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1969–1979

KISHIO SUGA
Writings

CONTENTS

I.
KATSURAGAWA SEI, 1969

Kishio Suga began his writing career operating under the pen name and alter ego Katsuragawa Sei, a self-styled art critic. His first major text as Katsuragawa Sei was submitted to an art criticism contest sponsored by one of Japan's leading art journals, *Bijutsu Techō*, where it received an honorable mention. Composed in 1968–69, "Transform Space: From Future Notes" would not be published until 2014, but it set the tone for Suga's early writings. Reflecting his wide-ranging curiosity and theoretical sophistication, the essay uses avant-garde butoh as a starting point for addressing the paradox of an art form that must deny its essential properties to fully express itself. Also evident is Suga's use of nested logic, densely packed word play, and elliptical jumps across subjects, which establishes a productive friction between cursory and deep readings of the text.

These themes are developed in two subsequent Katsuragawa Sei essays, "Invisible Language of an Invisible World: A Look at the 13th Shell Art Award Exhibition" and "The Start of Disappearance: As Things Deny Things." In both, Suga challenges the assumptions behind Conceptual art, which was then rising to worldwide prominence. Yet he does so not from a reactionary position, and rather from a radical desire to push art beyond its limits. In "Invisible Language," he triangulates meditations on verbal speech, written text, and Joseph Kosuth's *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) [Nothing in English]* (1968), while in "Start of Disappearance" he applies Robert Smithson's dyadic relation of *site* and *nonsite* to an analysis of the emergent practices that would come to be known as Mono-ha. Suga's use of linguistics and semiotics to argue against Conceptual art gives his writing an inherent reflexivity whereby language critiques itself at the point where it comes undone. Although there are hints of its emergence, Suga's nonconcept of the *[thing]* that exists at the very margins of conscious perception and naming does not make a proper appearance in these texts.

All written within a year of each other, the Katsuragawa Sei texts can be seen as a trilogy of sorts. Exploring the dynamics of futility and self-negation, Suga stops short of outlining a program for what he believes should come after avant-garde and Conceptual art. But in assuming the voice of a critic, he is able to attack the preconceptions that customarily define art—which in the Japanese context are caught up not only in institutional and generational values but also in long-internalized notions of Japan's "lateness" in relation to the perceived hegemony of Euro-American culture.

The year 1970 would see Suga's career take off with his inclusion in several important survey exhibitions, and it would also establish a new landmark in interactions between the Japanese and international art scenes with that year's Tokyo Biennale, *Between Man and Matter*, and Expo '70 in Osaka, both of which featured international participants ranging from Hans Haacke and Richard Serra on the one hand to Experiments in Art and Technology on the other. These texts thus provide a snapshot of a confident young artist at a moment when all horizons seemed to be wide open for him.

Transform Space: From Future Notes (1969/2014)

Suga's first major essay was submitted under the pen name Katsuragawa Sei to an art criticism contest organized by the art journal *Bijutsu Techō*, with the winners announced in the magazine's April 1969 issue.

The essay received an honorable mention,[1] and was summarized in commentaries by two of the contest's judges, the critics Yoshiaki Tōno and Ichirō Hariu, but was not published. Last known to be in the possession of *Bijutsu Techō*, the manuscript submitted to the contest was subsequently lost, although Suga retained a working draft, which was written in black pen on Japanese manuscript paper with revisions marked in red and green ink. The manuscript was the basis for a version of the essay that was finally published, some forty-five years later, in the catalogue for Suga's 2014–15 solo exhibition at the Vangi Sculpture Garden Museum in Shizuoka Prefecture. Although the essay appears only in Japanese, it is listed with the title "Space Transformation" in the catalogue's English table of contents, and presented under Suga's own name. The following translation is based on the Vangi catalogue, but revises passages where the Vangi editors seem to have misinterpreted Suga's notations to the manuscript.

In part because it does not appear anywhere in the body of the essay, the phrase *ten'i kūkan* 転移空間 is open to multiple interpretations. Suga also used it as the title of an artwork and the exhibition in which it was presented, both of which date to 1968, the year he graduated from Tama Art University. Held at Tsubaki Kindai Gallery in Shinjuku from November 18 to 23, the exhibition was Suga's first solo show. Both the work and exhibition titles are known in English as *Space Transformation*. Yet the word *ten'i*—written with a combination of the Chinese characters for turning and shifting—conveys a strong sense of dynamic process, and can also be translated as "transition," "transference" (in the context of psychoanalysis), or "metastasis" (with regard to cancer). If anything, "transformation" is a secondary or tertiary meaning of the word, but a gloss in an exhibition listing in the December 1968 edition of *Bijutsu Techō* reinforces the idea that this was Suga's intent. The listing states that the exhibition's theme is "transform-Art" in English, followed by *ten'i āto* 転移アート in Japanese. The text continues: "[the artist] thinks it is possible for all forms [*keitai* 形体] to transition [*ikō* 移行] to other forms through a single space medium."[2]

In light of this, the revised English title "Transform Space" offers a way to honor Suga's original intent while also alluding to the dynamics of *ten'i* through an unusual and somewhat unsettling combination of words. "Transform Space" could be a command to the reader to transform space, while if *transform* is taken attributively it can be seen as denoting a space that encompasses multiple forms. At the same time, the word's suspension between verb–noun–adjective teases the reader to inflect it further, to transform*ation*, or transform*ing*.

1. *Lee Ufan also received an honorable mention for his essay "Jibutsu kara sonzai e." As in Suga's case, the* Bijutsu Techō *manuscript appears to have been lost. Lee preserved a blueprint copy of his manuscript, which was transcribed and also published, coincidentally, in 2014. See Lee Ufan, "Jibutsu kara sonzai e" [From object to being], in* Gurūpu Genshoku to Ishikawa Junzō 1966–1971 *[Group Genshoku and Junzo Ishikawa 1966–1971], ed. Shōko Kawatani, exh. cat. (Shizuoka: Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, 2014), 317–35. Suga and Lee met for the first time at the award ceremony of the criticism contest. See "Biographical Outline" in Kishio Suga,* Kishio Suga 1988–1968 *(Tokyo: Self-published, 1988), 211.*

2. *Exhibition listing,* Bijutsu Techō, *no. 305 (December 1968): 260. Translation mine.*

Humans walk. That this act has been done for the most part unconsciously since humans came to walk on two legs is because to be human is of course to walk on two legs, and we didn't retain the practice of using our hands to advance on all fours. Someone who loses their legs in an accident will become acutely aware for the first time of how we use our legs to walk. More so than the fact of having lost their legs, this is due to their attachment to *the act of walking* as such, taken away from them by the loss. But the mere fact of walking is not really enough to distinguish one person from another. People are able to possess their own local spaces by walking. And these will all differ according to the habits, build, direction, purpose, and so on of each walking person, while people can also distinguish their own walking acts as such from those of others by doing things like running or skipping.

Since the act of walking is the marking of a trajectory that is walked in a space over time, we could demonstrate the trajectory of a definite action by a certain human being if we could make that trajectory evident. There is no start or end to the walking act. Humans have walked on and on from their first existence to the present, and, barring a change someday to the motion of making their two legs move in alternation, humans will have to keep walking on into the future.

Questioning the act of walking, an individual dancer tried to fix a start and end to the walking motion by limiting his own range of action and setting up a special stage to show the audience in full. The stage gave the dancer no basis whatsoever for walking or jumping around on it. Only then could the dancer, in trying to move for reasons of no reason, for no purpose and no meaning, gain the starting point of the act of walking. To put it concretely, a person's moving has a function only in order to walk—because the act they do to achieve that purpose is walking.

Now necessarily having to walk instead for the sake of purposelessness, the dancer on stage momentarily considers the direction, the speed, the form of his moving—how to move. This is when the motion that accompanies his unconscious steps takes on consciousness for the first time.

