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Ayako Kano

University of Pennsylvania, akano@sas.upenn.edu

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Women? Japan? Art?:
Chino Kaori and the Feminist Art History Debates
Ayako Kano

Introduction
The debates Chino Kaori participated in intensively during the last five years of her life have often been termed the “gender debates” (jendā ronsō).1 As several Japanese scholars have pointed out, the term “gender” (jendā) was first introduced into the Japanese academic vocabulary by sociologists who used it to denote the socially observable difference between men and women. The Japanese term “jendā” therefore carries both the connotations of academic objectivity and political neutrality supposedly lacking in terms like “feminism” and “women’s liberation.”2 To engage in gender studies by this definition, means that one can observe and analyze gender difference, without necessarily desiring to challenge the system that creates such a difference.

Yet it is important to note that this is not the only meaning of “gender” in Japan: for example, the way the term has been used by the Image & Gender Research Association (Imēji & Jendā Kenkyūkai), an interdisciplinary research association co-founded by Chino and several like-minded women in 1995, has been to denote the effort to transcend the heterosexism of mainstream feminist discourse, as well as to mark an awareness that gender categories exist in a complex web that intersects with categories such as class, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and age.

This means that the term “gender” can be used very differently by different people within Japanese discourse: feminists use it to further advance and critically refine their agenda of challenging gender discrimination; non-feminists use it as a less political and less objectionable alternative to “feminism” and “women’s liberation”; and anti-feminists use it to denote what they believe to be “natural” gender differences.

Although Chino did not use the term “feminism” (feminizumu) very often in her writings, I believe that her project was a feminist one, and that her use of the term “gender” reflects her critical engagement with feminist ideas. It is for this reason that in
this paper I will often translate Chino’s use of the term “jendā” as “feminism” when it is clear from the context that what is meant is a challenge to the status quo of gender difference rather than a mere description of it.

The title of this paper is taken from an anthology of essays Chino edited in 1999, *Onna? Nihon? bi?: arata na jendā hiiyō ni mukete* (Women? Japan? Beauty? Toward a New Gender Criticism). The placement of the three question marks is eye-catching and deliberate, intended to signal the questioning of the categories “women” (*onna*), “Japan” (*Nihon*), and “beauty” (*bi*). In the title of the symposium that became the basis for the anthology, the Japanese terms for “women,” “Japan,” and “beauty,” were placed in quotation marks, further foregrounding their status as concepts to be critically interrogated. As I hope to show below, Chino’s critical interrogation of “women,” “Japan,” and “beauty” was also at the heart of the debates in which she later became involved.

The debates in question began in the summer of 1997, with the most intense phase lasting about two years. There were two main strands to the debates, one that focused on the academic discourse of art history, the other on the contemporary art scene and art exhibits. Remarkably, despite the often lamented split between art history and art criticism, the two realms came together in these debates.

Chino was directly involved only in the first strand of these debates, that is, the debates on art history, but she also wrote a comprehensive analysis that considered the two strands together. In doing so, she also clearly expressed her solidarity with those on one side of the second strand of the debates on contemporary art and art exhibits. In this paper I would like to focus on the strand in which she was directly involved, but I will also show how these two strands are closely related, and how their points of contention virtually overlap.

**Debates on Art History**

The debates on art history began with responses to a talk given by Chino in December 1997 at an international symposium titled “Today, Looking Back on Japanese Art History Studies” (*Ima, Nihon no bijutsushigaku o furikaeru*). She opened her talk with the following words, in which she specifically chose the addressee of her message: “My talk today is a message intended for people who feel stifled by the conditions of art history studies in Japan today, those who feel like they are suffering and suffocating from lack of air.” Having thus selected her addressee, she continued with a statement about the inherently partial and biased nature of scholarship in general:

> There is no such thing as academic scholarship that is neutral and does not take a position. Each and every one of us must begin our studies from positions that are biased by the values of the age or the place in which we live. However, we have the ability to make contacts and learn from others, understand our own biases, and thus gradually correct our own scholarship.

Her main argument was therefore to support the introduction of new perspectives to the
study of art history in order to correct the biases of the past. Gender was one of these new perspectives, and particularly worthy of attention, according to Chino.

Today, if we desire to study in a way that is true to our times, we cannot remain indifferent to issues of class or status, race or ethnicity, and, above all, to issues of gender. These are mutually related issues, but today I will focus on gender for the following reasons: gender issues are almost totally being ignored, not only in art history, but in Japanese academia in general, and their significance has not been recognized at all.  

