

ANPO: Art X War - In Havoc's Wake 安保: アート戦争」—破壊の跡に

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Our plane was one hour away from landing when the pilot announced, "There's been a major earthquake in Japan and Narita is shut down." It was March 11th, 2011. I was en route to Japan to teach my film, *ANPO: Art X War* in art, film and history classes at the American School in Tokyo the following week. Or so I thought. I could never have imagined I would arrive to witness Japan's greatest postwar disaster. Or the resonances my film would assume in its wake.



ANPO: Art X War is a film depicting decades of resistance to U.S. military bases in Japan, through a treasure trove of oil paintings, photographs, contemporary art and film clips I discovered, mostly languishing in museum storage and private collections in Japan. Although I made the film in 2009 and 2010, it is rooted in my childhood in provincial Japan where I was raised the daughter of liberal American missionaries. In the 1960s, my family lived in the Inland Sea port of Hofu, situated 70 kilometers from the Iwakuni Marine Corps base and 120 kilometers from Hiroshima. Although I never visited either as a child, the U.S. military presence in Japan and the atomic bombs we dropped would complicate my identification as an American, long after I moved to the U.S. to attend university and settle in the late 1970s.

Actually, the closest I ever got to Iwakuni were the Thanksgiving turkeys my father purchased annually at the base PX, but I can still taste my instinctive aversion to the military enclave and my smug disdain for the American children confined to base schools. My parents had made the unorthodox decision to home school my sisters and me in English while sending us to Japanese public schools, and though I balked at the daily English vocabulary lists my mother piled on top of the relentless *kanji* tests at school, I knew I was being better educated than my unseen American peers.

Hiroshima was another matter entirely. I was in the fourth grade—the only American in my class—when our teacher wrote the words “America” and “Atomic Bomb” in white chalk on the blackboard, and we opened our textbooks to the chapter titled “The Defeat.” All forty Japanese classmates turned around to stare at me. The moment is seared into my memory, more as an emotion than an image; though I no longer remember the shape of my wooden school desk, I can still trace the exact contours of my sense of entrapment. My country had done something unforgivable and I had to take responsibility for it, all by myself. I desperately wanted to dig a hole under my desk, escape my classmates’ mute disbelief and never have to face them again.



From Yokosuka Story, 1979

Ironically, I was also subliminally aware throughout my childhood that I was physically safer as an American child than any Japanese adult. As teenagers, my American friends and I used to hitchhike hundreds of kilometers every summer, confident that no Japanese would ever harm us. It wasn't until I interviewed Ishiuchi Miyako, the renowned Japanese photographer I feature in *ANPO: Art X War*, in early 2008, that I finally understood why. I was interviewing her for an American photo book showcasing her black and white photographs of Yokosuka.

When I asked her, simply, "Why did you photograph Yokosuka?" she flatly stated,

"I hated Yokosuka and couldn't wait to get out of there. Bases are ugly, you see, they're the gateway to war. I lived there as a young girl during the Vietnam War and the adults always warned me *Dobuita Dori* (Gutter Alley) was off limits. American soldiers went there for the bars and brothels and they acted like they owned the place. Any Japanese girl was fair game."

Fair game. My childhood flashed through my mind and the source of my entitlement thudded like dead weight into the pit of my stomach. The same American soldiers, who had jeopardized her safety, had always guaranteed mine, however invisible their presence might have been. Her frank recollection finally made me see that the security treaty, which permits the U.S. to station our soldiers there, also exempts most American expatriates from Japanese crime. Ishiuchi continued, "When I started photographing, I decided to go to the place that I despised and that terrified me. That was *Dobuita Dori*. My photographs of Yokosuka are a kind of revenge." Before I had even started filming, I knew Ishiuchi and her photographs of Yokosuka would play a crucial role in my film, in which I planned to use art to delineate the 1960 national uprising sparked by America's military presence, along with the underlying subjective experience of de facto permanent occupation.

Several years earlier, I had come across Hamaya Hiroshi's iconic photographs, which he took in May and June of 1960, of the "ANPO struggle," which had flooded the streets of Tokyo with protestors trying to stop the revision and extension of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty - referred to in Japanese as *Anpo*. A Japanese art bookstore dealer had recommended the 1960 photo book, *Ikari to Kanashimi no Kiroku* (*Days of Rage and Grief*). Leafing through the slim volume's pages graying with age, I saw hope, defiance, outrage and heartbreak igniting Japanese faces in a way I never realized was possible.



