
Opening Speech

Session 1: Bearing Witness

同様に、日本、アラブ世界の役割を共有

pop-up mathaf
@mori art museum

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モリアート・アラブ現代美術館

same-same but different:
the role of the artist in the arab world and japan

モリアート・アラブ現代美術館

“Arab Express: The Latest Art from the Arab World”

Dates: June 16 - October 28, 2012

Venue: Mori Art Museum (53F Roppongi Hills Mori Tower)

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, The Yomiuri Shimbun

Curated by: Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum),
Kondo Kenichi (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Curatorial Advisors: Wassan Al-Khudairi (Former Director, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art),
Hoor Al-Qasimi (President, Sharjah Art Foundation),
Ehab Ellaban (Commissaire, the 12th Cairo Biennale),
Salwa Mikdadi (Former Head of Arts & Culture Programme, Emirates Foundation),
Muhammad Talaat (Former Director, Palace of Arts, Cairo)



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Pop-up Mathaf @ Mori Art Museum

Symposium Co-organized with Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art

“Same-Same But Different: The Role of the Artist in the Arab World and Japan”

Mori Art Museum collaborates with Mathaf to present a weekend of events. Arab artists participating in “Arab Express: The Latest Art from the Arab World” at Mori Art Museum, join Japanese artists active worldwide in giving presentations on their art practices, talks, and a panel discussion comparing contemporary art in the Arab world with that in Japan. This exciting program designed to create a new dialogue and cultural exchange between the two regions is a part of “Qatar-Japan 2012,” a series of events celebrating 40 years of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Japan.

Dates & Time: 19:00-21:00, Friday, September 28, 2012

13:00-18:30, Saturday, September 29, 2012

Venue: Academyhills (49F, Roppongi Hills Mori Tower)

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar Museums Authority

Curators: Deena Chalabi (Former Head of Strategy, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art),

Kondo Kenichi (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

ABOUT THE POP-UP MATHAF

Since it first opened in Doha in 2010, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art has articulated its vision and purpose not simply through its exhibitions, but also by focusing on different strategies for engaging with audiences in Qatar and beyond. The goal of the “Pop-up Mathaf” has been to engage with international audiences through developing a flexible, engaging platform for multiple voices on art and ideas, and to address a substantial knowledge gap around the contexts for Arab contemporary art. The first “Pop-up Mathaf”, called “Interference”, took place in London in collaboration with the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in July 2011, and included artist talks, workshops, a film screening, a commissioned publication and interactive elements. “Same-Same But Different” is the second “Pop-up Mathaf”, developed in collaboration with Mori Art Museum in Tokyo for a September 2012.

ABOUT MATHAF: ARAB MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The first institution of its kind in the region, Mathaf offers an Arab perspective on modern and contemporary art and supports creativity, promotes dialogue and inspires new ideas. The 5,500-square-meter (59,000-square-foot) museum, located in a former school building in Doha’s Education City, has a collection that offers a rare comprehensive overview of modern Arab art, representing the major trends and sites of production spanning from the 1840s through the present. Mathaf presents exhibitions that situate the Arab world in relation to a larger art context and also offers programs that engage the local and international community, encourage research and scholarship and contribute to the cultural landscape of the Gulf region, the Middle East, the Arab Diaspora and beyond. For more information, please visit: www.mathaf.org.qa

ABOUT QATAR MUSEUMS AUTHORITY

Established in 2005 by His Highness the Emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani to combine the resources of all museums in the State of Qatar, Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) is a governmental organization whose remit is to develop museums and cultural institutions and provide an effective system for collecting, protecting, preserving and interpreting historic sites, monuments and artifacts. Under the leadership of Chairperson H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa, QMA is transforming the State of Qatar into a cultural hub of the Middle East. The Museum of Islamic Art, inaugurated in 2008, is the Authority’s flagship project. The organization won further global acclaim with the December 2010 opening of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. QMA’s goal of becoming a “global leader in the world of museums, art and heritage” will be advanced in the coming years with ambitious, world-class projects, including the Jean Nouvel-designed National Museum of Qatar. For further information, please visit www.qma.org.qa

ABOUT QATAR-JAPAN 2012

Qatar-Japan 2012 celebrates 40 years of excellent relations between the State of Qatar and Japan. This is realized through a yearlong series of cultural, sporting and business-related activities held in Japan and Qatar. The events highlight mutual understanding, recognition and appreciation of the Qatari and Japanese cultures, traditions and people. Qatar-Japan 2012 also promotes educational opportunities, business relations, economic support and increased cultural exchange between the nations of Qatar and Japan. Qatar-Japan 2012 is led by Qatar Museums Authority, and officially sponsored by Qatar Gas and Qatar Petroleum; the other partners are Qatar Ministry of Culture, Al Jazeera Network, Qatar Airways, Doha Film Institute, Katara, Qatar Ministry of Business and Trade, Qatar 2022, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Olympic Committee, Qatar Tourism Authority, Reach Out to Asia (ROTA), Qatar Friendship Fund, and the Supreme Education Council. To learn more about the Qatar-Japan 2012 project, please visit www.qatarjapan2012.com

DAY 1

19:00-21:00, Friday, September 28, 2012

■ Navigator: Kondo Kenichi (Curator, Mori Art Museum / Co-curator of "Arab Express")

19:00-19:25 Opening Speech

■ Speaker: Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum / Co-curator of "Arab Express")

19:30-21:00 Session 1 "Bearing Witness"

■ Speakers: Halim Al Karim ("Arab Express" participating artist),
Ushiro Ryuta and Ellie of Chim ↑ Pom (artist collective)

■ Moderator: Kondo Kenichi

Opening Speech



Nanjo Fumio (Director, Mori Art Museum)

Born in 1949. Nanjo Fumio graduated from Keio University with degrees in economics and also aesthetics/art history. After organizing numerous exhibitions for the Japan Foundation and other institutions, he joined the Mori Art Museum as Deputy Director in 2002, and became Director in November, 2006. His international appointments include Commissioner of the Japan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Commissioner at the Taipei Biennale, and Artistic Director of the Yokohama Triennale and the Singapore Biennale. He is a member of CIMAM (International Committee of ICOM for Museums and Collections of Modern Art) and AICA (International Association of Art Critics).