She then went on to make a statement that has been much quoted: “What will change in art history if we start considering gender issues? The answer is: Everything will change.”

It is hard to imagine that many readers today would object to any of the statements that Chino made that day in December 1997. Yet they set off what curator Mitsuda Yuri has aptly called an “allergic reaction” among art historians. Some of the more striking symptoms of this allergic reaction included statements like the following: “I felt offended in a way that words can’t describe…. I don’t know how far she wants to go in applying gender theory to the study of art or whether she intends to come back from that point.”

A particularly fierce exchange occurred on the pages of the journal Aida (Between) between the two art historians Inaga Shigemi, who criticized Chino’s statements, and Wakakuwa Midori, who came to Chino’s defense. Others like Ogawa Hiromitsu, an art historian at the University of Tokyo, and Kano Hiroyuki, a curator at the Kyoto National Museum, further added their voices to the critique of Chino’s statements.

In her talk Chino proposed that introducing a consciousness of gender issues would change the way scholars regard the discipline of art history:

Once we become aware of gender issues, we realize that the objects and themes that have been discussed in art history studies until now have all been chosen according to the values of one segment of society, heterosexual men. And we realize that it is a fundamental mistake to believe that such an art history is “universal” and “mainstream.” To realize even this much is already to dispel half of our feelings of being stifled. For, through this realization we see the possibilities for creating a new kind of art history studies, different from the conventional one.

In critiquing this point, Inaga also stated that he too felt stifled by the field of art history studies in Japan, but did not think it was due to the lack of consideration of gender issues: “To believe that the introduction of gender perspective will shatter the main fallacies [of art history studies] is to fall into the fallacy that mistakes the ‘values’ of a ‘minority’ as ‘universal.'” One of Inaga’s main critiques is that the feminist perspective mistakes the epistemological and ethical dimensions of male domination. He criticized Chino for saying that she had been mistaken when she had believed that conventional art history was universal. It was universal, he argued, because the discourse of male domination has been universal. To say that art has been dominated by men is
historically and epistemologically correct, even though we may want to object to that domination as having been ethically and politically wrong.

The point is a tricky but important one, so allow me to summarize the difference as follows, at the risk of reducing the arguments to caricatures. The difference between Inaga’s position and Chino’s position comes down to two different views of art history. The first position claims that there are no female Picassos and Matisses because the art world has been male dominated. The second position claims that there might well have been female Picassos and Matisses, but the conventional framework of art history cannot recognize this fact because it defines great art in a fundamentally masculinist way.

Inaga holds the first position. We can critique male domination as having prevented women from becoming great artists, but that still does not change the fact that there have been no great female artists. He believes that the male domination of art history is a historically correct fact, and cannot be challenged even by feminist critique. Chino, on the other hand, argued for the fundamental reexamination of the notion of artistic evaluation itself, from the perspective of gender, as well as of class, race, and ethnicity. For her, feminist critique was to extend beyond pointing out that conventional art history has been dominated by a small group of men; it was to raise the possibility that there could be an alternative art history.¹⁴

It may be useful to cite one other critic of Chino’s talk in order to draw out the main points of contention. The following statements were made by the curator Kano Hiroyuki:

1) Those who profess belief in gender theory should not then object to the beliefs of others. Or do they intend to castigate as heretical those whom they are unable to convert by preaching?

2) I too believe that “museums should be places for analysis, critique, and discussion.” On this point I agree with Ms. Chino. But if that “analysis” is to be based on a “discourse” that is unrelated to the era in which the work emerged, then I absolutely oppose it. We should exclude from the outset the kind of foolishness that is akin, for instance, to critiquing sumo according to the rules of wrestling.

3) Also, I believe that one of the museum’s “missions” is to “worship god-like great artists.”

Similar points were made by various other critics. The main areas of contention between the two sides of the feminist art history debates can thus be summarized as follows: 1) the question of the value and status of a feminist perspective, i.e., the question of “woman”; 2) the question of the use of Western theories and perspectives in Japanese criticism, i.e., the question of “Japan”; and 3) the question of the existence of a realm of art impervious to critique, i.e., the question of “beauty.”

In the debates, anti-feminist art historians argued: 1) feminist critique could also become stifling;¹⁵ 2) feminist critique is a foreign import, borrowed from the West;¹⁶
and 3) there is a realm of art that cannot be touched by criticism.