The dancer is forced to move willfully toward no purpose. With no will now but to just move somehow, the dancer has no connection to the background that he himself set up. And so the dancer is unable to stop once he leaves the starting point of the walking motion. Even if he did stop, it would serve no purpose. Walking, jumping, dancing, he strives intently for the end point to the walking motion—patiently enduring until the coming of the final renunciation of his will to walk and to consume his body.

And yet he has to keep walking as long as his feet stand on the ground. So he has to quickly lie down, or leap up from the earth's surface like a bird. He rigs it so he can stop in midair. Doing this is his only means for stopping the walking motion. Unable to escape the purpose of walking, he clings to the rope suspended in midair and becomes still. This is his transition from the movement of walking to stillness, and it is only when he is in midair that he is finally compelled to admit the act of walking about in itself, admit that to be human is to walk by clinging to the earth with one's two feet.

In butoh,[1] the frequent nudity of the dancer confers a feeling of abnormality on the audience. This is not just about the dancer being naked, but also further because his head is shaved and he is covered in extremely thick makeup—so that he has the form of a naked human yet does not seem human. The dancer's being stark naked is not to give him any particular character; it is because it ideationally conjures the form of a person covered in normal attire for the audience, and they can ascribe a specific personality to him by those clothes, accessories, and other belongings. So when someone like Tatsumi Hijikata, frenzied and naked, provokes in the audience a sense of shame met with envy, it's rather because he exposes his body as a material itself that can transform into anything by its very nakedness.[2] Dance especially requires an element of nonpersonality whereby the dancer can become anything. The dancer must be naked so as to eliminate all conceptual prejudices and transmute constantly, moment by moment. Bearing the crisis of always being in transition—of whether it is the self in dance that is real, or the ordinary self that is the truth—the dancer must be filled with anxiety. If dance itself is Hijikata's substance, then the entirety of his life must be an imaginary space. But I bet Hijikata wasn't able to find any proof of his existence as substance even in his true dance. Didn't he try to immerse himself in a world of complete

1. *A dance form developed from the late 1950s onward by Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, known for the attenuated movements and grotesque contortions of its performers. Suga refers to it as both* ankoku butoh *(literally, dance of darkness) and* butoh *in the Japanese.*
2. *Suga likely has in mind Hijikata's performance* Hijikata Tatsumi to Nihonjin: Nikutai no hanran *(Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Revolt of the Flesh), which was held October 9–10, 1968, at Nippon Seinenkan Hall in Tokyo. In the performance, Hijikata appeared both wearing various articles of clothing (a bride's wedding kimono, a ballroom gown, a loincloth) and also naked with a large phallus attached to his groin. In the final act, Hijikata was tied up in ropes and lifted into the darkness above the audience. See Alexandra Munroe,* Japanese Art after 1945: Scream against the Sky, *exh. cat. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 193, for an in-depth description of the performance and its reception in the Tokyo art scene. Suga says he attended several performances by Hijikata, as well as those by Jūrō Kara's Situation Theater, around the time he was composing "Transform Space" in late 1968 and early 1969. Kishio Suga, interview with Andrew Maerkle and Sen Uesaki, June 20, 2019.*

Kishio Suga
Diagonal Phase, 1969
斜位相 (Shaisō)
Wood, stones
Dimensions variable
Fieldwork: Fujimichō Studio,
Yokohama, Japan, 1969

falsehood by getting naked?[3] It was only by exposing the obscenity of his inner nature to such an extent that the idea of his body covered in warm clothing could have any effect.

Conversely, Alwin Nikolais, who arouses our most human desires by concealing the visual human form in clothing, deals with the human only as human. The act of clothing and covering others is one of the most basic human acts, but instead of clothing his dancers to turn the human into another, nonhuman form, he tries to turn the human itself into a nonhuman, formless thing by repetition of the two motions of humans clothing and being clothed by other humans. This is just like the Abstract-Expressionist painters' attempts to invert the values of painting solely by the act of painting on the picture plane. Their methods are always the same, and the same for the physical act of clothing another. If he didn't use the human as his material, Nikolais could never realize the vision of nonhumanization to which he aspires. And yet, it is only in the act of clothing another—or rather: humans will forget their being human as long as they hold on to the persistent idea that a human should be the one who puts on clothes.

3. Based on an alternate interpretation of Suga's revisions to the manuscript, this and the preceding sentence depart from the content of the Vangi edition.

If a dancer specifically wanted to set up a stage to show the audience dance or dancing, he would have to dance alone. Which is because the idea and its means of expression have to coexist based on the situation of the dancer's utmost isolation. An idea is not necessarily for expressing through dance. When it comes to the presentation of an idea that does not need to be danced, the dancer does not have to set up a stage or anything at all, as he already has the necessity of having to dance.

The dancer's standing isolated on the stage has got to be the moment when he destroys all social systems, all limits on individual thought. There is a considerable difference between the dancer standing still on the stage and him moving his body and jumping around with abandon, in that the dancer's standing isolated in a corner of the stage is when the eyes of the audience block out the background and space of the stage to perceive the standing dancer himself; is the state of human eyes being conscious of a human being. But once the dancer starts to move across the stage from left to right and up and down, the audience will perceive the limited space of the stage as they track the one moving. The dancer being by himself is precisely his holding the limits of his own isolation in a limited space. It is more focal for the dancer to be alone and to stay as still as possible without moving, and the quickest way for him to become a *definite person out of an indefinite number of people*. The longer he halts his movement, the longer he is able to possess his own particular time and space.

But an ensemble of two or more dancers has more spatial elements. That is, when the dancers are *grouped* together, the perception of them as an

Kishio Suga
Space Transformation, 1968
転移空間 (Ten'i kūkan)
Wood, paint
59 × 39 ⅜ × 39 ⅜ in.
(150 × 100 × 100 cm)
Installation view, Tsubaki
Kindai Gallery, Tokyo, Japan,
1968

assembly of *moving things* is the more powerful, prior to each individual being perceived as a human. And each individual in the group must possess their own independent space prior to their perception of being dancers, which is why they have to move around seeking out ever more atomized spaces within the limited space of the stage, splitting away like magnets that repel each other without any going back. This is something akin to the struggles of the human to transition *as* space.

Whereas a solo dancer tries to retain an isolated space between the audience and the staged background—a space for the human to be more human—the ensemble can only be the movement to gain more shared space by the limiting of the stage. And so perhaps the ensemble aspires to the recovery of humanity by the contradiction that while it admits the necessity of sharing the space, it is also a space where the dancers can never become one, even when each dancer traces the same circle as the other dancers.

The reason why solo dance tends to be jazz-like is that the distance, time, and direction between one point of the dancer's not moving and the next point of not moving constantly betray the audience's anticipation. But in the case of an ensemble, each dancer shows their direction, timing, and posture according to situation, allowing the audience to anticipate what will happen to a considerable extent.

It's also easy to lose track of the direction and intensity in a jazz solo, but with a band it becomes possible to predict the whole of the lead part on the basis of the rhythm instruments. Just as jazz is a trajectory in time, a solo dance is a trajectory in space—one that is almost impossible to retrace once it is done. So it is inevitable that contemporary dance should have no fixed steps or moves: a solo dance cannot be danced in the same way twice. Hence where in most cases an ensemble has the intention of covering the space, in a solo the intent is to stitch the space—is linear. And so the audience, unable to anticipate the movement of the dancer, perceives the dancer himself all the more strongly. As opposed to the transitions of the ensemble in response to the space, the solo dancer is more conscious of a move to the temporal by the marking of a unique trajectory.