Session 1 "Bearing Witness"



Halim Al Karim (Artist)

Born in 1963 in Najaf, Iraq. Currently lives and works in Dubai, UAE and Denver, USA.

Halim Al Karim has held solo exhibitions in Dubai, France, the Netherlands, USA, Jordan and Lebanon. He was nominated for the "2010 Sovereign Asian Art Prize" and awarded the jury prize in the 8th International Cairo Biennale (2001). He is one of the six artists whose work was featured in the Iraqi Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) – the first Iraqi Pavilion at the Biennale in 36 years. His work is in the collections of major museums including Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Saatchi Collection in London, Darat Al Funun in Amman, L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.



Photo : Matsukage Hiroyuki

Chim ↑ Pom (Artist Collective)

A collective formed in Tokyo in 2005 consisting of Ellie, Ushiro Ryuta, Hayashi Yasutaka, Mizuno Toshinori, Okada Masataka and Inaoka Motomu.

The six-member art collective Chim ↑ Pom is known for their interventionist artworks with strong social messages on contemporary society. They have garnered both national and international recognition for their activities and have been invited to show at art festivals and exhibitions worldwide. Their expanded activities include producing the feature "Chim ↑ Pom presents REAL TIMES" for the art monthly *Bijutsu Techo* (March 2012), curating the exhibition "Turning Around" (WATARI-UM, Tokyo, 2012), a solo exhibition at Parco Museum in Tokyo, a new book, and participation in the 9th Shanghai Biennale.



Kondo Kenichi (Curator, Mori Art Museum)

Born in 1969. Kondo Kenichi completed a Masters in Art History in 1999 at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, and started to work at Mori Art Museum in 2003. He curated "MAM Project 009: Koizumi Meiro" (2009) and co-curated "History in the Making: A Retrospective of the Turner Prize" (2008) and "Roppongi Crossing 2010" (2010). Recently, he co-curated "Arab Express" with Nanjo Fumio (2012). In 2010, Kondo also curated a video art exhibition showcasing young Japanese artists' work at Sala 1, a non-profit gallery in Rome.

Opening Speech



Nanjo Fumio
Photo: Mikuriya Shinichiro

Kondo Kenichi Thank you for your patience. I would now like to begin.

Once again, thank you all for coming. I am Mori Art Museum curator Kondo Kenichi, and I will be the moderator this evening.

The program will last around two and half hours. I hope you will stay with us to the end.

As you are probably aware, this symposium is being held in conjunction with the “Arab Express” exhibition currently showing at the Mori Art Museum.

It has been brought about with the collaboration of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the Qatar Museums Authority.

I’d like to start by inviting our director, Nanjo Fumio, to say a few words.

Nanjo Fumio Good evening, everyone.

“Arab Express,” an exhibition focusing on contemporary art from the Arab world, is now showing at the Mori Art Museum from June 16 to October 28.

This symposium is being held in conjunction with the exhibition with the support of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and its parent body, the Qatar Museums Authority.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone concerned at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the Qatar Museums Authority for their enormous support.

Qatar Museums Authority CEO Mansoor Al Khater is with us here this evening, so I would like to invite him to say a few words before we get underway.

Mr. Al Khater studied engineering and business administration at university and held important positions at Qtel among other organizations before joining the Qatar Museums Authority as CEO this year.

So without further ado, I’d like to invite Mr. Al Khater to say a few words.

Mansoor Al-Khater

Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Nanjo Fumio and Mori Art Museum for hosting us here this evening and welcome to the opening event for Pop-up Mathaf in Tokyo.

It has been our great pleasure to be working with our partners and friends in Japan to celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Mathaf stands for Arab Museum of Modern Arts, which belongs to a family of museums that fall under the umbrella of the Qatar Museums Authority.

Mathaf opened in December 2010. And it is a unique institution that celebrates Arab modern art and houses a great collection of the works of Arab artists from the late 19th Century to today.

It is also the only museum in our region that contains modern art from every single Arab country.

In addition to promoting art from the Arab world, Mathaf also aims to challenge stereotypes about our region through showcasing the history of the development of Arab arts.

Here, in Tokyo, with our partners at Mori Art Museum, we are looking forward for you to participate in our workshop that we hope will clarify perceptions about Arab modern art and build a bridge of understanding between Arab and Japanese artists.

Along with Qatar Week: Ferjaan in Tokyo that was inaugurated yesterday by Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado and His Excellency Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Pop-up Mathaf is another important cultural activity from Qatar that we are bringing here to Japan.

I hope, and we hope, you’ll enjoy the workshop on Arab modern arts here in Mori Art Museum today and thank you very much for listening.

I would say in Japanese, *arigatogozaimasu*, thank you very much.

Nanjo Fumio Thank you very much.

Next, I’d like to introduce Deena Chalabi, who co-curated tonight’s symposium. Ms. Chalabi was closely involved with the foundation of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art as its Head of Strategy, a position she held until spring this year. At the same time she developed this “Pop-up Mathaf” event. Please.

Deena Chalabi

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Thank you so much for being here this evening. My name is Deena Chalabi, and I am the former Head of Strategy at Mathaf, in Doha, I am also one of the curators with Ken Kondo of tonight’s program. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Pop-up Mathaf.

