Spring 5-23-2016

Hohoemigaeshi (Smiling Back)

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Hohoemigaeshi (Smiling Back)

By

Takayuki Kubota

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art
Hunter College of the City of New York

2016

Thesis Sponsor:

May 23, 2016
Date

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May 23, 2016
Date

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Second Reader
For my late father who gave me everything and has always been the fountain of inspiration.

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I: Overture

In the summer of 1977, Candies, the Japanese female singing group, announced the break up of
the group during their concert at Hibiya Open-Air Concert Hall in Tokyo. They were at the
height of their popularity and it was a sudden announcement for everyone. The concert hall filled
with the audience’s screams. Three girls on the stage were crying and kept saying, “I’m sorry.”
Then, Ran Ito, a member of the group shouted the phrase, “Futsū no Onnanoko ni
Modoritai!” (We want to return to being ordinary girls.)

Figure 1. Candies at Hibiya Open Air Concert Hall, July 17, 1977.

The phrase that Ito shouted on the stage has been floating in my mind for different reasons. The
girl who became a pop star says that she wants to return to being the girl that she used to be. But
how could she? How could she go back to the past? Or, how could she bring back the past to the
present? Can I return to be the “I” of 10 years ago? How can I (return to) be the one that I used to be?

Candies released their last single, *Hohoemi Gaeshi* (“Smiling Back”) on February 25, 1978, before their farewell concert was held at Korakuen Stadium in Tokyo on April 4th of the same year. The lyrics of the song contain the titles and lyrics of their previous songs, which in a sense functions as a sort of retrospective. I have been working on self-imposed assignments that incorporate history or the past in general. For example, one of the assignments incorporates the life of Polish harpsichordist Wanda Landowska; while another assignment is an investigation of the Manhattan Project. The process of making these assignment-based works always involves a learning process. I learn about figures, events, or the past to make the works. I am deliberately using the term assignment, instead of project and research. Please let me explain why I do this. I consider my practice to be a process of learning about things; and I do not necessarily have a purpose or goal. I prefer to use the term ‘assignment’ rather than ‘research’ or ‘project’ because I believe that in order to be called research and project, the activity should have a purpose and a goal. Assignment can simply be, without having a place to land.

The video work *Untitled*, which I included in the thesis installation is a ten second excerpt from the found footage *Flying Floats* (1973). *Flying Floats* is an instructional video for floatplanes and it was produced by the Federal Aviation Administration, and the US Department of Transportation. I edited out the moment of landing so that the aircraft never touches the water. The ten-second loop shows a floatplane that is about to land on the water but it never lands.
A narrator says “until the aircraft makes contact with the water” and the phrase is repeated as the video loops. I consider this work to be my main thesis and it says: I am not going to have a place to land. In other words, my activity is not to have a goal or purpose.

Figure 2. Takayuki Kubota, *Untitled*, 2015, SD Video (color, sound), 10”, Loop.

I started to realize that all I am doing is saying good-bye to the things that I have come across. First I encounter figures or events. The place that I encounter figures could be anywhere, sometimes it is a second hand record store where I would encounter things on the newspaper. I encounter many things everyday but a few things that kept holding my attention. It may be because of my personal interests; but I see that my attention is held when there is a coincidental aspect. Imagine that there are two circles and I am one circle. Mathematically, when one circle touches the circumference of another, it means that they have touched on one single point. For
me, coincidence is the moment when circumferences happen to be touch on a point; a point that mathematically has no length, area or volume. Once I see that the circumferences are momentarily touching, I try to learn about the other circumference; and I am prepared to be detached from it. This process is something that I describe as ‘saying good-bye.’

Figure 3. Circles, Circumferences, Coincident.

I am trying to say good-bye to the 20th century. With this in mind, I titled the work “Hohoemigaeshi (smiling back)”; since in the end, I feel that all I can do is to smile back to the things that I have come across—in order to say good-bye.

