



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EAST ASIAN STUDIES CENTER

Institute for Japanese Studies Lecture Series

Katsura Yuki and the Stakes of Exposure

Namiko Kunimoto

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The Ohio State University

Monday, October 30, 2017

4:30-6:00 pm

Ramseyer Hall 100

29 W Woodruff Ave

Abstract: This presentation examines the work of Katsura Yuki (1913-1991), a Tokyo-based painter and assemblage artist. Katsura enacted political resistance by representing contentious issues such as self-sacrifice in times of war, the United States Castle Bravo nuclear test, the representation of gay lovers, and the status of women in Japan. This presentation will focus specifically on her paintings from the 1930s-1960s, as well as her illustrations of the James Baldwin novel, *Another Country*, that were featured in the *Asahi Journal* in the 1960s. Katsura's body of work evaded the overdetermined masculine heroics of abstract expressionism and action art that had taken Japan by storm in the postwar period, forging an innovative mode of expression that was whimsical and strange in its tone, but nonetheless bore a potent political thrust.



By experimenting with the visibility and invisibility of the body, I argue Katsura enacted what Jacques Rancière terms political “dissensus.” Rancière sees genuine art and politics as those that create new relations between the visible and the invisible, liberating bodies from their assigned places and breaking with the ‘natural’ order of the sensible. Similarly, by experimenting with the visibility of the Othered body Katsura reoriented aesthetic-political sensibility and opened up a space for a wider discourse on gender and race in Japan.

Bio: Namiko Kunimoto is an assistant professor in History of Art. Her recent essays include “Tanaka Atsuko’s Electric Dress and the Circuits of Subjectivity” published September 2013 in *The Art Bulletin* and “Shiraga Kazuo: The Buddhist Hero” published in *Shiraga/Motonaga: Between Action and the Unknown* in 2015. Dr. Kunimoto’s awards include a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Fellowship, Japan Foundation Fellowships (2007 and 2016), and a College Art Association Millard/Meiss Author Award. She has been a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and is an executive member of Japan Arts and Globalization and Vice-President of the Japanese Art History Forum. Her book, *The Stakes of Exposure: Anxious Bodies in Postwar Japanese Art*, was published in February 2017 by the University of Minnesota Press.

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