I am skeptical of the use of special stages and backgrounds in most contemporary dance. Which is because in these cases the stage is set up not with the idea of it being a ground for the dancer, but with the intent for it to be an artificial living space. Because doing a dance created in an artificial space means that even as the dance is the reason that establishes the dancer as an individual human being, it also inadvertently turns the reason that establishes the dancer as human from truth to fiction—in that it is done in an artificial, fabricated situation. All the audience perceives is an object[4] that takes the form of a fictive person in a fictive situation. This is the person

4. Buttai 物体.

Tatsumi Hijikata
Hijikata Tatsumi and the Japanese: Revolt of the Flesh, 1968

Alwin Nikolais
Mantis from *Imago (The City Curious)*, 1963
Dancers: James Aarons, Kay Andersen, Alberto del Saz, James Murphy, and Spencer Nichols

who calls himself a "dancer" betraying himself as he is without any calling, which is further a betrayal of the audience as well. And this means that the dancer betrays even the ordinary world that is the basis for his moving on stage. That he can stand on the stage is a condition made possible only by his ability to become another version of his ordinary self.

The audience always expects something to be expressed by the dancer on stage, but in most cases they cannot understand any expression whatsoever. Their inability to understand must give them a lot of psychological agitation and resistance. Avoiding any kind of visual motion as much as possible, appealing to the audience's deeper psychology, the dancer waits for the audience, in anticipating something, to conceive imaginary facts based on imaginary situations. The more the audience imagines, the more those imaginary facts leave behind visual fact, and they end up adrift in fictive space. And so the dancer is able to create a decisive rift between the audience's hypothetical facts and true, visual facts by slowly pointing out facts that are completely different to the imaginary facts. The greater this rift grows, the stronger is the audience's sense of having been betrayed, so that as they confront each other in this artificial, fictive space, dancer and audience exist in a relation of doer and receiver of what is done. Dancer and audience exist only by the fact that they never cohere.

The audience, like the stage, is just a background for the dancer. That is why the dancer is able to perform. It's just an element for confirming that he is isolated. So the audience could as well be a single person. Dance wouldn't be dance without the reciprocal relationships between stage and background, dancer and audience, which is why the stage is removed from the ground itself as a reflection of a fictive, artificial world. They are all components of the dance.

If one were to watch a dance form like butoh in the same way an audience watches a dance in which the steps are set or where it's obvious something is being expressed, it would be almost incomprehensible. With contemporary dance, which started with the smashing of the very idea of dancing according to fixed rules, we must first give up trying to perceive dance as something that is complete. We need to be mindful of the interaction between the invisible idea of dancing as such and our visually grasping and perceiving as real in that moment the fact and situation of the stage really being there with the dancer standing still upon it. As with works that can be constructed but never completed, butoh merely shows the audience the steps in the process for constructing the broad concept of dance in reality by the techniques[5] of *dancing*. Thus, since dance is a fictive thing that can never be completed, and since to dance is to sequence the momentary facts of completed motions to that fiction, which aspires to the impossible, dance has to keep going on and on without ever reaching an end. Movement is merely the fact whereby the dancer verifies process. That is, the visual movements that were originally meant to produce ideal thinking are inverted in contemporary dance, in that the dancer attempts to manifest a total world of ideas by showing the fragmentary movements of process. If dance has no means of expression for presenting ideas other than the fact of moving, then we have to conclude that to represent some kind of idea by the fact of not moving relative to the fact of moving is also a new way of perceiving dancing.

Dance held the theorem that the dancer moves to express something. But it got to where it had to overtly expose the most profound aspects of that idea without moving, by turning the audience into an element of the situation, dragging them into the same dimension as the dancer, and then staying still and not trying to express anything. That dance exists as situation while depriving itself of the reason that makes it a situation is clear proof that performance is always futile, and it is because it is futile that the dancer bears the fate of continually erasing himself by his own hand in an imaginary situation space that is his alone.

5. Gikō 技巧 *expresses the idea of not just technique but excellent or skillful technique. Although in their figurative senses both "craft" and "art" might be appropriate here, they also evoke complex preconceptions about the relative values of "high" and "low" arts in Western culture.*

II.
EXHIBITION
STATEMENTS,
1972–1981

Between 1972 and 1981, Kishio Suga wrote a series of short, untitled statements that were published in the exhibition listings section in the back matter of *Bijutsu Techō*. Composed in a terse, note-like format, these poetic fragments offer an immediate window into Suga's thinking as he prepared his exhibitions. Taken together, they chart the development of his ideas as they evolved over the first decade of his practice.

Generally published six months to a year apart, the statements reveal some of Suga's enduring preoccupations. The theme of "dependence" (*izon* 依存) recurs frequently in the early 1970s, while *tectonics* (*kōchikusei* 構築性) and *detention* (*ryūchi* 留置) emerge as keywords entering the 1980s. In other cases, the statements condense themes elaborated in greater detail in the longer essays Suga was working on at the time, as with the notion of the "individual" (*ko* 個) in the exhibition statement "Individual Sight," from 1972, which also figures in "Nameless beyond Namelessness: Why [Thing]s?," published in the same issue of *Bijutsu Techō*. Many of the statements are composed of incomplete sentences ending in the nominalizer *koto*, a multifaceted formal noun carrying the sense of "intangible thing," "matter for discussion," or "occurrence." Grammatically, *koto* is often used in expressing situations of abstract cognition or habitual practice, as well as imperatives. This gives the statements the feel of a to-do list or an expanded take on Richard Serra's *Verblist* of 1967–68—something like a "process list."

The layout of *Bijutsu Techō*'s exhibition listings section featured a calendar of exhibitions at selected galleries running along the upper half of each spread, with space for two-to-four highlighted listings squeezed into the bottom half alongside thumbnail illustrations and advertisements. As with those by other artists in the section, Suga's statements were embedded in the editorial content, enclosed in quotation marks and framed by exhibition and biographic details, work descriptions, and occasional commentary by the editors.

Although the statements are therefore somewhat marginal texts, there is evidence that they were appreciated by attentive readers, as critics referenced them in their reviews of Suga's exhibitions and profiles of his practice.

The images Suga supplied for the listings were typically of fieldwork interventions at outdoor sites such as gardens and public parks. These rarely had a direct link to the contents of the statements or exhibitions, and their selection seems to have been governed more by incidental logic. Even where Suga provides exhibition plans, the actual works differ in their realization. Notes about the materials to be used are also often misleading. This indicates the spontaneity with which Suga adjusted his ideas on-site.

Suga later compiled and titled the statements for the Yokohama anthology, where they appeared in a section dedicated to fragments and short texts. Responding to themes latent in the statements, the retrospectively appended titles reflect Suga's sharp sense of wordplay and sly humor.

Individual Sight (1972)

1. Hōchitai *(放置帯) in Japanese. This is one of Suga's fieldwork interventions into the everyday environment. The full title in English is* Zone of Release *(Situated Condition).*

Statement for a solo exhibition at Kinokuniya Gallery, Tokyo, April 15–21, 1972, in which the work *Left-Behind Situation* (1972) was presented. The editorial content begins with a description of the work in the illustration accompanying the text: "(1) Title: *Zone of Release*;[1] (2) Size: Rope, 32 m; stone, 45 × 25 × 10 cm; (3) Date of production: March 10, 1972; (4) Site: Garden at 1–3–7 Shimizu, Suginami-ku; (5) Materials: Hemp rope, natural stone, trees." It further notes that the exhibition will address the theme "individual situation."

Suga expands on the themes addressed here in the long essay "Nameless beyond Namelessness: Why [Thing]s?"

A [thing] is that thing that blocks the sight (visual field). Further, the sight (visual field) is also there after the [thing]. To both manifest private distances and public distances to [thing]s, and further reveal the *total* [field]site (situation) by the *totality* of [thing]s. To gain an even more *personal word* by the *personality* of the [field]site (situation).

