

**The Past Within Her: Tomiyama Taeko's
Sorrows of War and the 'Postwar'
~ What a Woman Artist Saw**

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I. Introduction

Our visions of history are drawn from diverse sources, not just from history books but also from photographs and historical novels, from newsreel footage, comic books and, increasingly, from electronic media like the Internet. Out of this kaleidoscopic mass of fragments we make and remake patterns of understanding which explain the origins and nature of the world in which we live.¹

Let us tell tales of memories of the twentieth century etched in our hearts. At times I am a shaman who listens to the voices of the dead. At times I am a trickster fox who wanders through realms of myth and reality, looking hard at the history of East Asia as I probe the possibilities of art.²

In *The Past Within Us*, Tessa Morris-Suzuki considers ways in which representations of history in a range of media play a critically important role in how we remember and make sense of history. But as she goes on to note, this project is not only about history, but also about “making sense of the world in which we live.” In an artist’s statement for an exhibition titled, *The Shaman and the Fox*:

¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “The Past is not Dead” in *The Past Within Us* (New York/London: Verso 2005), 2.

² Tomiyama Taeko, artist’s statement. *Shaman and the Fox: Tomiyama Taeko’s Art*, Kyoto Seika University, Gallery Fleur (2002).

Tomiyama Taeko's Art (2002) Tomiyama Taeko asks herself and viewers to consider the role of art in the process of remembering and representing history. She states that in the beginning, art was a form of prayer and that *ginyū shijin*, or wandering minstrels, musicians, and artists, are the ones who tell tales of the past. She proclaims herself and her creative collaborator, musician and composer Takahashi Yuji, to be present-day itinerant tale-tellers who aim to respond to the times we live in as they communicate memories of the 20th century—at times becoming “a shaman who listens to the dead,” or a “trickster fox who wanders through realms of myth and reality.” For Tomiyama, this ongoing pursuit as an artist and teller of tales has multiple aims: to revisit vestigial images of colonialism and war in Asia, to form unique visual vocabularies and techniques, to question war and violence and to bring an awareness of the role of art in critical thought to the fore.

I first encountered the work of Tomiyama Taeko a few years after I moved to Kyoto in 1976. I saw Tomiyama's exhibition of prints and drawings, *Chained Hands in Prayer*, at the Italian Cultural Center in Kyoto and still recall the powerful lines of black and white lithographs depicting figures that seemed to cry out to viewers. I also recall the sound of music echoing in the gallery and the hall packed with people who had come to listen to the artist speak. At that time, Tomiyama chose print-making as a medium to respond quickly to the situation of political prisoner Kim Chi Ha and the people's uprising in Gwang Ju. This medium allowed her to show audiences things that were happening “outside the frame” of mainstream media. Although her work was censored by the media in Japan, it nevertheless circulated widely in activist circles but was not always identified, catalogued or titled.³

I continued to follow Tomiyama and her works in exhibits and presentations she made when she visited Kyoto, and later began showing her collaborative slide works in my classes at Kyoto Seika University. Her work inspired many of us to study and teach about feminist critiques of art history. In the early 90s, I joined Tomiyama,

³ See, for example, in Park Yeong-chui, “Political Suicide among Korean Youth” (1994), one of Tomiyama's works is referred to as “a Korean print.” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 26, No. 1–2, 69.

Hagiwara Hiroko and Fukazawa Junko, in the Asia Women and Art Collective, which met once a month in a café in Tokyo to explore new possibilities for art, feminism and cultural critique.⁴ In 1995, Fukazawa Junko and Kobayashi Hiromichi coordinated and curated the exhibit, *Silenced by History: Tomiyama Taeko's Work*, at Tama Art University for which Tomiyama produced new paintings, collages and slide-works. Thanks to the AWAC workshops, we learned more about a younger generation of contemporary artists who were exploring questions of war memory, post-colonialism and gender, including Yong Soon Min, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Margo Machida and Dinh Q. Lê. Although working in a very different context, Tomiyama's work shared concerns with those of younger generations of artists, feminist theorists and activists exploring the potential of contemporary art as a space where contested histories and memories of war, migration, and identity can be explored.