The feminist art historians replied as follows: 1) feminist critique intersects with critiques from other perspectives such as class and race, and while it is certainly not the only valid critical perspective, it is a particularly important one given the status quo of art history studies in Japan; 2) the fact that feminist criticism and gender theory originated abroad do not discredit them; 3) there is no sacred realm of art that is impervious to critique.

On the first point, the exchange between Ogawa Hiromitsu and Suzuki Tokiko, a professor of art history at Meiji Gakuin University, is instructive. Ogawa critiqued Suzuki’s introductory essay for the volume Art and Gender: The Asymmetrical Regard (Bijutsu to jendā: hitaishō no shisen; 1997)\(^7\) as providing only Japanese, European, and American perspectives. The absence of other perspectives, especially perspectives from areas historically oppressed by Japan, Europe, and the United States, troubled Ogawa who complained: “There is no recognition that emphasizing the discrimination against women in nations that oppress others potentially obscures and enables racial and cultural discrimination in Asian and African nations that are oppressed as a whole.”\(^8\) Suzuki replied that this was a (possibly intentional) misreading of her article.\(^9\) In introducing the ideas of a “new art history”—one component of which is an emphasis on “gender and art history”—she points out that the approach sheds light on “works by unknown or little known artists, works by women artists, and works from areas other than Euro-America” and that the approach also takes into consideration “the social position—sex, class, race—of the work’s producer, the portrayed subject, and the work’s main consumers.”\(^10\) While it is true that this particular volume does not include essays that focus on Asian art outside of Japan and China or African art, Suzuki rightly elucidates the politics of Ogawa’s rhetorical move:

If there is a study that points out a particular discriminatory structure (let’s call it structure A), then to critique it by saying that it fails to refer to a different discriminatory structure (let’s call it structure B), is often nothing more than a means of refutation, unless the critic is driven by a sense of necessity because he himself is being discriminated against by structure B. This is because even if the scholar who points out structure A withdraws her own study because of this critique, it is rare that the critic would then go on to conduct a study that points out structure B.\(^11\)

While Ogawa specializes in the art of China, women or gender issues in Chinese art is clearly not the focus of his scholarship. Thus it is disingenuous of him to attack Suzuki and the other contributors to the volume for not dealing with gender issues in Asia and Africa.

The second point, concerning the putative origins of feminist theory and criticism, might require some elaboration. The defenders of feminist art history argued that the desire to repudiate all borrowing and thereby return to some kind of pure and originary Japanese culture is nothing but a fantasy. As Wakakuwa summarizes it: “There is basically not a single issue the world faces today of which it can be said that the problem
exists only in Euro-America and not in Japan, or that it has nothing to do with Japan." Suzuki also concurs, "In the present age, there is no such thing as a problem that exists only in one area of the earth and is totally irrelevant for people living elsewhere. Furthermore, all forms of 'knowledge,' no matter what their origins may be, ought to interact with each other and merge in order to become the means to solve these problems."

The fundamental hybridity of culture as well as the global imbrication of scholarship invalidates the critique of "borrowedness." Chino went even further, pointing out that the attitude of refusing the notion of "borrowing" was "not merely old-fashioned and foolish, but deserved strict censure" as a dangerously nationalistic stance.

The third and last point, Chino's insistence that there is no sacred realm that can be kept insulated from critique, was something that she reiterated in a variety of venues. This point, for example, was part of her critique of the advocates of the so-called "liberal view of history" (jiyū shugi shikan) and their revisionist history textbook. The infamous "new history textbook" published by FuyoSHA in 2001 sought to instill patriotic pride in Japan by emphasizing how Japanese art equaled the best works of Greek antiquity and the Italian Renaissance. Chino pointed out how this textbook reproduced the myth of "universal art" as created by "great (male) genius," and how in the absence of the fundamental dismantling of such myths of universality, an emphasis on the particularity of "Japanese beauty" only served to satisfy Western Orientalism.

In a discussion on Heian art, Chino also questioned the concept of art itself and asked, "Why is the Tale of Genji Picture Scroll (Genji monogatari emaki, mid-twelfth century) and not a vase (tsubo) considered art? Why is a pair of wooden clogs (geta) not art?" She dared anyone to answer these questions. In this way Chino disputed the idea that "art" was unassailable. She concluded her talk at the symposium in 1997 by raising the possibility that the very discipline of art history might be dismantled as a result of a questioning of art prompted, for example, by the introduction of a gendered and feminist perspective.

