Takamatsu, Genpei Akasegawa, and Natsuyuki Nakanishi, and they were also very close to *Group Ongaku*, especially Tone and Kosugi who often joined their events and happenings. Interestingly, Akasegawa as an artist learned how to "compose" music through Tone and Kosugi, and he wrote several instructional pieces. One of Akasegawa's compositions, in which members of the orchestra wrap a physical musical score, was actually performed by *Fluxus* members at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1965. (Akasegawa 1994: 206) Just as *Group Ongaku* was a very flexible and open group, *Hi Red Center* had a different number of participants depending on the event. Something common to the anti-art groups mentioned above is that the boundaries between each group were not very strict, and many artists and musicians intermingled between the genres and groups.

Akasegawa stated that the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition was a very good event through which to consider the art world in the late 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, and it was also strongly related to why *Hi Red Center* was

formed as a group. This exhibition was “the chief vehicle of postwar democracy for young visual artists in Japan who lacked connections with the clubby fine-arts establishment.” (Havens 2006: 143) One of the Japanese anti-art artists, Ushio Shinohara stated that young artists in the late 1950s did not have money, but they had passion. For them, this exhibition was the only place they could show their works because there were hardly any galleries or museums in those days. (Havens 2006: 143, 144) It was sponsored by the Yomiuri Newspaper Company, and was held every March between 1949 and 1963. Since it was unjuried, it invited applications from whoever wanted to enter their works, and was therefore a good opportunity for young Japanese artists to show their works in public. (Akasegawa 1994: 56) Since this exhibition did not have any strict regulations, artists could enter any art works which they considered to be art. Therefore many unique and unconventional works were shown at this exhibition.

New types of art work started to appear especially around 1958 and 1959. Artists started to mix sand or stones with paint. Even that was becoming conventional, and they began using objects in their paintings such as clothes, nails, rice scoops and tires. In general, paintings are painted only on canvas with colors, but some of those works did not look like “paintings” anymore, they looked like “objects”. (Akasegawa 1994: 66, 67) In 1961 and 1962, some works started to be rejected by the exhibition officials because some artists started to use dangerous substances such as cutlery and meat, as well as obscene objects. In 1963, this situation forced the museum to put some restrictions on which works participants could enter. “Prohibited are works that involve loud, unpleasant sounds, that smell bad, that decompose, that are dangerous or potentially toxic, that are installed either directly on the floor or hung from the ceiling” (Merewether 2007: 18)

Natsuyuki Nakanishi sent his work *Clothespins Assert Churning Action* to the exhibition in 1963. He attached hundreds of tin clothespins to pieces of burned canvas and underwear which were hung on the wall and piled on the floor. (Merewether 2007: 19) The works Akasegawa entered were very unconventional and unique as well but they looked like they could potentially cause criticism at the same time when compared to others. He entered two works; packages and copies of 1,000 yen bills. For packages, he simply covered canvases with craft paper and strings, and presented as his works, “packages”. He also reproduced a magnified 1,000 yen bill by hand, and entered it as his work. Although he could not complete it until the exhibition because of lack of time, he

entered his almost completed magnified 1,000 yen bill along with privately copied 1,000 yen bills on which only one side was printed, but concerning which the size was the same as the original 1,000 yen bill. Takamatsu had concentrated on string as an object for a while, and his work submitted to the exhibition this year was also string: the string attached to daily necessities and junk was colored black.

One of the crucial facts about the exhibition this year was that not only artists but musicians also entered their works. Yasunao Tone and Takehisa Kosugi of *Group Ongaku* and *Fluxus* decided to enter their works at this exhibition. These two musicians who often attended events and happenings of *Hi Red Center* had been interested in this exhibition and visited it every year. Although they did not enter their works until this year because they felt constrained by the idea that musicians could not enter the works to artistic exhibitions, after the exhibition in 1962 they noticed that many works entered there were unconventional, and thought that they did not have to feel such constraint anymore. (Akasegawa 1994: 67)

Tone entered his work *Something Happened*. He brought a square tape recorder which was an open deck with two big reels. It also played music. He put a piece, *Eleven Kimigayo*, in which the melody from the Japanese National Anthem was arranged in eleven different ways electronically. The exhibition officials first said that they could not accept his work because it was an exhibition for art works only; they could not accept any music or musical instruments. In order to be accepted at the exhibition, Tone painted colors on surfaces of the recorder, and reentered it as a "sculpture." Tone's *Eleven Kimigayo* should have been very difficult to categorize, as there were only four categories for this exhibition: traditional Japanese painting, Western painting, sculpture and photography. Therefore the exhibition officials decided to label his work sculpture. Akasegawa reflected that this might be the first time that a tape recorder was regarded as a sculpture anywhere in the world. (Akasegawa 1994: 67, 68) As we can see in this exhibition, the boundaries between art and music were fading at this point, and these two categories started to be mixed together.

Another musician, Takehisa Kosugi, entered a work in 1963 that was very unusual as well. His *Micro 4 Instrument* looked like a bag which had various sizes of zippers everywhere. Although this work was hung on the wall, it did not look like a picture, so the head office considered it a sculpture as well. To complete his work, he went to the exhibition everyday, took it down from the wall, opened the biggest zipper, entered the bag and closed it from the inside.

(Akasegawa 1994: 69) He also brought musical instruments inside the bag with him, and was moving on the floor. (Kosugi 2002: 160) He entered a "moving sculpture" to the exhibition.