From Days of Rage and Grief



My sheltered childhood had left me ignorant about Japan's greatest postwar crisis with its powerful patron. I only stumbled on hints of the popular revolt that unfolded in 1960 after I began subtitling Japanese films in the 1990s and immersed myself in the classics. *The Bad Sleep Well* (Kurosawa), *Pigs and Battleships* (Imamura), *Night and Fog in Japan* (Oshima), *The Elegant Beast* (Kawashima). Master filmmakers with disparate themes and styles had directed each of these ominously titled films, during or shortly after 1960. What could account for their bitter chorus, rendered in motifs of betrayal, resentment and cynicism?

I turned to history books to learn how Kishi, then prime minister – politically rehabilitated by the CIA after a 3-year term in Sugamo prison as a suspected WWII-era war criminal – had orchestrated a veritable coup d'état, ordering police to drag members of parliament opposed to the treaty's extension out of the building. With the opposition hauled off, Kishi

rammed through the vote. In the ensuing weeks, tens of thousands of citizens, with no political party or union affiliations, who had watched their newfound democracy trampled on TV, linked arms and marched down the streets of Tokyo. Interviewing the artists in my film, I realized that most protestors were motivated by their revulsion for Kishi's ham-fisted tactics, coupled with their terror of being sucked back into war, a scant fifteen years after Japan's cities had been obliterated by American firebombs and atomic bombs through the self-serving machinations of leaders like Kishi.



**Ishii Shigeo, 1961, Violence Series:
Decoy**

I had discovered another major artist in my film during a trip to Japan in early 2007, while watching the NHK weekly program, *Nichiyo Bijutsukan* (Sunday Museum). Several minutes into the show, I was transfixed by an astonishing image.



Sunagawa Goban

The raw confrontation unfolding at the center of the large oil painting was as alien to my experience of Japan as the enraged students in Hamaya's images. When I eventually interviewed its painter, Nakamura Hiroshi, for my film, he told me that when he painted it in the mid-1950s, he had deliberately emulated Diego Rivera's brand of indigenous realism, steeping his in the Japanese milieu. He was also inspired by the montage technique of the filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein, whose *Battleship Potemkin*, had prodded the painter to envision his two-dimensional "close-up," to magnify the tension between the police and the farmers. Nakamura told me how he had visited and sketched the "Sunagawa struggle," which unfolded in the mid-1950s when police attempted to seize farmland adjacent to the Tachikawa Air Force Base, to extend the runway for jet planes. He told me he had painted the diminutive Buddhist monk – part of his pictorial strategy of creating four points of perspective instead of the conventional one, to achieve his "close-up" – to honor the *Nichirenshu* priests' stoic sacrifice, intentionally sitting in the frontlines to endure the brunt of the police beatings. Nakamura was hardly the only artist riveted by the dramatic struggle. For *Bloody Record of Sunagawa* (*Ryuketsu no kiroku, Sunagawa*), the documentary filmmaker, Kamei Fumio, recorded incendiary footage of armored vehicles leading hundreds of policemen to

attack the resisting farmers and their supporters, as ear-shattering American bombers take off directly overhead. Nakamura only stumbled on his "four-perspective points" approach trying to match Kamei's raw footage.

Nakamura told me how, during the Korean War, Tachikawa had been a frontline base, first airlifting bombs and soldiers, then ushering back the maimed and the dead. At the time, Nakamura's provocative paintings had no commercial appeal—still less did they attract interest from the guardians of the artistic canon—and he worked a series of part-time jobs to support himself. Although he himself declined, the painter recalled hearing about the well-paid work Tachikawa offered to Japanese to "take care" of American corpses en route from Korea, much as Okinawans would subsequently be paid to handle our fatalities flown in from Vietnam in body-bags. The irrepressible Nakamura, whose belated retrospective exhibition, at the age of 75, had precipitated my encounter with his work on television, joined Ishiuchi as a central character in my film, telling droll and poignant stories about a turbulent era with disarming aplomb.

Because Tachikawa was shut down in the 1970s, it was not among the U.S. airbases –

I remember Misawa and Yokota – our pilot briefed us were being considered for our plane to divert to, in lieu of Narita. We wound up at the civilian Chitose Airport on Hokkaido instead, where we felt the aftershocks as we waited for our bags. Our plane finally reached Narita late the next night, and as several of us rode the last, unheated train in to Tokyo, making all local stops, it was already glaringly apparent that something in Japan had broken, perhaps irreparably.

