

ISAJI YUGO

Art works of

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中島智 いきなり大きな質問からいきますけど、まず、伊佐治さん自身の造形衝動について聞きたいんです。何が引き金になって造形衝動が起きるのか。

伊佐治雄悟 それって個別の制作のことですか？

中 そうそう。まあ、あれの場合は、これの場合は、と違うのかもしれないけど、でもそれを引き出して共通点みたいなものが見えてくるのかなって

伊 造形衝動って言えるような感じになるのが割とその新作を思いついたときとかいうか、新しいことやってみようかなって時は多分その言葉に当てはまると思うんですが、旧作を展示があるからそれに向けて作るうっていうのはかなり作業化されています。

中 あ、そういうこともあるんだ。じゃあそれは除外して。

伊 だから新作を思いついた時は割と衝動みたいなものを感じるかなー。

中 思いつく引き金みたいなものって何？

伊 実際に行動に移すことは学生の時と比べて少なくなっていて、頭の中だけで色々やっちゃうんだけど、それでも現実に行ってみたくなる時が自分の生活のバイオリズムの中にあります。それが失敗するときもあるけど。頭の中で 実験を重ねて「あーこれはうまくいくわ」って思う時があって、それが一番衝動って言葉に近いかもしれないです。

中 それは主にスタジオ内での話？

伊 いえ、スタジオにいるのは実際の作業が行われる時ぐらいで、あんまりいること自体が少ないかな。

中 じゃ普段ってことだね。普段の日常生活の中で。

伊 やはり、モノを見ることが多いので。

中 例えば？

伊 例えば、そう工事現場とか見ちゃいますね。

中 あー見ちゃうねー。  
穴があったら覗いたりねー。こういう地層かーって。笑

伊 なんかそういうモノが建ってたり、壊れてたりってことを見たときの、頭の中でイメージできるものがあると思うんです。おそらく自分の中にモノを動かしたり作ったりする為のシミレーションがあって、多分眼に映るものをシミレーションするようになってしまったんでしょうね、それがある時に自分でやって見たくなる、ってことだと思えます。

中 工事現場で作ってる途中か解体してる途中かと言えば、わしは解体してる途中かな、「あ、ここで止めといて」みたいな笑

伊 あー、木造家屋がショベルカーで崩れてるやつとか。

中 そう断面が見えるやつとかね。

伊 あれはいいですよ。

中 萌えるよね。絵が掛かっていたり、カレンダーとか、あれはすごいね。完璧にできている建築には、そんなに感じない？

伊 あー、でもやっぱりね、最近銀座なんか現場で行くと、よく見ると最新の技法でお金かけて作りたみたいなの立派な建物があるから、そういう見慣れないものにも目がいっちゃいます。

中 、、更地も不思議だよ。

伊 更地不思議ですか？

中 うん、不思議。宙に浮いてんじゃん。

伊 あー、、それって更地になって見えるようになった周りの家ってことですか？

中 それもあるけど。どっちつかずの宙に浮いているような場所に惹かれるんだよね。ホームレスの人たちが見つけるデッドスペースとか、その活用とかがとっても面白くてね。それはホント宙に浮いている場所をうまく見つけているんだよね。まあそれは私の興味だけ。

伊 そう考えると僕のは物質寄りで、空間的には注目してなかったですね。だからモノが壊れるのに注目しても、そうした「不在」とか、空き地のこととか、ホームレスの人の場所とか、そこまで魅力に感じてなかったですね。

中 それは意外なんだよね。結構同じようなことをやってる気がするけど。つまり、彼らは見立てでやってる訳だね。この場所は休むのにとか、寝るのにとか、住むのにとか、すごく見立てている訳ね。空間の性質を。それで誰も発見しなかった意味をそこに付与している。そこで伊佐治さんの作品って見立てが強いじゃん。

伊 「見立て」ってもっと動物に見せたりとか、そういう意味じゃないんですか？

中 じゃあ物質の方に惹かれるってことで、二問目の質問に移っていきます。生活材とか日用品とか使われるでしょ？前に「横浜映像祭2009」で「プリコラージュの演習」[\*1]をお願いしたけど、プリコラージュというものがまさに見立てなんです。既存の意味とか機能を持っているものを、別のものに見立てる。転用するっていうか、そういう働きがプリコラージュ/見立てで、だから感覚的にはホームレス的だと思うんだけど。

伊 多分空き地に興味を持つかに繋がると思うんだけど、その元の意味作用とか後の意味作用とかを全然意識してない状態でやるから、ちょっと違うのかなって気がしますね。

中 でも意識してなくてもさ、あそこで色々なものを持ってこられた訳じゃない。既製品のものも含めて。で、明らかにこれはCDである、とか認識しながらも、別のものに見えてくる訳じゃない。

伊 じゃあ例えばペンを渡されて、ペンを加工しようってなった時に、それがペンだってことがあまり自分のシミレーションに関与してこないっていうか、だからペンっていうよりは、例えばプラスチックの方を、じゃあプラスチックであればどういう変化が可能かっていうことだと。

中 それはその既製品が新品の場合だね？でもあそこで持ってこられたものって、中古品とか壊れたものであって、その場合はモノに必ず垢がついているって言うか、記憶が付いていますよね？