This series of talks tonight and tomorrow is the combination of many months of work by the Mathaf team, the QMA team, the Qatar-Japan 2012 team, and of course, the team here at the Mori. Thank you very much Fumio, Ken, and the entire Mori team for all your support, ideas, and enthusiasm. The success of this program rests on the strength of the relationship between the two institutions, and we have been very lucky to have such excellent partners.

Thank you also to the Qatar Museums Authority, including the Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al-Mayassa Al-Thani; the CEO, who you just heard, Mansoor Al-Khater, and Miguel Blanco-Carrasco, who led the Qatar-Japan 2012 team. I hope you enjoy tonight’s discussion. Thank you.

Nanjo Fumio Thank you, Ms. Chalabi.

I’d like to explain briefly the background to the “Arab Express” exhibition. The origins of this exhibition can in fact be traced back to the 1970s, when I was closely involved in cultural exchanges with the Middle East as an officer at the Japan Foundation.

At that time I undertook numerous trips of 30 days or more and visited at least seven countries to perform fieldwork. My work involved introducing traditional Japanese performance art, children’s theater, and so on to countries in the Middle East.

As a result of this experience, I decided that I wanted to introduce contemporary art from the Middle East to Japan one day.

Then, in 2006 and 2008, I arranged to have a number of artists from the Middle East participate in the Singapore Biennale, which is a massive international art exhibition.

This required making several visits to the Middle East starting in 2005, during which I interviewed artists, met with experts, and canvassed the opinions of various people.

All of these activities have culminated in my involvement as co-curator in the development of this exhibition, "Arab Express."

"Arab Express" introduces artworks by 34 individuals and groups. In Japan, it seems news reports about the Middle East and the Arab world are all too often about such topics as terrorism or conflict.

At this exhibition, however, I wanted to do all I could to dispel such images. The people living in the region have normal everyday lives, have lives with their families, so I wanted to show these and other aspects of the region.

In putting the exhibition together, I wanted to see if it were possible to portray comprehensively the lives of people in the Arab world. At the same time, conflicts do have a considerable impact on people's lives, so it was inevitable that this aspect of life would also be depicted.

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art opened in Qatar in 2010, by which time investigations for this exhibition were already underway. This underlines how new this art museum is.

Together with Mori Art Museum curator Kondo Kenichi, I made numerous visits and met with the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art team on numerous occasions. The museum already has an impressive track record in terms of collecting and carrying out studies of modern and contemporary art in the Middle East. At present, I can think of no other art museum in the region that has collected as much information on Arab modern and contemporary art.

The theme of this symposium, which is to compare contemporary art in Japan and the Arab world and discuss the differences and similarities between them, is an extremely ambitious one. Some people may wonder whether there are really any similarities at all. Hopefully we will be able to come up with an answer to this question in the course of the discussions this evening and tomorrow. To coincide with this symposium, we have specially invited artists from Japan and overseas. I hope the discussions will encourage people to think about not only Arab art, but also Japanese art. As well, I hope they will serve as an inspiration in various ways for actual art.

This year marks 40 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Qatar. To celebrate this occasion, a Qatari souk, or marketplace, has been recreated at the Arena on the ground floor of Roppongi Hills as part of an event titled "Qatar Japan 2012." There are exhibits on Qatari culture, sports, and economics, among other things, so I urge you all to come early tomorrow and check out this new presentation.

I am extremely grateful that we have been able to realize this symposium thanks to Qatar's support. I think perhaps this is the first time such discussions have taken place in Japan. It is with much anticipation that I look forward to listening over the next two days. Thank you.

Session 1 Report

While Iraqi-born artist and photographer Halim Al Karim seems to have little in common with the guerrilla antics of Tokyo artist collective Chim ↑ Pom, they share a commitment to understanding and exploring their various contexts, and producing work as evidence of their respective countries' recent traumas. This discussion addresses the idea of the artist as an outside observer of social conduct and conflict, the relationship between the private and the public spheres, as well as how these artists choose to position themselves in order to make a powerful statement through their images and practice.

Kondo Kenichi First I'd like to ask each speaker to make a brief presentation on their works. After that, we'll exchange opinions. Halim, would you like to speak first?

Halim Al Karim *Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim.* Good evening. Hi everyone and thanks for coming to this event.

I don't really know where to start. I'm sure there is something more important than my art that I can talk about, but because I have been invited by Mori Art Museum and Mathaf in Qatar, I think I will have to talk about my art, albeit against my will.

Anyway, I've prepared some images related to my work aesthetically and conceptually. The image you see now relates to my memories. When I was in Iraq, as a very young boy, my father used to take me to the Iraqi national museum. These images relate visually or aesthetically to my work.

I get the same question all the time: Why do I use this kind of technique, which I call "out of focus." One of the reasons is this kind of Sumerian statue. It is made of clay or pottery or stone and over the years – it was made thousands of years ago, like 6000 years ago – the surface of the statue became faded and the details unclear.

There is also a personal aspect to why I use this "out of focus" technique. Since I was young I've worn glasses, and when I don't wear them, I cannot see, like even two meters ahead. I can't see anything except the noses on faces in front of me. I like being without my glasses because everything is floating. There are no sharp lines around me and I cannot see small details, like people's skin, whether it's good or bad.

Sometimes I'd intentionally not to wear my glasses.

