

Report from JSPS Seminar, Alumni Club Denmark:

Collaboration and Community-Building in Contemporary Art in Japan and Denmark

University of Copenhagen, November 4-5, 2017

The seminar was hosted and organized by Associate Professor Gunhild Borggreen, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, with the practical help by student volunteers Anna Klein and Josefine Præstekjær.

The seminar was inspired by the increasing interest in socially-engaged art works on the contemporary art scene. In Japan, it was especially the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear incidents in the North-Eastern Japan in 2011 that inspired many Japanese artists to use their artistic practice as contribution to the recovery and rebuilding of local communities. Other elements of precarious societies, such as depopulation in rural areas and decline of the Japanese population, have triggered the emergence of *chiiki aato* (regional art) and various types of socially-engaged art projects in Japan. In Denmark, similar demographic changes in rural areas have triggered a number of new initiatives in small villages that engages artists and local residents to collaborate in art projects that contribute to strengthening local identity and community-building processes.

Pre-seminar announcements

Early on, a website was created under the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen web-based calendar function and design:

<http://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/Calendar/2017/collaboration-and-community-building-in-contemporary-art/>.



Announcements on Department of Arts and Cultural Studies (left) and Facebook (right)

A flyer for the seminar (Appendix A) was created and forwarded to 98 names on an e-mail list made by Gunhild Borggreen for this purpose. The list comprised of names from various relevant networks in the field of art research as well as Japan studies, including members from the network Take Part (<http://projekter.au.dk/takepart/>) as well as list of participants from the conference Art & Politics in Postwar Japan that Gunhild Borggreen had organised and hosted in May 2016

(<http://kunstogkulturvidenskab.ku.dk/artandpoliticsinpostwarjapan/>). The invitation to join was sent to the list on September 29, 2017, about 5 weeks before the event was to take place.

The seminar was created as a Facebook event and announced on Gunhild Borggreen's own Facebook wall. It was also announced on the blog part of the network Take Part's website (<http://projekter.au.dk/takepart/nyheder/nyhed/artikel/collaboration-and-community-building-in-contemporary-art-in-japan-and-denmark/>). The seminar was announced on info-screen on the campus of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen. Furthermore, the event was also announced through word of mouth to students and staff at Department of Arts and Cultural Studies as well as Japan studies. Once participants had signed up, specific communication such as directions to the seminar site etc. was made through e-mail correspondence.

The seminar event

The seminar took place in the large lecture room 27.0.09 at University of Copenhagen, Southern Campus, Njalsgade 136. Apart from a detailed description and map on the website, posters were placed around campus on the morning of November 4, enabling participants, who were not familiar with the Southern Campus of the university to easily find the lecture room. The updated programme for the seminar (Appendix B) was copied and distributed among participants at the entrance.

Apart from 17 speakers and organisers, the group of participants consisted of 29 participants, in total 46 attendants. The list of participants (Appendix C) includes scholars and students in art research as well as Japan studies in Copenhagen and in Lund (Sweden). The list also includes art consultants and artists, which serves the purpose of crossing disciplinary lines between art research and artistic and curatorial practice.

The seating was arranged so that participants would sit on three sides of a square, facing each other, and the speaker placed at the fourth side of the square in front of a black board and a projection screen. Inside the square, some additional tables were placed facing the speaker in order to accommodate the more than 40 participants. In the back of the room, tables were set up for coffee, tea, fruit and other refreshments in order for refreshments to be close at hand. There was a name card with large letters for each participant to be placed on the table so that everyone could see the name of other participants on a distance.



Seminar participants



The academic programme

Beginning on Saturday morning of November 4th, around 40 people turned up to the seminar. After a brief welcome by Gunhild Borggreen, the host of the seminar, Dr Tsumoto Tadaharu from the JSPS Stockholm office gave a short presentation of the JSPS organisation, its history and the JSPS grant programmes in order for the audience to pursue the possibility to apply for JSPS grants themselves. JPS information material was available for free at a table in the lecture room.

Next, Professor Mōri Yoshitaka from Tokyo University of the Arts presented his keynote talk. With an extensive knowledge about artistic and activist movements in contemporary Japan, Professor Mōri presented a number of art projects that aim at raising the critical and environmental awareness to the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, as well as focus on artists who commit themselves to document and transmit the struggles of re-establishing local communities after the tsunami disaster in the Tōhoku region.



