

Performance in Print: Channeling Tōmatsu Shōmei's NO.541

Ross, J. and Stojkovic, J.

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Julian Ross and Jelena Stojković

Title:

Performance in Print: Channelling Tōmatsu Shōmei's *NO.541*

Bios:

Dr Julian Ross is a research fellow at University of Westminster on a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship. He holds a PhD on 1960-70s Japanese expanded cinema at the University of Leeds. He is a Programmer at International Film Festival Rotterdam.

[Carolina Macgillvarylaan 441, 1098XA Amsterdam, the Netherlands](#)

rossj@westminster.ac.uk

Dr Jelena Stojković is Lecturer in History and Theory of Photography at the Arts University Bournemouth. [She is the author of *The Impossible Avant-Garde: Surrealism and Photography in 1930s Japan* \(I.B.Tauris, 2018\).](#)

[17c Queen's Drive, London N4 2SZ, UK](#)

jstojkovic@aub.ac.uk

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Abstract :

At 1pm on February 6, 1971 eight 'actors', a reporter and a cameraman entered a space at an undisclosed location with the intention of spending twenty-four hours together. They did not belong to a single artistic group and some of them had never met before. Tōmatsu Shōmei's photographic record of this event appeared in the spring 1971 issue of the magazine *Kikan shashin eizō* accompanied by sections from a transcript of the tape recording. The images and the text —jointly titled as *NO.541*— offer fragmented glimpses into the situations and conversations unfolding in the room and also function with and against each other, as in a dialogue.

We continue this dialogue in the writing up of major themes contextualising the performing and recording of this work: the space, the magazine page and the body. We imagine ourselves in *NO.541* and enact this intermingling of space-times by reproducing not only some of Tōmatsu's photographs but also parts of the transcript in translation. Joining the conversation, we adopt some of the main strategies of the image-text, such as fragmentation, improvisation and refusal of any singularity. Woman C and Man G take on the role of mediums, channelling, for instance, a possible future re-enactment instead of producing a conclusive account of the event.

* We refer to the Japanese names by the last name first, [except when the name is most commonly known in its English order \(such as Yoko Ono\)](#), and use macrons in all cases except when the word or name is in common use in English (such as Tokyo).

Article:

Artists make rooms. That much is for certain. Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Le Stanze* (1975-1976) made sure of it, constructing and reconstructing the gallery space as a room within a room over its many iterations. Artists also occupy rooms, rooms as galleries, or galleries as rooms, and Vito Acconci's *Room Situation* (1970) drew precisely this parallel as the artist displayed parts of his apartment in a New York gallery, stopping by daily to fetch the objects he needed (or to bring them back) for the duration of the show. Artists can invade or document rooms that they haven't made or occupied. Sophie Calle did that, in *The Hotel* (1981), working as a chambermaid in a Venetian hotel only to get access to different rooms: identified by numbers, they are photographed like the scenes of some mysterious, meaningful event.

For Tōmatsu Shōmei, all of this matters as much as it doesn't. His rooms are pure fictions, just tools and not much more. The first room – *NO.24* – was seen at the historic exhibition *Kūkan kara kankyō e* (*From Space to Environment*, 1966) and it was this context that Tōmatsu responded to for the occasion, producing an interactive installation piece to accompany other, even more ambitious, installation pieces seen at the show. That room was conceived as a 'laboratory', complicating the relationship between the person looking as seen and the person seen as looking and, in Tōmatsu's terms, turning it upside down (Tōmatsu, 1967). Tōmatsu also calls it an 'appliance': 2m 40cm in size and painted all white, it invited visitors to step in one by one so as to encounter a pair of painted footsteps on the floor and have their photograph taken. The photographs, seen in the January 1967 issue of the *Kamera* (*Camera*), showed cropped and abstracted views of the encounter between the visitors' feet and painted footsteps, and were introduced by Tōmatsu within the show's concept of *the ENVIRONMENT* (in capital letters). They were accompanied with a transcript of the conversations taking place among the visitors, their reactions, comments, the chatter. The transcript, made of single lines, indicated different voices by capital letters, as: A, B, C, D and so on, all the way to N. There was a room, all right, but it was only a device that aimed to facilitate the recording, produced in image and text, another recording device in itself perhaps, or an environment of recording and for recording. Tōmatsu, after all, was a photographer, and operating recording devices was the thing he did best.