Kishio Suga
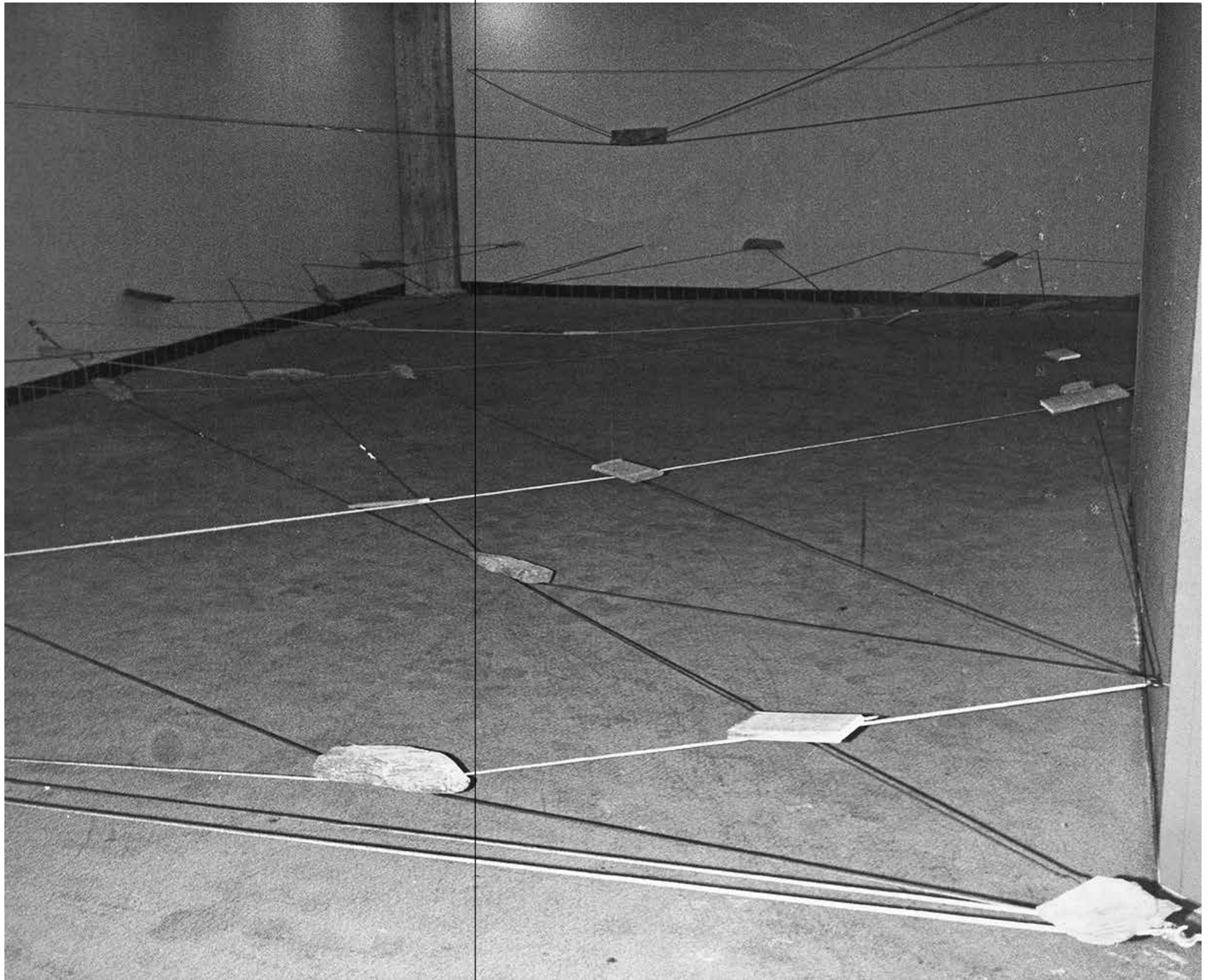*Left-Behind Situation*, 1972
捨置状況 (Shachi jōkyō)
Wood, stone, wire rope
Dimensions variable
Installation view, Kinokuniya
Gallery, Tokyo, Japan, 1972

Not *Anything* to Do With . . . (1974)

Statement for a solo exhibition at Tamura Gallery, Tokyo, July 29 to August 4, 1974, in which the work *Units of Dependency* (1974) was presented. The entire listing is dedicated to Suga's statement, which is enclosed in quotation marks. The illustration is of an undated fieldwork captioned *Mui shūsō* (無為集相, *Accumulated Phases of Nonaction*). No other information is provided.

(1) To think about dependence. To think about that thing that depends and that thing that is depended on. (2) To think about that thing that depends on time, that thing that depends on space, that thing that depends on state, that thing that depends on phase, that thing that depends on sense, that thing that depends on substance, that thing that depends on void, and also about a matter, or [thing], that does not depend on all that. As well as cases where it's neither. (3) To think about nonattachment. About something being present even in nonpresence. (4) To think about nonact. And about enacting an *act*. (5) To think about situations that have been depended on and situations that should be depended on.
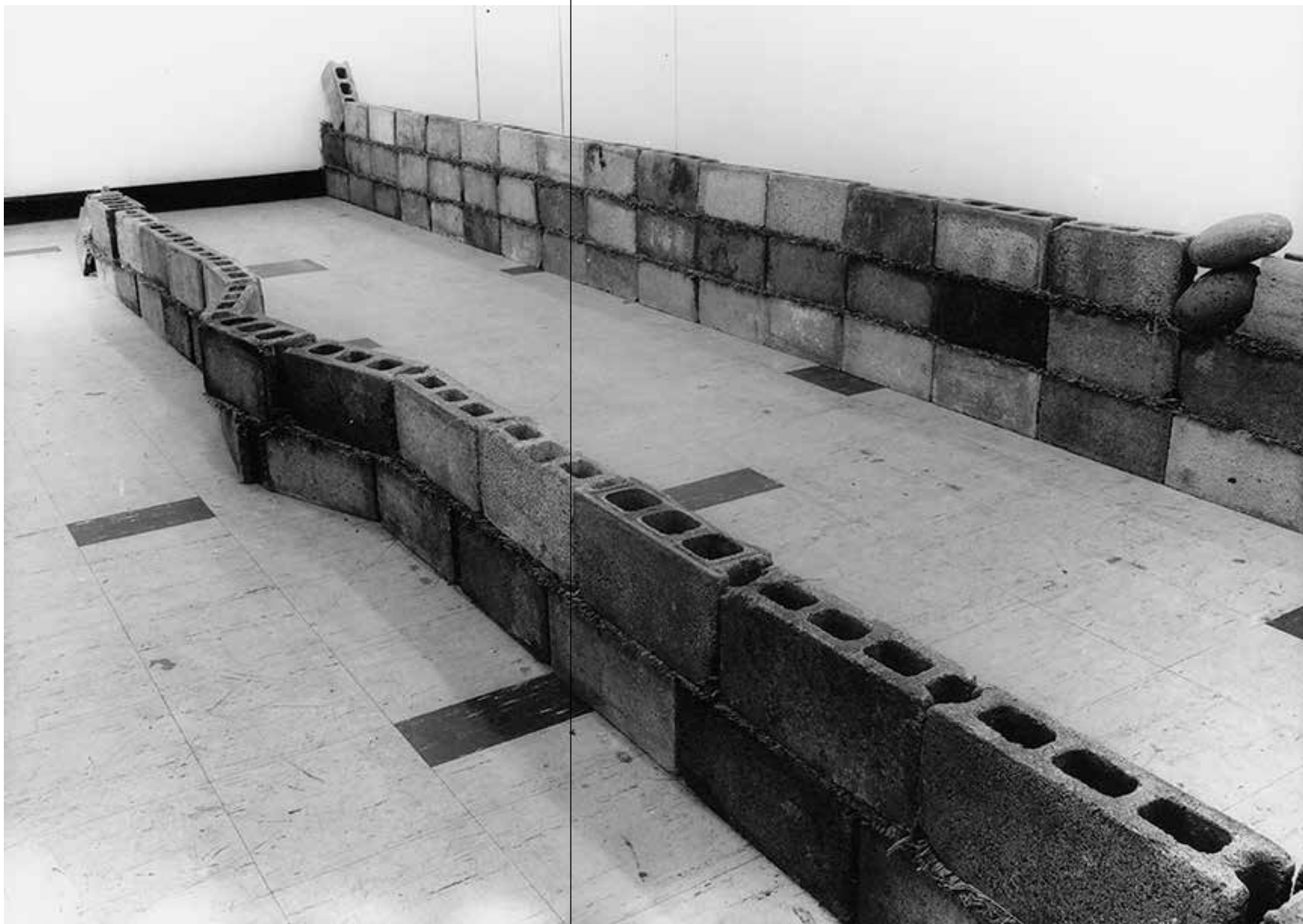
Kishio Suga
Units of Dependency, 1974
依存位 (Izon'i)
Concrete blocks, stones, grass
Dimensions variable
Installation view, Tamura
Gallery, Tokyo, Japan, 1974