NOTE: I’m translating the lyrics of the song to English now. Sorry it’s not available yet.
II.Scherzo

II-I. Oysters

When I look into things I often try to find their roots. Everything has its beginning and at the same is supposed to have its ending. Even we as creatures, will eventually physically die. We just do not know when, how, and where, our lives will come to the end. I have to make myself interact with the past in order to find a place of beginning. This includes a lot of imagination – just like when we try to speculate about the future. I feel that the future is not the only subject for prediction. I can also predict the past; but predicting the past is not like repeating myself in a “what if” fantasy. I look at the past just as we see the future; since no one has direct access to either of these distant times. I may use physical materials to get closer to times other than my own; but does an object, a document, or any “historical” material really speak about history or the past in general? How do materials help us see something that we cannot really see? Could there be another past? Just as we always have limitless possibilities for the future?

I love oysters. When I go to places where I have never been before, especially if it is close to the ocean, I always look for oysters. Oysters and journeys are synonymous. Going on a journey has a risk. However, taking an eight hour flight is not comparable to a 15th century transatlantic crossing; but still, every time the airplane is going to take off I ask myself: is this flight going to be alright? My flight experiences have been fine so far; but I don’t know if the next one will be fine, even though it is statistically the safest form of transportation. And when journeys become too safe and too comfortable, they do not feel like journeys anymore. Risks, slight dangers, uncomfortable feelings, would be good companions for a journey to become a journey. Oysters
are similar in this sense. I have never had food poisoning from an oyster; but I am not sure if I will eventually get sick the next oyster I eat. Another reason why oysters and journeys are inseparable is in how oysters become oysters. After the egg hatches, oyster larvae move around the ocean and look for a place to be settled. Once settled, it never moves again so it can become an oyster. Similarly, I think that I have been traveling to grow up; but oysters makes me feel like I need to find a place to settle to become a human. Is going on a journey all about finding the settling place?

Figure 4. Oyster Larvae.
Figure 5. Takayuki Kubota, *Hohoemigaeshi (Untitled)*, 2016, Plaster of Paris, Glass, Wood, Stainless rod, and Water. (From the thesis installation and the picture was taken on the day of the opening, April 21, 2016.)
Figure 6. Takayuki Kubota, *Hohoemigaeshi (Untitled)*, 2016, Plaster of Paris, Glass, Wood, Stainless rod, and Water. (From the thesis installation and the picture was taken on the last day of the exhibition, May 7, 2016.)
The century I was born is often characterized as the century of total war at a global scale: the First and Second World Wars, and many other conflicts during and after the Cold War. Those wars boosted dramatic developments in science. For example, the 20th century was the first century that was extensively documented by film and audio recording. During the 20th century, several attempts to have a new way of documentation, such as the archive, museum practice, library science, journalism, and oral history became more widely practiced. Do we have enough documents to see the last century? Will there be a time we can completely document everything and leave nothing behind? For example was everything kept in the Encyclopedia Britannica?

Archiving practices contains two different violences, the violence of forgetting and the violence of remembering –since they both include a process of selecting information. Sirius of Canis Major is the brightest star in the night sky and it is easy to find. But there are limitless stars that we do not see with our eyes. Are we gazing at the stars or are the stars gazing at us? Scientists say that everything we see is in the past. A Star 100 light years away from Earth, or a man speaking in front of me, everything I see with my eyes is in the past since light has a speed limit.

If, for example, one should assume the movement of the stars to be in a straight line to infinity, as some have opined, how could it be explained that each star will be observed daily moving from the same starting point? For how could the stars turn back while rushing on to infinity? Or how could they turn back without appearing to do so? Or how is it they do not disappear with their size gradually diminishing but on the contrary seem larger when they are about to disappear, being covered little by little as if cut off by the earth's surface? But certainly to suppose that they light up from the earth and then again go out in it would appear most absurd. For if anyone should agree that such an order in their magnitudes and number, and again in the distances, places, and times is accomplished in this way at random and by chance, and that one whole part of the earth has an incandescent nature and another a nature capable of extinguishing, or rather that the same part lights the stars up for some people and puts them out for others, and that the same stars happen to appear to some people either lit up or put out and to others not yet so even if anyone, I say, should accept all such absurdities, what could we say about the always-visible stars which neither rise nor set? Or why don't the stars which light up and go out rise and set for every part of the earth, and why aren't those which are not affected in this way always above the earth for every part of the earth? For in
this hypothesis the same stars will not always light up and go out for some people, and never for others. But it is evident to everyone that the same stars rise and set for some parts, and do neither of these things for others. ¹

If both the time before I was born and an instant ago are both “the past,” I feel that I can claim to recall things that happened even 1000 years ago. Making things make sense is not my purpose and goal. That is why I started to consider my activities as assignments and a learning process. I am learning; and there is no answer to any of these questions. My works are just the temporary result of this learning process.