Tone and Kosugi's works cannot be categorized as either music nor art, or even dance. As many anti-art works created in this generation have shown, there has come to be no clear line between music and art, and music and other components of art. Despite the rules of this exhibition in 1963, it included several strange works which used "a bath bucket, straw mat, knives, glass fragments, a steel drum, a tire and food stuff such as a French roll, udon noodles, been sprouts, and tofu." (Havens 2006: 144) Young artists invented many innovative but troublesome methods to create their works, and the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition was closed forever after the exhibition in 1963. One of the reasons could be that the exhibition officials and the museum which held this exhibition thought that they could no longer control artists' "unconscious destructive energy of the artworks". (Havens 2006: 145) Another reason was probably that the Yomiuri Newspaper Company believed that it had milked all the public-relations advantages possible from serving as sponsor, and it did not see anything further to be gained. (Havens 2006: 145)

After the 15th Yomiuri Independent Exhibition in 1963, *Hi Red Center* was officially born. According to Akasegawa, their interests back then were not of individual activities but larger and nameless artistic power and ideas which could go over established frames such as art galleries and paintings. Therefore they decided to do something which was not individual but as some sort of collective group or organization. (Akasegawa 1994: 101) *Hi Red Center*'s events attempted to shake up the bored but Japanese rich middle class through direct actions. (Havens 2006: 149) One of their best known events was *Shelter Plan* which happened in 1964 at one of Japan's top hotels, the Imperial Hotel frequented by heads of state and prime ministers. They used an expensive suite for this happening. (Paik 1994: 80) People who responded to the invitation were measured for a custom-made fallout shelter from the nuclear war in the suite. For example, they recorded height and chest circumference as well as the volume of your body by measuring how much water you would displace in a bathtub and how large your mouth is by holding water in your mouth and spitting it out into a cup where it would be measured. (Paik 1994: 80) Two of the *Fluxus* members, Nam Jun Paik and Yoko Ono also joined this *Shelter Plan*, and this event was

performed again by *Fluxus* members at The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in 1966. (Iezumi Hiro 2007: 121)

*Hi Red Center* used satirical performances which were staged in public spaces in order to critique the mechanical banality and covert authoritarianism underlying Japan's mass capitalist society. (Munroe 1994: 159) Another important event, which became the last one they did as *Hi Red Center*, was *Cleaning Event*, which was held on the streets of Tokyo. The core members and a couple of other artists cleaned the city six days after the Olympic Games started in 1964. (Hiro Iezumi 2007: 19) The Tokyo Olympics were a good chance for Japan to show its quick recovery from the mess of the war. Japan built superhighways, people tried to clean the city as much as they could in order to accept many guests from all over the world. Therefore *Hi Red Center* also decided to clean the Ginza Namiki Street slowly, carefully and correctly by themselves. (See Figure 6) They wore white uniforms with red armbands and cleaned asphalt roads, manholes, and pedestrian crossings with toothbrushes, dustclothes and scrubbing brushes. Akasegawa reflected that they ostentatiously pretended that they were official. In order to lead pedestrians to believe that they were from the government, they also brought a signboard in both Japanese and English which emphasized that they were cleaning. Interestingly, a policeman who patrolled thanked them for cleaning, maybe because their manner was so serious, and he might have believed *Hi Red Center* was a part of the Olympics-related program. (Tomii 2007: 55) They successfully gave this event a certain authority. (Havens 2006: 152)


Figure 6: Hi Red Center, *Cleaning Event* (1964) (Tomii 2007: 54)

Akasegawa stated that *Hi Red Center* was thinking seriously about jokes all the time (Akasegawa 1994: 293), in common with *Fluxus*. What they did might have been very simple and could appear senseless, but they were always doing such things very seriously. There are some suggestions that they may have been possibly influenced by European Dadaism because their happenings and events looked similar to those anti-art movements in the beginning of the 20th century, but three of them stated that they did not have any connections with any European anti-art movements. (Takamatsu et al 1994: 323) Despite their declaration, it is true that Akasegawa was a member of *Neo-Dada Organizer*, and other two members, Takamatsu and Nakanishi were also congenial with this group, although they were not official members. Therefore, they might not have been aware of any European influences, but there was a feeling that they might have been influenced by those European movements indirectly, as they actually stated that they were feeling that American Pop Art might have given them some ideas such as how to take notice of daily life. While most works of Pop Art are stable and fixed works to be seen and enjoyed, what *Hi Red Center* did was always moving, and it was not meant to be preserved. Therefore the concept of Pop Art might have influenced them somehow, but essential parts were very

different as they did feel that they were doing something which was very difficult to be explained and defined by anybody. (Takamatsu et al 1994: 326, 327)

Although I have introduced two Japanese based anti-art groups, here is one important question to consider: did these artists consider themselves and their works anti-art? As mentioned in Chapter 1, the term *han-geijutsu* (anti-art) was used for the first time by the critic Yoshiaki Tohno, who just came back to Japan from the West. As he described the work which adopted discarded everyday items as *han-geijutsu*, this term has been used for describing works which demanded freedom from established concepts of art (Havens 2006: 135), although the definition of this term was very vague. Avant-garde artist, Ushio Shinohara, who was a member of *Neo-Dada Organizers* stated that he disliked that term because those artists back then were not opposing old authority or old ideas themselves, but rather they simply wanted to have an answer for their distrust for art itself, something which was incompatible with them, and something which could not be expressed enough inside exhibition halls. (Shinohara 2011) However, it is also true that not all the artists and musicians who tried to express themselves in innovative ways might have been thinking the same as Shinohara did. For example, *Group Ongaku* was aware of being against European high art, and renounced European academicism (Havens 2006: 109), therefore they were aware of being opposed to the authority which was already established. However, Shinohara's comments indicated that the term *han-geijutsu* did not reflect what so-called anti-art musicians and artists wanted to do.

There was actually an opposing argument toward Tohno's statement about *han-geijutsu* by another critic, Atsushi Miyagawa. Since anti-art used junk and readymade articles in various works, he stated that its "descent into the common everyday negates the final border between art and non-art," and acknowledged that anti-art raised important questions about the nature of art. (Havens 2006: 137) There is a feeling that artists and musicians might not have cared what their art was called so much, but they were just trying to find new ways of expression, and that specific term came after that. However it is very true that those works blured the boundaries between art and life, therefore Miyagawa's statement, "descent into the common everyday negates the final border between art and non-art," could explain the situation of the art world in this generation. Shinohara also agreed that art was something immanent in the everyday. (Havens 2006: 136)

Both *Group Ongaku* and *Hi Red Center* tried to remove the boundaries between art or music and everyday life, similar to directions Cage and a few other *Fluxus* members learned through Zen. But the extent to which Japanese artists and musicians were aware that their ideas could be interpreted as Zen is unclear. Hugo Munsterberg stated in an article published in 1961 that it had often been said that all of Japanese culture and especially Japanese art were inspired by Zen, but most Japanese artists were not conscious Zen devotes and they did not create out of this religious commitment. (Munsterberg 1961: 198) Even if they were not aware of specific thoughts inspired by Zen Buddhism, they were removing boundaries between everyday life and art, and even between each artistic and musical genre. As Munsterberg indicated, Japanese culture and art may have been influenced by Zen on an unconscious level. Now we can see a very unique circle here: Cage and a few core members of *Fluxus* were influenced by Japanese Zen, and developed it as *Fluxus* in New York, and Japanese artists and musicians in the early 1960s were attracted to the concept of *Fluxus*, which reflected ideas of Zen Buddhism.