The second room – *NO.541* – only references an undisclosed hotel where Tōmatsu 'used to have fun' (Tōmatsu, 1971) and is seen in the photographs as an empty, industrial space. Given the changed character of *the ENVIRONMENT* in the five years since *NO.24*, this time the room is not even a room for Tōmatsu. Rather, it is a ship without the captain, a place where ten people gather for the duration of twenty-four hours, another device that operates on a simple instruction: enter and do not exit for a certain amount of time. Tōmatsu's photographs of the atmosphere, *the* conversations, games, boredom and situations that unfold are reproduced over thirty pages in issue 8 of the *Kikan shashin eizō* (*Photo Image Quarterly*) in spring 1971, accompanied with a more complex transcript. Again, the voices are assigned letters, as A, B, C and onwards, but are also gendered, as Woman A and Woman B and as Man A to Man F. The 'passenger list' includes some well-known names of Japan's performance art scene: the leader of the (in)famous collective *Zero Dimension* (*Zero jigen*), Katō Yoshihiro, is in the room and so is a member of the Jack's Society (*Jakku no kai*) and a frequent collaborator of Zero Dimension, Chida Ui. Eight 'actors' in total, as well as Tōmatsu and the magazine's Ōya Yoshiko, who operates the tape recorder, engage the room, draw on the walls and spread their belongings around, but they also feel its constraints: it is talks of prison that we read about in the text, more so than of a gallery, or, indeed, the view (**Figure 1**).

It wasn't the first time Japanese artists occupied a hotel room as an artistic intervention into publicly accessible space. The artist collective Hi Red Center, led by Takamatsu Jirō, Akasegawa Genpei and Nakanishi Natsuyuki, hired out Room 340 in Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, built in 1922 by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, to stage their performance event *Shelter keikaku* (*Shelter Plan*) on 26-27 January 1964. Dressed in doctors' gowns, the artists began to measure their guests' proportions from head to toe, their arm spans, and even body mass — as in the case of filmmaker Adachi Masao, who was asked to climb into the bathtub naked — in the pretence that the artists would build custom-designed nuclear shelters for each individual. Guests included artists Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Tadanori Yokoo and Kazakura Shō. There were even a few policemen disguised in plainclothes yet

Commented [J1]: I feel like this (and Jack's Society) should be reversed – as we're always starting with the Japanese transliteration and then translation in brackets – what do you think?

standing out like a sore thumb. They were keeping an eye on Akasegawa who had been arrested only a few weeks before for counterfeit and questioned for his artwork's detailed replication of Japan's 1,000-yen note. The Imperial Hotel was built as a display of progress for the outside world and aimed to attract clientele from overseas and perpetuate the image of an advanced Japan; several months later during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the same artists staged the Shutoken seisō sokushin undō (Street Cleaning Event, 1964) critiquing the absurdity of the government's unfeasible attempt to rid the city from dirt of all types in time for the arrival of their foreign guests. Famously surviving the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the Imperial Hotel as a location is thus loaded. With the context of the Cold War, it asks us to question whether any infrastructure could survive a nuclear attack.

Man B: Take it off, in front of everybody.

Woman A: But the hip size is different.

Man B: My hips are even narrower.

Woman A: I can't get in. What size are you?

Woman B: Hips? 92.

Man B: I'm around 81.

Woman A: That small? I am 95.

Man B: Wow. Are you a Cleopatra or what?

Man C: That's big.

Man A: Fatty.

Woman B: And your chest?

Man A: 99.

Woman B: That's amazing, you've got that much?

Man A: ~~It's a A~~ womanly body.

Woman A: That's not true, she's shaped like a reversed triangle...

Man B: It's womanly.

Woman A: Hips look small.

Man A: Waist is 69.

These 'occupations' of hotel rooms also recall the student occupations taking place nationwide during the protests against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo) that was to be re-signed in 1970. On 18-19 January 1969, protestors occupied University of Tokyo's Yasuda Hall (Auditorium) and its iconic clock tower and threw rocks and bottles down at the riot police. Protesting against the misappropriation of the university's budget, students of Nihon University staged a mass collective bargaining session with university staff - similar sit-in in on 30 September 1968 and it was documented in detail by experimental filmmaker Jōnouchi Motoharu, who also documented Hi Red Center's intervention into the Imperial Hotel for his film Hi Red Center shelter keikaku (Hi Red Center Shelter Plan, 1965). Protests continued after the re-signing of the treaty, until it was drawn to a close with the Asama-Sansō Incident on 19-28 February 1972, a widely televised police siege where armed members of the United Red Army took a woman hostage and sheltered in a mountain lodge in Nagano, an act we could perhaps call another type of occupation.