Hinges are the only things that I keep collecting. I have been collecting them for over fifteen years. I have several reasons why I do this. First, I find them to be beautiful. I know this is a term that I should hesitate to use but I am trying to be honest. Yes, they are beautiful, the way they function or the way they look just by themselves. I did not think of using hinges as a material to make works. Collecting hinges was something that I did like a habit. When I travel and if I find an antique store, I would buy some. Until recently, it was just one of those things that everyone would have as a habit. Now I would like to connect this to my practice and activity as an artist. I encounter things and if feel the encounter is a chance encounter, I learn about it and try to say good-bye. This whole process is my work. My activities and practice have an aspect of ‘hinging’ things and it was a moment that I see another reason why I have been collecting hinges.

I see hinges as things in between spaces. I see hinges as a things in between times. Hinges give me a sense of here (the place and the time I am at) and there (distant space and time from myself). This brings me to the question: Can I consider ‘here’ as now? Where is now? Is it something that I will never be able to grasp too? I know that I do not have a direct access to distant times; but if I do not have an access to ‘now’ –does it then mean I do not have an access to any time at all?

But even in this pure succession of nows passing away in itself, primordial time reveals itself in spite of all levelling down and covering over. The vulgar interpretation determines the flux of time as an irreversible succession. Why can time not be reversed? Especially when one looks exclusively at the flux of nows, it is incomprehensive in itself why the sequence of nows should not accommodate itself to the reverse direction. The impossibility of this reversal has its basis in the provenance of public time in temporality, whose temporalizing, primarily futural, “goes” ecstatically towards its end in such a
way that it “is” already toward its end. ²

Book (binding) and hinges are very similar in their form and how they function. Seeing multiple hinges is like seeing different pages of a book. Also, in Japanese hinges are called Chōtsugai, which literally means ‘Paired Butterfly.’ This is one of the reasons why I decided to present my hinge collection like butterflies specimens in a vitrine. There is also a suggestion of the butterfly effect. I interpret the butterfly effect as a concept that surrounds unpredictability, which resonates with my question “could there be another past, just as we always have limitless possibilities for the future?”

Figure 7. Takayuki Kubota, Hohoemigaeshi (Untitled), 2016, Hinges, Oak wood, Slide Projectors, Book (George Auguste Escoffier’s Le Guide culinaire), Six Screws.

II-III: Parrots Repeat While Raptors Gaze

As a general rule all birds with crooked talons are short-necked, flat-tongued, and disposed to mimicry. The Indian bird, the parrot, which is said to have a man's tongue, answers to this description; and, by the way, after drinking wine, the parrot becomes more saucy than ever.³

I was in Kyoto with C who I once fell in love with. I remember that it was a really hot day. Really hot. Summer in Kyoto gets nasty. We were walking around the city and I do not quite remember exactly but at Gojō or Shijō Bridge, we found a birdcage in front of an old Japanese confectionary store. Being inside a small cage, a parrot was repeating some phrases over and over.

When a parrot speaks to me, should I respond and try to keep a conversation? When it says something like “Hello, welcome!,” should I respond “thank you, how are you doing?,” knowing that it might repeat: “Hello, welcome.” The parrot is not really speaking to me. It repeats the phrase that it remembers. This is the way that I communicate with history or the past in general. When I learn history, it speaks to me first, then I make a response to what history has spoken to me. I do it to keep the conversation going; but it never becomes a real conversation. It’s always a one way communication, where either I transmit or history transmits.