After over a decade of working with Tomiyama, I was able to coordinate an exhibit of Tomiyama's works at Gallery Fleur under the title, *Miko to Kitsune: Tomiyama Taeko Ten (The Shaman and the Fox: Tomiyama Taeko's Art)*. At the time, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and the US-led invasion of Iraq dominated the news; transnational feminist scholars and critics were discussing the question of "women's public mourning for the other" as a form of resistance to nationalist discourses. For me, Tomiyama's work clearly resonates with—and is a precursor to—both the innovative "border-crossing" practices in contemporary art and the work of feminist theorists aiming to critique multiple forms of state violence from perspectives "outside the frame."⁵ My aim in this essay is to ask how a close reading of Tomiyama's collage works, *The Sorrows of War and the 'Postwar' ~What a Woman Artist Saw~*—can help us better understand the depth and breadth of this artist's vision and practice. After a brief discussion of Tomiyama's practice and the position of her work in more recent discussions of contemporary art in

⁴ See *Visions International*, AWAC (Tokyo: AWAC, 1994). Also see Hagiwara Hiroko, "Off The Comprador Ladder: Tomiyama Taeko's Work" (1993) and "Working on and off the Margins" (2010).

⁵ See: *Feminisuto no sōzō ryoku: keishi/tsuitō no kenri/kyōtsūsei*, (The feminist imagination: form, the right to mourn, commonality), Drucilla Cornell, trans. by Okano Yao, Takemura Kazuko, in *Gendai Shisō*, no. 1 (January, 2003) : 130–145.

Japan, I will discuss these collage works that might be seen as a small retrospective, curated and reconstructed by the artist herself.

II. Approaching Tomiyama Taeko's Work

In the introduction to her book, *Kaiho no Bigaku; 20 seiki no bijutsuka ha nani wo mezashita ka?* (Aesthetics of liberation: what artists of the 20th century sought) Tomiyama asks readers to look at a map of the world that clearly shows the dominance of western imperial/colonial powers. She sets the stage for her own essay by citing the close interconnection between the critical changes in the system of political power in the first half of the 20th century and the “*henkaku shisō*” (transformative thought) seen in the works and practices of artists at the time who challenged established systems of representation, imperial monuments and Euro-centric aesthetic values. Tomiyama highlights, Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), leader of the Paris Commune (1871) who proposed disassembling the Vendome Column, a symbol of war and conquest of an imperial dynasty. A quick glance at the writers and artists she discusses in the following chapters—Tristan Tsara, Otto Dix, George Heartfield, Käthe Kollwitz and many others—points to ways that the ideas, themes and material practices of these artists have influenced the development of Tomiyama's own practice as an artist. In *Bijutsu shi wo toki hanatsu* (Setting free Art History), Tomiyama collaborated with Hagiwara Hiroko and Hamada Kazuko to explore works and perspectives that have been marginalized or excluded from the established “frame of art history” in the Asian context, citing artists like Yamashita Kikuchi (1919–1986) whose work has recently received renewed attention from scholars of postwar Japanese art history.⁶

Thanks to prior research and the results of new studies that appear in this volume, greater attention is being given to Tomiyama's own critical writings about history, art history and feminism. In the artist's own writings about her life and art,

⁶ See Justin Jesty, *Art and Engagement in Early Postwar Japan*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018) and Linda Hoagland, *ANPO Art X* (New York, New Day Films, 2010).

she has tended to highlight a personal, autobiographical narrative, but to say less about her creative process or the materials and techniques used in her art. Here, I hope to give more attention to the latter in section III below.

In her introduction to *Imagination without Borders*, Laura Hein argues that “Tomiyama’s sophisticated visual commentary on Japan’s history—and on the global history in which Asia is embedded—provides a particularly compelling guide through the difficult terrain of modern historical remembrance”; at the same time, Hein notes that U. S. positioning of Japan as “the centerpiece” of its Asian Cold War strategy made it more difficult for Japan “to reckon with the past.”⁷ As Justin Jesty has shown convincingly in his ground-breaking study, *Art and Engagement in Postwar Japan*, it was against this background that artists in early postwar Japan sought ways to treat themes such as war responsibility, struggles by citizens protesting the construction of US bases or labor movements. Under US Cold War cultural policies, the frame and definition of “contemporary art” in Japan led artists working on themes thought to be more “political” or working outside of Tokyo to be excluded from the emerging “art scene.”