Conceived, staged and recorded at the tail end of Japan's season of politics, Tōmatsu's *NO.541* appears to be decidedly apolitical in comparison. The room functions more as a hideout than a public statement. It's an occupation without a clear agenda, political or otherwise. As the location isn't disclosed – beyond admitting it has personal attachment for Tōmatsu – it leaves little room to interpret the space in any other way than as a bubble divorced from the realities of the outside world. All we're left to work with on the printed page are cut-up conversations and non-descriptive photographs. Yet, the politics of *NO.541* lie in a different place from where we expect for an event staged during this period of radical protest. While [this](#) may be difficult to decipher, the politics of *NO.541* is positioned in the relationship it seeks to establish between the project and its readers. Aligning the project as a continuation of his contribution to the exhibition *From Space to Environment* from the outset, Tōmatsu asks his readers to recall the tenets of ENVIRONMENT laid out by the Environment Society (*Environment no kai*), which were announced for the exhibition that took place four years prior to the publication of *NO.541*. Considered a landmark event ever since, the exhibition took place over six days in November 1966 at the Matsuya Department Store Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo, and exhibited works by thirty-eight participating artists, including

Tōmatsu, all of whom were signatories of the Environment Society. Rather than geological issues that the term might connote these days, the artists' use of ENVIRONMENT concerned the consideration of space in the practice and experience of an artwork, in line with Allan Kaprow, for example. In their statement, penned by critic Tōno Yoshiaki, the notion of participation was emphasised in their declaration that 'the harmonious and still space (*kūkan*) between audience and art has been broken and replaced with an active and mixed environment (*kankyō*)' (Tōno, 1966, p.118). The exhibition itself triggered what were described as 'violent responses' (Tōno, 1967, p.9) from its visitors, causing damage to several works, which were interpreted as appropriate reactions to the call for participation by some critics. Largely considered an early example of installation art that would take over the art scene in the coming years, the exhibition not only outlined the existing relationships between artwork, audience and space but also sought to overcome them, triggering a dynamic shift in exhibition design for years to come.

However, this understanding of the hotel room as a space rich in symbolic meaning through its intersection of the public and the private is still not conclusive. In fact, it was also used in film and theatre of the period as a space of confinement. Jean-Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*, 1944), for example, is entirely staged in a hotel room where three characters find themselves locked in for eternity, which is depicted as a form of punishment for their crimes that they eventually reveal to one another in a series of events. It echoes some of the episodes taking place in *NO.541* where its participants are similarly stuck, albeit only for one night. Sartre's works were increasingly attracting attention in 1960s Tokyo, and were regularly staged at the Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka, a unique cinema in the centre of Shinjuku, Tokyo, the heart of the vibrant cultural scene of the period, where plays by Eugène Ionesco, Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, Barbara Garson, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and Jean Genet were staged after the last screenings on the small stage in front of the screen, or its basement converted into the underground art space Theatre Scorpio, named after Kenneth Anger's film *Scorpio Rising* (1963) by writer Mishima Yukio. There is a moment in the play where the characters discover a potential exit but find themselves unable to leave, much like the bourgeois characters in the film *El angel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*, 1962) by Spanish director Luis Buñuel, similarly revered by Japanese artists and filmmakers in the 1960s and whose films screened often at the Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka. In the film, a large gathering of bourgeoisie families dines together but finds itself unable to leave the house for inexplicable reasons. With damning cruelty, Buñuel's camera watches as their social status becomes increasingly irrelevant and they deteriorate into beastly beings, desperately hungry, physically and mentally diminished. The 44-minute film *Yoiyami semareba* (*When Twilight Draws Near*, 1969), directed by Jissoji Akio and written by Ōshima Nagisa (of *In the Realm of the Senses* fame), similarly sets a room as its only stage where a group of young people spend the night. In these films and plays, the participants are trapped and unable to engage in anything but conversation (**Figure 2**).

Man E: This is like a reform school, feels great! I was thrown in for five months. When I got out it was so bright outside I couldn't cross the street. That day I couldn't sleep so I kept doing it for around ~~fifteen~~45 times. With a girl, for real.

Man B: You pee, and eat, and then I think you could go on for a week. It feels like you could do it for a month, even.

Man E: But, I don't feel like that at all now.

Man B: I'm considering whether I could go on for a year, —carrying on with that sensation.