Raptors gaze. It was another hot summer. I was driving alone in the mountain in Niigata Prefecture in Japan. It was just before noon. I pulled over and got out the car to have some rest

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and fresh air. After I walked about 30 feet from the car, a huge owl came out suddenly from the trees and flew over me. It gazed my eyes and never looked away. It kept looking at my eyes. I felt the kind of fear that one would feel when there is no chance of successful communication. It gazed at me hard but it did not communicate anything to me. This is something that I see happening when I look into history. When I look deeply into history, I see the gazes of dark, big round eyes of owls in a complete darkness. I see that these eyes look at me; but I feel that there is a huge distance that I cannot really bridge.

Figure 8. Takayuki Kubota, *Study for Hohoemigaeshi (Smiling Back): From the chapter ‘Parrots Repeat While Raptors Gaze,’* Museum board, plexiglass, glassine paper, Edition Peter® music note, Canson® Mi-Teintes®, acrylic and charcoal.
The first time I visited Hong Kong was March 2009. I went there to have a meeting with an art archive that I started to work for. In Chinese, Hong Kong is written as 香港 (港 means a port); and yes, Hong Kong is a port city and the city somehow reminded my memory of the place where I grew up. I visited Hong Kong at least twice or three times a year while I worked for the archive. After work, I often walked from the office in Sheung Wan to Central to explore the area. But my main purpose was to take a ferry from Central to Tsim Sha Tsui. The ferry was called “Star Ferry,” and it travels between Central in Hong Kong Island and Tsim Sha Tsui on the Kowloon side. It's only about a ten minutes ride. After tunnels and subway were built that
crossed the harbor in the 1970s, the ferry stopped being the main means of transportation between the two islands. Today, commuters use subways; while almost all the passengers on the ferry are tourists. I loved taking the ferry, and to make myself disappear in the crowd of tourists. I did not know back then, that RMS Queen Elizabeth sank somewhere in the harbor: Victoria Harbor, the harbor named after Queen Victoria.

The famous cruise ship, RMS Queen Elizabeth has been the main figure of one of my on-going assignments entitled *Queens* (tentative). The ship was constructed in Clydebank in Scotland in 1938.

![Queen Elizabeth in Clydebank (1938)](image)

Figure 10. Queen Elizabeth in Clydebank (1938)

The RMS Queen Elizabeth was originally going to be used as a passenger liner but the war
started up soon after her birth. She was then deployed by the Royal Navy to serve as a troopship.
She transported Allied forces in the Pacific Ocean until 1942 and then between in North America
and Europe until the end of the war in 1945.

Figure 11. Canadian troops aboard RMS Queen Elizabeth in the Atlantic Ocean, December 1945.

After the war, she finally started to work as a cruise ship and sailed between Southampton and
New York. The time, however, was shifting from sea transportation to aviation. After the 1950s,
aircrafts with reciprocating engines such as the Douglas DC-6 or the Lockheed Constellation
provided transatlantic route service. The advent of larger aircrafts with jet engines such as the
Boeing 707 were critical for decreasing the number of passengers for the Queen Elizabeth. She
retired in 1969, later she was sold to different people, and finally to a businessperson in Hong
Kong. This businessperson was planning to use the ship as a university. The ship was re-named
as The Seawise University; and was under renovation when there was an accidental fire in 1972
and she sank in Victoria Harbor –as if she was held in the arm of the former queen.

![Image of the Wreck of The Seawise University (formally RMS Queen Elizabeth) in the Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong, 1972.]

Figure 12. The Wreck of The Seawise University (formally RMS Queen Elizabeth) in the Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong, 1972.

The ship has been a symbol of adventure, finding something new, departing for somewhere new, something dramatic and adventurous. A ship like the Queen Elizabeth fits perfectly with this metaphor. She went to war right after her birth, then after the war she got back to her regular job, which was to transport people between two continents. A ferry also has a specific role. She sails a short distance and on the same route everyday for many years. I always feel like I am seeing one human’s life when I look into the life of any ship.