This is also part of my choice to use "out of focus" in my photography. As you can see here, and here in this piece, the ancient Iraqis, the Sumerians, had special eyes in their statues, and I think they used such big eyes because – as you know, Sumer was the first civilization in the world, the oldest – it was a surprise for them to watch themselves and witness themselves create the first irrigation canals for farming, set up the first school in the world, and invent the first calligraphy. I don't know, is it calligraphy or – I think it was amazing for them to discover that and watch themselves and witness themselves making this discovery at that time. This is my own explanation for why Sumerians used big eyes in statues. It's not my only explanation: I studied art history and art history in Iraq, not outside Iraq, and I also visited archeological sites. Day by day, I started to feel like I lived at that time, until I believed it, and this caused real problems in my relationship with reality and also in relation to the conceptual aspect of my work.

I have here nine images on this topic. This kind of temple is what the ancient Iraqis, the Sumerians, used to build for the many goddesses they worshipped, and they called it a ziggurat. It also relates in a way to my work. At least, I feel it does. Here also we have one of the ancient Iraqi gods, a Sumerian god, handing down rules or advice to his people.

These two figures, male and female nudes, kind of prove that people are same everywhere. In private, we are all naked yet we pretend that we don't like it. I'd prefer not to talk about each image and time is short, so I'll be brief.



Halim Al Karim
photo: Mikuriya Shinichiro

This image is titled *Hidden War*. I made it in 1985. *Black Bread*, I think in 1994. This image addresses the rebellion and anger of Iraqi women surrounding the economic embargoes against the Iraqi people during the '90s.

Love in Baghdad: I was young and my models, at that time, were young also. I don't know if it's useful to talk about each piece. *Black Rain*, I did in 1991 just days after I left my hiding place and just days also before I left Iraq. In this piece, I tried to portray my feeling of being in the middle because I felt like I was young and could not handle what was happening. I saw black smoke everywhere. Bombs from other armies, attacking Iraq at that time. They burnt everything. Their cause was to help Iraqis, and it was not right.

I don't like this way of talking about all the images. I will just talk about life I think. I am from Iraq and I really live in a different time. I feel like I live a few thousand years ago, and know exactly the rules and law of that time. Iraqis at that time treated women as goddesses. We built special temples for them and called them temples of love. Girls, when they turned 13-14 years old had to go to the temples and stay for a period of time. I don't know how long. When they left these temples society saw them as goddesses. I still believe that now. That's why I have, for example, this image, *Goddess of Florence*. I have this theory, which I've been working on since 1985. Always when I have a special relationship with a city, I try to find the goddess of that city.

For *Goddess of Venice* 2006, I spent two beautiful months there. Okay, after I left Iraq in 1991 – before I left Iraq, I think I was an angel or a naïve angel because I thought that when we leave Iraq, we will see open hands welcoming us from other people, especially from our Arab brothers. And yes, it was like this from the people, but from Arab governments, it was worse than how Saddam treated us. Actually, this image is part of a theory I call "Hidden Agenda."

I collect images of Arab leaders from newspapers and magazines. I made this in Jordan. I burn and destroy the images, make a kind of collage, and then I photograph it. This image – I don't know if you can recognize his face, he is now in jail, in Tora Prison in Egypt – is President Mubarak. He supported, at the time, Saddam and his regime.

This is King Hussein, the King of Jordan. He passed away a few years ago. He was also a very strong supporter of the regime against the Iraqi people. This is Queen Elizabeth. They all supported the regime against Iraqi people, under the table. They pretended to protect human rights and blah, blah, blah, blah, but in fact they are part of the crimes committed against the Iraqi people.

I was in exile. When I was at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1983-1984, there was a war between Iraq and Iran and I used to meet colleagues who graduated and went into the army. And when they came back to school to visit, their faces were totally different; I couldn't recognize them. From that day on, I started to think about not going to the army after I graduated. Because the law was that when you graduate from university you have to serve a few years in the army, and I started to visualize or imagine what kind of shelter I could find, or where I could hide.

This is one of my friends, an Iraqi artist. I did a portrait of him when he came back from the army. Look at him. He was an awesome, beautiful man. When he talked about the fear and how he was scared, I made a series out of his feelings and I called it *Last Seclusion of the Soul*. Then I started to think where to hide in Iraq after graduation. *Schizophrenia*. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it the right way.

All my life, I think since I opened my eyes, I've behaved in totally different ways simultaneously. For example, I love my mother and I hate her. I'm a good boy and I'm a really dirty boy. Even now that I'm older, there are some real close friends who call me a dictator, some of them call me a dirty old man, and some of them, an angel, because I behave in all these ways at the same time.

I mean, I always have different characters. Then, I started to observe that it's not only me. I started to realize that other people around me, most, maybe all, are in this situation. They have this disease of sorts that gives them different characters, and they try to hide it. They are honest, but sometimes they are not honest. That's why I made this. This is the series. This is also *Schizophrenia*, 1987.

I showed you a few minutes ago the *Last Seclusion of the Soul*, the soldier or student. It was 1985, one of first series I did. And after these years, I returned again to seclusion and I made this series, *Seclusion in Pigalle*. You know Pigalle? Pigalle as in the red-light district in Paris.

And because I used to visit these places everywhere, in any city I try to find this kind of place for many different reasons. I made this series because I meet these kinds of people who are working... The women and the men, I talk

to them. I have many friends among them, very good friends.

They talk to me about their clients and who is visiting them and why. I discovered and I believe that for people who go to prostitutes, men or women, to pay money for sex and pleasure, it's not just about sex. It's because there is a huge... there are people who cannot find love or mercy in their life and they think that they can find it if they pay money for it.

This series I call *Slavery*. I did it in 2000 at the start of the new millennium. The system or the government or the officials or the politicians, they try to put us, put the people – normal, ordinary people – into this system, and even make people change their shape just to get a job.