Woman B: You got caught red-handed?

Man E: They couldn't throw me in if I hadn't been carrying grass.

Man B: You were tipped off. They attach somebody onto you for two, three days. And then they get you [...] When I was in prison there was this incredible guy. He had tattoos up to his collar. (*laughs*) Ha had earrings tattooed as well as a watch showing 3.30. (*laughs*) It's always 3.30 to him. Unbelievable. He has everything tattooed. Apparently he also had sandals or *geta* shoes tattooed on his feet. Unbelievable.

Woman B: Who was he?

Man B: He was a *yakuza*. He was missing a finger. If you went to prison, everybody is missing their little finger. Worst-case scenario, they are missing up to three fingers.

Kikan shashin eizō was printed in Tokyo by the well-established publisher and critic Yoshimura Nobuya over ten issues between 1969 and 1971. Under the editorial guidance from a doyen of Japanese photography, Kuwabara Kineo, it showcased the work of some of the best-known photographers in Japan. Hosoe Eikoh's *Embrace* is featured in issue 1 whereas Fukase Masahisa's *Evil* from issue 2 combines his well-known interest in ravens with a collaborative work with a legendary Butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi. However, it published images, texts and transcripts of round table discussions produced not only by photographers and photography critics, but also by filmmakers, film critics and designers as well as conceptual and performance artists. Akasegawa designed the cover page for issue 6 while issue 7 features Yokoo's work on its cover. The magazine thus situates photography in an area of within multimedia collaboration and within the discourse on the 'image' (*eizō*) – which was also encompassing cinema, television, visual arts and graphic design – while drawing on the culture of student protests and political dissent of the 1960s. Issue 2, for instance, features a text by the filmmaker, photographer and critic Kanesaka Kenji on the photographic image (*Shashin eizō ron*) as well as Tōmatsu's *Devastation of Campus*, a series of photographs documenting student protests at Tama Art University in Tokyo. It does so at the moment when both of these contextual issues – the discourse on the 'image' and political dissent – undergo a significant transformation, after Osaka Expo (1970), and it is in the midst of these transformations that *NO.541* takes place.

Commented [J2]: Japanese title?

Professional and more artistic magazines such as the *Kikan shashin eizō* played a crucial role for the production, dissemination and development of photography in Japan in the 1960s and '70s, especially given the under-represented status of the medium in arts institutions at the time. On the one hand, they offered the means to tease out a body of work and make it available in public outside and often simultaneously to their more conventional means of presentation, such as the exhibition or the photobook. On the other hand, they also functioned as a means of putting together or developing a discussion between image and text, with transcripts of round-table conversations often taking up the role of theoretical elaboration. For Matthew Witkovsky, writing in the catalogue *ofte* the travelling exhibition *Provoke: Between Protest and Performance, Photography in Japan 1960 / 1975* (2016), photographs and language were often made to perform as elements of a discussion in fine art practices in the country, and we can observe this situation in those cases when the text was printed not only alongside but also over images, as in Tōmatsu's *Devastation of Campus*. *NO.541* is a prominent example of such a use of texts and images, in which 'a photograph takes place when words fail' and 'words must frame that which may not be pictured' (p. 479). What matters, according to Witkovsky, is the discussion, and the one that takes place here is deliberately fragmented and inconclusive. The transcript does not put forward a single narrative, as it is cut up and presented with inconclusive indications of the unfolding of time. In most cases, it is only through photographs that the transcript starts to make sense, and vice versa, which deliberately displaces the reader from a safety zone of linearity and demands engagement.

Commented [J3]: Japanese title?

Commented [J4]: I think it's still confusing what the discussion is about in this sentence - could you add?

If we were to interpret the magazine as an alternative exhibition site, or another environment in the sense of *kankyō*, Tōmatsu's *NO.541* is laid out in a way that demands an active readership from those who turn its pages. The conversations, transcribed to accompany the photographs in the publication, are presented in a non-chronological fashion where the sequence of events is confusingly disordered. At times the photographs appear to accompany the topic of conversation; at other times, there appears to be no relation. While its ramshackle structure may come across as impenetrable, the reader is asked not only to follow the line of conversation but also piece together the chatter to make sense out of this mess. It recalls the cut-ups of William Burroughs and Tristan Tzara where lines of text are deliberately displaced and reordered, allowing chance to create newfound associations between them. Perhaps better reflecting the drug-infused haze that surrounded the overnight conversations, and no doubt the subsequent recollections of the evening by its participants, the re-juggled chatter shifts into unexpected directions and at times descends into incomprehensible gibberish. The type of conversation that takes place is one that is often kept private and left scattered between the empty beer bottles. Indeed, what takes place in the spatial confines of a hotel room is also one that isn't often made public. Yet, each participant is aware of the eventual mediation of the event onto the magazine page. As we've already alluded, many artists have found in hotel rooms a space charged with a dynamic