JSPS Director Tsumoto Tadaharu (left), Professor Mōri Yoshitaka (middle), and artist group Making Land (right)

After this, Ph.D. scholar Line Marie Thorsen from Aarhus University presented her research on new approaches to farming practices carried out as an art project in transnational setting in both Hong Kong and the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Niigata Prefecture in Japan.

The session after the lunch break focused on artistic practices. Artists and Ph.D. scholar Rikke Luther from University of Copenhagen talked about art projects she has carried out in Japan and in collaboration with Japanese school children. Next, member of the Danish-Japanese artist group Making Land presented various thoughts on collaboration practices, including Georg Jagunov and Jacob Remin. The artist Toshie Takeuchi made a performance, in which she got every participant out on the floor to help her realize a vision about collaboration and unity: using stones from the beach of Møn, all seminar participants joined their bodies into one large circle.



Everyone joining the artistic performance by Toshie Takeuchi

The last presentation in this session was Lene Noer, artist and curator, who talked about her involvement in a bottom-up, participatory cultural citizen art project under European cultural capital Aarhus 2017. This took place in four villages in the northern part of Denmark and reflected the different types of engagement of the local residents.

Sunday morning began with two Danish recipients of JSPS fellowships as a means to give other potential applicants insights into the experience of JSPS fellowships in Japan. Jacob Kreutzfeldt had stayed at Osaka City University in 2008 and carried out research in sound studies, while Gunhild Borggreen has also been affiliated with Osaka City University in 2006 and encountered examples of participatory art projects in various parts of Osaka.

This was followed by a session on transnational collaboration, in which three speakers presented different perspectives: Peter van der Meijden, Postdoc at the University of Copenhagen, presented some of the philosophically based art projects by the Japanese artist Matsuzawa Yutaka, and his international networks in the early 1970. Next, Professor Miryam Sas from University of California, Berkeley, spoke about interrelationships between human beings and things, in which she suggested the concept of *ageneement* rather than *assemblage* as a means to describe the ideas and practices of artists Nakahira Takumi in the 1970s. Finally, Signe Meisner Christensen, Postdoc at Zürcher Hochschule der Künste and Aalborg University, presented examples from the documenta 14 in Athens as a means of locating critical perspectives of collaboration and capitalism in broader context of international contemporary art movements and events.

In the afternoon, Professor Mōri made a short introduction to the documentary art film *Iki no ato* (Trace of breath) from 2016, which was screened afterwards in its full length (93 minutes). The film is directed by the young Japanese artist Komori Haruka, who went to the Tōhoku some time after the earthquake and tsunami to register the life of local people in the disaster areas. The film focuses on the seed shop owner Mr Sato and his struggles to overcome the sorrow of losing many neighbours and friends, and how the landscape is changing as new infrastructure compete with local traditions. After the film, participants at the seminar joined in a plenary discussion of the film and the ways in which ordinary people engage in artistic practices in their attempt to respond to precarious conditions in their personal lives as well as in the local community. The film *Iki no ato* thus became a significant way of ending the seminar - exposing many of the challenges in the Tōhoku area, but also demonstrating how art can have a significant effect on people in terms of coping with the situation and creating a vision of the future.

The social programme

The purpose of the seminar was to present a number of excellent talks about art projects in Japan, Denmark and elsewhere, as well as to give participants a chance to meet each other and exchange their interest in participatory and socially-engaged art. Various types of social interaction was part of the planning: after the first two presentations, participants were asked to speak with the person next to them for about five minutes and discuss some of the issues addressed by the two speakers. This more intimate format of conversation was an attempt to make everyone present in the room engage in the topic, but not by joining a plenary discussion where some people may feel intimidated by those who appear more “knowledgable” in the field. These five minutes of talking two-and-two made the room full of voices and eager discussions and made it easier to get everyone to join plenary talks later on.