Urban Witness, 2002. I heard a lot in the West people saying that in the Muslim world they don't treat women in the right way, but it's not true. We really treat women... actually for me, I believe that they are still goddesses. I made this series because I discovered after I graduated or while I was studying at the Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, my colleagues, the girls, told me that even now in Europe, some countries in Europe, when a woman gets a job, they pay her less for same job than what a man would get. It was really a shock. I made this series because I wanted to tell people that they are treating women in a bad way in the West, not in Middle East or Muslim countries.

Wall Street, 2001. This is about the economic crisis at that time. It happened again in 2008 and was a real war against ordinary people. Thousands of people and families lost their houses and jobs for no reason, and nobody knows why it happened, and who did it; no one has been jailed for it yet, and it will happen again.

Witness from Baghdad. Thank you so much.

Kondo Kenichi

Thank you, Halim. Next are two artists from Chim ↑ Pom. Ellie and Ushiro-san, please.

Ellie & Ushiro Ryuta

Thank you.

Ushiro Ryuta

There are many Japanese in the audience, so I thought it would be better to spend more time talking with Halim, but...

As it takes time to switch the screen display, I'll change my part slightly.

Today's subject is "bearing witness," and I found Halim's speech quite convincing. I want to talk about our activities so far, along with this subject. Please take a look at our early works created in Tokyo. Afterwards, I'll show you what we produced after we had the earthquake and nuclear power plant accident last year.

Ellie

Why don't we show our work to Halim?

Ushiro Ryuta

I think our Japanese guests know them already, but I'd appreciate it if you would kindly join us.

Ellie

I'd very much like Halim to see our works rather than the Japanese audience.

Ushiro Ryuta

All right, Ellie, but the screen doesn't change.

Ellie

Ah.

Ushiro Ryuta

I'll use this time to introduce us. We're a group of six people called Chim ↑ Pom, working out of Tokyo. It's been



From left: Kondo Kenichi, Halim Al Karim, Ellie and Ushiro Ryuta.
Photo: Mikuriya Shinichiro

seven years since we formed the group.

Ellie A group of five boys and one girl.

Halim Al Karim I know you very well.

Ushiro Ryuta What should I do? I don't know what to do without the screen display. Well then, I'll explain in words.

Ellie Right.

Ushiro Ryuta We've been based in Shibuya in Tokyo since our formation. Shibuya is the busiest area in downtown Tokyo.

Our first work was a video that shows how we chased and caught a lot of rats using nets in Shibuya. The title is *Super Rat*. In fact, the term "super rat" was coined by rat exterminators. They usually use poison and traps to kill rats, but rats gradually become capable of avoiding traps and resistant to poison. They call these evolved rats "super rats." We thought that expression was great.

Do you want to talk with Halim because there's no screen display?

Ellie Yes.

Ushiro Ryuta Isn't the PC connected?

Ellie I want to know more about Halim when he was hiding for three years. I heard that you were hiding in some ethnic settlement dressed in the same way as they were. What was your everyday life like there?

Halim Al Karim A normal life, very normal. I became used to it – but was full of panic. The panic never left me.

I panicked about everything, about snakes and other creatures, and about whether I would have enough water to survive. Sometimes it wasn't much, but it was enough for one day. This was normal.

Ellie Where did you get water? Was it nearby?

Halim Al Karim There is no time to tell the audience about the whole thing, but I survived because of the help of an old lady, an Iraqi lady. Her name is Negima, which means "Star," and she used to supply me with food and water every two or three weeks. She used to travel six hours on donkey to bring food for me. Day by day then you become used to it and it's a matter of surviving.

Ellie I see.

Ushiro Ryuta I think I understood a little, but I'm afraid the situation is beyond our imagination. Didn't you feel lonely? Were you alone, or with your family?

Halim Al Karim No, I was not lonely, no. I never felt lonely. I told you before that I really live in a different time. When I am here I am present, yet I am somewhere else all the time. But if there is time, I would like to say just a few words about this experience.

I lived these three years hiding in the dessert because I didn't want to be part of the war. I'm no coward, but I didn't want to be part of this. I think these three years reshaped my humanity because during them I started to think about why the government would push me to do this, and I started to think about them on an individual level. They lived with me and I started to imagine how they treat their families, their wives, their sisters, their brothers, and I started to feel closer to them and not to hate them. That's why I say it reshaped my humanity – because I don't have that feeling of hatred anymore.

Ushiro Ryuta Well, I'm not confident how well I've understood the situation.

Ellie Looking through the "Arab Express" exhibition, it struck me that Arab and Japanese life are very different. They are totally different even though we live on the same planet. It's surprising.

I've never been to the Arab world except that I stopped at Doha Airport in transit to Brazil to visit the Sao Paulo Biennial. That airport struck me as incomparably gorgeous. It was my first experience of the Arab world.

Looking at the exhibition, it struck me that danger is close at hand in the lives of Arab people.

Ushiro Ryuta A curator told me that people are the same in Arab countries and Japan, and there are similar things about them. I understand that, but I still feel that there is something very different about them.

Ellie I thought maybe their way of thinking might be totally different from ours.

Ushiro Ryuta If I could visit Arab countries, I might get a different impression. Today's situation must be different from the earlier times that Halim talked about. Recently there have been revolutionary movements like the Arab Spring and other demonstrations. Such events have changed the Arab world, I believe.

I'm not sure what period each piece on display is depicting, but I feel overall it's a very serious exhibition.

Ellie We are all living on the same earth, but our basic ways of thinking might be different. For instance, I believe that there exist about five "present times" on the same dimensions and timelines simultaneously. Do Arabs have such a concept?

Halim Al Karim You know, when it comes to being different or the same, I think we are neither different nor the same. But, there is a big mafia, I'll call it, that's rolling us. This mafia, for their own benefit, tries to divide people and to divide even one society; they try to divide it and make it different from others. In this way they can control everything they want: the economy and politics.