between the private and the public that is difficult to attain in the white cube that is the gallery space. The reader might recall Andrea Fraser's performance-for-video *Untitled* (2003), where she invited a private collector of the male gender to engage in a sexual encounter with her in a room hired out at the Royalton Hotel, New York, in what has since been described as a critique of male power in the art world, equating the relationship established between artist and collector to the sex worker and client. The private moment was captured on video and reproduced on DVD to a limited edition of five, one of which was to be owned by the participant-collector, which asks us to consider for whom the event took place and for whom the documentation was made. Tōmatsu's *NO.541* similarly straddles the public and the private. While the conversations and turn of events took place behind closed doors, the participants were aware of its eventual disclosure for a potential public in some form at a later date. What would be kept between the participants and what would be leaked to the public? To what extent do you dictate the course of conversation and submit yourself to where the discussion takes you as a participant? How much of the conversation do you perform for the tape recorder?

Man A: Don't you want to try?

Man B: You of all people can do it. Put it here and jump. (*laughs*) With your hips, jump, jump.

Man A: My body and mind are feeling nuts.

Man B: Go, do it! Nice one! C'mon now, you're over twenty now, you're an adult!

Woman A: All you do is chase ass!

Man B: Now this is a sight! (*laughs*) Boom!

Man C: At least hide my pants.

Man B: Bring it out and do it.

Man A: Ah, ah, ah.

Man E: That's right.

Tōmatsu was one of the chief photographers of the 'image generation' who were coming of age at the turn of the 1960s. They worked within a single, collective logic to an extent, as they belonged to the short-lived agency VIVO (1957-1961) – including Hosoe and Tōmatsu but also such legendary photographers as Kawada Kikuji – while also developing their individual careers during the 1960s. The unique treatment of the photographic image that they developed was an essential predecessor to *the Provoke*, but also drew from and crossed roads with all of the other artistic fields during the 1960s: experimental cinema, fine arts, and graphic design included. Theatre played a significant part in this multimedia crosspollination that much of the photographic practice during the 1960s centred on. For instance, it was an influential scriptwriter, poet and artist, Terayama Shūji, that helped launch the career of Moriyama Daidō, whereas a significant part of Hosoe's work in the 1960s oscillated around his collaboration with Hijikata. In Tōmatsu's case, his involvement with the Environment Society offered him the means to probe the relations between photography and installation and established the conceptual basis for the later feature. Whereas *NO.24* primarily questioned the act of looking and how it takes place, *NO.541* extends this question to the possibility of an encounter: the room acts as a stage, a capturing device or a mediator of the (politically symbolical) situation, same as the magazine page acts as a stage, a capturing device or a mediator of the records – the photographs and the transcript – and Tōmatsu exercises a strong control of both spaces. This can be ascertained through his choices of what to reveal or, indeed, conceal to the viewer and the reader of the feature, not only vis-à-vis the space of the room but even more so through how he portrays the 'actors'.

The bodies in *NO.541* are decidedly gendered in the transcript and often naked in the images. How to control those bodies and what rules to impose on them is a question that comes up in the transcript but the photographs show something different altogether: a letting go of control and spontaneous interaction. A reference that comes up in the conversation is to Ishii Mitsutaka, another Butoh dancer and initially Hijikata's student, who gets a nod for his 'naivety', or readiness to abandon the constraints of reason. Another reference that immediately follows is to Yamashita Kiyoshi, a Japanese artist and a runaway from mental institution who is best known for his work in *chigiri-e* —piecing of images from torn pieces of paper— and for his wanderings around Japan with nothing but a rucksack on his back. Both references —to Butoh's experiments with the body as a material and a site of transgression as well as to such well-known strategies for deliberate experimentations with chance

encounters such as collage work and walking— frame the interaction between the space and the bodies in the room. A game of leapfrog, seen in one of Tōmatsu's photographs, is an instance of this interaction, with nudity becoming a site of collective vulnerability rather than of sexualised objectification (**Figure 3**). Katō's presence in the room seems to be of decisive importance in that sense, as Zero Dimension's main strategy was the deployment of nudity in public. As KuroDalaiJee notes in his work on performance art collectives in Japan of the 1960s, nudity mirrored the shared interest in the premodern, ritualistic nature of the body among different performance collectives and individuals in Japan during the 1960s but it also catered to multiple interests of Zero Dimension: to draw media attention with their scandalous nature but also to erase individuality of the participating members (KuroDalaiJee, 2013, 436) (**Figure 4**).