伊 あー。  
そういうものに関しては鈍感というか、あまり感じていない。だから、新品の方が気分良くできるな、と考えていました。

中 じゃあそういうのは邪魔する要素なんだ。見立てを。

伊 そうですね。邪魔する要素って言うよりは、加工の上では問題ないのは分かっているんだけど、わざわざそれを使う必要がない。僕はそれを面白いとは思わないけど、一般的には面白いものではあるじゃないですか。例えば、なぜこれがここに落ちているんだろう、みたいなものとか。面白いけど、それはそれを見るだけでいいかって感じ。それをあえて拾ったりする動機が自分がない。

中 じゃあ解体作業の見方も、私とだいぶ僕と違うね。

伊 違う気がしてきましたね。

中 僕は、これはお父さんが作ったんだろうとか、これは子供のとか。

伊 そういうストーリーは見えてなかったですね。もうちょっと視覚的ですね。

中 建築でいうと、出来上がったものより構造に興味がある感じ？

伊 そうですね。だからさっき言った銀座の建築で目を惹かれるのは新しい工法が試されている時で、こんなこともできるんだなって、感じて見てました。多分自分の中の新しいシミュレーションの一部になる。知識というか。

中 なるほど。自然なんだね。というのはだから、僕の場合は初めにそういうものを読み取ってしまう。伊佐治さんの場合はモノが持っている記憶とか意味とか機能とかを脱色していくわけじゃない。だから初めにこれがあるから脱色するっていうよりも、かなり自然に脱色がされている印象。

伊 見てない、というか見えてないというか。

中 僕が前にDMにかいた文章にある「無主性[\*2]」っていう言葉、つまり脱色していると「無主性」に向かうんだけど、だから僕から見ると伊佐治さんの作品は無主物として現れているっていう不思議な見え方をしている。僕が興味があるのは、無主物性と無主的な場所、アート/芸術って場所の本質にあるって考えなんです。市庭だとか境界だとか、そういう普段は宙に浮いた場所、公界[\*3]で、いろんな芸事が生まれた歴史があるんです。モノが脱色されて無主物になっていく過程は、その芸術的な領域に親和していくと思っているんです。

伊 わからんでもない話だなーとは思いますが。

中 感覚的にでもいいんだけど

伊 うーん。その無主的な場所っていうのは？

中 無縁ともいうけどね

伊 では中島さんの考えだと、無主的であるがゆえに、そういう祭事だとか、いろんなことが起こりうると？

中 うん。非所有の場所。

伊 広場とかもそうですよね。

中 うん。

伊 あー。言ってることは分かるんですけど、自分に置き換えると場所じゃないなって、場所で物事を捉えることってないかなって思います。

中 これは対応についての話。じゃあ自分の作品が作業すればするほど無主物になっていくって感覚はある？つまり自分の所有から離れていくような感覚。

伊 うーん。前に書いてもらった文書[\*2]に引っ張られている気もするけど。笑

ただ、加工してこれは作品、これは違うという判断基準というのがあるんです。コンセプトで作ってないから、口で言えるような判断基準ではないんだけど、なんかこう面白く感じる状態はあるんです。例えば、ボールペン膨らませるのにも間違っただ膨らみ方があるんです。それって自分だけのルールなんですけど、そこに確かに新しいルールができていくんだと思います。

中 そこってどこのこと？

伊 ボールペンです。ボールペンが彫刻的、作品的にあるためのルールみたいなものが、その作品を作り始めた瞬間から存在するんです。

中 生まれるわけだ。

伊 はい。だから新作を作り始めた時でも、これは失敗だなんていうのがあるんです。その瞬間から選別が始まって、だから結構時間をかけないとバリエーションみたいなものはあまり生まれません。

中 いやバリエーションっていうのは、調子いいとか悪いとか笑 そういう身体的なバリエーションは感じるけどね。

伊 それはあると思います。ただホッチキスを積む上での法則とか、そういう意味でのバリエーションの可能性は少ないと思うんですよね。

中 だからパターンを制約することで、むしろそういう生理的なものも出てくるってことだろうね。

伊 つまりルールがその素材で決まるっていうか。そういう意味でいうと無主的なのかな。だからそれは俺のルールなのではなく、ボールペンのルールなんです。ただそのボールペンのルールはその作品が存在しないと無いわけですよ。だから自分と離れたものを扱っている感じが体験できるっていうか。

中 へー、いいね笑

だから私は基本的には、作品の完成っていうのは、理想的には、作品はやはり作家が作品に対して責任を負えなくなる、あるいは作品から置いてけぼりになる、っていう状態で手を止めなきゃいけないって思う。だから言い換えればそれ自身が意思を持ってしまふ。こっちの意思では無いものをモノが持ってしまう。だからそのボールペンができた時っていうのは、離れていくっていうのは、ボールペン側のルール、意思みたいなものとして独立したのになって、そういう感じで考えると無主性に近いのかな。

伊 ただすごく微妙な感覚なので、よくわかんない判断基準でやっている感覚はあります。

中 じゃあ特に強烈に置いてけぼりになったっていう感覚は無いの？

伊 その話はよく中島さんのTwitterでも拝見していて笑

中 読んでるの？

伊 はい。それを読んでそういうこともあるのかな、と読んでいたんだけど、ちょっと意識し始めちゃったところはあるかな。笑

中島智 新作の金継ぎシリーズの話に行きたいんだけど、いわゆる雑器と言われるものを使うシリーズですが、伊佐治さん、これを赤瀬川原平の「宇宙の缶詰」[\*4] に対する別の回答なんだと仰っていたと記憶しています。この辺について詳しく教えて欲しいです。