Bells are also important in this assignment. I made sculptures for an installation and they all had the form of a bell. Bells and ships are closely related. All ships used to have a marine bell, and I
believe that many ships still have it. Sailors ring a bell to announce the time or to alert other ships to avoid a collision. When a marine accident happened, people used to ring the bell at Lloyd's of London to notify insurance brokers about the accident. This bell is known as Lutine's bell. Lloyd's of London is an insurance syndicate, which has its roots in marine insurance. And Lutine's bell was originally a marine bell for the HMS Lutine, which was lost in a storm in October 9, 1799.

![The Lutine Bell, Lloyd's of London.](image)

Another bell that I am looking into is not a bell proper; but an object that has the shape of a bell. It is Halley's diving bell. A diving bell is used to dive in the ocean and it keeps air coming in from the surface. British Astronomer Edmond Halley invented this diving bell, known as a Haley’s diving bell, in the early 18th century. Halley pioneered astronomy in the western world.
and of course astronomy helped develop the art of navigation.

Figure 14. Halley’s Diving Bell (1714).

In the thesis installation, I presented a work made of teak wood, which is a very important material in ship making because it contains much oil and therefore has a high resistant to water. Teak wood can be grown only in specific regions. Places such as Burma, India, and Indonesia are known to have forests that with good quality teak wood. There is a history that the Great Powers of the West consumed enormous amount of teak woods from these places to build their ships. For example, if you look at the deck of ships constructed in the time of the British Empire, the width of the each piece of wood is at least more than 8 inches. This means they had access to good quality teak wood, which also represents how many colonies the country had. I am interested in
how the decks of ships represent ‘power.’ In the time of Queen Victoria’s reign (1876-1901), the British Empire greatly expanded its territory and the empire reached its territorial peak. It is often described as ‘the empire on which the sun never sets.’ The ship named Queen Elizabeth sunk in the harbor named after Queen Victoria, in Hong Kong, a territory of Britain. I happened to learn about this event and I feel that I need to somehow personally conclude this. This assignment is on-going. The day of the opening of my thesis show happened to be the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II. It seems like things keep going.

Figure 15. Takayuki Kubota, Detail of *Hohoemigaeshi (Queens (tentative)*), 2016.
Figure 16. Takayuki Kubota, Detail of *Hohoemigaeshi (Queens (tentative))*, 2016
In 1757 there were only three cafes in Paris. [D3a, 1]4

It was a day that gave me a little sense of Spring. It was not freezing cold but still not warm enough. I (do not) like this moment between every seasons. I was wearing an obviously oversized trench coat of France beige. It is funny that I do not remember what I had for lunch a few days ago while I can precisely recall what I wore on this specific day that was more than ten years ago. Memory is such a selfish thing.

By the time I got to Jimbōchō station, the sun was about to set. Jimbōchō is a neighborhood in central Tokyo, where there are many second hand bookstores. I used to go there a lot when I lived in Tokyo, and during my last three years there, I ended up living in the neighborhood. On that day, I first went to Yaguchi Bookstore to get a few music scores. Then I headed to the Fuji record store. That was not my original plan. After I bought those music scores, I was going to have a coffee at a cafe that has the same name as someone who I once fell in love with. Anyway, I just want to note that it was a kind of accident.

I took an elevator to the fifth floor of an old building and randomly looked through the classical music section. I do not usually go to a bookstore, music store or any kind of place if I do not have a specific thing that I am looking for, so I remember it was a little bit awkward to be there.

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Figure 17. Cafe Erika, Jinbōchō, Tokyo.
I ended up buying two records for two different reasons. The first one was the recording of a Brahms piano concerto played by Rubinstein with the Israel Philharmonic, and conducted by Zubin Mehta. The combination of the old master from the 20th century with the young conductor, who is now regarded as a maestro was fairly attractive. The second record though, I did not have any specific reason why I picked it up.

I did not know much about the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska and I was not really into Domenico Scarlatti either. I still do not know why I bought it; but I have spent many years with the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska since then. After I got home, I listened to the record and I heard the sound of explosions in the recording. They sounded like thunder hitting the ground near you. It is a sound that hits the stomach, like the low strings of Karajan's orchestration. I started to do research about this recording and soon found out that it was the recording she did at EMI studio in Paris in March 1940. It was in May of the same year when the German Army started invading France; by then the war had already started in the European theater. I assume that what I heard was the sound of anti-aircraft guns. It is not certain whether it was a test fire or actual warfare. But it is certain that the circumstances were unusual.