Maybe I cannot answer your question, but I really believe that we are not the same and yet not different. We are just human. We are brothers, friends, and we eat. I don't want to go into details, but what I believe is that these politicians who are ruling us, their goal is to divide us and to make us same-same, but not different; or different-different, but not same-same. This is all. I see it as a kind of game to control us and to keep controlling us.

Ushiro Ryuta Today I just returned from Shanghai to Narita. As you know, there is a territorial dispute between Japan and China over an island. There is related news every day in Japan, and the topic has been raised at the United Nations. The issue has also been attracting attention in China. I feared I might get harmed by anti-Japan protesters, but actually nothing unpleasant happened to me.

Chim ↑ Pom is known as a group creating social works. Halim used the word “politics” in his talk, but we are not interested in subjects like today’s territorial dispute. This territorial dispute is over an uninhabited island, and I see no human life involved. The problem is viewed solely in terms of politics, economics and resources. It seems to me that politicians agitate, the media fuels the dispute sensationally, and as a result, people talk about the topic.

Through the “Arab Express” exhibition and the previous presentation given by Halim, it has struck me that Halim has survived despite being so buffeted by politics. What attracts me is not Arab politics or culture but the human elements expressed in his work. That’s why I wondered what he was like.

Ellie Halim, you said in your speech that you were a good son to your mother and at the same time, not a good son. Could you describe more about how you grew up from childhood to adulthood? What do you mean by a good and bad son?

Halim Al Karim It became worse as I grew older. Yeah, really. When I was kid, at least there was... the family could control me.

Now at this age I really feel ashamed of myself. But, it’s not me. Also, I told you there was no time to talk about the conceptual aspect of my work. My work is related to my struggle with the reality between me and the devils who live inside me or within my soul or my body. I have to find a common language to communicate with them.

I don’t know how to say it, but I think it’s not only me. I try to talk about it, but observe that most people I know have the same thing, but hide it or don’t know that there are many devils living inside them. I’m sorry. I forgot the question. It was...?

Ellie I wanted to know about your feelings towards your mother. What did you mean by a good son and bad son? What sort of a person is she?

Halim Al Karim You have to ask her. Honestly, I don’t know who she is. But I think we are all the same in that we’re a mixture of angels and devils, and it’s just a matter of how and when you discover yourself. I think through my experience I discovered something. Yes, that’s it.

Ellie As I have poor eyesight, all the contours appear blurred.

Halim Al Karim Yeah, what is the question now?

Ellie Well, I only feel empathy with your work.

Ushiro Ryuta The PC is ready. I was going to show you work made before the quake, but since we don’t have enough time, I’d like to show you the pieces produced after the quake.

Is the screen display working?

As Kondo-san gave me the okay, let me show you our early works produced when we were formed. It’ll be also our introduction for Halim. This is *Super Rat*, which I mentioned a little while ago. I’d rather use the word “participant” than “witness” in this case.

First we were interested in the “evolving” element of the super rat. This was produced considerably after our debut. Since we lived in Shibuya as rats did, we photographed them as if taking our self-portraits. These rats have evolved to escape from traps and poison, so we had to catch them more directly. This shows how we caught them.

First we used a basket like this to catch them, but the only rats we could capture were small young ones, so we gave up this strategy. Kicking piles of garbage, we tried to directly catch rats coming out of them, using a net.

This work still represents our concept. We don’t fight pressure on us, but rather live by adapting ourselves to the environment. We respond to this sense of survival or being alive. That concept has gradually become the benchmark for our creations. Even now, when we are asked about Chim ↑ Pom’s concept, I answer “super rat.”

What we photographed next were crows. They are wild creatures in Tokyo like rats, living on the large amount of garbage there. This work shows how we gathered a lot of crows in a unique way.

Crows in Tokyo are shrewd. If they sense that one of their fellows have been caught, they call together more crows to help the captive out of danger. This shows how we induced them to take off into the air at various well-known places, taking advantage of this behavior.

The recorded cries of crows are being played. A lot of crows that were eating garbage in a park or somewhere are flocking to the place.

As I’ve mentioned, up in the sky over Shibuya, over a famous park, this is a Japanese celebrity’s house. This shows crows flocking over the Diet Building.

Around this time, I was very conscious of the concept of “super rat.” I think it’s amazing that wild creatures are living under rules totally different from ours in an ultimate city artificially built by humans.

This is the Diet Building.

We took pictures at a variety of spots, and sold them as a set of picture postcards for a Tokyo souvenir. Our original souvenir reveals Tokyo as it really is. Later we went to many different places in the world and conducted various projects.

Let me return to the subject of “witness” and “participant.” Last year we experienced the Tohoku earthquake and nuclear accident, and many foreigners left Japan. So, I certainly appreciate that this many people are now visiting from abroad.

The earthquake and nuclear accident were terribly shocking. The pictures I’ve just shown you are based on the assumption of a peaceful society, and express how we enjoy ourselves there.

Ellie I didn’t even imagine that such a disaster could happen, until it did. We were so shocked.

Ushiro Ryuta I was freaked out. Everyone was shocked. You might say that those disasters had a similar impact on the Japanese people to our defeat in World War II. I don’t think I understand it exactly because I didn’t experience the war, but I’m sure that most Japanese people’s perspectives on life were shaken.

Ellie It might have really been the same as World War II.

Ushiro Ryuta I wouldn’t say anything definite now. It’ll become clearer as the years go by.

At that time, everyone thought, “What can we do?” and “What have we been doing?” All the people responsible for building our society, including artists and those who promoted the construction of nuclear power plants, were called to account for their actions. It was the first time that Japanese responsibilities were questioned on such an extensive scale.

We also asked ourselves, “What should we do in this situation?” We then produced several works in the six months or so after the earthquake hit. I’d like you to see some of them.