伊佐治雄悟 いい意味で、ああいうウィットに富んだ作品って大好きなんです。言葉遊びだったりとか、そこまでエンタメ性も無いですよ、あの作品って。風刺でもなくて、そこがまた良くて、好きな作品なんです。ある時、知り合いに私の作品がトポロジー的だと言われたことがあったんです。そこで、トポロジーって言葉を調べた時に、僕のシンプルな理解だと、穴の数で物の形/次元を考えている。そうなってくるとボールペンの作品はまさしくトポロジー的と言えそうです。そうした時に「宇宙の缶詰」は蓋を開けた瞬間にその関係性は壊れているから、ラベルを内側に入れても裏表逆の関係性にはなっていない。むしろ蓋を開けていない状態が彼が表現しようとした状況なのではと、考えたんです。

中 それをトポロジーから導いたのね。笑  
缶を開けた瞬間に別の形態になってしまう。なるほど。全然感覚がコンセプチュアルじゃないね。

伊 そうですか？笑 それで、缶が開いてある状態が実は、僕らの世界と蓋の身だけの世界とを生み出すのであれば、それは面白い体験 だと思うんです。それを人に見せようとした時に、蓋のないものであればそれを再現できると考えました。よくよく考えると、割った瞬間に茶碗と世界の関係は壊れているんですが。

中 プロセスはね。

伊 その上で金継ぎの技法がリーズナブルだったというか、納得感があるんです。

中 それはどういう意味で？

伊 金継ぎの技法がそもそも、その傷を隠すわけじゃないんだけど、無かったことにするものなので、見る側が割れていることに合意できると思うんです。

中 そこに繋がるのかな？笑  
例えばただ反転させるのであれば、最初から釉薬も模様も反転させて焼いてしまえば良いわけじゃない。だけど、割るっていう行為はかなり強いものが伝わってくるよね。

伊 強いものですか？そうですか？

中 これは次の質問に関わってくるんだけど、金継ぎの作品はコンセプチュアルだって言ってたよね？

伊 その時にコンセプチュアルって言った意味っていうのは、作った後に言葉やストーリーが作りやすいと思うんです。だからこの作品に関しては今話したように少し長めの話ができる。話しやすいから。そう意味でコンセプチュアルって呼びました。コンセプチュアルな意図というよりは、出来上がったものがコンセプチュアルアートが好き人も切り口を見つけられる作品なのではと考えています。

中 でもねー。あんまりコンセプチュアルだとは感じないんだよ。笑

伊 そうなんですか？笑

中 さっき言ったような反転させたものを発注したりすれば、かなりコンセプチュアルに見えてくると思うんです。

中 でも割る行為っていうのは、すごくフィジカルなんだよね。僕はそこがすごく面白いと思っていて。

伊 そうなってくると、僕が仮にもともと取っ手が内側にあるカップを作るとしたら自分で作ると思うんですよ。そうなった時にその作業工程が僕にとって退屈であることが想像できる。行動に移すまでのモチベーションが湧かないというか。

中 だから、コンセプチュアルには成りきれないんだよ。笑

伊 そうかもしれない。笑

中 そこにやはり造形衝動が必要で。

伊 あー造形衝動。

中 それで最後の質問になりますが、金継ぎの作品をコンセプチュアルな作品と語っているけども、確かにボールペンはさっきも言っていたけどモノに聞いたりだとかすると、モノが手を止めるタイミングを教えてくれる。そういう対話があるわけじゃない？それは全くコンセプチュアルではない。あとホッチキスや切り込みを入れる作品、僕はそれを伊佐治ユニットと呼んでいるけど。笑

伊 単位でしたっけ？

中 そう伊佐治単位。モノに対してある単位を掛け合わせて、あるいは割り算して、そのモノをある単位に還元していくって感じがあるんだよね。それが結果的にトポロジカルに変形を伴うこともある。その伊佐治単位が加算されていって反復されていく中で、繰り返せば繰り返すほど単位が浮上してくる感じ、単位が自立してくる感じがある。モノ性よりも単位性があるんです。単位っていうのはもちろんコンセプトではないからコンセプチュアルとは呼べない。むしろコンセプトを拒否するようなあり方をしている。

伊 コンセプト拒否してたんですか？笑

中 拒否するぐらいのものが単位だと思う。かなりストイックなあり方を感じるんです。  
それまではコンセプチュアルではないっていうのがあったんだけど、でも金継ぎシリーズ、これをコンセプチュアルだと言うことが面白い。確かに伊佐治さんの説明ではそうかもしれないんだけど、やはりモノから受ける印象としてはフィジカルで非常に行為的、遂行為的。これまでも非常に遂行して作ってきたんだけど、でもその遂行するものが、割ったものをつなぎ合わせるという、再現性のない、繰り返しのできない行為をやっているから余計に行為性が全面化してくる。