Wanda Landowska was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1879. She studied Piano at Fredric Chopin University of Music in Warsaw and later studied counterpoint in Berlin. She moved to Paris in 1900, when she was 21. She was invited by a music school, Schola Cantorum to teach some classes. 1900 is a symbolic year not just because of being the last year of the 19th century and the first year of 20th; but also because in Paris, it was both the year of the Exposition Universelle and the Olympics. At the exposition, new technologies such as the diesel engine, escalator, sound
film, and telegraphone, the first magnetic recording device, were exhibited. I believe that people sensed the atmosphere of a “New Era” in Paris back then. After Landowska moved to Paris, she started to gain interest in the harpsichord, which had been a forgotten musical instrument since the invention of the piano. Back then, when composers wrote music for keyboard, it was assumed that it would be played in a piano, not a harpsichord. She made her debut as a harpsichordist in 1903 in Paris. In late 1900, Landowka started to work with the musical instrument company Pleyel. She collaborated with the company to produce a modern style of harpsichord, which could be played for larger audiences in modern concert halls.

The resulting harpsichord is very large for a harpsichord. It is the size of full-scale grand piano. While I am very interested in the notion of revival; I am more interested in how Landowska put her energy in reviving a forgotten instrument at the moment when the city she moved to was celebrating new technologies and the future.

Another figure that I am incorporating in this assignment is Donald Keene. He was a scholar of Japanese literature, who used to teach at Columbia University for more than 40 years before he moved to Japan in 2013 and naturalized Japanese. In 1939, he randomly picked up a book at a second hand bookstore in Times Square in New York –just like I picked up Landowska's record. The book he picked was The Tale of Genji, translated by Arthur Waley.
Figure 18. Wanda Landowska and Grand Modèle de Concert, Pleyel.

Figure 19. Takayuki Kubota, *Study for Landowska, Keene, New York, 1941*, 2013.
He said that he chose the book because the book was thick and the price was cheap. After he read the book, he decided to study Japanese and Japanese literature. During the war he served in the Navy as a translator and after the war he finally made it to Japan.

Landowska was a harpsichordist and Keene was a scholar of Japanese literature so that they would have never met in any kind of history. But by establishing a rapport, or connection between two figures, I can create something new, a different way of seeing historical events by establishing new relationships. By connecting these disparate parts I hope to create an effect akin to resonance in music.

On December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor. Donald Keene was a student at Columbia, studying Japanese literature under Ryūsaku Tsunoda, founder of Japanese studies at Columbia University. On that day, Keene had a picnic with his friends in Staten Island. On his way back to the city, he saw the news at a newsstand near the ferry terminal.

Landowska left Paris in the summer of 1940 as Nazis invaded Paris. She escaped to Southern France first and then to Lisbon to take a ship to New York from there. On the same day when Keene was having a picnic at Staten Island, the ship from Lisbon finally arrived at Ellis Island.

After I arrived in New York, I took a ferry to Staten Island. Ellis Island was shut down after Hurricane Sandy so that I first went to Staten Island where Keene had a picnic on the day that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and Landowska arrived at Ellis Island after her long journey. Both Landowska and Keene were involved in reviving things from the past. Landowska revived
the harpsichord while Keene revived a Chikamatsu’s puppet play written in the 17th century by translating it into English. In fact, Keene decided to dedicate his time to studying Japanese literature after reading the Arthur Waley's English translation of the Tale of Genji. There are people who revive things from the past, and there are people who are influenced by those revivals. And I am trying to see the pictures that those people saw. I know that there is no ferry that takes me to the past and brings me back to the present. How can I recall the memory that I do not have? Is reviving the only way to recall it, just like making the dead alive?