First is *Ki-Ai 100*. This is the first piece we produced after the earthquake. Here is a port city that was destroyed.

Ellie It's in Fukushima Prefecture. When we were there, we saw boys selling fish. Probably they were volunteers.

Ushiro Ryuta They were also victims of the disaster and suffering in different ways such as having their houses washed away by the tsunami. Then Ellie said, "Let's yell 'Go for it!' a hundred times." They all yelled together.

This is Soma City very close to the nuclear plant. Everyone was scared. As no volunteers from outside the prefecture dared to come, victims themselves had to work as volunteers. In this situation, everyone yelled out feelings that they had to do anything they could.

Ellie They wanted to do it at the harbor.

Ushiro Ryuta They told us that Soma lives with the sea. Here they formed a circle and each one yelled something ad-lib. This is viewed from below. In the exhibition, two screens are provided, so you can see them from different directions. They are subtitled, so let me show about five minutes.

[Screening]

That's the work.

When we experienced the disaster, we thought about what we should leave behind us. When we come across this sort of thing, it is a matter of course to leave something behind, but it was difficult to decide what we should leave. A little while ago, I mentioned the defeat in World War II, and...

I wondered what sort of videos I would want to see if there were videos recording how cities were destroyed during the war. What I would expect to see are not news photos but videos, which describe who was doing what sort of things at the time. That would be very encouraging and I'd love to see them. After thinking over what we could hand down to posterity, we produced a work putting ourselves in coming generations' shoes.

Ellie We talked a lot and thought it over until we concluded that it should be from the standpoint of coming generations.

Ushiro Ryuta This is a work we produced around the same time as *Ki-Ai 100*, and the last piece in our presentation.

It is titled *Real Times*. The area within a 20km radius of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was designated an evacuation area, and the area within 30km a warning area. There was no longer anyone living within 30km. With all residents evacuated, there appeared a vast "ghost town."

Ellie The area was completely blockaded about a month after the earthquake. As it was before then, we could enter to shoot our video.

Ushiro Ryuta At our own risk.

Ellie Anyone could enter, but no one else dared. The TV images of the explosion at the plant were sharpened pictures shot more than 30km away from the spot.

Ushiro Ryuta All images were taken outside the 30km warning area and made clear afterwards.

Ellie It was less than a month after the earthquake, and we could enter the area. It wasn't like nobody entered the place, but the media didn't go to the spot to get footage. I felt there was something wrong about with that.

Ushiro Ryuta This shows the main entrance of the power plant. We parked the car there and walked to the nearby observation point, on a hill constructed by TEPCO for neighboring residents to promote the construction of nuclear power plants. We trekked up there. The round trip took us about 40min. This shows how we made the work at this observatory.

Ellie We couldn't drive up there. When we went to see the place in advance, we could drive through. But the road had since collapsed due to aftershocks, and we couldn't use the car.

Ushiro Ryuta We went up the hill this way. I mentioned that all the news coverage used pictures taken outside the warning area, and moreover, information from the news was limited to announcements made by the government and TEPCO. The Japanese media didn't report any information obtained independently.

The title *Real Times* implies three meanings. One is "this time." The second meaning is "it has become a realistic era," which might be similar to Charlie Chaplin's movie. The last one is "real news" like the *New York Times*.

As you see, we entered different places at our own risk and captured video footage. I never realized the significance of using a video camera so intently before. I went up the hill feeling that I was doing my duty. Please watch and listen.

I have a white flag and red spray paint in my hand. First I wanted to put up the flag. Arriving at a summit in the Himalayas or on the moon, those who have achieved their goals always put up flags. Thinking of our custom of raising a flag at a place where no one has ever reached, I wanted to prove that a vast area of land where nobody can live has come to exist and it is near Tokyo. I put a mark in red spray paint on the white flag.

When the nuclear accident occurred, nothing could be done at first. It seemed as if no one in Japan knew how to deal with it. Thus I began by raising a white flag.

When we were capturing rats, our production process was comparably upbeat. Most shots of the process depict pleasant moments. But, when we shot this work, none of us spoke. Wearing a mask and layered clothing to guard against radiation, I was hot and had difficulty breathing. My protective goggles were clouded with sweat. I felt terrible. I wanted to give up and get out of there as soon as possible.

According to the announcement by TEPCO, there was extremely high radiation, estimated at 199 microsieverts, around that hill. Approaching where the radiation level was highest, I had to breathe deeply because I was losing my breath. It was the most difficult shoot I'd ever experienced.

I was shocked when I saw smoke coming out of a building of the plant when we arrived at the observatory on the hill. TV news shot from outside the 30km area didn't show smoke left in the building. Nor did the media inform us that there was an explosion. I knew nothing of any meltdown either.

Ellie I knew there was a meltdown.

Ushiro Ryuta You were saying so all the way, Ellie.

Ellie I told you there was a meltdown, but we just went ahead. At the observatory, we waved the flag and spread it on the ground to spray the mark.

Ushiro Ryuta When I was driving to the site, I was thinking of what kind of mark it should be.

Ellie Yes, you were thinking about that right until the last minute.

Ushiro Ryuta Actually, it should have been a nice artistic mark, but eventually the only mark in my mind was to first make a white flag into the Rising Sun flag, then develop it into the radioactivity symbol.

As far as the design quality is concerned, I don't think it's especially good. Looking back on the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know that Japan is the only country to suffer from radiation so much. Japan is a strange country in that sense. That's why I concluded it should be the radioactive symbol.

Ellie No matter what country people live in, they think their country is strange, I suspect.

Ushiro Ryuta Yeah.

Ellie And we put up this flag and left.