伊 なるほど。

中 その辺で僕はすごくフィジカルになったと思ったんだけど、伊佐治さんはすごくコンセプチュアルと、逆のことを言うのが面白かった。でも確かに説明を聞くとコンセプチュアルなんだよ。でも作品が発しているものはかなりフィジカルなんだよ。で、実際にそう言う作品があるわけだから、こちらが考え方の更新を迫られる。つまりコンセプトとフィジカルは二律背反じゃないんだってことを考えなきゃいけない。

伊 なるほど。へー。

中 そこは新しい。慣習的にそれを分けていたけど、別のあり方、メタなあり方があるんだろうなって期待を感じたり、ハッとするものがあるんだよね。二律背反だと思っていたものがそうではなかった。それが実現している。

伊 ただお話をされていて、純粋にコンセプチュアルな作品って、良くも悪くも理想主義的に思えてきました。つまり僕のような素朴な肉体労働者には全ての物をモノで捉える癖がある。もし仮に「コンセプチュアルアート」が身体性を超越するような試みなのだとする、常に浮かび上がってくる身体性や物質性と戦わなければならない。

【\*1】 国際映画祭2009、横浜新港ピア会場での中島智氏による企画。伊佐治は来場者から持寄られた市販の製品などを、その場で手を加えて作品化した。

【\*2】 本書3 ページに記載されている中島氏寄稿の文章。

【\*3】 公界(くかい)/アジール

【\*4】 美術家、赤瀬川原平氏(1937-2014年)による1964年に発表された作品。開封され空になった缶詰の内側に、紙製のラベルを巻き直している。ラベルが内側にあることで缶の内部を外側に見立て、缶がその構造的な内部以外の宇宙を内包したことを示唆している。

Nakashima I will begin with a big question without any preliminary remarks. First of all, I would like to ask about your sculptural impulse. What drives you to create forms?

Isaji Are you asking me about what drives me to make each individual piece?  
Yugo

N Yes. Of course, it might be different depending on the work in question. However, I wonder if you could draw some kind of common thread across all of them that you see as a point of similarity?

I The time when I feel something I could describe as a sculptural impulse is when I come up with an idea for new work. I think this phrase is appropriate to describing how I feel in times when I'm thinking about giving something new a try. But, as a pretty regular part of my operation now when I have an upcoming exhibition of my old work, I feel the impulse to make something new with that exhibition in mind.

N Oh, you've felt like that as well. Setting that aside?

I Well, as I said, I would say I feel something like an impulse when I come up with an idea for new work.

N What triggers the idea for new work?

I I put the impulse into actual action less now compared with when I was a student, with a lot happening just inside my head. But, sometimes within the biorhythms of my life I get the urge to go a step further and actually try it out in physical reality. Sometimes it doesn't work out well, but sometimes having gone through all these experimental trials one after another in my mind I get the feeling that "Oh, this is going to work..." That might be the moment that is closest to the sense of the word "impulse".

N Do you mostly experience this in your studio?

I No. I'm mainly only in my studio when I'm actually working on something, so I don't really spend much time there.

N So, you mean it just happens, within the course of your daily life?

I Well, because at the end of the day I am often looking at things.

N What do you mean? For example?

I For example... Well, I get pretty into looking at construction sites and things like that.

N Oh yes, I get it, I'm into that too. When there's a pit, I peer into it, and think, oh, look at all these different layers of earth (laughing)...

I Well, I think there is something I am able to imagine in my mind when I see how things are built up or destroyed. Probably, there's a simulation that runs inside of me that moves things and builds things, so I wind up getting into the habit of simulating the things that catch my eye. Then, I think, sometimes I feel the urge to try actually doing it myself for real in the physical world.

N If you ask me whether I prefer construction sites in the middle of demolition or construction, I say demolition. It's like I want to say to them "OK, stop just here..." (laughing)

I Yes, like when a wooden house is falling apart under the efforts of a power shovel.

N Yes, like when you can see different cross-sections...

I Yes, that's great isn't it...

N It makes me feel a sense of moe, a sort of emotional affection. Sometimes there's still art on the walls, or calendars, things like that – it's amazing. With perfectly completed architecture, do you not feel as much?

I Well, that being said, going to work sites in Ginza or wherever recently, if you look closely there are remarkable buildings going up where they're spending a lot of money on the latest techniques, and my eye is also drawn to these unfamiliar things...

N ...vacant lots are also intriguing...

I Vacant lots are intriguing?

N Yes, they're intriguing. Look, they're floating in space, right?

I Ah...

Are you talking about the houses neighboring the plot that have become visible after it has become a vacant lot?

N Well, that too. I'm drawn to places floating in space that are neither here nor there. Like the dead spaces homeless people find – the way they put places like that to practical use is really interesting to me. They're really doing an amazing job of finding these places that are truly floating in space. Well, ultimately this is all my own personal interest...

I From that perspective, I would say that I've been focusing on the matter, and haven't paid much attention to these places spatially. So, even when I'm focusing on a thing being broken, I haven't felt much appeal in this kind of "absence", empty lots, the spaces of homeless people, or that kind of thing.

N That's surprising. It seems to me you've been doing something pretty similar to them.

That is, I think they apply mitate technique appropriating these spaces as stand-ins for something else. Appropriating this space as a place for resting, this one for sleeping, that one for living – they're really engaging in an extreme mitate on the nature of the spaces.