Figure 20. Staten Island ferry behind a boat bringing Zombi to New York, Stills from Zombi (1979)
I was born in a port city. I cannot recall the first experience of getting on a ship but I remember that I used to see many ships sailing on a coast when I was a child. Among the ships that I saw from a hill, there was one ship that was memorable for a child like me. A huge illustration of the sun (or sunflower) was painted on the body of the ship. The ship was called Sunflower and it was easy to recognize from a long distance because of the painting.

In the 1974 Godzilla movie, the same ship appears quite often because there was a commercial tie-in between the film company and the transportation company. I learned two things much later: it was the ferry service ship between Kobe and Oita in Japan, and Godzilla was born out of the hydrogen bomb test in Bikini Atoll in 1954, an experiment that brought the sun to the surface of the earth.

It was almost a month after I arrived in New York, I was walking to my studio from Canal Street station. I was waiting for a traffic light, and I lit my cigarette. There was a woman also smoking
cigarette on the other side of the crosswalk. The traffic light changed and I started walking. When I got to the middle of the crosswalk, the woman came to me and said, “Do you want a cigarette?” I clearly heard what she said; but I couldn't get what she really meant. I had many experiences where people asked me for a cigarette; but I have never been offered a cigarette without asking. It was a very awkward moment for me. Then she said again, “Do you want a cigarette?” So I made a facial expression of confusion. Then she said, “I'm trying to quit.” She passed me a pack of cigarette, smiled at me, then she walked towards the financial district.

It was a pack of cigarettes called Newport, which I had never had before. But the name sounded familiar to me because I was going to visit my friend in Newport in Rhode Island soon. When I visited Newport, RI, I saw a statue of Matthew C. Perry at Touro Park. Then I learned that Captain Perry was born in Newport. Matthew C. Perry was a commodore in the US Navy and he is known in Japan as a figure that came to Uraga in Japan in 1854 with kurofune (black ships) to demand that the Tokugawa Shogunate open the country and sign the treaty with the US. I also learned that his brother Oliver Hazard Perry was also a US Navy Commodore and he served the navy in the Battle of Lake Erie in 1812 and earned the title “Hero of the Lake Erie.”

I looked at the map of Lake Erie and I saw that there is a small town called Newport, in Michigan. And in this small town called Newport, there is a big power plant on the shore of the lake. It is called the Enrico Fermi Nuclear Generating Station, named after the Italian physicist Enrico Fermi who is known for his contributions to quantum theory and the development of the first nuclear reactor.
I started to look into this some more and realized that there are many towns and streets called Newport across the country. When I was looking at these different Newports across the country on a map, I found out that there were institutions and facilities for the Manhattan Project, the project that developed the atomic bomb, that were located near some of these Newports. I decided to travel to 14 different Newports to have the 14 cigarettes left in the box the woman gave me on Canal Street. This will become a journey to visit important facilities involved in the Manhattan Project.

I was also looking at a map of New York, where this woman gave me the pack of cigarettes in the middle of a crosswalk. If she continued walking straight from where she gave me the
cigarettes, she would have gotten to the building where the head office of the Manhattan Project was once located.

Another important scientist for the Manhattan Project, Leo Szilard once said that he came up with the idea of nuclear chain reactions when he was waiting for a traffic light in the intersection on Southampton Street in London in 1934. 80 years later, I was waiting for a traffic light and a woman gave me a pack of cigarettes. In my work I take events such as this and allow them to cause a strange chain reaction, in which accidental elements launch assignments that lead me to other coincidences and these in turn lead to more chain reactions. The motivation is never to do research or construct a project that has a purpose or goal other than to keep the reactions going.
It was the next day of the opening of the thesis show, Friday, April 22, 2016. On this day, I could smell the scent of ocean in the streets of New York. There is a day like this every once in a while. A day like this reminds us that this city is an island and is surrounded by water.

I was on my way from my studio to Brooklyn. I think it was around 9:00 PM. I took a subway from Canal Street and I got off at 14th street to take the L train. As I was walking up the stairs from the platform, I started to hear the sound of strings, and the piece of music that I had been listening while I was making the works for this show. The music piece is not my favorite one written by the composer; but for some reasons, I kept listening to it over and over again. Let me explain just one of the reasons why I kept doing this. Towards the end of the piece, there is a part where the same phrase is repeated by violin(s) six times. I somehow felt that it is like a transmission made over time. It’s like a folktale that has passed on from person to person over time. And this somehow resonates with what I have been doing, and what I have been thinking. It relates to the question, how can I have access to distant times, either of the past or the future.