Several Japanese anti-art groups of the 1960s contained a number of female artists and musicians. Japanese rapid economic growth started in the mid-1950s, as women were also becoming more socially assertive. (Kimura-Steven 2003: 176) In an academic area in art, the admission of female students to the nation's major art schools led to an increase in the number of women artists in Japan, while no school except Joshi Bijutsu Gakko (now Joshi Bijutsu Daigaku: Women's Art University) accepted female students before the war. (Yoshimoto 2006: 26) Compared to conventional established art organizations which have hierarchical and patriarchal systems, these anti-art groups were relatively democratic, allowing more female artists to get involved. (Yoshimoto 2006: 28)

By the mid-1960s, many avant-garde artists felt that the Japanese art world was too conservative to appreciate their works, and some of them including female artists took advantage of opportunities offered to them to exhibit their works outside Japan (Yoshimoto 2006), such as Shiomi and Kubota who moved to New York to join *Fluxus*. Although some artists remained in Japan, they also succeeded in the global arena because of the rapid internationalization after the war. (Yoshimoto 2006: 28) Besides *Group Ongaku* which included female members, several artist groups which formed in postwar Japan attracted attention for their experimental works, and many women became involved in these

avant-garde groups. One of those groups was *Gutai* (1954-1972) which was based in the Kansai region, and included a female avant-garde artist, Atsuko Tanaka. (Yoshimoto 2006: 28) Besides *Gutai*, around 20 artists formed the *Kyushu-ha* in Fukuoka in 1957, the southern island of Kyushu. Mitsuko Tabe was one of a few women artists involved in the group from its formation and remained a central figure in this group, serving as its accountant until the group dissolved in 1968. (Yoshiomoto 2006: 28) Since avant-garde is always against established systems, the fact that these anti-art groups included female artists unlike patriarchal and conventional art organizations might show their status not only in their innovative and wild works, but the state of the groups themselves.

In order to consider the contemporary art and music scene in Japan in the 1960s, it is necessary to discuss the Sogetsu Art Center, an essential venue for avant-garde arts that played a very important role. In those days, there were not so many indoor halls where artists and musicians could hold concerts or exhibitions, only open-air theaters. As the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition was forced to close in 1963, young artists and musicians started to use several new methods to express themselves. Some of the avant-garde works made those halls very messy because of spreading colors on the floor, for instance. Therefore it was often the case that they were not allowed to use the same hall again after they used it once. (Yoshioka 2002: 182) According to Donald Richie who is an American researcher of Japanese culture and avant-garde film director, there were two places where one could present new works in those days. One was Sogetsu Art Center, and the other one was the Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka in Tokyo. While the Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka mainly played dramas, events at the Sogetsu Art Center were mostly music and movies. The other point of difference between these two places was that the Art Theater Shinjuku Bunka was a commercial venue, but the purpose of the Sogetsu Art Center was not to make money. People who did not know the director could also join the events there, and it was almost like their club. (Richie 2002: 209)

The director of the Sogetsu Art Center was Hiroshi Teshigawara, who was a film director and an avant-garde calligrapher. (Havens 2006: 104) He wanted to synthesize a variety of genres of art, and he was hoping that the Sogetsu would be the place where various young artists and musicians met and new developments could happen. As he stated, the Sogetsu Art Center not only provided young artists a place to perform, it also played a role as a window for communicating foreign trends. (Teshigawara 1987: 1)

It is not too much to say that the Sogetsu Art Center led the Japanese contemporary art and music scene by actively hosting many events and concerts of avant-garde art and music. They hosted *Group Ongaku*'s debut concert as well as Ichiyanagi's concert which introduced Japanese audiences to chance music from the United States. Their biggest achievement was to invite John Cage and David Tudor in 1962, and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, of which Cage had been music director, in 1964. (Ichiyanagi 2002: 164) One of their core projects was 草月コンテンポラリーシリーズ (Sogetsu Contemporary Series) which was frequently held in the early 1960s. (Yamamoto 1998: 246) Sogetsu Art Center was also a place which brought as many contemporary painters and composers from abroad as any other institute. (Havens 2006: 102) When Ichiyanagi returned to Japan as a "missionary" of the most advanced music, the first wave of Cage shock happened, and the Sogetsu Art Center started to push this new type of music which he brought back. (Yamamoto 1998: 248) Cage and Tudor's visit to Japan in 1962 conclusively became "Cage shock" which we saw through various critiques of the première of *0'00"*.

Artists who spent much time at the Sogetsu Art Center reflected on how important it was in those days. An avant-garde composer and pianist, Yuji Takahashi said that it provided a place for artists who tried to destroy established genres. Many new things happened back then, and the Sogetsu Art Center put them together and made them visible. (Takahashi 2002: 158) It was a melting pot of artists who intended to create new artistic expressions from many different genres, and was also a place for them to meet new artists and exchange their ideas. (Yamamoto 2002: 246)

Although anti-art artists and musicians of the 1960s tried to resist a music and art world which were dominated by the West, the ironic fact is that the methods they adopted in their anti-artistic and musical works could be also considered as part of Western art culture. Some anti-art groups clearly stated their hatred of Western high art and attacked it, but they were not able to "destroy" it since Western high art is not an object, but a "concept". In this case, what they tried to do might be that they simply created a new category in a broad sense of art and music. They succeeded to express their opinions about Western high art through unconventional methods which were completely different from traditional art forms, and their attitude to challenge the conventional traditional art was significant. It surely gave people who had closed minds a chance to think about the concept of art again.

Although anti-art movements flourished from the end of the 1950s to the 1960s, most anti-art groups stopped their activities in the late 1960s or the early 1970s. One of the major reasons why this trend faded was that society started to change. Internationally, the 1960s was a time when many social movements occurred. This decade experienced civil rights and anti-war movements such as the anti-Vietnam War movement, student rebellions, and movements for the rights of women, homosexuality, the elderly, the handicapped, and many other emergent groups, identities and causes. (Edelman 2001: 285). In this period, many labor unions moved from a stance as rebels to legitimate bargaining powers, and the governments in the advanced capitalist world including Japan developed more programs to extend social welfare benefits to the middle classes. (Gordon 2003: 290) These social changes also influenced artists and musicians' attitudes in this decade.