Through this they add meaning to the space that nobody had discovered before.

And, I would say that this current of mitate runs very strongly in your work.

I Doesn't mitate more mean a technique of making one thing look like another, like making something look like an animal – things like that?

- N Well, you've said you are more attracted to matter, so let's move on to the second question. Your work uses consumer products and daily-use items, right?
- For the International Festival for Arts and Media Yokohama 2009, I commissioned you to take part in the "Seminar on Bricolage"[\*1]. Bricolage is itself the very act of mitate - taking things with existing meanings or functions and transforming them in the image of something else, or appropriating them to another purpose. That kind of action is bricolage / mitate, and that's why at the intuitive level it feels like the sort of thing homeless people do.
- I It might be connected to the question of whether or not I'm interested in vacant lots, but when I work on my art I do it in a state of mind where I pay no attention to its original significance in the semiotic sense, nor its ex post facto significance, so that may be why my approach is a bit different from what you're talking about.
- N But, wouldn't you say that even if you weren't conscious of it at the time, all kinds of ready-made goods and other things were brought in at that time? And then, for example even while consciously recognizing that this is obviously a CD, it winds up looking like something else, right?
- I Well then, for example if someone gives me a pen and I set to work on this pen, the fact that it is a pen doesn't influence my simulation very much. So, rather than the fact that it's a pen, what I'm looking at more is the plastic. I think, OK, since this is plastic, what kinds of transformations are possible?
- N That's when the ready-made product is new, right? But at that time the stuff that was brought in was used products and broken things. In that case the materials inevitably have patina, imprints of the memory of use, right?
- I Hmm...
- I would say that I'm insensitive things like that, I don't really feel that kind of thing.  
It makes me think that maybe this is why I feel better when I'm working with products that are new.
- N So, elements like that are an interference? They interfere with your mitate?
- I Well, rather than calling this an interference, I would say that even though I know there's no problem from the perspective of the process of working the material, there's no need to go to the trouble of using those kinds of objects. I don't think this kind of thing is interesting, but in general it is the kind of thing that people find interesting, isn't it? For example, wondering to yourself "Why has this thing fallen here of all places?" Thinking about that kind of thing is interesting, but I'm fine just looking. I myself have no motivation to go any further to pick it up or anything like that.
- N Then, I imagine your perspective on the act of dismantling is quite also quite different from mine.
- I Yes, I've started to feel we probably do have different perspectives.
- N For me, I imagine that "this one was made by the father, that one was by the child", that kind of thing.
- I I've never seen stories like that in objects. I've been more visual.
- N When it comes to architecture, would you say you are more interested in the structure than the finished building?
- I I think so. As I said a second ago, what catches my eye in the construction in Ginza is the times when new construction methods are being tried out. I've been looking at them from the viewpoint of, "Oh, now it's possible to do that kind of thing..." This then probably becomes a part of a new simulation in my mind – a new piece of knowledge.
- N I see. It happens very naturally.  
I guess that what I'm saying here is that in my case, I wind up reading all of that into it from the beginning. In your case, you don't bleach out the memories or meanings or functions of things – rather than actively bleaching out that which is originally there, my impression is that this bleaching is happening quite naturally.
- I I don't look for these things, or perhaps I might say I can't see them.
- N Thinking about the word "ownerless-ness"[\*2] that I used in an essay for a pamphlet about you some time back, when something gets bleached of its original meanings in this way, it heads towards "ownerless-ness". That's why I have the unusual perspective of seeing your artwork as coming into being as ownerless objects.  
What I am interested in is ownerless object-ness and ownerless space, and the idea that art / the arts are rooted in the fundamental nature of space. Marketplaces, boundary areas, these kinds of places usually floating in space as kugai[\*3] – sanctuaries of asylum – are historically the birthplaces of the diverse arts. I think that in the process by which things are bleached of their original meaning and become ownerless objects, they come to be accommodated within this artistic realm.
- I I think I sort of understand what you mean.
- N Even intuitively is fine.
- I Hmm.  
What is this ownerless kind of place?
- N It is also called muen – a state free from entanglement in the rules of others.
- I So, in your way of thinking, is it owing to this ownerless-ness that we have festivals, and other kinds of things can happen?
- N Yes. In places that are un-owned.
- I Public squares are another example, aren't they.
- N Yes.
- I Hmm.  
I do understand what you are saying, but when I think about myself in this context it isn't about the place. I think I don't perceive things through the lens of place.