Figure 23. Johann Sebastian Bach, “Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major, BWV 1048,” in The Six Brandenburg Concertos and the Four Orchestral Suites (New York: Dover Publications, 1976): no3-16
Anyway, by the time I got to the place where the string quartet was playing, the piece was almost over. I had an appointment so I had to leave and I took L train. By the time I got to Union Square, I strongly felt that I needed to go back to the 14th street station. I got off and hoped on the 8th Avenue bound train. I sent a text to my friend, saying that I would be late. I walked to the place where the quartet was playing and I heard another line of music that was more than familiar to me. Indeed, it was another important piece of music that influenced my process of making works. I encountered with this particular piece when I was 11 or 12. I had watched a film and the piece was used in the first 10 minutes of the film. I became attached to the piece but I had no idea what its title was. It is like falling in love with someone who you even do not know their name. I really wanted to know the title so that I could buy the record and listen to it over and over. I asked my father but he did not know the song. He told me that the rhythm sounded like a Tango. He was good at dancing, which didn’t really inherit. The next thing I did was to bring the VHS tape to a music teacher at a junior high school. He also did not know the piece but he told me that it should be a piece of Argentine Tango. Then I went to a city library and asked the librarian to check out all the records and CDs of Argentine Tango that the library had. I went over all of them but I still could not find the song. I started to hop around music stores across the city and more than a year later, I finally found a person who knew the title of the song at a second hand record store. This journey to find out the title of one song definitely became one of my foundations. It was not the most efficient way to look for the title; but through this journey I learned many other things and encountered many people. This is something that I am still doing. Not for everything, but I choose inefficiency over efficiency.
I asked the string quartet to play these two pieces of music in my thesis installation. I also asked the quartet to play an additional piece but I did not request to play a specific piece. Instead, I asked the quartet to play any piece that they came up with in their mind by seeing the terms ship, navigation, journey, distant times, in between spaces, memory, and history, which are all related to my installation.
Hoheumigaeshi (‘smiling back’)
May 4, 2016. 8:30 PM-
205 Hudson Street Gallery

Introduction by Takayuki Kubota
Music performance by the Quartette from The Diverse Concert Artists

I. Johann Sebastian Bach, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major, BWV 1048 (1721)
II. Antonín Leopold Dvořák, The String Quartet in F major Op. 96 (1893)
III. Carlos Gardel, Por una Cabeza (1935)

Figure 24. Video still from the documentation of performance, May 4, 2016.

Figure 25. Video still from the documentation of performance, May 4, 2016.
IV. References

Bibliography


V. Thesis Installation View

Figure 26. Thesis Installation View

Figure 27. Thesis Installation View

Figure 29. Thesis Installation View

Figure 30. Thesis Installation View

Figure 31. Thesis Installation View

Figure 32. Thesis Installation View

Figure 33. Thesis Installation View

Figure 34. Thesis Installation View

Figure 35. Thesis Installation View

Figure 36. Thesis Installation View

Figure 37. Thesis Installation View

Figure 38. Thesis Installation View

Figure 39. Thesis Installation View

Figure 40. Thesis Installation View

Figure 41. Thesis Installation View

Figure 42. Thesis Installation View

Figure 43. Thesis Installation View

Figure 44. Thesis Installation View

Figure 45. Thesis Installation View

Figure 46. Thesis Installation View

Figure 47. Thesis Installation View

Figure 48. Thesis Installation View

Takayuki Kubota, *Hohoemigaeshi (Untitled)*, 2015, SD Video (color, sound), 10”, Loop.
Figure 49. Thesis Installation View

Takayuki Kubota, Hohoemigaeshi (Untitled), 2016, Plaster of Paris, Glass, Wood, Stainless rod, and Water, Dimensions Variable. (The picture was taken on the last day of the exhibition, May 7, 2016.)
Figure 50. Thesis Installation View