Hagiwara Hiroko has argued that Tomiyama herself felt estranged and marginalized in relation to the emerging contemporary art world in Tokyo in the postwar era where American abstract expressionism and pop art were fashionable. Her depictions of the world of mines she had discovered in Kyushu and Hokkaido were viewed as “unwomanly” or dismissed as “left-wing” or “political art” by critics in Tokyo; at the same time, she was seen as a “bourgeois, city-bred painter” and a “questionable outsider” in the mining towns. As Tomiyama herself stated in an interview with Hagiwara, “If I am to be marginalized anyway, I would rather remain on the margin, to be independent and be myself.”⁸ As Hagiwara goes on to argue, the unique creative practice that Tomiyama has developed since establishing her one-woman studio, Hidane Kōbō, in 1976, has enabled her to create alternative, more

⁷ Laura Hein, “Postcolonial Conscience: Making Moral Sense of Japan’s Modern World,” in *Imagination Without Borders* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2010): 7.

⁸ Hagiwara Hiroko, “Working on and off the Margins,” in *Imagination without Borders* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 2010): 133.

democratic means of circulating her art “on and off the margins” of the art contemporary art world. Hagiwara writes,

Ironically, the very conditions limiting Tomiyama’s production have served to create a unique alternative base for the artist, which has, in turn enabled her to keep on producing and developing her art for decades.⁹

Kitagawa Furam has written of Tomiyama’s work, situating it in the context of a long a tradition of “the outsider artist” who is on the margins of the art market but who “expresses our anxieties and hopes for the future, who revives forgotten memories, who unearths small wonders.”¹⁰ Kitagawa sees artists who only seek acceptance in the museum and institutional system as “disassociated from society,” and points to new directions in 20th century art that aim to reestablish the link between art and society. In this context, he views Tomiyama Taeko who, like other artists seeking new directions, “aims to connect with the public” and produces art that can truly be called “public art.” He writes:

Taeko Tomiyama is an artist who has challenged the distortions of history from a feminist viewpoint, and her works in this show are closely connected to the situation in South Korea since the Kwangju Massacre in 1980... Tomiyama’s works do not simply document historical events, but express their potential...It is these qualities together with her long and deep association with two major Asian cultures that have helped her succeed in reaching the general public.¹¹

In 2009, Kitagawa Furam invited Tomiyama to show her work at the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale. According to Justin Jesty, *Embracing Asia: Tomiyama Taeko’s Art~1950-2009*, held in an abandoned school building, demonstrated that

⁹ Hagiwara Hiroko, *ibid.* 146.

¹⁰ Kitagawa Furam, “Introduction,” in *From the Asians: Tomiyama Taeko and Hong Sung-dam* (Tokyo: Tama Art University, 1998): 4.

¹¹ Kitagawa Furam, *ibid.*, 5–6.

“the format of the eclectic art project can accommodate more political diversity than any museum has been able to do.”¹² In recent years, discourse and publications on the subject of “socially engaged art” have opened up new possibilities for re-positioning Tomiyama’s art. Jesty questions the “frame” that has shaped discourse on Post-1945 art history in Japan, “constructed as a progression from modernist expressionism (Gutai) to performance (Fluxus and Neo-Dada) to formalist minimalism (Mono-ha), a progression which should be unsurprising in its similarity to the canonical history of the neo avant-gardes in the U. S.” He suggests that Tomiyama is an example of an artist who has been left out of that history. Jesty writes:

To take one clear example, TOMIYAMA Taeko devoted most of her artistic career to social and political causes. Yet, for that very reason, has been entirely excluded from major museums both inside and outside Japan. Her work has circulated primarily through activist networks, local and university museums, small galleries, and in the work of historians and anthropologists.¹³

In the following section, I will discuss collage works that Tomiyama chose to exhibit in *Banned Images: Control and Censorship in East Asian Democracies*, held in Berlin in 2015. The group exhibit was held at nGbk (*neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst*, Berlin) and invited artists from East Asia to address the question of censorship and democracy in contemporary art.