Zero Dimension were ubiquitous in the popular media of Japan at the time; on KuroDalaiJee's count, they appeared over twenty times in popular weekly magazines in 1968 alone. Perhaps more than any other performance collective of the period, Zero Dimension understood the importance of photographic documentation to ensure the afterlife of a performance, and their staged actions were designed for maximum impact not only for the surprised onlookers but also —and perhaps more so— for the photographers who were invited to be present and ready with their cameras. Their performance for filmmaker Miyai Rikū's double-projection film *Phenomenology of Zeitgeist* (1968) is memorable in this respect. Constructed to appear like it was shot in one take, the 35-minute film is a journey across Shinjuku where performances and events take place in different parts of the city. Towards the end of the film, their naked gas mask-adorned ritualistic march through the ground floor passageway of Shinjuku's cultural landmark the Kinokuniya bookstore begins only when Miyai's camera arrives and most of the witnesses seen onscreen (including Kanesaka) are ready with cameras in hand. It's evident that these events are a tight-knit operation that is scheduled only to last for an instant and its photographic proof of taking place to outlive it. Katō is undoubtedly aware of the recording devices in the room, and ~~the deliberately stimulatesion of a deliberately childish and naive behaviour of the group, echoing —effective in—~~ Zero Dimension's public performances ~~—can probably be brought down to his influence.~~ However, Tōmatsu does not allow Katō to control the presentation of the event, refusing to lend his camera purely in the service of documentation, a role often performed during the 1960s by another photographer, Hirata Minoru. ~~The images~~He subscribes to some of the well-known strategies of the 'image generation' photographers such as the obscuring and cropping of content for the sake of visual impact as well as the bleeding of images across the pages of the magazine, but mostly pay attention to the mundane, in no way spectacular atmosphere in the room as well as the moods of different 'actors' and the relations developing among them (**Figure 5**). The staging of the event over time and without any script sets it outside of the commonly recognised uses of photography in performance — as either a document or a means of work — as does the camera's operating alongside the tape recorder. The feature appears under Tōmatsu's signature but deliberately displaces what might be thought of as a purely photographic event. It comes out of the context of a particular space and functions decidedly alongside the text in the framework of a magazine and its readership, but it also engages with the bodies occupying the space, making sure no singularity of vision, perception or possible meaning takes over in that process.

Commented [JA5]: Not sure about this phrase.

Man B: Ishii Mitsutaka. He is fun. I love him for his naivety.

Man A: He said he was going to Europe. But he's living in a detached house.

Man B: Ah, in Shōdoshima?

Man A: They said he cooked a cat for dinner and served it to people.

Woman B: They ate it?

Man A: They say he tried to make them to.

Woman B: They figured it out? That it was a cat?

Man A: Yes. Everybody walked straight out. (*laughs*)

Man B: Who's that painter again? You know who I'm talking about, the strange one. You know, they call him the Japanese Vincent van Gogh. He cuts and pastes bits of paper.

Woman B: Ah, Yamashita Kiyoshi. (*laughs*)

Man B: He's as naïve as him.

Woman B: Yamashita Kiyoshi, they say they examined his brain waves and that there was no movement. (*laughs*) It was the same brain waves as of a high priest, a monk of the highest rank, a best-achieving monk.

Man B: Anyhow, to hell with logic. He's got it.

Woman A: That's so interesting.

Man B: I think he went through enlightenment, that he senses the universe.

Woman B: Precisely, I think so too.

Man E: He transcended.

Man B: That's right.

Woman B: What he says is just at another level.

Man B: Yamashita doesn't need LSD.

Woman B: He's so clever.