Most social movements which were active until the 1960s came to an end in the 1970s, and for young artists and musicians in Japan, one of the clear turning points was The Osaka World Exposition which was held in 1970. Artists needed a place to show their big-scale works in the 1960s, and many of them were invited to show their works without juries for this exposition. Expo' 70 gave them a big chance, and it also brought them a great deal of money. (Havens 2006: 206) Regardless of genre, most artists who joined Expo' 70 seemed to move on after that, independent of groups, and scattered in various directions. (Havens 2006: 216, 217) While Japanese society grew more integrated in the 1970s, vanguard art grew increasingly diverse. (Havens 2006: 217)

Many anti-art artists and musicians who were active in the 1960s have already passed away, or they are elderly. Many young Japanese in contemporary Japan have been getting interested in avant-garde art and music of the 1960s, and Shiomi is thinking that this is a very interesting development. Events and works created by *Fluxus* can be very interesting for young people who have not experienced it before. It was very shocking in those days as well, but she has wondered how much meaning it could actually hold for young generation today. *Fluxus* was born in the early 1960s because it was needed in that generation and society. (Shiomi 2005: 221) However, the question is whether this type of music and art can actually fit Japanese society in the present. Shiomi thinks that all we could do now might be to learn something from these anti-art

movements in the past and see if there is anything we can utilize in this generation because we need to create our original performing art which fits current Japanese society. (Shiomi 2005: 221)

## Chapter 5: Japanese Music and Art Today

Almost 50 years after the artistically enthusiastic era of the 1960s, I am exploring the current Japanese anti-art and music scene, and works emerging in the 2000s and early 2010s. Ichiyanagi mentioned that once Japanese society became stable after the post-war era, most artists and musicians started not to explore new possibilities, but preferred to stick with one specific established genre. (Toshi Ichiyanagi, pers. comm. 2010) In fact, what most artists and musicians are doing in this generation is obviously different from works created in the 1960s which combined several different genres of art. As shown in the previous chapter, one of the characteristics of the avant-garde art and music scene in the 1960s was that one person could play multiple roles at the same time. Many avant-garde artists were creator and performer at the same time, as *Group Ongaku* and *Fluxus* represented. For example, most members of *Group Ongaku* were composers, but they performed their own works on stage as well. Ichiyanagi pointed out that those musicians and artists in the 1960s faced music from all sides and were able to compose, perform, conduct, and produce their own work as Japanese traditional musicians and composers of classical music in the old days did. (Ichiyanagi 2002: 165) However since most artists and musicians now prefer to stay in one specific genre, their activities tend to be presented only in a narrow category such as European classical music, painting or sculpture. According to a Japanese sociologist, Yoshio Sugimoto, Western classical music as well as opera and art exhibitions are things which Japanese elites enjoy. (Sugimoto 2003: 244) As introduced in Chapter 2 and 4, one of the purposes of the anti-art movement in the 1910s and 1960s was an opposition to bourgeois culture including Western traditional art and music. Therefore this statement shows that Western classical music and art exhibitions still stand in the same status.

Today's music world in Japan exhibits conservative tendencies. In performance world, it is a taboo to study with professors other than your own mentor in music schools, and you often need their permission in order to attend some competitions or music festivals. Yuji Numano, a musicology professor at the Toho Gakuen School of Music (another prestigious music school in Japan), talked about the similar situation in musicology. Many scholars develop narrow specialties, focusing only on Debussy or Bartok. (Ichiyanagi et al 2008: 208, 212) Thus unlike the 1960s it seems that there are clear lines between music categories in the current Japanese musical world.

However, there is an exception: contemporary music, 現代音楽 (gendai-ongaku). As I indicated in the first chapter, 音楽 (ongaku) means music, and 現代 (gendai) means today or contemporary, so 現代音楽 (gendai-ongaku) indicates contemporary music. In Japanese history, *gendai* indicates the period after World War II or after 1955 specifically when the large-scale political realignment happened in Japan. Therefore *gendai-ongaku* often indicates musical works written from the latter half of the 20th century to today. Although this category is also included in a genre of Western traditional music, it is slightly different from its mainstream, and some pieces are as innovative as works created by anti-art artists in the 1960s. Although it seems that not so many people are using the term *han-geijutsu* or anti-art to describe certain types of art and music works in current Japan, many people do use the word *gendai-ongaku*, and interestingly, Cage's and Ichiyanagi's works are often categorized as *gendai-ongaku*. Compared to mainstream traditional Western music which was composed before World War II, *gendai-ongaku* is still a newer category in Japan, therefore it does not have clearly laid out routes (Ichiynagi et al 2008: 208, 212), and has not established its value as a genre yet. Since *gendai-ongaku* also has some elements to give audience members some impact with their novel and shocking ideas about music, *gendai-ongaku* could possibly be categorized as an extension of *han-geijutsu* in this generation.

Ryoichi Matsumoto, a reporter of the Yomiuri Shimbun made it clear how the mainstream classical music and *gendai-ongaku* are different. He stated that Western classical music tends to place greater importance on presentation and performance than on the concepts of the works themselves. Since classical pieces were written over 50 years ago, the general public had many authorities to listen to and learn about this type of music, therefore it had already established its value in the musical world in other words. In this case, performances tend to be seen as more meaningful, while concepts of works are regarded as important in *gendai-ongaku* rather than performances. (Matsumoto 2008) Although Western traditional music and *gendai-ongaku* are both categorized as music, the nature and roles of Western traditional music and *gendai-ongaku* seem to be different from each other. In fact, a number of classical masterpieces have already established their values in the music world, but since *gendai-ongaku* is a newer category, their historical values have not been established yet. Therefore ideas of *gendai-ongaku* composers and concepts of those works tend to be regarded as more important than the qualities of the performances.