III.
1970–1979

Coinciding with his establishment as an artist, the period 1970–79 was also when Kishio Suga wrote some of his most important texts. In the three essays "Existence beyond Condition" (1970), "*Being Left* as Situation" (1971), and "Nameless beyond Namelessness: Why [Thing]s?" (1972), he articulates ideas that would inform his practice for the rest of the decade and beyond, such as the nonconcept *[thing]* (emphatic *mono* もの, 〈もの〉,「もの」, or モノ), *being left* (*hōchi* 放置), and the *no-good* [thing] (*muda na* mono 無駄なもの). Whereas Suga sees himself as part of a broader movement in "Existence beyond Condition," which was published in a special feature in *Bijutsu Techō* on the emerging artists who would retroactively come to be known as Mono-ha, the latter texts increasingly find him speaking for himself, befitting someone who claims to be in pursuit of ART (datsu*geijutsu* 脱芸術)—as he does in "*Being Left* as Situation"—and who seeks to establish a radical equivalence in agency between artist and [thing], as argued for in "Nameless beyond Namelessness."

All written before he turned thirty, these visionary early essays would be complemented in the latter half of the decade by "Logic of [Field]Site: On Earthworks" (1977), in which Suga weaves his artistic biography into reflections on the practice of Earthworks, and two pieces bookending his presentation in the Japan Pavilion at the 38th Venice Biennale, "Interim Abode and Fixed" (1978) and "Did You Feel the Heat in Venice" (1979), in which he affects a studied diffidence toward institutional recognition. By that point in his career, he had won the 11th Shell Art Award in 1967, taken the grand prize at the 5th Japan Art Festival in 1970 (the exhibition traveled to the Guggenheim Museum in New York under the title *Contemporary Japanese Art*), and participated in the 8th Biennale de Paris in 1973, the 2nd Biennale of Sydney in 1976, and many survey exhibitions in Japan. Summing up his experience in Venice, he takes pride in "baiting viewers," yet also suffers over the "incomprehensibility toward . . . the East" that he encounters overseas.

Although Suga purposely avoids explicating his works in his writings, the above texts offer insight into his working process and social situation at the time. Similarly, in contrast to the world-beating tone of the early 1970s, the essays "Infinite Seen through Window" (1976) and "Worlds of Line" (1979) provide a more unguarded glimpse into his appreciation of his predecessors and peers—Brâncuşi in the former essay, and Barnett Newman, Ellsworth Kelly, and Lee Ufan in the latter. This presages what would come in the 1980s, when major texts would be devoted to commentaries on other artists such as Richard Serra (1983) and Yoshishige Saitō (1984), as well as the first retrospective takes on Mono-ha.

Also included here are a number of short statements and fragments pulled from editorial surveys, inserts in longer articles, and artist statements for exhibition catalogues. These address topics ranging from Suga's views on art criticism ("What Criticism Means to Me" [1972]) to "intervals" and "landscape" ("From the Notebook" [1974]) and the realization that moving even a single element can alter the entire system in a given environment ("Unnatural Systems, from Afar" [1976]). Among these, "Between Self-Standing and Other-Standing" (1971) is notable for its explicit mention of Eastern thought in relation to Suga's practice, while "If You Were to Show *X*" (1978) suggests an artifact of his youthful ambitions in poetry.

Existence beyond Condition (1970)

Translated by
Mika Yoshitake

In 1970 *Bijutsu Techō* dedicated the featured content of its February issue to the voices of emerging artists. Subjects included Susumu Koshimizu, Lee Ufan, Katsuhiko Narita, Nobuo Sekine, Katsurō Yoshida, and Suga, who all appeared together in a roundtable discussion.[1] The year prior, in 1969, these artists had made their mark at major exhibitions such as the 9th Contemporary Art Exhibition of Japan at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the annual Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. Not participating in either, Suga was the lone exception, although his solo exhibition in October 1969 at Tamura Gallery, where he presented the work *Parallel Strata*, caught the eye of influential critics such as Toshiaki Minemura.

Suga was on the cusp of his breakthrough. Later in 1970, he would be included in the 9th Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art in Kyoto and the 7th Artists Today exhibition at the Yokohama Civic Art Gallery, as well as the thematic survey *August 1970: Aspects of New Japanese Art* at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

Additionally, he won the grand prize at the 5th Japan Art Festival exhibition, which traveled to the Guggenheim Museum in New York under the title *Contemporary Japanese Art*. It was a sign of things to come, then, that Suga was chosen to contribute one of two long essays that led the roundtable, the other being Lee Ufan's "In Search of Encounter."[2]

Full of dense rhetoric, "Existence beyond Condition" is one of Suga's most challenging texts to unpack. As with his other essays from this period, we find him launching an attack on international trends such as Conceptual art, Minimalism, Neo-Dada, and Pop, which he implies are overly in thrall to ideas and "data." He further extends his critique to his older Japanese peers Shūsaku Arakawa, called out by name in a quick aside, and Jirō Takamatsu, who is alluded to through a long riff on two works, *Slack of Cloth* and *Stones and Numerals* (both 1969). Whereas Suga merely chides Arakawa for suddenly changing styles after moving to the United States, he is particularly severe with Takamatsu, implying that the latter is behind the times and has no clue what he is doing.

The central theme of the essay develops from a linguistic distinction between three different representations of the verb *aru* (to be, to have): (1) as written in hiragana, ある (being [there]); (2) as written with the Chinese character *yū*, 有る (which emphasizes a sense of having or being given); and (3) as written with the Chinese character *zai*, 在る (which emphasizes a sense of being present or situated). Each distinction is used to identify a different level of being for things: (1) a found being; (2) a mediated being; and (3) an unmediated being. (Below, translator Mika Yoshitake distinguishes the latter two as "presence" and "existence.") It is the task of the artist to help things achieve the third state of being—a state of existence beyond condition—which in Suga's estimation neither the celebrated American nor the conflicted Japanese artists really get. This is the first appearance of the emphatic *mono* (〈もの〉), rendered as "[thing]," in contrast to the Chinese character *mono/butsu* 物, rendered as "object[thing]."

1. *Susumu Koshimizu, Lee Ufan, Katsuhiko Narita, Nobuo Sekine, Kishio Suga, and Katsurō Yoshida, "Hatsugensuru shinjin tachi: 'Mono' ga hiraku atarashii sekai,"* Bijutsu Techō, *no. 324 (February 1970): 34–55. For the English, see "Voices of Emerging Artists: 'Mono' Opens a New World," trans. Oshrat Dotan, James Jack, and Mika Yoshitake, in Mika Yoshitake,* Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha, *exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Blum & Poe), 211–17.*
2. *Lee Ufan, "Deai o motomete,"* Bijutsu Techō, *no. 324 (February 1970): 14–23. Lee would revise the essay for subsequent collections of his writings. For an English translation, see "In Search of Encounter," trans. Stanley N. Anderson, in Alexandra Munroe,* Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity, *exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2011), 113–18.*

When we happen to climb to a high place far from ground level, we sense more the fear that comes from our bodies not being supported, or from not having a single thing to support our bodies, than the fear that comes from our sensation of the height—and that is when we can perceive it as a *place that is high*. As there is no change to our standing on our feet, it feels as though we should be able to jump or hop around freely, but since there's nothing but void some feet[1] beneath the scaffolding, it means, when you think about it, that our freedom is being controlled by there being nothing there.