- Nakashima What I'm talking about is correspondence. Do you have the sense that the more you work on one of your art pieces, the more of an ownerless object it becomes? In other words, do you feel it becoming increasingly distant from your ownership?
- Satoshi
- Isaji Hmm. It seems like we're getting caught up in the previous essay[\*2] you wrote for me (laughing)
- Yugo But, I will say that when I go to work, I do have criteria for judging what is an art piece and what is not. Since I don't work based on a concept, my judgement criteria aren't something I can explain in words. I would best describe it as a condition where it feels somehow interesting. For example, when inflating a ballpoint pen, there is a wrong way to inflate it. I think I am definitely creating new rules here, even if they are just my own personal rules.
- N Where is this "here" you are talking about?
- I In the ballpoint pen. The rules that have to be in place in order to make the ballpoint pen sculptural and a work of art exist from the instant I start making that piece.
- N So, they are born in this way.
- I Yes. That's why sometimes when I've started making a new piece, I come to realize that this one isn't going to work out. The selection process has begun in that instant, and this is why if I don't spend a fair amount of time, I don't see a lot of variation being born.
- N I would have thought that variation is more a matter of when you've hit your stride or not. (laughing)  
There is that kind of variety based on one's physical condition.
- I Yes, I agree.  
But, I think that the possibilities for variation are few if you think of it in terms of the potential range of laws to follow in piling up staples, for example.
- N So, I guess that limiting the pattern winds up causing the emergence of these kinds of physiological effects, doesn't it.
- I What I mean is that the rule depends on the material. In that sense, ownerless-ness may be at play. You see, the rule is not my rule, it is the ballpoint pen's rule. But, of course the ballpoint pen's rule won't exist unless the artwork exists. That's why I am able to experience a sense that I am handling something separate from myself.
- N Wow! That's great! (laughing)  
So, fundamentally, in my opinion the completion of an artwork, ideally speaking, happens when the artist can no longer carry the weight of responsibility for the artwork, or they have to stop working on it because they have reached a point where the artwork has left them behind. Put another way, the artwork itself comes to have its own intention. The thing is possessed of an intention that is not that of the artist. In this way, in the moment when your ballpoint pen has reached completion and takes its leave of you, its rules as a ballpoint pen have become a kind of intention that take their independence. Thinking about things from this perspective, I think we are close to the realm of ownerless-ness.
- I Well, it is a really sensation, so I do get the feeling I am proceeding based on a judgement criterion I myself don't know well.
- N So, have you never felt a particularly strong sense that you have been left behind?
- I I do often see this topic on your Twitter feed. (laughing)
- N You read my Twitter?
- I Yes.  
Reading your Tweets left me thinking that this might be one way of looking at things, and maybe I have begun to be a bit conscious of this... (laughing)
- N I would like to move on to your new series using kintsugi, the art of repairing broken ceramics using seams of lacquer and gold. It's a series that makes use of a miscellaneous selection of ceramic dishes, and I remember that you mentioned that they were another response to Genpei Akasegawa's "Canned Universe"[\*4]. Can you elaborate on this?
- I In a good way, I love those kinds of artworks full of wit. That piece doesn't do wordplay or have that much sense of trying to entertain, nor is it satire. That's what's good about it, that's why it's an artwork I like.  
An acquaintance once said that my work is topological. When I then went to look up the meaning of the word topology, my simple understanding was that this refers to thinking about the dimensions / forms of things based on their number of holes. In that sense, I think that the ballpoint pen pieces can be said to be very topological. From that perspective, in the case of "Canned Universe", once the lid is opened, the relationship is broken, so even if the label were put on the inside, it doesn't become a relationship where things are turned inside-out. I think that what he is really trying to express is what happens when the lid is unopened.
- N You got all of that from the idea of topology... (laughing)  
The instant the can is opened, it winds up becoming a different form. Yes, I see. Your perspective is not at all conceptual.
- I You think so? (laughing)  
And then, if in fact it is when the can is in its closed state that it gives rise to our world and a world where only the crab meat exists, I think that is quite an interesting experience. Thinking about how I could show this to people, it occurred to me that I could recreate this if I used something with no lid. But, on further consideration, it is true that the instant the bowl breaks, its relationship with the world is broken.  
This is the process...
- N And, in addition, the kintsugi technique was reasonable – I mean it makes sense to me.
- I What do you mean?
- N To begin with, the kintsugi technique, though not about hiding the flaw, is about making it as if it had never happened. So, I think it makes it possible for the viewer to accede to the fact the bowl is broken.
- I Does it connect to that? (laughing)



N If, for example, you just turned it over from the beginning, you could simply reverse the glaze and pattern and fire it, couldn't you? But, the act of breaking it conveys something quite powerful.

I Something powerful? Really?

N This actually relates to my next question – you have said that your kintsugi pieces are conceptual, right?

I When I used the word "conceptual" at that time, it was because I think that it makes it easy to create words and stories around it after I've made the piece. That's how I am able to talk at a bit of length about this work, as I've just done. It's because it's easy to talk about. And it was in that sense that I called it conceptual. Rather than having a conceptual intention, the artwork that was realized is, I think, a piece that also offers something people who like conceptual art can find to take an interest in.

N But, you know, it doesn't feel very conceptual to me... (laughing)

I Really? (laughing)

N If, along the lines of what I was talking about a second ago, you put in an order to have something made in a reversed state, that would start looking quite conceptual, I think. But the act of breaking is extremely physical. That's the point that I think is really interesting.

I In that case, if hypothetically speaking I were to make a cup that had a handle on the inside to begin with, I think I would make it myself. In that case, I can imagine that the production process would be quite tedious for me, like I wouldn't feel the motivation to put this thought into action.

N That's exactly why it can't be completely conceptual! (laughing)

I You might be right. (laughing)

N At the end of the day you need a sculptural impulse.

I Yes, the impulse to sculpt form.

N We have arrived at my final question. You talk of your kintsugi works as conceptual pieces. And, as you were saying a moment ago in the case of your ballpoint pens, when you listen to your objects, the object tells you the timing when to stop working on it. You have this dialogue, right? That's not at all conceptual. And then, there's your work with staples and the ones made by inserting cuts – I call those "Isaji Units". (laughing)

I Units, right?