III. Sorrows of War and the ‘Postwar’ ~ What a Woman Artist Saw (2015)

In the fall of 2014, Tomiyama Taeko was invited to show works in a group exhibit titled *Verbotene Bilder: Kontrolle und Zensur in den Demokratien Ostasiens/Banned*

¹² Justin Jesty, “Japan’s Social Turn,” in *FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art*, Vol. 7. Accessed Sept. 25, 2020. <http://field-journal.com/category/issue-7>

¹³ Justin Jesty, “Japan’s Social Turn” *ibid.*

Images: Control and Censorship in East Asian Democracies, at a small, alternative gallery in Berlin. The curators, Han Nataly Jung-Hwa, Yajima Tsukasa and Yoo Jae Hyun, invited six artists including Chen Chieh-jen (b. 1960, Taiwan), Chen Ching-Yao (b. 1976, Taiwan), Hong Sung-dam (b. 1955, South Korea), Nakagaki Katsuhisa (b. 1944, Japan), Sunmu (b. 1972, North Korea) and Tomiyama Taeko. Their aim was to introduce works that “take a stand on freedom of opinion and human rights, treat sensitive topics from the past and do not shy away from the social and political conditions inherent in their works” (Han 2015, 6). In *Silenced by History Revisited—From the Life of a Woman Artist*, curated by Kobayashi Hiromichi, Tomiyama exhibited fifty works organized in four chapters or acts with accompanying dvd/slide works, each organized around a theme selected by the artist.

Act One featured reproductions of new paintings from *Revelation from the Sea* (2014), the series of paintings and collages (and accompanying DVD work produced in collaboration with Takahashi Yuji) that Tomiyama created in response to the triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami, nuclear disaster) that struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011. She chose to follow this with *Prayer in Memory Kwangju, May, 1980*, the pivotal, critical series that marked the beginning of her four and a half decades of collaboration with Takahashi Yuji. *Sorrows of War and the ‘Postwar’ ~ What a Woman Artist Saw* constituted Act Three of the exhibit.

Acutely aware that the show was going to open in Berlin on the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII and the fourth anniversary of the triple disaster of Northeast Japan, Tomiyama was determined to exhibit new works. She had first visited Germany in 1967 on her way to Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. When she returned to Berlin in 1982 to exhibit prints and slides inspired by Kim Chi Ha’s poems and the people’s uprising in Gwangju, she discovered a vibrant community of artists, musicians and feminist activists there. When she came again in 1985 to show the film, *Hajike Hōsenka* (Pop-Out Balsam Seed!), her visit coincided with President Richard von Weizsäcker’s well-known speech on the 40th anniversary of WWII.

In the first collage, in the series *A Shaman’s Prayer* (2002), powerful black and

white images from the artist's early lithographs form the background for fragments of printed text and the decorative Korean style character for *rei* (禮), a gesture of respect toward Korea, the land of "courtesy and respect." The fragment of the face of a woman, taken from earlier black and white lithographs appears as a shaman and witness, offering prayers for Korean miners and "military comfort women" who suffered during the war. This shaman or *mudang* connects the living and the dead, the past and the present. Techniques that Tomiyama had been developing in earlier collage works like this were again deployed in the new series produced for the Berlin exhibit.

The following fourteen images in this series traverse time and space, beginning with the history of European colonialism in the Age of Exploration, and ending with the Gulf War and the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001. Some of the collage works were produced earlier, and some were newly added pieces that again incorporate fragments from earlier paintings and prints, and materials like cut paper, cloth and string. In *The Road to Empire—Korea, Manchuria, and Puppet State Manchuria* both originally made for the exhibit in Philadelphia in 2004, Tomiyama deploys images of oil paintings (or slides of details of those works). In *The Road to Empire*, she collages a large circular piece of hand-made cut paper over the Manchurian plains at sunset, and a fragment from the series, *Requiem for the 20th Century: Harbin* (1995); the folk-art artifact seen in many Asian countries, and often made by craftswomen, is placed above the shadowy images of colonial rule. In *Puppet State Manchuria*, also a revised version of an earlier collage, a reproduction of a Mongolian shamanic artifact again hovers above images of Japan's empire; the work is embellished with woven pieces of cloth from her mother's obi and strips of paper from Korea. Here, Chinese and Mongolian folk art are juxtaposed with details of earlier works on the theme of Japan's puppet state in Manchuria and the colonization of Korea, and refer to a time that for Tomiyama marked the beginning of the era that led to the "sorrows of war."