And there is no better place for sensing the earth than a high place. On the earth we are able to stand straight and walk without anything to hold on to. Even if we were to fall at any instant, we would fall no further than our own height, so we do not particularly need to grab on to something to support our body.

Looking at and drafting architectural designs or plans for large-scale machinery are great necessities for those who fabricate some kind of object[thing], but it's not necessarily that those plans precisely indicate the spatial enormity of the buildings or machines that actually get built or the sureness of the materials that actually get used. To put it extremely, even where the signs in the plans indicate stone or steel, glass wool or polyurethane board, it would be hard to conceive of a single fixed thingobject in our minds aside from what we already know by the semiotic conventions for those materials. Even if we could, they would be reduced object[thing]s, all enframed in or assembled out of object[thing]s flimsy as paper. The perceptions we hold about individual materials must inherently differ from the materials as actually combined.

Arguments about whether plans are complete in themselves can only stand on the perspective that the actual result and its plan are things of

1. *The Japanese makes reference to* shaku 尺, *a unit of measurement that has fallen into disuse in Japan with the introduction of the metric system, but still retains a strong idiomatic presence. One* shaku *is roughly equivalent to one foot.—(AM)*

completely differing dimensions. Minimalist or constructivist artworks almost always require plans, with the artists adjusting the resulting works to fit the plans precisely by feeding them back into the plans, which means that this process controls the base actions we do without realizing. Usually, spectators will be left with the mysterious question mark of sensing something wrong or wondering what they're seeing in response to incalculable human errors. The greater the gap between plan and actual result, the more we inevitably get taken in by the artist's intention. The tendency to put up or present plans or diagrams in the same place as the object[thing] after it is made was trendy two or three years ago, but all that did was to completely disregard people's conceptualization or imagination. In other words, insofar as it governed the freedom of spectators' thoughts toward the thing that was actually there, it was probably a natural consequence that recent artworks should be presented as representations of conceptualization itself.

As long as we think a plan should be the precondition or process for fabricating some kind of visual artwork, the plan can never be completed, nor is there any need to display it. It is only when a plan is not visualized as any representation, or there is no meaning to its being visualized, that the plan is able to gain independence as a plan. If plans were simply diagrams, mathematical formulas, or symbols that could easily be given form by us, we would have no need to go on and fabricate the object[thing]s.

The moment the planning operation's shift from the imaginative process into visual representation gets normalized, we lose the reason for showing the plan. That we have to deny the creative process in order for it to become an important starting point must be a great irony for those who want to *create object[thing]s*.

Even if the symbols, lines, or figures drawn in the temporal process of drafting a plan are drawn to indicate thingobjects or phenomena that must be real, or that are expected to be so in the near future, they are just the semioticization or schematization of imaginary phenomena, and not the semioticization or schematization of something in reality. All that happens is that these made-up imaginary symbols and diagrams, which are free and nonbinding, get turned into imaginary symbols and diagrams that *are binding*.

With the introduction to Japan of Neo-Dada and New York Pop artists[2] such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, or Tom Wesselmann entering the 1960s, a certain art critic[3] who came back from the United States told us how all the artists there carefully keep vast amounts of memos and notes that they don't want to show to others. But once we realize that the United States is a better place for realizing ideas than it is for thinking up

2. *The* Bijutsu Techō *version only mentions New York Pop. Neo-Dada was an addition to Yokohama.—(AM)*
3. *A reference to Yoshiaki Tōno, a prominent art critic and curator who introduced postwar American art to Japanese readers through articles such as* "Amerika no bijutsukai" [America's art world], Yomiuri Shimbun, *August 25, 1959. Tōno traveled through Europe, the United States, and Mexico in 1958–60. He published a book on his travels in 1962,* Pasupōto No. 328309: Avangyarudo sukyandaru arakaruto [Passport No. 328309: Avant-garde scandal a la carte] (Tokyo: Sansaisha, 1962), *followed up in 1968 by another work of travelogue-criticism,* Amerika: Kyozō baiyō koku shi [America: Journal from the land of virtual-image cultivation] (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppan-sha, 1968).—(AM/MY)*

Kishio Suga
Soft Concrete, 1970
ソフト・コンクリート
(Sofuto konkurīto)
Steel plates, concrete, oil
Dimensions variable
Installation view, Tamura
Gallery, Tokyo, Japan, 1970

Jirō Takamatsu
Slack of Cloth, 1969
Cloth
59 × 59 in. (150 × 150 cm)
Collection of Iwaki City
Art Museum

forms, we can see how these vast amounts of memos and notes have served to isolate each artmaker from the other, and how these artmakers have continued to invoke America and the consciousness of being American within themselves by each possessing some form that is theirs alone.

These vast amounts of memos and notes were not being written only for fabricating object[thing]s, and were more for the artmakers to notice something out of all the things in everyday life that strongly affected their feelings and then try to classify it in their own way, with sculptural objects or two-dimensional canvases only happening to be employed as the last step in that classification. To put it more explicitly, it's not that the memos were necessary for the mentality of fabricating object[thing]s, but that creation came to be born out of this unique concept of memos for American artists. From the viewpoint that they should be called appeals to society, to humanity, and to the self, these vast memos have secured an utterly indispensable position for Johns, Rauschenberg, and others.

We could say these vast memos are the outcome of a cognitive process in response to American civilization and ideology, say, or even the entirety of Western thought. The "vast memos" are an important key for tearing down ideational thinking or overly formalized ways of seeing object[thing]s: they are meant not for fabricating but for *destroying*.

That someone like Shūsaku Arakawa, who was working on creepy coffin-like things when he was in Japan, should suddenly convert to doing

diagram art once he got to the US implicitly demonstrates the differences between Eastern and Western ways of thinking.

Young Japanese artists are busy promoting themselves carrying around their inordinately thick notepads and whatnot, but I have doubts about whether future artists should really let their cheap memos be publicized. When we write memos, we always do so on the premise of fabricating some kind of visual object[thing]. As long as they are a means of pursuit toward object[thing]s, toward the spatiality or temporality of object[thing]s as mediums, memos will only have a secondary value for artmaking.

If memos or *data* really are necessary for you, then you've got to change something. Where the Americans needed their memos or *data* for changing society, for changing themselves, we lost our reason for having memos the moment we became conscious of fabricating object[thing]s, and so have had to work directly to change object[thing]s in themselves.

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We take photos to retain the traces of the finished artwork, but these days we don't preserve what we make—or instead of don't, it might more accurately be said we can't preserve it. The moment a work is made, it sure *is there*, but as we begin to lose our conscious awareness toward the object[thing], thingobjects break down and there is a shift from a state of *presence* toward a condition of *existence*.[4] Compared to the state of a thingobject's just being there, the state of *presence* puts more emphasis on the presence or absence of ideational thinking through the thingobject's state of *presence*. Which means the state of *presence* is not a thingobject just actually being there without manipulation, but the state of the object[thing] that emerges after some form of operation has been applied to the thingobject by artificial modification or by use of an act/actions or technique, while *existence* is none other than the true being there of the thingobject that is actually visible to us, encompassing time and space and the object[thing]'s immutability.

The state of *presence* is something that is secondarily produced by people, which connects to the mentality of fabricating object[thing]s. Prior to the perception of *presence* it of course has the state of *absence* at its other extreme, and there necessarily needs to be a visual element to go from a state of *absence* to a state of *presence*. If the state of *presence* is the foundation for an artwork to be visualized, then it makes sense that the state of *absence* should be part of the process of fabricating a nonvisualized object[thing].