In today's report, I have discussed from several angles how the introduction of gender as a perspective would be unmistakably significant for the field of art history in the future. Yet, at the same time, I can say that I no longer place much belief in the old framework of the academic discipline called "art history." What I hoped to communicate here today, to as many people as possible, is the message that we have the ability to engage in new scholarship and transcend the framework used until now. And in doing so, the concept of gender can provide us with an extremely effective tool. Whether the new brand of scholarship that we create will be called by the name "art history," or by some other name, will be up to people of a later era to decide.

In other words, what mattered to Chino was not protecting some kind of entity called "art," or the discipline of art history, but opening both up to critical analysis and discussion in a way that would be meaningful for our time.
As seen above, the areas of contention in the feminist art history debates were those of “woman,” “Japan” and “beauty,” precisely those terms in the title of the anthology edited by Chino. Does “woman” signify a monolithic, essentialist, and potentially oppressive category? Or, does it signify a critical interrogation of the categories of gender, sex, sexuality, as they intersect with other categories of subject positions? Is “Japan” an area with a particular and unique culture, alien to “borrowed” ideologies like feminism? Or, is “Japan” a part of the network of global cultural and academic exchange? Is there a realm of “beauty” impervious to critique? Or, is “beauty” also a historical, cultural, and social construct, to be analyzed and critiqued, dissected and potentially discarded?

The anti-feminists wanted to freeze-dry these concepts, to keep them unquestioned, stable, and safe. Chino questioned these concepts in fundamental ways, pointing out that the attempt to keep these concepts free from critique was at the heart of the proponents of a sexist, nationalist, and conventionally stifling art history.

Debates on Art Exhibits

Let us now turn to the second strand of debates, the strand focusing on the contemporary art scene and art exhibits, and focus on the overlapping points of contention with the art history debates. The debate was touched off by Sanda Haruo, the arts editor of the Mainichi newspaper. In an essay published in the journal LR (Live and Review) in August of 1997, Sanda accused the Japanese art scene from the mid 1980s onward of being seized by various fads, such as feminism, ecology, and multiculturalism.²⁸ He rejected these fads as “borrowed things” (karimono), Euro-American imports without any “urgent social reality” (seppaku shita genjitsu) to support them in the Japanese context. Not only that, he also saw this trend as harboring an oppressive tendency based on political correctness (seigisei).²⁹

When a curator of one of the exhibits explicitly attacked by Sanda responded to this critique in the same journal in February of 1998, the debate began to focus more sharply on feminism and gender. The respondent was Kokatsu Reiko, who as curator at Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts had been organizing a considerable number of exhibits by women artists and exhibits focusing on gender issues.³⁰

Others soon joined the debate: Wakakuwa Midori, professor of art history at Chiba University, once again took up the feminist banner to support Kokatsu’s position, and defended the need for art exhibits organized around gender issues. Kitahara Megumi, art critic and professor at Kōnan University, also joined the debate in an article in the journal Impaction (Inpakushon). Sanda’s position, meanwhile, was supported by those like Ueda Takahiro, an art critic writing for the journal Musashino Art (Musashino bijutsu).

Chino summarized this debate in her article “Gender Debates as Seen in the Realms of Museums and Art History: 1997-1998,” published in 1999. The main arguments against using gender and feminism as a framework for exhibiting art were as follows: 1)
it is borrowed from Euro-America and is not supported by Japanese social reality; 2) it has oppressive tendencies of its own; and 3) it ends up showcasing art that is of questionable artistic merit.  

The defenders of feminism countered these critiques point by point. Here we can see the overlap with the first strand of the debates on the academic discourse of art history. We have already dealt with the first point, that of “borrowing.” A related point is the putative lack of “urgent social reality” driving the interest in gender and feminism in the Japanese art scene. Kokatsu, Wakakuwa, Kitahara, and Chino pointed out that for women—whose work as artists, curators, students, and scholars had been long stifled by an overwhelmingly male-dominated art world—to be told that their interest in gender and feminism lacked the context of an “urgent social reality” was insulting. Yet Sanda insisted that such urgent social reality did not exist prior to its being conveniently “found” by curators who merely capitalized on the borrowed ideas of feminist thought and gender theory. He argued that the problem of gender difference (seisō no mujin) existed long before the 1990s; if feminist art exhibits were motivated by the social reality of gender difference, he asked, why did such exhibits, previously rare, suddenly increase in the 1990s? Sanda failed to see that the dearth of such exhibits and scholarship prior to the 1990s was evidence of the rampant sexism against which women artists and curators had been struggling for a very long time.