Participants discussing two-by-two

Furthermore, easy access to coffee and refreshments in the lecture room would make it likely for participants to meet for brief conversations at the coffee table during breaks. The lunch break took place in the lunch room of the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies in informal surroundings and with a stunning view of the campus area from the 4th floor. Sandwich and soft drinks were served on a buffet style, and participants were free to choose their seating and engage in conversation with other participants. The sandwiches were bought from the near by bakery, which is an Anderson Bakery, a shop concept invented in Japan (and named after the famous writer H.C Anderson) and now with franchise shops in Denmark. This was yet another small example of mutual cultural exchange between Japan and Denmark.

On November 4th, the first day of seminar, participants were invited to join an informal reception outside the lecture room after the seminar. This was another chance for participants to talk to speakers, organisers and other participants over a glass of wine or juice, and to establish contacts and network for future collaborations.

Furthermore, thanks to support by the Scandinavia-Japan Sasakawa Foundation and the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, speakers were invited to join a dinner on the evening of Saturday November 4th. The dinner took place at Au Bistro, an informal wine bar and bistro restaurant close to the University of Copenhagen venue. The dinner functioned as a symbolic gesture of thanks for the speakers, who had all put a great effort in preparing their presentations and dedicated themselves in joining the plenary discussions and supporting the event in many ways.

Future prospects

No doubt that the presentation of Alumni Club Denmark and the JSPS grant opportunities will encourage scholars in Denmark to seek out JSPS as possible resources for future research projects in Japan. Also, the list of participants including e-mail addresses were shared among participants after the seminar in order for participants to get in touch and establish or continue collaborations. Furthermore, the host of the JSPS seminar, Associate Professor Gunhild Borggreen has received a grant from the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education's International Network Programme to build a bilateral network between Denmark and Japan on the topic of Collaboration and Community Building in Contemporary Art in Japan and Denmark in a two-year period 2018-2020. This means that the activities that began with the JSPS seminar can be continued forward and contribute to strengthen the research collaborations between Japan and Denmark in other formats.



All speakers and participants at the seminar.

Flyer for announcements



Collaboration and Community-Building in Contemporary Art in Japan and Denmark

University of Copenhagen, Southern Campus, Njalsgade 136, room 27.0.09

Saturday November 4th - Sunday November 5th, 2017

A seminar with presentations of art projects and artistic practices, as well as theoretical and methodological perspectives of research and knowledge production in the field of collaboration and community-based art in Japan, Denmark, and other places.

Speakers:

- Mōri Yoshitaka, Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts
- Miryam Sas, Professor at University of California, Berkeley
- Line Marie Thorsen, Ph.D fellow at Aarhus University
- Rikke Luther, artist and Ph.D fellow at University of Copenhagen
- Making Land art group: Georg Jagunov, Jacob Remin, Lars Kynde, Toshie Takeuchi
- Peter van der Meijden, Postdoc at University of Copenhagen
- Signe Meisner Christensen, Postdoc at Zürcher Hochschule der Künste and Aalborg University

Register and read more: <http://ikk.ku.dk/ccca>

Participation is free. Limited seats – register before October 27th

Sponsored by Japan Society
for the Promotion of Science
Alumni Club Denmark



Seminar Program

	Saturday, November 4, 2017, in room 27.0.09:
10:00-10:30	Welcome and introduction by Gunhild Borggreen, University of Copenhagen JSPS Presentation
10:30-12:00	Morning session: Currents in Contemporary Japan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote: Mōri Yoshitaka, Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts • Line Marie Thorsen, Ph.D. fellow at Aarhus University <p>Discussion</p>
12:00-13:30	Lunch Served in the lunch room of Department of Arts and Cultural Studies (room 21.4.57)
13:30-16:30	Afternoon session: Artists' collaborations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rikke Luther, artist and Ph.D fellow at Royal Danish Art Academy and University of Copenhagen • Making Land art group: Lars Kynde, Toshie Takeuchi, Georg Jagunov, and others • GRASSLANDS: Lene Noer <p>Discussion</p>
16:30-17:30	Reception Drinks and snacks will be served in the lobby outside the room.