In the next work in the series, *Sending off a Soldier* (Figure 3), elements of the collage give shape to a figure that stands firmly at the center of the composition. The faceless figure in a decorated military uniform comes from earlier works such as *Spirit of Yamato* (1995) and a collage work from the series, *Hiruko and the*



Figure 1 *A Shaman's Prayer* (2002)

Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi

Puppeteers (2008); at the base of the composition is a detail of *Sending off a Soldier* (1995), an oil painting in the series, *Requiem for the 20th Century: Harbin Station* in the collection of Kyoto Seika University.

Here we see a family of foxes surrounded by banners inscribed with the war-time slogan *hakkō ichiu*, (all the world under one roof) at the rushed wedding of a soldier before he is sent off to war. The artist also adds strands of gold thread, adding a new materiality to the work—the gold paper, images and thread strengthen the composition which was based on an earlier collage and revised with the aim of making the connection between the imperial uniform and Japan's era of “fox possession” more explicit for the Berlin audience.

The next two collages in the series touch on the theme of “military comfort women”; they were first created in 2004 for the exhibit at the Nihon Kaikan in Tokyo, and were shown in Philadelphia in 2005. Here Tomiyama juxtaposes more symbols and artifacts of shamanism, images from her earlier slide work *The Fox Story*, news clippings and fragments of photographs documenting an installation she exhibited at the Women's International Tribunal on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery held in Tokyo in 2000. In *Military Comfort Women*, the haunting image of



Figure 2 *The Road to Empire—Korea, Manchuria* (2015)
Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm) Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi

the *mudan* mask (photographed by Kobayashi for *The Fox Story*), hovers over the other images. Both *Military Comfort Women* and *Military Comfort Women: The Night of Galungan, Festival for the Dead* were first created for the 2005 exhibition in Philadelphia, but were slightly revised for the Berlin exhibit.

Sino-Japanese War: From Works by Agnes Smedley was created for the Berlin exhibit with the Berlin audience in mind. Here we see Tomiyama's *homage* to John Heartfield who had emigrated to the US from Germany, and continued to use collage and photo-montage as techniques in his journalism and art. The image from Heartfield's own collage is severed and placed alongside those of book covers by Agnes Smedley, another leftist journalist whom Tomiyama admired and who supported Chinese resistance to the advance of Imperial Japan in the 1930s. This work can be viewed in connection with other collages that touch on the theme of Japan's Alliance with Germany; here, the artist wishes to stress her own alliance with artists, writers and intellectuals like Heartfield and Smedley who resisted imperialism and fascism.

Tomiyama worked quickly on this series in the winter of 2014. As she thought

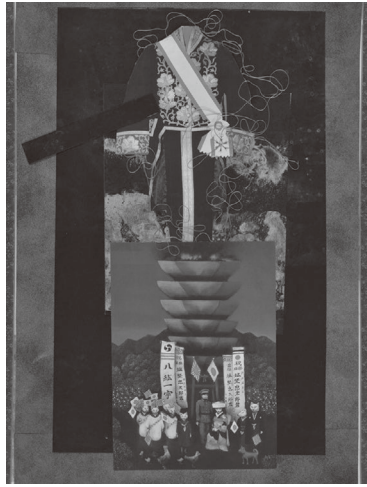


Figure 3 *Sending off a Soldier* (2015)

Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi

about sending the works to Berlin, she continued to add and juxtapose new images and references to “the sorrows of war.” *Harbin—Unit 731*, (Figure 5), also created for the Berlin exhibit, refers to the biological warfare unit operated by the Japanese military outside Harbin where she had lived with her family as a school girl. Again, for the Berlin audience, she incorporates documentary photographs that make reference to Auschwitz, and fragments of images of barbed wire fences and fingerprints that evoke associations with present-day issues of migration and border crossings. She includes an image of skeletons, a still shot from the slide work, *A Memory of the Sea* (1988). The red-tinted image, is a photo by filmmaker Hara Kazuo who collaborated with Tomiyama on the slide series, *Requiem for the 20th Century: Harbin*.