Secondly, the charge that “gender” can itself become an oppressive ideology, or in Sanda’s words, “that it becomes an unconditional correctness that oppresses art,” was exposed as little more than a defensive reaction of a critic whose masculinist privilege was threatened. Kokatsu, for example, dismisses his objection as indicative of “a persecution delusion that foresees an impending era in which men will be dominated by women.” From another angle, however, she also points out that the “gender art” of the 1990s, unlike the “feminist art” of the 1970s, deals not only with the binary of female-male, but also “extends its perspective to value the various minorities with regard to race, religion, body, age, and sexuality.”

Finally, the third point is the question of the artwork itself. This point is presented as the ultimate defense against feminist critique. According to Sanda, even if an art work is motivated by or portrays evil, impurity, or immorality, it is not thereby diminished as art. And, conversely, Sanda speculates aloud as to whether recent works that deal with gender might have been “somehow regarded favorably according to an unspoken understanding,” though they may be lacking in artistic merit as defined by a critic such as himself. In other words, sexist art might be good art, while feminist art might be bad art. The criterion Sanda gives for artistic merit is “expressiveness,” the ability to “strike at our hearts as expression.” And by saying that art driven by gender concerns does not strike at his heart, he reiterates his belief in the lack of urgency of gender as an issue.

The belief that judgments about art can and should be made apart from political
judgments is reiterated by the art critic Ueda Takahiro as well.⁴⁰ Responding to Kokatsu’s and Wakakuwa’s statements in particular, he insists on “the possibility, nay the necessity, of the validity of critique” concerning art.⁴¹ Yet the position of these critics of feminist art is self-contradictory. It is precisely because these critics are threatened by the politics of feminist art, that they decry the works as devoid of artistic merit. In other words, political and artistic judgments are entangled in their assessment, contrary to the separation that they espouse. As evidence of this fact, it suffices to point out that Ueda dismisses such exhibits and the trends embodied by them despite the fact that he has “not seen a single one of these types of feminism-related exhibits that have been frequently organized in recent years.”⁴² Nonetheless, he explains that this lack of knowledge does not contradict with “the responsibility of critique.”⁴³ His “critique” in this case is therefore not the critique of art works and art exhibits; what he reserves the right to engage in is the “critique” of feminist art curators and historians like Kokatsu and Wakakuwa.

One notices in this second strand of the debate on art exhibits, as well as in the first strand of the debate on art history, the desire to delimit a realm of artistic evaluation that would be free from the political challenge of feminism. In the second strand of the debates this desire takes the form of arguing for the autonomy of art; in the first strand, it takes the form of arguing for the autonomy of art history scholarship. And it is precisely the desire to impede or delay critique that Chino ceaselessly challenged.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Five years have passed since the debates on feminist art history and art criticism reached maximum intensity. In the years between 1998 and her death on 31 December 2001, Chino devoted time to broadening the critique of art history and connecting it to the issue of history education in public schools. Her aforementioned critique of the junior high school history textbooks was presented at a symposium she organized on 15 December 2001, just a few weeks before her death.⁴⁵ At the symposium, Tanaka Hidemichi, a professor of art history at Tōhoku University and one of the editors of the Fuyōsha textbook,⁴⁶ insisted on the meaning of “Japanese art” as part of the great history that constitutes “Japanese identity,” and also emphasized the persistence of “artistic value” that cannot be brushed away by Marxist, post-colonialist, feminist, and other approaches to history.⁴⁷ In response, Chino reiterated her critique of the kind of representation of art history that would posit a monolithic entity called “Japan” and “Japanese beauty,” and argued that it was dangerous to use works of art to illustrate historical events in textbooks without elucidating the power relationships between those who produced the art, those who commissioned the art, and those who consumed the art. Her critique of the use of art history in history education extended beyond the specific example of the controversial Fuyōsha textbook, and it is clear that the questions raised in the feminist art history debates occupied Chino to the very end of her life.⁴⁸
In her article “Embodying Hope: Colonial Memory and Contemporary Art in Korean Museums” (Kibō o shintaika suru: Kankoku no myūjiamu ni miru shokuminchi no kōoku to gendai bijutsu), published in 2001, Chino wrote movingly about the experience of confronting the legacy of Japanese colonialism through exposure to Korean art installations. She concludes:

I want to stop praising “art” enshrined in temple-like museums, worshipping it, and cooperating with the forces that encourage people to stop thinking. I would rather look thoroughly at a work, observe it down to its most intricate detail, contextualize it within the realities of society, and read hope into it as an individual of today’s world. My wish as an art historian is to continue performing this practice. To really “look” at a work of art, even a work made in the past, is to consider it within the context of our own present day problems, with our contemporaries. Such an approach leads to the possibility of creating a new future together.\footnote{Similarly, in commenting on the gender debates in her 1999 essay “Gender Debates as Seen in the Realms of Museums and Art History: 1997-1998,” included in Women? Japan? Beauty? Toward a New Gender Criticism, Chino also expressed the following hope: “Some day, gender awareness (jendā no shisō) will be shared by many people, and these ‘gender debates’ of late-twentieth-century Japan will be regarded as historical events of the distant past. That day may not be tomorrow, but it will come, some day.”} Chino Kaori dedicated her life to bringing us closer to that day. And her hope for the future will always be with us.

Profile

**Ayako Kano** is an associate professor of modern Japanese literature at the University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches Japanese theater, literature, and women’s studies. Her recent publications include *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theater, Gender, and Nationalism* (Palgrave, 2001).

Notes

1. I first met Chino Kaori in 1996 at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Hawaii. This is also when I first learned of the Image & Gender Research Association (Imēji & Jendā Kenkyukai). During the academic year 1998-99, when I was on a year of research leave in Japan, I was fortunate enough to participate in the group’s activities. It was then that I learned of the series of debates in which members of the Image & Gender Research Association had become involved, and which had claimed much of Chino’s academic and emotional energies. My aim in this paper is to bear witness, not only to her struggle, but also to her hopes for a better future.
4. Chino Kaori, *Nihon no bijutsushi*...

The proceedings have been published as Tokyo Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo ed., Kataru genzai, katarareru kako: Nihon no bijutsushigaku hyakunen (Narrating the Present, The Narrated Past: 100 Years of Japanese Art History Studies) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1999). The abstract of Chino’s speech was also reproduced in Aida (Between), no. 29 (May 1998): 3. The quotes are from Chino’s speech itself (not the abstract), as cited in “Gender Debates as Seen in the Realms of Museums and Art History: 1997-1998,” 124-27. The translations are mine.

6. Chino followed this with: “This means that the recipients of my message are likely to be young people.” I do not believe this to be an ageist statement. The academic system almost ensures that the older members of her audience would have been scholars occupying the most powerful academic positions—they are the ones responsible for the stifling conditions and, like herself, are in the position to change them. The young are, by definition, lacking in such institutional powers.

7. Ibid., 125.

8. Ibid., 126.

9. Ibid., 126-27.


14. Note that in her rebuttal to Inaga, Wakakuwa takes a slightly different position. She defines the “gendered view of history” (jendā shikan) as beyond right and wrong. What she advocates is an “objective science” and a “view of history that reconstructs the power relations of men and women as a whole, in historiographical, sociological, and cultural terms,” rather than “a political ideology that objects to the male domination of the past and indicts it as a mistake” (Wakakuwa, 7). Wakakuwa believes that Inaga misunderstands Chino on this point. According to Wakakuwa, Chino is not arguing about male domination as a factual historical event, but rather about the fallacy of believing male-dominated discourse, i.e., a non-gendered view of history. While it is possible to see Wakakuwa’s position as similar to position 2) outlined above, the difference is that Wakakuwa professes belief in an “objective” and unbiased perspective (even if this is merely a tactical move), whereas Chino clearly rejects the possibility of such a perspective. To draw out the difference between their stances even further, whereas Wakakuwa’s position would see the future of gendered art history studies leading to an ever more objective and complete version of art history, Chino would probably argue that scholars in each era see art history according to the era’s own set of biases, priorities, and perspectives. Her focus is gender because it is a concern of “our time.” I raise this point not to deliberately place a wedge between Chino’s position and those of her supporters, but in order to elucidate the full ramifications of this debate and raise questions about the significance of a gendered perspective in the study of history. Wakakuwa Midori, “Jendā no shiten ni tatsu bijutsushishi no meguru ‘dansetsu’ no genetsu ni tsuite: Inaga Shigemi shi no ‘Ima, Nihon no bijutsushigaku o furikaeru’ o kiite’ o yonde” (On the Discourse of ‘Men Concerning Art History from the Perspective of Gender: Upon Reading Mr. Inaga Shigemi’s “Upon Listening to the ‘Today, Looking Back on Japanese Art History Studies’ Symposium”), Aida (Between), no. 29 (May 1998): 2-8.