	Sunday, November 5, 2017, in room 27.0.09:
10:00-10:30	Welcome back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JSPS fellows Jacob Kreutzfeldt and Gunhild Borggreen about JSPS experience in Japan
10:30-12:00	Morning session: Perspectives on Transnational Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter van der Meijden, Postdoc at the University of Copenhagen • Miryam Sas, Professor at University of California, Berkeley • Signe Meisner Christensen, Postdoc at Zürcher Hochschule der Künste and Aalborg Universitet <p>Discussion</p>
12:00-13:30	Lunch Served in the lunch room of Department of Arts and Cultural Studies (room 21.4.57)
13:30-15:30	Film session presented by Mōri Yoshitaka
15:30-16:00	Plenum Summing up and good bye

List of participants

Collaboration and Community in Contemporary Art		
Nov 4-5, 2017		
Speakers	Affiliation	E-mail
Mōri Yoshitaka	Tokyo University of the Arts	mouri@fac.geidai.ac.jp
Line Marie Thorsen	Aarhus University	lm.thorsen@gmail.com
Peter van der Meijden	University of Copenhagen	pmeijden@hum.ku.dk
Rikke Luther	University of Copenhagen	rikke.luther@gmail.com
Signe Meisner Christensen	Aalborg University	smch@create.aau.dk
Lars Kynde	Making Land Project	larskynde@hotmail.com
Toshie Takeuchi	Making Land Project	toshimoshirabbit@me.com
Georg Jagunov	Making Land Project	georg.jagunov@gmail.com
Jacob Remin	Making Land Project	uglenbatman@gmail.com
Jacob Kreutzfeldt	Consultant, researcher	jacob.superstereo@gmail.com
Miryam Sas	University of California, Berkeley	mbsas@berkeley.edu
Lene Noer	Grasslands	lene.noer@hotmail.com
JSPS Stockholm Office		
Tsumoto Tadaharu	Director, JSPS Stockholm Office	
Yoshihara Tadao	Deputy Director, JSPS Stockholm	t-yoshihara@jps-sto.com
Organisers		
Josefine Amalie Præstekjær	University of Copenhagen	szx606@alumni.ku.dk
Anna Klein	University of Copenhagen	nst517@alumni.ku.dk
Gunhild Borggreen	University of Copenhagen	gunhild@hum.ku.dk
Registrations		
Hannah Wood	Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts	hannahlucywood@gmail.com
Svend E Kristensen	Artistic Director, Sew Flunk Fury	administration@fein-schmecker.dk
Georg Albrecht Mai		albrechtm9@gmail.com
Anemone Platz	Aarhus University	ostap@cas.au.dk
Ellen Bangsbo	Independent researcher	ellbang@gmail.com
Asta Siri Leitao	University of Copenhagen	astaleitao@gmail.com
Adriana Prasnicki		a.prasnicki@live.com
Adriana Prasnickis friend		
Eimi Tagore-Erwin	Lund University	eimi.tagore@gmail.com
Nadia Nazarbaeva	Lund University	nazarbaeva.n@gmail.com
Nanna Marie Sigaard Helbo	University of Copenhagen	gcd625@alumni.ku.dk
Marta Fernandez		marta.laska.fernandez@gmail.com
Mette Højsgaard	University of Copenhagen	nrd785@hum.ku.dk
Agnes Højsgaard		nrd785@hum.ku.dk
Charlotte Bagger Brandt	Raaderum	charlotte@raaderum.com
Signe Marie Jacobsen	Kunststyrelsen	sigjac@gmail.com
Liv Elbirk	University of Copenhagen	mailto:liv@yahoo.dk
Sasha Andersen	University of Copenhagen	sasha.k.andersen@gmail.com
Aron Munk Røsing	University of Copenhagen	aronmunkrosing@gmail.com
Nina Marie Poulsen	University of Copenhagen	ninamariepoulsen@gmail.com
Nicole Kovacs	University of Glasgow	nicolekovacsny@gmail.com
Simone Bærentzen	University of Copenhagen	eggzakly@gmail.com
Emil Bach Sørensen	University of Copenhagen	emilbach@hotmail.com
Carla Eleonora Feigenberg	University of Copenhagen	rms502@alumni.ku.dk
Ffion Legg		ffionlegg@gmail.com
Laura Gerdes-Miranda	University of Copenhagen	lbn348@alumni.ku.dk
Amanda Færk Christiansen	University of Copenhagen	dbc626@alumni.ku.dk
Ming Ning	University of Copenhagen	sng360@hum.ku.dk
Sofie Havskov Jensen	University of Copenhagen	dml546@alumni.ku.dk