On Monday, the American School announced it was closing early for spring break and all my classes were canceled. Relieved of my commitments, I might have flown back to New

York, but I stayed to witness my beloved country flail with nuclear anxiety as the aftershocks persisted. I also wanted to honor my promises to attend screenings of my film in Tokyo, Nagoya, Hong Kong and Honolulu. The Tokyo screening had been planned weeks in advance for the evening of Friday, March 18th. My distributor, who owns his own theater in Shibuya, had been advised by one of the progressive groups supporting the screening consider canceling the showing out of *jishuku* (self-restraint), like so many other public events in the days following the catastrophe. The rationale for exercising “self-restraint” escaped me, but the suggestion infuriated my distributor, who wrote a cri-de-coeur two-page email, arguing that this was precisely the moment to gather as a community in a darkened theater, watch **ANPO** (its Japanese title), and reflect on Japan’s rebellious past and now uncertain future. More than fifty people, mostly in their twenties and thirties, heeded his call to temporarily exchange the anxiety of isolation for the comfort of an ad hoc community. After the film, the discussion, at first halting, then increasingly laced with outrage at their government’s tight-lipped negligence and the established media’s failure to provide reliable information, lasted more than three hours before my distributor finally sent everyone home in time for the last trains. On his way out, one young man remarked, “The artists in your film have mostly mellowed with age but their art still howls with outrage.” I was glad I had stayed behind to witness this latest, unsettled chapter in Japanese life.

I had no idea what kind of audience or reaction to expect, flying to screenings of my film at the Hong Kong International Film Festival the following week. Having previously subtitled *Japanese Devils*, the documentary chronicling Japanese wartime atrocities in China through confessions by former Imperial soldiers, I was aware that some Chinese might not be inclined to empathize with Japan’s contemporary plight. The first question after the screening, from the

large, mostly youthful audience was, “I’m an artist and I’m so sad to see how many Japanese artists worked so hard to resist the state, but they failed.” As I tried to formulate a positive response about the importance of resistance, I was struck by the fact that the young Chinese woman’s first impulse was to identify with the Japanese in my film as fellow artists. After the discussion, several other local artists approached me, sharing their art-related fundraising plans for the tsunami victims. Their manifest compassion brought to mind the heart-wrenching music video created by an astute, anonymous Korean, which I found online, via Twitter, less than a week after the earthquake tsunami. (One of several Korean videos: [link](#).)

Viewing my film in Hong Kong, I was least prepared for my own post- 3/11 reaction to a sequence near its end. Kazama Sachiko, a woodblock printmaker in her thirties, seated in front of her large, meticulously rendered manga-esque print of a railroad train-headed monster titled “Manchurian Railroad Man,” addresses the camera: “My father marched as a student in 1960 and raised me to distrust the government. The key phrase I’m interested in right now is “*kimin*” (棄民). It means a people abandoned by their country.” The screen cuts to an etching of baleful anthropomorphic fish captured in a net, rendered by Ikeda Tatsuo in 1954 after the Lucky Dragon # 5 fishing boat was irradiated by the U.S. hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll, which sparked a national movement against nuclear weapons testing.



Ikeda Tatsuo 10,000 Count

Kazama continues, “It’s quite obvious that in the history of modern Japan, the goal of politics has been to protect the state and the national polity, not the people of Japan.”

Her statement is followed by a black and white photo, dating from 1945, of a family eating a meal out in the open, amid the firebombed rubble.



I had interviewed Kazama in 2009 and edited the sequence into the film’s ending in 2010, impressed that an artist her age could succinctly articulate and identify with the predicament of her grandparents’ generation. In the wake of WWII, *Kimin* referred to the millions of Japanese peasants abandoned in what had been dubbed “Manchuria” by the Japanese government, which had lured them there before the war with promises of land-stakes in “paradise.” Kazama believes the term should also be applied to the never-

compensated Japanese citizens sacrificed by the government to firebombs during WWII, as well to those stranded by Japan’s attenuated economic downturn today. In the wake of 3.11 tsunami, *kimin* regained currency to depict the plight of tens of thousands of remote village residents left for the most part (and for those beyond twenty kilometers entirely) to fend for themselves.

In July 2011, as weekly screenings of **ANPO: Art X War** were underway at the Guggenheim in NY, I received word from my indefatigable Japanese distributor, informing me that *Bunkacho*, Japan’s Agency for Cultural Affairs, had nominated the film for its prestigious Best Cultural Documentary Film Award. As I researched the dozens of marginalized artists featured in my film, marveling at the range of their neglected, daunting art, it was unimaginable that the august *Bunkacho* would honor their work in this way, half a century later.

For more information about ANPO: Art X War visit anpomovie.com

[See the trailer](#)

See John Dower's [Teaching Guide](#) to ANPO: Art X War

Producer/Director Linda Hoaglund was born and raised in Japan. Her previous film, *Wings of Defeat*, told the story of Kamikaze pilots who survived WWII. She directed and produced **ANPO**, a film about Japanese resistance to U.S. bases seen through the eyes and works of celebrated Japanese artists. She worked as a bilingual news producer for Japanese TV. She has subtitled Japanese films, represents Japanese directors and artists, and serves as an international liaison for film producers. Email: linda@lhoaglund.com. An Asia-Pacific Journal Associate, she can be contacted at linda@lhoaglund.com.

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