15. Inaga Shigemi asks, “Is there any guarantee that the principle of liberation of ‘half’ of those ‘stifled’ would remain unrelated to some other form of oppression?” (Inaga, 13). This is an often-heard complaint against feminism as potentially leading to a kind of reverse discrimination of men.
16. Ogawa Hiromitsu sees the application of Euro-American “new art history” as an example of “plain evidence of the common evil of modern Japanese culture, which has refused to question its own subjectivity, and has repeatedly regarded as absolute the newest imported concept, and relied on it as authoritative.” Ogawa Hiromitsu, “Shoga to bijutsu: ‘Ima, Nihon no bijutsushigaku o furikaeru kokusai kenkyūkai ni yosete’ (Calligraphy and Painting Versus Art: On the International Symposium “Today, Looking Back on Japanese Art History Studies”), Bijutsushi ronshō (Discussions in Art History), no. 14 (1997-98): 157-66. The journal is published by the University of Tokyo, where Ogawa is professor of East Asian art. The quote is from page 162.


18. Ogawa, “Shoga to bijutsu” (Calligraphy and Painting Versus Art), 162.


20. Suzuki, “Bijutsu to jendā” (Art and Gender), 11.


22. Wakakuwa, “Jendā no shiten ni tatsu bijutsushi o meguru ‘dansei’ no gensetsu ni tsuite” (On the Discourse of ‘Men’ Concerning Art History from the Perspective of Gender), 7.


25. Chino Kaoi, “Shikakuteki ni rekishi no inpe i o hakaru” (Attempting to Observe History Visually), in Rekishi kyōkasho daironsō (The Great Debate on History Textbooks), special issue of Bessatsu rekishi dokuhon (History Reader Supplement) 87, vol. 26, no. 26 (October 2001): 40-45. The quotes are from page 42. Similar critiques of the imbrication of the universal and the particular are to be found in Sakai Naoki, “Chi no shokuminchi tai sei to Ninonokori de aru koto; riron to dōjiteki na kyōdōtai o megute” (The Colonial System of Knowledge and Japaneseeness: On Theory and Simultaneous Community,” Women? Japan? Beauty?, 99-115.


27. Chino Kaoi, “Nihon no bijutsushigaku gensetsu ni okeru jendā kenkyū no jūyōsei (The Significance of Gender Studies), speech, quoted in her article, “Bijutsukan, bijutsushigaku no ryōiki ni miru jendā ronsō: 1997-1998” (Gender Debates as Seen in the Realms of Museums and Art History: 1997-1998), 141.


29. Ibid., 22-23.


Kitahara Megumi points out that even before the 1990s, there were small-scale exhibits. See her “Nihon no bijutsukai ni okeru ‘takaga seibetsu’ o meguru ronso: 1997-98” (Debates Concerning ‘Mere Sexual Difference’ in the Japanese Art World”), 101.

35. Sanda, “Jōkyō kō 6: bijutsu to seigi o megutte” (Thoughts on Situation 6), 25.

36. Kokatsu Reiko, “Yokuatsu no rooni o megutte Sanda shi ni taisuru sai hanron: futatabi jendā to bijutsu ni tsuite” (Responding Again to Mr. Sanda Concerning the Logic of Oppression: Another Look at Gender and Art), LR, no. 8 (July 1998): 70-76.

37. Kokatsu, “‘Bijutsu to jendā’ no genzai: ‘yureru onna/yuragu imēji’ ten o megutte” (“Art and Gender” Today: On the Exhibit Waverings Woman/Waverings Image), 33-34.