In the next two collages, *At the Bottom of the Pacific: Forgotten Envoys* (2015) and *Corporate Warriors ‘Let’s Go to Japan!’* (Figure 6) we begin to see the “sorrows of the ‘postwar’ era.” In the latter, enlarged fingerprints are juxtaposed with images of paintings and prints from *The Thai Girl Who Never Came Home* (1991); while touching on the theme of contemporary women migrant workers from Southeast



Figure 4 *Military Comfort Women* (2015)

Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hironichi

Asia, the work also draws attention to the issue of both past and present controls on cross-border migration. Around the time when the original series of paintings and collages was created, Korean residents of Japan were leading a protest movement against fingerprinting, a strict requirement under the Alien Registration Law.

The final image in the collage series is titled, *Song of Seabirds Drowned in Oil Tip...tap...tip...tap* 'Let us have light' (Figure 7). Here, Tomiyama takes fragments of images from earlier works including *In Toxic Seas* (2008), a large painting from the *Hiruko and the Puppeteers* series (2009), first shown at the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale. On this undersea stage, towers reminiscent of the World Trade Center in New York, destroyed in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, burn as a chorus of skeletal sea birds drowned in oil tap on abandoned computer keyboards. An ominous eye at the center of the composition—an image taken from *Night of the Festival of Garungan* (1984)—sits near the center of the column-like composition. Relics of modern civilization such as fragments of a computer "mother board" also punctuate the mixed-media work that was also made for the Berlin exhibit. While this image was the final collage shown in Act Three, it also points to the disasters

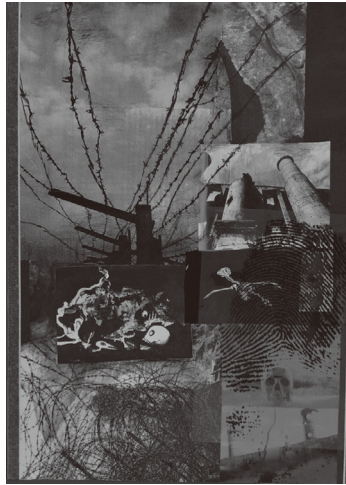


Figure 5 *Harbin, Unit 731* (2015)

Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi

that are the focus of Act One in which the sea was also a stage for the artist's revelation and response to the triple-disaster of Northeast Japan.

The series of paintings, prints and DVD in Act One, *Revelation from the Sea* (2014), also included a number of collages. After completing five large oil paintings between 2011 and 2014, Tomiyama learned of mutations and high mortality rates among butterflies in the area around Fukushima and produced an epilogue of nearly twenty collages on paper. Several of these works were also exhibited in Berlin. In *To the Dead Butterfly. Fukushima 4* (2014), images of the small, fragile creatures seem to float on the dark, swirling background that suggests layers of geological strata and time.

Tomiyama also heard and saw reports of tanks filled with radiation-contaminated wastewater from the nuclear plants which prompted her to create other collages. The vision of countless rows of tanks reminded the artist of Goethe's poem, "*Der Zauberlehrling*" in which a sorcerer's apprentice attempts to use powerful magic that he doesn't understand and belatedly realizes the danger he has unleashed.

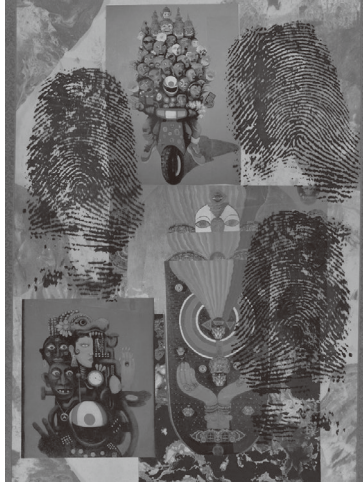


Figure 6 *Corporate Warriors 'Let's Go to Japan!'* (2015)
Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi



Figure 7 *Song of Seabirds Drowned in Oil Tip...tap...tip...tap 'Let us have light'* (2015)
Mixed-media collage on paper (70cm × 50cm). Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi



Figure 8 *To the Dead Butterfly: Fukushima 4* (2014)

Mixed-media collage on paper (50cm × 70cm) Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi



Figure 9 *To the Dead Butterfly: Fukushima 5* (2014)

Mixed-media collage on paper (50cm × 70cm) Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kobayashi Hiromichi