The Toru Takemitsu Composition Award recognizes new compositions written by young composers, which are performed in Tokyo every year. *Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall: Takemitsu Memorial* aims to stimulate and create activities in the music world, following the principles of "Prayer, Hope and Peace" which their late artistic director, Toru Takemitsu, one of the recognized authorities on Japanese contemporary music, set out. In order to provide a "window to the future", this award in Takemitsu's name hopes to encourage young generations of composers who will shape the coming age through their new musical works. (Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation 2011) One of the unique points about this award is that only one composer, appointed by the foundation to serve as judge each year, examines all the musical scores and selects the compositions to be awarded without the assistance of committees. Several notable composers from North America, Europe and Japan have been invited as judges for this award since 1997. Although this competition usually accepts only orchestral music excluding concertos, the 2008 award, judged by the American composer Steve Reich, was an exception: he said that he would agree to judge only if they would accept ensemble works, and with electronics if possible. Thus unlike other years, there were several innovative compositions with electronics which were different from the mainstream of European traditional music in the 2008 award.

One of very unique pieces which received the first prize in 2008 was *広島　長崎の原爆投下についてどう思いますか?* (What do you think about dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?) by a Japanese composer, Yuichi Matsumoto (b.1975). The method he adopted in this composition is called "アンケート　アート" (*Anke-to Art*: *Questionnaire Art*). He conducted surveys to gather opinions from the general public, and those answers are presented in a work transformed into music. (Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation 2008) He created a system of composition by assigning a pitch for different parts of speech such as noun, verb, and adjective, and placed two speakers where we hear Japanese from one side and English from the other side for the performance. (Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation 2008) Not only the unique skills applied to his composition, but the shocking title which reflected Japan's gloomy history also seemed to give this work stronger meanings. Since he knew the judge would be Steve Reich, he decided to pick a topic which was related to both Japan and the United States. (Matsumoto 2008)

Unlike most musicians who follow traditional ways to study music, Matsumoto did not receive any formal musical training when he was young.

When he was in high school, he got interested in one of the Japanese New Age bands[4] called Cryzler & Company which was organized by three students of the Tokyo University of the Arts. They adopted Western traditional instruments such as violin and piano in their compositions. Matsumoto was also drawn to other instrumental music such as progressive rock and jazz fusion. (Yuichi Matsumoto, per. comm. 2011, my translation) He started to study composition by himself, and decided to go on to the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the Ibaraki University in order to learn more about synthesizers. Afterwards, he studied computer music and media art at the International Academy of Media Art and Science. (Yuichi Matsumoto, pers. comm. 2011, my translation)

*Anke-to Art* is closely tied to the system of languages. Matsumoto contrived this innovative method with inspiration from one of Steve Reich's operas, *The Cave* (1993) which was composed based on an interview. (Matsumoto and Hayakawa 2009: 22) Reich used old recorded natural voices and composed melodies which went along with pitches of voices for this opera. Matsumoto thought that if it was possible to combine an interview and music, he might be able to do the same thing with questionnaires. He was also wondering what kind of music could match Japanese as a language, (Matsumoto 2008) therefore he adopted a way to assign each part of speech to a specific note.

Matsumoto has composed several pieces which were based on answers on questionnaires such as "What do you think about the conscription system?" and "What do you think about environmental problems?" As shown in these questionnaires, the unique point in this *Anke-to Art* is that these pieces are strongly tied to society and reflect not what the composer feels but what the general public is thinking about one specific topic. Therefore these pieces convey a diversity of answers from several classes of occupations and ages. Matsumoto himself mentioned it is possible for a questionnaire to get ideas and opinions from the general public widely. It is also possible to conduct those questionnaires on the Internet very easily these days, which makes things easier as Matsumoto's website has questionnaire forms which we can all use.

Although *Anke-to Art* can be categorized as music, it might be true that most people pay more attention to how Matsumoto has used questionnaires in music rather than the performance of *Anke-to Art* itself. Also since this *Anke-to Art* is based on many different answers on one specific topic from the general

[4]New Age is a musical genre which combines several different aspects of Asian and Western styles. It also has some aspects of French impressionism and minimalism. (Schreiner 2011)

public, it does not seem that his composition is self-expression. He used to compose so-called "beautiful music" which he wanted to listen to, but his musical style started to change after the events of September 11, 2001. He began to feel curious about what other people were thinking in their daily life, and began to write music which structured environment outside of himself. (Yuichi Matsumoto, pers. comm. 2011, my translation) Another significant point about *Anke-to Art* is that many people can join the process of composing music through simply answering questionnaires. Music is not only for composers and a specific audience, but people who have nothing to do with music, and even those who are not interested in music could be somehow related to this whole music making process by joining these questionnaires.

There seem to be some similarities between Matsumoto's *Anke-to Art* and works created by anti-art artists and musicians in the 1960s. Innovative concepts of Matsumoto's *Anke-to Art* sound and look very different from the mainstream of Western traditional music. Although more people tend to present their works in one or some specific established categories in this generation, *Anke-to Art* is very different from those works. Matsumoto himself feels that *Anke-to Art* is not truly "music". His interests are the structural part of music rather than sound itself, therefore the structure comes to the center of his composition. He has also stated that developments in electronics and technology made it possible for many people to compose music even without receiving formal musical training. (Yuichi Matsumoto, pers. comm. 2011, my translation) Adaptations of electronica started to appear around the 1950s, and as shown in the previous chapter, *Group Ongaku* created some tape music as well. As time goes by, more sophisticated technology has developed, and those new electronic devices will help innovations in brand new art and music forms in the next generation.

Besides development of electronic devices in music, there are several young artists and musicians who are interested in creating new styles of performing art in this generation. The place supporting these artists and their works is the Tokyo Wonder Site, an art center dedicated to the generation and promotion of new art and culture in the heart of Tokyo. (Tokyo Wonder Stie 2010: 2) Tokyo Prefecture started this art center to support young artists in 2001 and it has three branches in Tokyo: Hongo, Aoyama, and Shibuya. The center supports young artists through several epoch-making projects such as "a forum for public displays of works, design exhibitions, overseas placement and many other

activities." (Tokyo Wonder Site 2008: 46) They do not merely give them a place to perform, but have several of their own projects which stimulate young talent and support them financially. Most projects at the Tokyo Wonder Site are based on fine arts and visual arts, but they have also supported performing arts as music and dance, as well as projects dealing with Japanese tradition and young children.