38. Sanda, “Jōkyō kō 6: bijutsu to seigi o megutte” (Thoughts on Situation 6), 25.

39. Ibid., 25. A related criterion is “individual spontaneity” (ko no jihatsusei), which he feels is stifled by feminism, a partisan ideology. See Sanda Haruo, “Jōkyō kō 8: Han’eiron to tōhase o megutte Wakakuwa Midori, Kokatsu Reiko ryōshi ni kotae ru” (Thoughts on Situation 8: On Reflection Theory and Partisanship, Responding to Both Ms. Wakakuwa Midori and Ms. Kokatsu Reiko), LR, no. 9 (September 1998). In this article Sanda also objects to feminist arguments that would interpret “mere sexual difference” (takaga seibetsu) as a matter of difference in consciousness. It is this phrase that is picked up by Kitahara Megumi in her “Nihon no bijutsukai ni okeru ‘takaga seibetsu’ o meguru ronso: 1997-98” (Debates Concerning ‘Mere Sexual Difference’ in the Japanese Art World”).

40. Ueda Takahiro, “Bijutsushi no musume (tachi) e” (To the Daughter(s) of Art History), Musashino bijutsu (Musashino Art), no. 110 (October 1998): 78-79. The quote is from page 79. In an equally questionable gesture, Ueda—even though he has not read the exchange between Inaga and Chino—“predicts that the young and accomplished scholar Mr. Inaga is justified” (Ueda, 79).

41. Ibid., 79.

42. Ibid., 79.

43. Ibid., 79.

44. One might ask if it is possible to reconstruct the notion of “beauty” after critique. One position would be to discard the notion of “beauty” altogether. Another position, articulated by Karatani Kōjin, would be to keep questioning and distorting the borders of “beauty” and what is thought to lie “outside” of it (i.e., politics, economics, science, and ethics), without reducing the former to the latter. Following Kant, who delineated three separate realms that govern our attitudes toward objects—epistemology (true or false), morality (right or wrong), and taste (pleasant or unpleasant)—Karatani suggests that each of the realms of truth, goodness, and beauty come into existence through the active bracketing of the other realms. The aesthetic attitude, therefore, amounts to an indispensable ability to bracket various other interests, such as those of epistemology and morality. However, these brackets can always be removed, and in Kant, no priority is given to one or the other kind of bracket. The function of feminist theory, for instance, is to unbracket: feminists point out what has been bracketed in masculinist interpretations. The problem of the so-called “aesthetes,” by contrast, is that they forget to unbracket. But to unbracket does not mean denying artistry and beauty completely and forever—the work of art will allow other interpretations that will bracket the first interpretation again. And yet, this does not mean that the critique performed by the first interpretation is either negated or that it disappears. What Karatani thus advocates is a constant bracketing and unbracketing, and a refusal to stop this movement. See Karatani Kōjin, “Bigaku no kōyō: ‘Orientarizumu’ igo” (The Uses of Aesthetics: After “Orientalism”), Hihyō kikan (Critical Space), vol. 2, no. 14 (1997): 42-55.

45. The symposium was titled “The Mode of Narration of Japanese Culture and Art in Junior High School History Textbooks” (Chūgakkō no rekishi kyōkasho ni okeru Nihon bunka, bijutsu no katararekata), and was held as a special meeting of the Eastern Division of the Art History Association (Bijutsushi Gakkai) in Japan. A detailed and sympathetic account of the symposium can be found in Konno Hideharu, “Bijutsushi to rekishi kyōoku: tozetsu shita kokoromi” (Art History and History Education: An Interrupted Attempt), Rei kishi hyōron (History Review), no. 634 (February 2003): 49-58.

46. Tanaka also became chair of the so-called “Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform” (Aitarashi rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai) in 2002. English versions of the organization’s statements can be found at: <http://www.tsukurukai.com/eng/mokuj.htm>

47. Quoted in Konno Hideharu, “Bijutsushi to rekishi kyōoku: tozetsu shita kokoromi” (Art History and History Education: An Interrupted Attempt), 55.
48.
This concern is shared by various scholars who have questioned the institution of art history in Japan. See, for example, Ikeda Shinobu, “Nihon bijutsushi to onna” (Japanese Art History and “Woman”), *Rekishi hyöron* (History Review), no. 634 (February 2003): 3-13.

49.
Chino Kaori, “Kibō o shintaika suru: Kankoku no myōjiamu ni miru shokuminchi no kioku to gendai bijutsu” (Embodying Hope; Colonial Memory and Contemporary Art in Korean Museums), *Kanagawa Daigaku hyōron* (Kanagawa University Review), no. 39 (2001): 85-95. The quote is from page 94. This was one of the last articles Chino published. It is translated into English in the present volume on pages 62-71. For a comprehensive bibliography of Chino’s publications, see pages 72-86 of this volume, and in Japanese see *Image & Gender*, no. 3 (November 2002): 36-38.

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