IV. *The Beginning of the End, the End of the Beginning?* (2016)

In this essay, I have tried to show the breadth and depth of Tomiyama Taeko's work through a closer look at one series of collages, *Sorrows of War and the 'Postwar': What a Woman Artist Saw*. The dense array of images in these works poses a challenge to viewers anywhere. Together these works constitute a mini-retrospective of the artist's oeuvre, curated by the artist herself; as the title of the exhibit and the series suggest, it is important to Tomiyama to emphasize that these "sorrows of war and the 'postwar'" are what "a woman artist saw." Tomiyama's commitment to remember and represent the past, to "mourn the other," and to question the turbulent post-9/11 and post-Fukushima era warrants ongoing consideration. For the time being, we have seen here that the artist's use of images and themes from earlier works, collage techniques and mixed-media including photographs, documents, news articles, juxtaposed with fragments of her own earlier prints, paintings and slide works give expression to the "past within her"; at the same time, the artist's memory and experience, her re-framing of history and artistic imagination, help us to make sense of the present.

To suggest, however, that this series of collages is a "retrospective," might imply to some that it also marks the culmination of the artist's life and work. Not so. In 2016, Tomiyama responded to another call, an invitation from the Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels in Saitama to show works in the annual exhibit of "Anti-war, anti-nuclear" art. The title of the exhibit, *Owari no hajimari, hajimari no owari* (*The Beginning of the End, the End of the Beginning?*) was inspired by a composition by the 14th century French poet and musician, Guillaume de Machaut, introduced by Tomiyama's collaborator, Takahashi Yuji. For the exhibit, Tomiyama selected collage works from earlier series and created new ones. Interspersed on the wall of the gallery were poems by Fujii Sadakazu—also written after the triple-disaster of 3.11—that resonated with the images in the collages. The artist reworked the surfaces of two large oil paintings to depict the "first" (beginning) and "last" (ending) landscapes of her past and her imagination; in them, viewers see the blood-red plains of Manchuria and the fiery plains of the present, burning in the

wake of natural and man-made disasters. For this viewer, the images eerily resonate with news photos of fires spreading in Siberia during the summer of 2020, when the highest temperatures recorded in the arctic shocked the world. At an event held in the gallery, Takahashi Yuji performed Guillaume de Machaut's piano piece as Fujii Sadakazu read his poems, creating a space of a live performance. As they had done before, Takahashi, Tomiyama and Fujii—artist, musician and poet—were joining together to go “beyond making interesting objects to the building of communities whose creative acts allow us to question social norms and the way we live.” (Takahashi, 2001)¹⁴.

Finally, while Tomiyama has been developing the technique of collage for many decades, we might ask why she has chosen to use it more in the latter half of her 9th decade. One simple answer is that collage works on paper are more practical as it becomes more physically difficult to work on large canvases or to coordinate collaborations with others to create new slide or multi-media works that have characterized her artistic practice. Tomiyama's strong desire to gather and critically engage with image fragments from her own past works as well as many other visual texts that we see in the present, continues along with her belief that somehow reckoning with traumatic events and memories might help bring about reconciliation and healing. These collages in which elements from her earlier paintings and prints, multi-media slide works and drawings are juxtaposed with images from past and present photojournalism, folk art and internet sources can be seen as yet another transformational act that returns the multi-media slide techniques to a portable and manageable two-dimensional format.

Writing of their collaboration in the production of their slide works, Takahashi Yuji writes that the images “...appear and disappear. Music no longer fixed to a musical score, reenacts live performance. This space, this moment when sound and image interact becomes a mirror before the viewer who questions our time.” Tomiyama's late collage works—though two-dimensional and still—not only offer viewers a retrospective of her work, they also aim to create an interactive viewing

¹⁴ Takahashi Yuji “Slides and Music,” in *SLIDES* (Tokyo: Hidane Kōbō). Reprinted in the DVD liner for *Seas of Memory: Prayer Memory, Revelation* (Tokyo: Voyager Japan Inc)

experience like that of the multi-media slide works, an experience that leads us to question ourselves and our times. As she nears the age of 100, Tomiyama Taeko continues to ask us to look through the lens of history at the post-Fukushima landscape, and to reflect together with her on the past with the hope, not only of reflecting on history, but also of imagining new directions for the future.

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