The understanding of the naked body as a site of collective, politically motivated tension between the vulnerability of the personal and the aggressiveness of the increasingly capitalist public space is at the core of the feature. In that sense, *NO.541* also takes its cue from one of Tōmatsu's arguably best-achieved works of the previous decade, the photobook *Oh Shinjuku* (1969), where the everyday cityscape is contrasted with the violent clashes between the student protestors and the police but also with the naked ~~women~~ female bodies and situations taking place at Shinjuku's nightclubs. Whereas in the photobook the means of expressing this tension is achieved through juxtaposition – with the images of cityscape literally projected onto the naked body – in *NO.541* it is evoked in more complex terms, as a continuous process of negotiation between the image and the text as well as the magazine page and the viewer. As the female body is not disclosed in full nudity, regardless of Chida's participation in several Zero Dimension's performance pieces in the past, the crossing of roads with theatre and performance establishes a line of separation between two very different types of practice. Namely, although such photographers as Hosoe and Tōmatsu developed-adopted a view of the body as an ambiguous site of particular political tensions during the 1960s, their successors – most prominently Araki Nobuyoshi and Shinoyama Kishin – depart from this view and take the representation of the body into an opposite direction, working within the increasingly commercial and apolitical climate of the 1970s. *Kikan shashin eizō* sits at the crossroads of these opposing-different trends, in other words, – the body as a material or as a spectacle – within its concentrated focus on artistic collaboration: Fukase's feature with the designer Tatsumi Shiro, *Obscenity=Y*, reproduces explicitly pornographic images in the issue 5 whereas Araki's work with the same designer in the following issue, *Hojo-ki*, goes even further in its bordering with child pornography. However, *NO.541* is as much about photography as it is about performance and that it takes place at the moment when Shinjuku – the heart of political activism, experimental arts as well as underground culture during the 1960s – starts to be gentrified and increasingly policed is thus important to note.

Along with Ishii Mitsutaka, another figure mentioned by the participants is the young artist Gulliver, also known as Shuzo Azuchi Gulliver, whose works in performance and early conceptual art similarly demonstrate an investment in collectivity and the body. Born in Shiga-prefecture in southern Japan, Gulliver had already made a name for himself as a high school artist performing instructional happenings. As a member of two artist collectives formed in 1967, *Remandaran* and *The Play*, Gulliver participated in happenings in public spaces that intervened on the everyday lives of people in Kyoto and Osaka. In a performance with Mizukami Jun, a performance artist, he staged *Sokutei keikaku (Measurement Plan)* (1967) and *Sokutei keikaku #2 (Measurement Plan #2)* (1967), outside of the Kyoto Independent exhibition and at the Shijo-Kawaramachi underpass in Kyoto respectively, where he carefully measured distances between objects in public space, in a series of performances that recall the obsessive calculations enacted by the performers of Hi Red Center. Moving back and forth between Kyoto/Osaka and Tokyo during the mid-1960s, he eventually came to be known as one of the representative figures of the emerging *fūten* (hippie) movement with his signature long hair, a rare sight at the time, regularly featuring in popular magazines and television shows that placed a curious spotlight on the youth movement. Indeed, hippies were often known by their pseudonyms and, in the case of Gulliver, he kept it as his artist name too. While his public persona grew, and his collective performances continued as collaborations in film and performance and at times as something between the two, in the form of expanded cinema, his interests as an artist increasingly shifted towards more private

Commented [JA6]: Female?

transactions in relation to his body. In *Karada (Body)*, 1973, he divided his body into parts and established contractual arrangements with individuals, including Terayama, where he would be given the specific body part in the event of his death. Here, again, the private and the public intersect as these private transactions put to paper on a contract were placed on display in an exhibition. The performance by Gulliver that the participants in Tōmatsu's *NO.541* are discussing is one that isn't confirmed by his published list of works. Nevertheless, it speaks to his engagement with public space that was a hallmark for his artistic practice as a hippie – itself a public performance of disengagement with contemporary society. Indeed, Shinjuku's *hiroba* (public space) was not only used as a place for public engagement by activists but also as a hangout spot for the hippies and its conversion into a passageway compromised their way of existence too.

NO.541, therefore, does not only record the specific performance taking place in real time but **provides** also the oral history of the 1960s performance art scene in Japan. Another instance of this is Chida's recollection of her collaboration with Koyama Tetsuo, which offers some background to their *Dating Show (Dētingu shō)* from November 1966. On the occasion, the two members of the Jack's Society performed in front of the Shinjuku Koma Theatre, with Chida appearing in a long cloak and Koyama wrapping himself up in a number of mannequin doll parts (KuroDalaiJee, 2010, 233). As these sensationalist pieces of performance art were very often only documented by the mass media, learning about the context behind them becomes crucial for the understanding of the artistic scene that generated them: the people, their stories, their ethics and politics. In other words, *NO.541* deliberately refuses to cater to the spectacle and in its treatment of the space, the print and the body it places the focus on the personal, intimate experience of participation. It is the sharing of time that appears to be its ultimate artistic gesture, entangling the 'actors', the operators, the viewers and the readers and forcing them to look at each other (**Figure 6**). This entanglement, we might speculate, continues into the future encounters with *NO.541*, a ghostly reminder of the stakes involved in any attempt at addressing the tensions between the private and the public, the lived and the recorded or the theatrical and the photographic.