The first example of their projects is an event called *Artist Night* which was planned in commemoration of the one year anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Wonder Site. It was a 46-hour event held from December 13th, 2002 at 7 p.m. to the 15th at 5 p.m. at the Tokyo Wonder Site, Hongo. The first floor was a performance space, where an ikebana (Japanese style flower arrangement) master, Kozo Okada arranged flowers. (See Figure 7) A plaster craftsman, Akira Kusumi, designed a space on the second floor with a theme of "tradition and the contemporary". The third floor became an art café. (See Figure 8) For this event, the whole building of the Tokyo Wonder Site, Hongo transformed into a series of theater, lounge, café, talk, performance and concert spaces where artists and musicians from a variety of ages and genres attended. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2008: 92)

Figure 7: Ikebana by Kozo Okada (Left)
Figure 8: Art Café (Right) (Tokyo Wonder Site 2002)

The opening event was a collaboration of butoh dance (Japanese traditional dance), large hand drum, piano, and djembe (West African drum) improvisation. (See Figure 9) As we can see in this opening event, the three-day event was full of a great variety of programs. One of the other events presented here was the "Tempura Project" where the chef actually cooked tempura, and a discussion of topics from the history of contemporary Japanese art to rethinking of their own standpoint were held by an artist, Makoto Aida, the art critic, Noriaki

Kitazawa, and a chief researcher at the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties in Tokyo. Emerging young artists supported by the Tokyo Wonder Site also showed their works during this event. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2008: 92, 94)

Figure 9: Opening event: a collaboration of butoh dance, large hand drum, piano, and djembe improvisation (Tokyo Wonder Site 2002)

The center organized *Artist Night Vol.2* in August, 2003 and *Vol.3* in January, 2004. Many young artists who specialized in images joined *Artist Night Vol.2*, and there was video art and a collaboration of Japanese musical instruments and images. In *Vol.3*, each floor of the Tokyo Wonder Site, Hongo presented a different genre; works by video artists were displayed on the first floor where they also had a section for talk and discussion. Works of young emerging artists were exhibited on the second floor, and there was an art bar on the third floor. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2008: 96, 97) Thus, several different events and performances which people from various backgrounds could join together were presented in this *Artist Night*. As shown in the previous chapters, there were several events in the 1960s which combined different genres of art and presented new forms of art, and such events were also similar to Dada's nightly events of the late 1910s. In this generation, there are not so many events where you can experience several genres of art in the same place at the same time, and it is also rare that one event can be held consistently for 46 hours in a row. As *Artist Night*, which was full of art and music, shows the Tokyo Wonder Site is attempting to create a lively atmosphere in which several genres of music and art can coexist, intermingle and create a new type of art.

Another center project encouraging young artists to cross boundaries and create unique works is the yearly *Tokyo Experimental Festival*. The festival is open to all nationalities and ages, and artists can submit their experimental musical works such as a live performance with noise, collaborative musical work with dance or films and sound installation. If a work is selected, the Tokyo Wonder Site will provide you a free exhibition space, and help publicize it as well. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2010) One of the works which received the highest award of the 2009 festival was *When the Images Go Virtual*. (See Figure 10) This project tried to question presence and absences in the current society by showing three different rooms. In the first room, there is a virtual image of a pianist performing on a small piano in an acrylic box. In the second box, there is a virtual image of a woman performing live. In the third box, a figure of an audience member looking into an acrylic box is shown, where the relationships between the viewer and non-viewer are reversed. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2009: 3)

Figure 10: *When the Images Go Virtual* (Tokyo Wonder Site 2009: 3)

Another work selected for this festival was *The Bird Fights Its Way out of the Egg "The Phenomenon at Tokyo Wonder Site Hongo"*. (See Figure 11) This work was an unpredictable performance which more than twenty members were attending, and spectators were also involved. Curry and rice were served for everyone on the first floor, some people read a poem, drew pictures and others sounded instruments on the second floor, and a guitar left by its owner is strummed on the third floor. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2009: 3) The core of this work is that these completely different events happened at the same time in the same building. Events which involved audience members were one of the popular anti-art styles during the 1960s as well, and it also reminds us of nightly performances of Dada.

Figure 11: *The Bird Fights Its Way out of the Egg "The Phenomenon at Tokyo Wonder Site Hongo* (Tokyo Wonder Site 2009)

Performers who presented their works at the *Tokyo Experimental Festival* also played multiple roles at the same time. One typical example is Tomomi Shimizu's *Fragments du Jorna Intime -Hommage à Luc Ferrari-*. She played three different roles in this piece; a performer, dancer and reader. (Tokyo Wonder Site 2009: 4) She succeeded to produce her own work totally by herself. As shown in these examples, it can be difficult to categorize some of these works. Some crossed the boundaries between genres, and some adopted unusual methods.

One of the jury members of the *Tokyo Experimental Festival*, Yuji Numano said, "I would like to listen to something really new and really different just because this is an experimental festival", and Ichiyanagi also said "This festival is very free and interesting. There are lots of energies which can push away things like blockade, stagnation, and compromise which are pronouns of current society in Japan". (Tokyo Wonder Site 2010, my translation) While there are many galleries where artists can display their works and concert halls where they can give concerts, there are fewer places where artists of multi-genre experimental works which cannot be categorized in only one specific genre can perform.

Through those projects of the Tokyo Wonder Site, it seems that there have been some similarities between the Tokyo Wonder Site and Sogetsu Art Center. The Sogetsu Art Center supported young avant-garde artists and musicians, and gave them a place to perform in the 1960s, and the Tokyo Wonder Site also gives young artists and musicians in this generation opportunities to perform and exhibit their works. As the Sogetsu Art Center invited John Cage and David Tudor, this art center has also invited great musicians such as members of The Berlin Philharmonic and an accordionist, Stefan Hussong from overseas, and

had done with them some projects which gave young musicians a chance to know more about contemporary music.