N Yes, "Isaji Units". I think there's a sense that an object is multiplied or divided by a certain unit, returning that object to a given unit. And, this is also often accompanied by a resulting topological transformation as well. Adding together and iterating these Isaji Units, the more they are repeated, the more the unit seems to emerge - the more the unit seems to become independent. Rather than object-ness, they have more sense of unit-ness. Of course, because the units are not concepts, you can't call it conceptual. In fact, they exist more as a rejection of concept.

I They have been refusing concept? (laughter)

N It is the nature of the unit to refuse. I feel a very stoic way of being here.

Until now you had said your work was not conceptual, but with the kintsugi series the fact that you say this is conceptual is interesting. It is true that your explanation may be conceptual, but the impression one gets from the objects themselves is physical, and very much about action, about going through with an action. Your work until now has been extremely oriented towards going through with actions, but here what it is you are going through with – the re-connecting of something that's been broken, this non-reproducible, non-repeatable action you are doing – makes the action-centric nature of the work all the more salient.

I I see.

N This is the perspective that made me think your work has gotten quite physical, but then the fact you were saying the opposite, that it's extremely conceptual – this is interesting to me. On the one hand, having heard your explanation, it certainly is conceptual. But, on the other hand, what the works themselves are conveying is something very physical. And so, because we do in actuality have on our hands works of this sort, we are pressed to update our way of thinking. In other words, we have to start thinking that the conceptual and the physical are not antithetical to one another.

I I see. Indeed.

N That's what's new here. I have been in the habit of dividing these two, but I feel a sense of expectation, a sense of stunned surprise when I see this other way of being, realize that there is this meta-level way. What I thought were antitheses are not. That has become reality.

I I would say that having talked with you, I have started to think that purely conceptual works of art are idealistic, for both better and worse. In other words, simple physical laborers such as myself are in the habit of perceiving things as objects. If, hypothetically speaking, "conceptual art" is an attempt to transcend the realm of the physical body, it will have to fight against the physicality of the body and the materiality which inevitably rear up into view.

[\*1] A project organized during the International Festival for Arts and Media Yokohama 2009 by Mr. Satoshi NAKASHIMA at the Shinko Pier Exhibition Hall in Yokohama. In this event, Isaji created artworks on the spot using retail products and other items brought in by the participants.

[\*2] The full text of the essay contributed by Mr. Satoshi Nakashima on 3 page of this book.

[\*3] "Kugai" in Japanese, "Asyl" in German.

[\*4] An artwork presented in 1964 by Japanese artist Genpei AKASEGAWA (1937-2014). A paper label has been re-wrapped around the inside of an opened, empty can. Because the label is on the inside, the interior of the can is appropriated via *mitate* to become the outside, suggesting that the can has come to contain all of the universe except its structural interior.

伊佐治の代表作の一つ [staple]が私はあまり好きではない。

ホッチキスの芯を一つ一つ解体して、それらをハンダづけして立体にしていくあの作品だ。気が遠くなるような時間をかけて作業をし、すごく綺麗な形を作り上げるところが醍醐味なのだろうけど、出来上がりの形態があらかじめ想定されているように思えてしまうのだ。設計図通りにつくられた工芸品のように、完璧すぎて自由さを感じない。同じ理由で、カッターの刃を材料にした立体作品 [cutter]のシリーズもそれほど好きになれない。デザインされすぎというか、カッチリしすぎている気がするのだ。コツコツと時間をかけて、あらかじめ見えているゴールを目指したいなのは、そういうのが好きな人もいるだろうけど、僕がイメージするアートの作品とは随分違っている。

それよりも [pen]や [bottle]のシリーズのほうが断然好きだ。

こちらの作品では、プラスチックの一部分を熱して、そこに伊佐治自らが空気を吹き入れ、ぶくっと膨らませる。すごく単純な行為だけど、そこから出来上がる形がなんともすばらしい。一個一個がバラバラで、でも存在感があり、それらをじっと眺めていると、普段よく目にするボールペンや洗剤を入れるプラスチックのボトルが、まさしく立体作品となってそこに立ち現れている。制作に時間をかけるかどうかの問題なのではない。

例えば、プラスチックのカップや小さなボトル容器にカッターで切れ込みを入れた [plastic cup]や [bottle]のシリーズもすごく良い。ゴールは見えないけれど、カッターで小さな切り込みをひたすら入れて行くことで立体作品が突如として立ち現れる。大量生産で作られたモノが、伊佐治の行為によって、たった一つの作品へとある瞬間に変貌する。そこに僕はアートを感じるのである。

そんな伊佐治の作品を見つけてきて 10年の月日がたつが、最近気付いたこととして、彼はインスタレーションがうまい。空間に対して作品をどのように配置すれば一番よく見えるかを知っていて、それを直感でさっとやっけてのける。単純に作品を置いているようでも、一つ一つの配置が絶妙で、心地よい緊張感を持って展示空間は構成されている。で、重要なのは伊佐治がそれをさっとやっけてのけるということ。おそらくその感覚は、プラスチックのどの部分を熱するかという場所選びなども通じている。熱して空気を入れ、ぶくっと膨らませる [pen]や [bottle]のポツポツも、適当に場所を選んでるようでも、その場所以外他にないという絶妙な配置で成り立っているのだ。