Woman B: Do you know Koyama Tetsuo?

Man B: Yeah, I do.

Woman B: He dropped out of middle school. (*laughs*).

Man B: No way.

Woman B: I was showing off how I dropped out of high school. After a while, he whispered to me that he dropped out of middle school.

Man B: He was bluffing.

Woman B: Right? It must have been a lie.

Man B: Dropping out of middle school, which is compulsory education, is a sign of a true man. He doesn't look it. (*laughs*)

Woman B: He is a bit creepy. I did something like a happening show with him during high school. During our meeting, he suddenly starts talking about how he wants to eat a bell pepper with parsley shoved inside and honey dripped on it.

Man B: He also bites into an entire cabbage and eats carrots raw.

Woman B: He's like "I only eat vegetables".

Man B: Such a funny guy.

Woman B: Two years later, I found him pooing in front of the public. (*laughs*)

Man B: And he picked up the poo with chopsticks, right? (*laughs*)

Woman B: And he started throwing it. As it was Koyama, I had been standing right at the front watching. And he starts throwing poo right at me.

Man B: He wanted us to eat his poo. He probably wouldn't have minded dying after seeing that.

Woman B: Once, him and I walked all the way to the Shinjuku Koma Theatre with two chickens on a leash. Policemen followed us. I chopped the neck of my chicken with a saw but he bit off the neck of his. There's something seriously wrong with him.

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Commented [JA7]: Seems like a new verb is needed here.

Commented [J8]: Reverse?

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Figures:

Figure 1-6: Tōmatsu Shōmei, NO.541, *The Photo Image Quarterly*, 1971 (excerpt)



Figure 1

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Figure 2



Figure 3

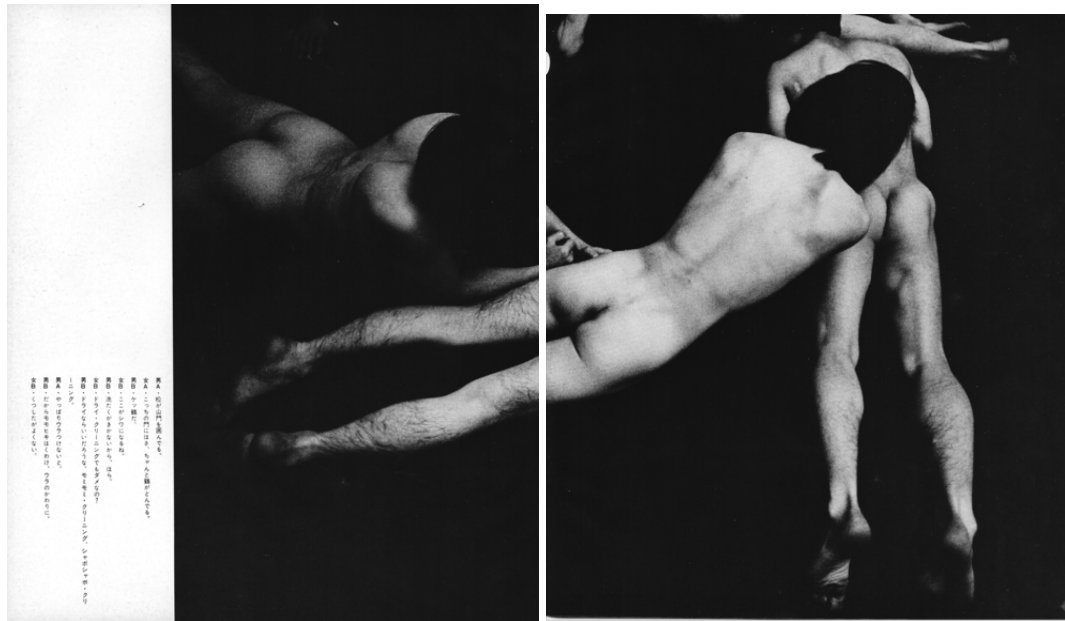


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6