As Sugimoto implied, only the Japanese elites enjoy Western classical music, opera and art exhibitions. Therefore there is also a feeling that fewer people enjoy this newer category, experimental performing arts as well as *gendai-ongaku* in current Japan, although both of them could possibly be categorized in Western traditional music and art. One of the differences might be that while several anti-art groups were active in the 1960s, most artists and musicians who attended the *Tokyo Experimental Festival* were individuals. As we saw several anti-art movements in the 1960s, those artists and musicians had networks, and they were working together and creating works impacting society. One of the aspects which seems to be missing in the youth generation today, but which played a very important role in the 1960s, is networking. The Sogetsu Art Center provided a place for young artists and musicians to get together and inspire each other, creating an atmosphere in which anybody could tap anybody else on the shoulder when they needed help with something. (Ichiyanagi et al 2008: 207, 211) Artists and musicians were close to each other, and that could be one of the reasons why several different anti-art groups existed back then, and they were all intermingled. Ichiyanagi pointed out that young people tend to be pigeonholed during their education, and shut themselves off from their own potential. Although there were several places such as art galleries where young people could casually visit in the 1960s (Ichiyanagi et al 2008: 207, 211), not so many places like that exist in contemporary Japan, and people do not tend to interact with other fields or other artists very often. A professor of Research Institute for Digital Media and Content at Keio University, Junko Iwabuchi mentioned that there seems to be a strong belief in contemporary Japan that the museum is just a facility or a building which can exist by itself. However, since the purpose of the Tokyo Wonder Site is serving as a platform, which supports creative activities in Tokyo, she hopes that this institute will remain a mission-oriented organization, and achieve things which other museums in Japan have not been able to so far (Iwabuchi and Imamura 2008: 195, 201), which will give young artists in this generation more chances to interact physically with other artists through their events and workshops.

In the 1960s, young artists were craving for places where they could present their works and many artists entered their works to the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition which was unjuried. Compared to those days, there are

more opportunities now to enter works into competitions and possibly authorized institutions as shown in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award and Experimental Festivals at the Tokyo Wonder Site. By winning one of those awards, artists are able to gain recognition and they could possibly use it for their business.

Another option is that some musicians open their works on-line and interact with other musicians and music fans through their own web-site or social networking sites. They can use YouTube to show their works as Matsumoto does, and many of them have MySpace accounts as well. For musicians, they might not necessarily have to have a space to perform their works. On the other hand, performing artists still may need a physical place to perform their works. It is obviously different to show their works live or in videos, although on-line technology can allow them to connect with other artists and their fans. In this case, they still need a physical place to perform their works. The Tokyo Wonder Site is attempting to give young artists and musicians more opportunities to interact with other musicians and artists through some of their projects, which might help to improve this situation currently in Japan.

Another difference is what they express through their works. Innovative works created by young Japanese artists and musicians which were introduced above, were all unique in their own ways, but the question is how many of them actually speak to current Japanese society directly, addressing some specific social rules or constructions. It might be easier to find innovative methods to express oneself today, but the most important part is what you convey through your works and why you use those skills. Now, it might be important to consider the role of the avant-garde in contemporary Japanese society. There are phrases stated by Chieko Shiomi which may explain the difference of the avant-garde in two different eras. The avant-garde can stand up when there is a firm ground upon which we can kick and jump, and academism and tradition provided such a ground in the 1960s. However avant-garde does not mean anything if the ground to you rally against becomes weak or easily collapsed. (Shiomi 2005: 139) Shiomi describes this era as the time when we cannot see something which we should stand up to because we already have the things we want and freedom to express ourselves. (Shiomi 2005: 140) Compared to the 1960s when Japan was still trying to recover from the damage caused by the war, people living in contemporary Japan might have more freedom and get things they want more easily. However it is also true that people are getting different types of social issues in each era,

therefore people might be feeling different kinds of pressures in everyday life. In this case, Matsumoto's *Anke-to Art* is actually facing to those social issues which reflect contemporary society in Japan. Shiomi also stated that there must be some components which suppress people in any generation, but the nature of the avant-garde is probably different in this generation compared to what they had in the 1960s. (Shiomi 2005: 140) Although Matsumoto's *Anke-to Art* shows ideas from the general public, it is not attacking specific social issues, but this can draw attentions from public, and give people a chance to think about one specific topic on society.

As Ichiyanagi mentioned, since the end of the 1960s, the economic situation was getting better and the environment which allowed people to do whatever they wanted freely began to be restricted. At the same time, artists and musicians began to prefer established genres to something new in the art and music world. It might show that their hungry spirit toward creating a new world was gradually decreasing. The features or methods adopted in works created today remind us of what anti-art artists, musicians and groups did in the 1960s because some skills used in those works resemble each other. Those methods were already shown in some anti-art works in the 1960s or even the 1920s which had an impact on society back then because the majority of people had not seen and experienced them before.

However, those ideas in history have now existed for a long time. Therefore, they do not have a major impact for us anymore. As one of the features of this generation, young artists seem to simply adopt the method they like without thinking why they were created and how they were born. Ms. Tamamushi, a senior public relations and educational program officer of the Arts Program Section at the Tokyo Wonder Site also pointed out that young artists in this generation have just adopted the methods they like because these artistic techniques look interesting for them. (Mikako Tamamushi. pers. comm. 2010) This might be one of the major differences between these two different generations. Compared to the 1960s, Japanese society is much more stable and peaceful now, but there should always be something you need to fight against in any generation. Shiomi stated that the "avant-garde" might be expressed differently in this generation. (Shiomi 2005: 140) In this generation, it might be their distrust of politics or anxiety toward the world which is changing at a massive speed. In any case, the avant-garde has to always be against something established although the form might be different in each era.

**Conclusion**

Starting from Dadaism, I have explored three anti-art groups, *Fluxus*, *Group Ongaku* and *Hi Red Center* of the 1960s as well as Sogetsu Art Center in Chapter 2, 3, and 4, and also talked about one of the young composers in this generation, Yuichi Matsumoto and his *Anke-to Art* (Questionnaire Art), and several other artists through the events held at the Tokyo Wonder Site in Chapter 5. In the 1910s, the first anti-art movement in history, Dadaism, occurred in Zurich and it eventually came to Japan. When Japanese Dada occurred in the 1920s, Japan was not exposed to European cultures much yet because of the influence of their national isolation. Since it was still on its way to catching up to the rest of the world and modernizing the country, Japanese people were not able to access information from foreign countries easily in those days. Therefore Tomoyoshi Murayama, one of the Japanese Dadaists and the leader of *Mavo*, had a reputation among young Japanese artists because he possessed new information from Europe. (Weisenfeld 1996: 64) *Mavo* was questioning the validity of existing artistic methods which were exclusively used by the art establishment, and they wanted to break down the boundaries between art and daily life as other European Dadaist artistic categories.