金継ぎの修復技法で、割れた陶器を元ある状態とは裏返しにして繋ぎ合わせる [bowl]や [cup]のシリーズも、伊佐治の持つこの優れた感覚が役に立っている気がする。

割れたものをつなぎ合わせるだけなら修練を積みれば誰でもができるだろうが、裏返しにそれを行うのは、破片をどのように繋ぎ合わせるかの決断に際し、類い稀な直感がなければ不可能だと思うのだ。と、ここまで書いてきて、あることに気づいてしまったのだが、あまり好きではないとはじめに告白した [staple]や [cutter]も、出来上がりの形態なんてあらかじめ想定していないのかもしれない。単純に、伊佐治しか持ちえないあのバランス感覚や直感でもって、ひとつひとつのモノに反応していき、その連続の中から作品の形が立ち現れているだけなのかも。だってよくよく考えてみたら、あの気の遠くなるような作業に設計図なんてあるはずもない。感覚的にホッチキスの芯やカッターの刃を積み重ねる中で、ある時フツと作品が立ち現れる。それは、工芸作品でもデザイングッズでもない、アート作品でしか表現できない決定的な瞬間だ。

そう考えると [staple]や [cutter]のシリーズもまんざら悪くない気がしてきた。ひどいこと言ってごめんね、伊佐治。伊佐治は淡々と何処にでもあるモノに向かい合う。いつものポーカークフェイスで、飄々としながら手作業を続け、彼の持つあのバランス感覚や直感でもって、「その瞬間」にまでたどり着いた唯一無二のアートの作品を差し出してくれる。さっと、またこんなんできちゃいましたって。

I am not huge fan of “staple”, one of Isaji’s most important works. This piece is composed of staples taken apart one by one and soldered together into a three-dimensional object. The point of the work is no doubt the time-consuming process it took to build up this quite beautiful form, yet it seems to me that the finished form was a foregone conclusion.

It feels too perfect, lacking in freedom, like a work of craft made exactly according to a set of design specifications. For the same reason, I cannot like much about the “cutter” sculptural series, which uses cutter blades as a material. It feels to me to be too designed, too rigid. There are some people who like the idea of spending time diligently working towards a goal that can be seen in advance, but that is quite different from my image of what makes an artwork.

Rather, I far prefer the “pen” and “bottle” series. In these pieces, Isaji heats up part of a plastic object, then blows into it to puff it up. Though it is quite a simple act, the forms that emerge are really superb. Each one takes its own shape, yet has a sense of presence. Looking at them, you find that the ballpoint pens and plastic detergent bottles we often see in everyday life emerge as truly sculptural art pieces. How much time it takes to produce them isn’t the point. In addition, the “plastic cup” and “bottle” series made by putting incisions into plastic cups and small bottle containers are also really good. Although the goal is unseen, through the process of simply making one small incision after another, a three-dimensional artwork suddenly arises. By the act of Isaji, these mass-produced “things” are in an instant transformed into one-off works of art. It is in this where I feel a sense of “art”.

Having kept my eye on Isaji’s work of this sort for the span of a decade now, I’ve recently noticed that he is really good at installation. He knows how to place his work in a given space so it looks its best, intuitively getting it done with casual ease. It seems like the pieces are simply placed without much further thought, yet each and every one is in fact exquisitely positioned to create a pleasant tension composing the exhibition space. And, what is important here is the fact that he gets it done with casual ease. It may be that the intuitive sense at work here is the same sense involved in choosing which part of the plastic to heat. The knobs on the “pen” and “bottle” pieces Isaji raises up by heating plastic and inflating it with air are seemingly located at random, but in fact create a composition that succeeds through their exquisite positioning just where they are, and nowhere else.

I think that this extraordinary intuitive sense Isaji has is also being put to good use in his “bowl” and “cup” series made using the kintsugi repair technique to piece together broken ceramics inside out from their original form. If it were just a matter of piecing broken fragments back together, I would imagine anyone would be able to do it with some training. But, doing this while turning the object inside out would be impossible, I think, without an exceptional intuitive sense driving the artist’s decisions on how to connect the shards back together.

Having written this far, I’ve realized something. “staple” and “cutter”, which I started out confessing I don’t like much, may not in fact have had any pre-assumed finished form at all. It may simply be that Isaji reacts to each individual object one by one with his unique intuition and sense of balance, and it is from that sequence that the artwork’s form arises. On reflection, there’s no way on earth there would ever be a master plan for such a mind-numbingly laborious process. As he intuitively piles up the staples and cutter blades, all of a sudden, the artwork pops into existence. This is a decisive moment that can only be embodied in a work of art, not a craft piece or work of design. Thinking about it this way, I’ve started to get the feeling that the “staple” and “cutter” series aren’t all that bad after all. Isaji-san – sorry for saying nasty things.

Isaji calmly engages with commonplace things. Wearing his usual poker face, he continues his handiwork a bit aloof from the world, applying his intuition and sense of balance to present us with entirely unique pieces arising upon arrival at the decisive “moment”.

And then, as if it’s nothing at all, he turns and says, “Look, I happened to make another one...”