4. "*In 'Existence Beyond Condition' (1970), Suga distinguishes between two models of the object's being: its 'presence' (有る) versus its mode of 'existence' (在る). The former involves the object's actual physical presence based on the artist's intentionality and realization of a concept. This would correspond to a subject-oriented model that hypostasizes the presence of human thought. The latter comprises an object-oriented model where such ideation has been eliminated and emphasizes the object's ontological existence in actual space and time. The ultimate model of 'existence' would comprise an untreated natural object that exists as an unnamed condition. . . . Suga is trying to seek out ways to maintain this nameless entity that extends beyond linguistic signification and the subject's fundamental desire to 'produce' objects. His project would seem thus to involve displacing the idea of 'presence' by showing the process in which an object exists within a total field ('existence').*" Mika Yoshitake, "Lee Ufan and the Art of Mono-ha in Postwar Japan (1968–1972)" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012), 153–54.—(MY)

As long as our perception of fabricating object[thing]s stands on the perception that "something has to be present," we will continue to believe unquestioningly in *what is present* as element. And we will never produce a new object[thing] for another dimension unless we destroy the material concept of an object[thing] that has been made by someone using various materials.

We move from an imaginary world to an actual world by imagining a state of *presence*. Thus: Clearly our perception of something *being present* cannot get away from our perception of fabricating something. On top of which, even once the idealization or presentation is over, we still cannot destroy the remnant due to our perception of having a fabricated object[thing] there.

In the perception of thingobjects *existing*, something is obviously there, and the state of its *not existing* is inconceivable. That is, it *is there* irrevocably outside of artificial constraints, which is to say at the point where it completely disregards our creation. But whereas something's *presence* is the perception of its state, its *existence* is the very perception of its quantitatively being there in itself. Sadistic traits like refashioning something to make it new or else making something into a *unique piece*[5] by ramming a feel of realness into some kind of structural framework are obliterated in the perception of *existing*.

We could say that the very state of *existence* is the most individualistic and *unique* mode of being as such for us. The clue for people to transcend their mentality of fabricating object[thing]s is to convert something *present* into that object[thing]'s extreme limit state of *existence*, to shift the general state of being of object[thing]s that we normally perceive to a state in which each *exists* in isolation.

Artists at the very least have to begin by breaking free from the latent mentality or ideality of fabricating some kind of object[thing]. It requires a human act as intermediary to understand the shift from an object[thing]'s general state of being to the *state of existing* at its extreme limit. Say an artmaker were to put a large stone on a steel plate.[6] We would know that object[thing] and object[thing], object[thing] and person had obtained a shared dimension ([field]site) by the property of the act of putting one object[thing] on top of another object[thing]. Going a step further, if there were some necessity that steel and stone should never be placed separately, then it would be the properties of the state of the one object[thing] and of the other that make it so.

5. Yunīku na shiromono ユニークなしろもの. *In Japanese the loanword* Yunīku *is weighted more to the sense of being "peculiar" or "unusual" than being the "sole" or "only one." Here Suga seems to be using it ironically in the pejorative.*—(AM)
6. *Here and following, Suga is clearly thinking of Lee Ufan's* Relatum *works, begun in 1968. In* Relatum (formerly Phenomena and Perception B) *(1969), Lee drops a large stone on a pane of glass—itself placed on top of a steel plate—that cracks under the weight of the stone. Other works in the series include* Relatum (formerly Phenomena and Perception A) *(1969), in which three large stones are placed at different points on a length of black rubber that has been marked with measuring lines, distorting the distances between the measures; and* Relatum II (a place within a certain situation) *(1970), in which wood beams are placed standing free, leaning against a wall, and propped on top of each other in the exhibition space. The former two works are used as illustrations in the roundtable discussion that appears in the same issue of* Bijutsu Techō. *See Suga et al., "'Mono' ga hiraku atarashii sekai,"* 45–46.—(AM)

Jirō Takamatsu
Stones and Numerals, 1969
Stone, plan, and photograph
29 5/8 × 42 in.
(75.5 × 106.8 cm) (plan)
The Estate of Jiro Takamatsu

Suppose there were a piece of lumber. If you were to make it stand by some means, it would not be the same as the state of its standing there without any intervention. To make it stand is not about the process of fabricating an object[thing] so much as it is a change to its fundamental mode of being as object[thing], as it might be more natural for the lumber to be on its side, or buried in the ground, or split in two. In light of the precondition of the lumber's standing, we could say that to make it stand is the reduction and abstraction of the property of the object[thing]'s mode of being that is standing to the property of the human act of making it stand. But the state of the lumber manifestly standing in place without human intervention is its maintaining the state of its standing, whether it stands with some support or without support, which concerns itself with the basic property of the object[thing]'s standing mode of being. And at this point something like someone's act ultimately adhering to the object[thing] and leaving a trace on it should almost never come by the idea of *fabricating* something.

Ordinarily people don't have any perception of repeating the same movements even when they repeat the same kind of movement multiple times. Because even with the same movements, even if the situations, objects,[7] methods were ultimately the same when you did the movements, they would still have different characters. That an object[thing] actually appears in some form even when we don't have the

7. Taishō 対象.—(AM)

mentality of fabricating an object[thing] is because we can't avoid the repeating pattern of actions inducing an object[thing].

There is an artist who slackened cloth and wrote numbers on stones so as to have a minimal interaction with object[thing]s, but this was perversely an attitude of maximum interaction with them.[8] Even when not especially slackened by hand, cloth will get itself wrinkled or pick up dirt, stretch and contract. But in more overtly making the surface of his cloth overly slack, the artist produced a state of cloth that could only ever be done by manipulation. For a cloth to be stretched is a natural condition of the cloth itself as it were, while to introduce an unnatural looseness into this natural perception is to alter the originary premise behind the cloth, and insofar as he can only express that through the cloth, the artist is maximally fixated on the object[thing].

Sometimes people cannot see the true substance of an object[thing] even when its form exists right before them in reality. For the state of *existence* has no part that is signified, whereas marking numbers on stones is the signification of *existence* itself. And yet our artist shows no doubts about the modes of *how something exists*. I don't know whether he perceived the stones' state as being something to be marked by numbers, but even if he had some absolute principle for the numbers to be marked, it would mean he unconsciously believes that numerical signs engage all people with equal weight. If numbers were object[thing]s for private use that we used on our own, then certainly they might fulfill their role as signs. Say you had some numbers and you had some stones, and numbers had the property that they should be for marking something, while stones had the property that they should be marked by something, then certainly there might be room for you to minimally intervene between stone and number at the moment of writing the number down, but as long as there is no necessity of being for the numbers to be for marking and the stones to be as they should, then we have to admit it's a completely meaningless act even before we speak of minimal engagements.

When an object[thing] manifests an unchanging state of *existence*, it will come with a person's act—but not as a means, as it is by the coupling of the unchanging elements of the act itself and the changeable elements of the object[thing] that the object[thing] displays the unchanging state of *existing as it has to be*. But we are not able to observe the object[thing]'s unchangeability in itself. If we want to further know the object[thing]'s unchangeable aspects, we have to break down the idea of the object[thing]'s being real.

People observe an object[thing] *as if it were present*. On the contrary, they can also observe an object[thing] *as if it were not present even when it is*.