Another important Japanese Dadaist, Shinkichi Takahashi was a poet and wrote a sixty-two line-manifesto. One of the interesting things about Takahashi is that he left Dada in a few years after his debut, and took a serious interest in Zen Buddhism instead. He pointed out some similarities between Dada and Zen, and later claimed that Dada was “an elementary form of Zen”. (Ellis 1999: 731) Not only Takahashi, but one of the founders of Dada, Tristan Tzara also proclaimed that “the most acceptable system is on principle to have none,” which is an idea close to that of Zen Buddhism. Thus there have been two important points shown in the Japanese Dada chapter: blurry lines between life and art, and the connection between Zen and anti-art.

Another interesting point to consider here is how different the meaning of avant-garde was in Japan and the West back then. The original Dada movement which happened in the West was opposed to traditional Western high art and music, which was their own tradition, but Japanese Dada seemed to occur simply by the influence of the West. Compared to the European countries which opposed their own tradition, Japanese Dada, which was originally imported from the West, was trying to oppose Western high art, which was also imported. The works Japanese Dadaists created surely looked like works by Western Dadaists,

but it could be superficial, since their intention and purpose were very different from each other.

The anti-art movements in the 1960s happened several years after World War II when Japan was struggling to recover from the mess of the war. The war and the defeat were very peculiar experiences for Japan, and those factors urged the country itself to recover from the damage of the war and create a better country. If the war had not happened, young artists and musicians would not have longed for an ideal artistic world. (Ichiyanagi pers. comm. 2010, my translation) As many artists and musicians stated, the trend of the time when everybody in Japan tried to reestablish the country and the power of young artists and musicians who tried to create a new world matched perfectly.

For the music world in the 1960s, one of the important figures was John Cage, who was strongly influenced by Japanese Zen Buddhism. Cage tried to remove the boundaries between music and daily life by accepting all noises and sounds in his compositions. As discussed in Chapter 3, when Toshi Ichiyanagi, who studied with Cage in the United States came back to Japan, people began to know about Cage and his music. Ichiyanagi also asked the Sogetsu Art Center to invite Cage and Tudor in 1962, and the concert they gave made Japanese musicians and audiences think about the meaning of music once again. *Fluxus*, which was one of the international anti-art movements including members from not only the United States but also Europe and Asia, was strongly influenced by Cage's philosophical ideas as some members studied with Cage at the New School for Social Research. Zen played a very important role in Cage's chance music, and his philosophical ideas were developed by *Fluxus* members. Since several Japanese artists and musicians were attracted to the concept of *Fluxus* which reflected ideas of Zen Buddhism, there is the very clear circle of relationship between Cage, Zen and Japan.

Japanese based anti-art groups were also very active in Japan in the early 1960s. *Group Ongaku* was formed in opposition to European high art, and the renunciation of European academicism. (Havens 2006: 109) Their ideas about improvisation showed that they were attempting to find a way to express themselves outside of the European musical system. Another group, *Hi Red Center* was born in order to critique mechanical banality and covert authoritarianism underlying Japan's mass capitalist society. (Munroe 1994: 159) What they did looked very simple and senseless at the same time, but they were always doing those things seriously. As shown in examples in Dadaism, works

created by these groups in the 1960s also blurred the line between life and art, and the methods they adopted into their works also showed that music and art are not only for specific groups of people, but for everyone.

Compared to Dadaism which happened mainly by the influence from the West, the anti-art movement in the 1960s was strongly tied to and reflected Japanese society in those days, which was trying to recover from the war. One big difference is that compared to the 1920s, traditional Western music and art completely established their own status as a basis for Japanese education by then. Therefore anti-art artists and musicians had a firm ground to fight against in the 1960s. As shown in Chapter 3 and 4, there might have been some influence from other anti-art movements in the West for this movement in the 1960s, but some artists and musicians of *Group Ongaku* and *Hi Red Center* stated that they started doing such things without influence from Cage or any other European anti-art movements.

Another important thing which was shown in examples of these anti-art groups was that many artists and musicians in this generation worked in groups, and created something together. As Kosugi and Tone of *Group Ongaku* were very close to *Hi Red Center*, these artists were strongly tied to each other and crossed over the boundaries between each group, and they worked together very often even if they came from different genres. The Sogetsu Art Center also played a very important role giving young artists and musicians a place to perform, critique and stimulate each other. The network was a very important cue in the art and music world in the 1960s in Japan.

Compared to the 1960s, present-day Japan is more advanced and artists have more access to highly developed technology which gives artists and musicians more options to create their works, as shown in some examples in Chapter 5. Several new electronic methods are rapidly developing these days, and these techniques might become the main device of arts and music in the coming generations. The way of presenting their works and communicating with other artists, musicians, and even fans is changing as well. Many artists have their own web pages, and present their works on-line. Compared to the situation in the 1960s, there is a feeling that artists and musicians in this generation have less opportunity to connect to other creators and develop a network with them physically. As shown in Chapter 5, the Tokyo Wonder Site has actively supported

young artists and musicians in Japan, and given them opportunities to perform their new art and music there. Thus there is a hope that this center will improve this situation in Japan.

In the works created by young artists and musicians in this generation there are some similarities to works created in the 1960s, which were considered anti-art in those days. From this point of view, it might be possible to call the works by current Japanese creators “anti-art”, since some of them look or sound very similar. One of the characteristics strongly seen in both Dadaism and the anti-art movements in the 1960s was that they tried to remove boundaries between everyday life and music or art somehow. Although those anti-artistic techniques were not considered art at first but anti-art, they were coming to be accepted in the art and music worlds, and became part of contemporary art and music. In other words, since anti-art works in those days expanded the possibilities of art and music, what we consider art and music has become much wider now. It can be very difficult to create “anti-art” works in the current generation because we call most objects ‘art’ and noise, ‘music’. Now, it is an exciting time to wait and see what types of art and music are emerging in this coming generation. Besides expanded possibilities of art and music, computer and electronic devices are developing and they are affecting the art and music world in current Japan. It will be very interesting to see how young artists and musicians are going to cope with these factors and create new types of art and music. There is a hope that young artists in this generation express themselves more originally and challenge current society.

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