8. *A reference to Jirō Takamatsu and his works* Slack of Cloth *and* Stones and Numerals *(both 1969). A member of the seminal Neo-Dadaist collective Hi Red Center active in the early 1960s, Takamatsu was already investigating the* "'objet-ification' of every possible object in everyday life," *or the possibility of* "liberating the object from a prescribed relation and making it the object of a new relation" (Takamatsu, "'Fragmentary Texts,' 1962–72," trans. Reiko Tomii, in Alexandra Munroe, Japanese Art after 1945: Scream against the Sky, *exh. cat. [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994], 373–74). Takamatsu would exert an influence in particular on Suga's peers Nobuo Sekine and Katsuhiko Narita, who worked for him as assistants on his project for the Japan Pavilion at the 34th Venice Biennale in 1968, and he eventually came to be identified with Mono-ha.—(AM)*

The artworks done in trompe l'oeil or "Tricks and Vision"[9] that were in vogue a year ago could not be continued because they neglected the reality perception that the object[thing] substance on which an object[thing]'s transformation is predicated actually exists.

At current artworks are still being fabricated while having to put up the same as always with the ridiculous monikers of *art*, from Conceptual art to Natural art or Air art.[10] But for us art work is work that has no purposeness, is doing nothing more than the work of work. Work has the definition of only doing something once there is a purpose, whereas our work maintains its position as work in its being *work* that is undefinable as such, in its being purposeless.

The reason it was first necessary to get rid of our fabricating consciousness in fabricating [thing]s is that otherwise we could only grasp the object[11] as an objective reality[12] through a view of [thing]s that puts ourselves as the subject. Before *observing* we have to first catch the object in the moment it stands with us, the moment of its *existing in the way it exists*. In the objectivity of observing, we can know the [thing]*'s mode of being* only through the unilateral view that it is the person who *observes* the [thing]. This means that unless we can have a perception of a [thing] that keeps in mind its being as [thing], we can only ever catch the [thing] in a state when it is not the [thing] itself.

In denying a [thing] with a [thing], we realize that [thing] and [thing] are equivalent, have equal positions. Although it's true we try to represent the kinds of things that get called "ideas" with [thing]s, is the object[thing] we are trying to present really ideational thinking in itself? No. When a [thing] becomes a nonobjective object,[13] all we know is a [thing] that is a substance as nonobjective object.

One method of denying a [thing] with a [thing] is to present the innate qualities of the [thing]s as *phenomena* that only they can represent. For example, making the [thing]s function where they get discounted by crossing their respective qualities, as by cracking glass with a stone or placing metal on top of rubber. But such phenomena differ from spontaneously occurring phenomena in that the impetus for the *phenomenon* to occur is backed by the unexpectedness of something happening unhappenably, and the [thing]'s persistence in its state continuing for as long as allowed without spontaneously disappearing. Then there's the physical effect of when the *phenomenon* occurs, which means that when it comes to making the *phenomenon* disappear, there needs to be an act/effect of equal weight. Ordinarily people know the property that glass has of cracking or that

9. *A reference to the seminal* Tricks and Vision: Stolen Eyes *exhibition organized in 1968 at two Tokyo venues by critics Yūsuke Nakahara and Junzō Ishiko. The exhibition was held from April 30 to May 18 at Tokyo Gallery and April 30 to May 11 at Muramatsu Gallery. Takamatsu was one of the participants, alongside Etsutomu Kashiwara, Natsuyuki Nakanishi, Nobuo Sekine, and others. The exhibition is seen as an important precursor to what came to be known as Mono-ha. Many of the works incorporated trompe l'oeil motifs and other optical effects. Suga also makes a dismissive reference to* Tricks and Vision *in 1977's* "Logic of [Field]Site" *(see p. 204).—(AM)*
10. *Such terms were introduced to Japanese readers through a two-part special feature on the theme of "The New Nature" in* Bijutsu Techō's *June and July 1969 issues. The first part focused on Air art and the second part on Earthworks. See "Atarashii shizen—Erementarizumu 1: Ea āto," special feature,* Bijutsu Techō, *no. 314 (June 1969), and "Atarashii shizen—Erementarizumu 2: Āsuwāku," special feature,* Bijutsu Techō, *no. 315 (July 1969).—(AM)*
11. *Here and in the next sentence,* taishōbutsu 対象物.—(AM)
12. Kyakkanteki jitsuzai 客観的実在. Kyakkanteki *(objective) is used in contrast to* shukanteki 主観的 *(subjective).—(AM)*

rubber has of stretching and shriveling, which is the only way they are prepared to have a shared conceptual [field]site with glass or rubber, but when glass cracks under the weight of a stone or rubber is squashed by metal,[14] they lose the [field]site for connecting to them as concepts even though glass that has gotten cracked or rubber that has gotten stretched out and shriveled up is right there before their eyes. Thus we need to come up with completely new and unknown conceptions for them as *that thing that is cracked* or *that thing that is squashed*. In other words, we find a [field]site for encountering something new where [thing]s are no longer [thing]s to each other.

Another method of seeking out *unknown* [thing]s is the practice of using homogeneous materials to transform the masses, forms, volumes, or temporalities, spatialities, materialities of the [thing]s to present the sensibility of their being obviously *different things*. In the case of the *phenomenon*, we simultaneously converted heterogeneous materials into a state of being entangled and reciprocal, but with homogeneous [thing]s the object of interaction is only the object[thing] in itself, subject and object[15] homogenize, and the [thing] as such exists as a thingobject to be seen along with a sensation. It of course entails a deliberate act[16] and the application of mechanical processes for this *thing that exists* to appear. But that's not enough for it to be an issue for us. Essentially, all it takes is to have a perception of its mode of being, of its being transformed and definitely being there.

One thing that has been defined and known destroys another given thing, transforms into yet another given thing. From one reality to another reality, a [thing] attempts its transformation as [thing] where there is no getting away from the [thing] concept for the [thing].

From a world of fiction to one of reality, from phantom to substance, idea to substance, and vice versa. We always thought about how to represent while taking something in relation as a measure. It's only now we learn that [thing]s have started assuming the will to deny all that through the measure of the [thing] itself—whereas once an idea puts [thing] and [thing], *intent and nonintent*[17] on the balance, we already fall into the ill of the outmoded creative thinking that we *must fabricate* something.

If not only people but *everything* had a critical mind, then a [thing] should be able to critique people, should be able to critique [thing]s themselves. If the mentality of fabricating a [thing] is some kind of demonstration of resistance, then you should know that the [thing] that comes out of it explicitly takes as its object of critique even you, the one who

13. Hitaishōbutsu 非対象物.—*(AM)*
14. *In addition to Lee Ufan's* Relatum *(formerly* Phenomena and Perception A*) (1969), the discussion of rubber being squashed by a metal plate here also evokes Nobuo Sekine's* Phase—Sponge *(1968), in which a large steel plate is placed on top of a cylinder of white sponge-like material, which is squashed under the weight of the steel.—(AM)*
15. Shutai to kyakutai 主体と客体.—*(AM)*
16. Jin'iteki sakui 人為的作為.—*(AM)*
17. Sakui to fusakui 作為と不作為. *Sakui's primary meaning is something close to "creative intent," although it accommodates diverse readings. For example, Arata Isozaki makes repeated reference to* sakui *as a concept in his book* Kenchiku ni okeru "Nihonteki na mono" *(Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2003). In his English translation, Sabu Kohso generally renders the term as "artifice," but at other points it is also associated with "intention," "poeisis," and "invention." See Arata Isozaki,* Japan-ness in Architecture, *trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).* Fusakui *commonly appears as a legal term corresponding to the English "nonfeasance."—(AM)*

fabricated it—critiques your, say, creative mentality or function, as well as, say, the act/actions that parallel it. It is in blindly believing in the things we fabricate that we are unable to discern the essences of [thing]s, the essences of *acts*, the *observing essence*, the essence of *perceiving*.

Once the creative act took on a single theorem, we had to look for a new methodology for beating the theorem. The way of turning a [thing] you think in your head into a medium had already gotten to where it spontaneously collapsed under the finitude of the idea, under its loss of *real* feeling. And all that gradually fishing ideas out of the undercurrent and incrementally altering their representation does is to meaninglessly adjust yourself to the theorem, as though to prove some long antiquated philosophy.