Ushiro Ryuta I tried to take a picture of the flag overlaying the plant building, but it was difficult as my goggles were fogged up. Then a photographer took off his goggles – unbelievable.

Ellie Later, our group was split because someone said, "He got in the car without goggles on," and someone else said, "No, he didn't." He was accused of lacking self-discipline.

Ushiro Ryuta This shows a field close to the plant building. The field will never be used again. We left our protective clothing and put up a scarecrow there. This is not in *Real Times*, but in *without SAY GOOD-BYE*.

Ellie The owner of the field had to give it up all of a sudden, and left the place. The title explains it.

Ushiro Ryuta I thought about the meaning of protecting this field. Then I thought of people working at the nuclear power plant.

Ellie We had a very difficult time deciding who would go there.

Ushiro Ryuta The plant workers are working in a dangerous place that other people are banned from entering and the media wouldn't go there either. It was an awkward situation. One of our team worked part-time at the plant for our latest piece.

Ellie We found the job at an employment service office.

Ushiro Ryuta We found the job there, and he went to work at the plant. We have the picture.

Ellie He couldn't make friends there, so he used the self-timer to take a picture of himself and the plant building together.

Ushiro Ryuta This is a work in which he showed a red card to the nuclear plant. The words "Fair play, please." were on the card. We didn't write them. They had been already printed on the red card when we bought it.

I hope you've understood what sort of things we've been working on. I'm sorry our presentation took so long.

Kondo Kenichi Thank you very much, Ushiro-san and Ellie-san.

Ellie Thank you.

Kondo Kenichi We're slightly running behind. Now let's move on to a brief discussion. Both Chim ↑ Pom and Halim are producing works as "participants" or "witnesses," but the processes are different. The members of Chim ↑ Pom witness something, react immediately to it, and take action to produce their works. The finished work shows exactly what they've observed. I don't know if the word "documentary" is appropriate in their case, but they show things as they are.

On the other hand, Halim does not produce works immediately after he witnesses something, for instance, what happened in Baghdad. Even after moving to the United States, he makes works related to Baghdad. Am I right, Halim?

What is more, Chim ↑ Pom's works are like documentaries on the subject, while Halim's works are "out-of-focus" or not straight to the point. So, at first glance, it's difficult to know what is depicted. There is a strong contrast between their approaches.

Ellie Well, features specific to our way of working, that is immediately turning what's in front of us into a work ...

Ushiro Ryuta I'd call it roles rather than features. My approach is not always from an artistic viewpoint, but when the earthquake hit, I thought about my approach very much.

Ellie I'm always thinking about that.

Ushiro Ryuta Probably we were the only artists who could react readily at that moment.

Ellie I wasn't certain at that moment whether some artists were quick or not.

I believe that artworks reflect the times and society. For example, a painting from 500 years ago tells us that there was some interaction between Japan and Europe, say, through pictures on *hanafuda*, Japanese playing cards.

If generations 500 or 1000 years later see our pictures and videos, people will understand through them what happened in Japan in 2011. That is one of our roles as artists.

Ushiro Ryuta Our work definitely has a sense of speed. I knew that Japanese artists would produce many works on the tsunami and nuclear power plant later. When I saw Halim's works, I realized he took plenty of time to make them and they are beautiful. Beautiful works are realistic in the same way as our works.

Ellie They won't fade away.

Ushiro Ryuta There is a sense of raw reality.

Ellie We are somewhat forgetful, so anxious to get the work done quickly.

Kondo Kenichi Halim, do you have any comment on that?

Halim Al Karim I don't know what to say but I want to go back to the movie you made about the earthquake. For me, this video is an answer for our talk today. I think after seeing this video I believe that we are the same and not different. Because during the earthquake even though we were thousands of kilometers away from you, and when this group of people, I don't know if it was you or not, when you were talking and encouraging each other, we were talking and dreaming and saying the same. Saying that Japan will never die. These people will rebuild their country, and be creative again.

Even if we didn't share in your efforts to help or do anything, we really have the same feelings about each other; I really believe that – I am not talking about art now, I am talking about people with each other. I really believe we are just one family, but that it's nice and good to be different. We can learn from each other. We can make life more beautiful when we have different points of view on any subject. But in this situation of the earthquake, for my part at least, I really was with this group talking and saying the same that they said. About art, maybe our curator can add something.

Ushiro Ryuta It might not be ideal to repeat the same thing in return, but when I saw Halim's works, they felt familiar. I mentioned that they are realistic. I meant to say that some kind of raw reality is expressed, even though they were created after a considerable interval of time. There is a humanness about them. With the focus only on the eyes, there is a human aura even though the contours are blurred.

I listened to him talking about his life, and realized that the harshness of the society forming the backdrop to his work gave it something profound. What I gather from his photos is not simply Iraqi society and politics, but that there is something universal.

Our *Super Rat* and *Ki-Ai 100* have the same concept, that is, to survive. We believe in living with strength and vitality.

I see the same aura-like vital force in Halim's work. Arab and Japanese art are the same in the sense that both are grounded in people.

Kondo Kenichi May I interrupt you for a moment?

Ushiro Ryuta Yes, of course.

Kondo Kenichi Your presentations have reminded me of something.

Ushiro-san commented that last year's earthquake and tsunami gave Japanese society the same shock as its defeat in World War II.

After the disaster, there was a period during which we were not fully informed of the facts, probably because the press was kept under tight rein. This might be still going on.

The same thing might apply to Iraq under Saddam Hussein's regime: no freedom of speech, but artists continued their creating. There, the two countries might share something in common.

Halim, you experienced working in a society where freedom of expression is limited to some extent, and then, went to the United States. As an artist, do you think it's easier to work in a society where you can create freely?

Halim Al Karim That's not the reason I moved to the United States. It was for other, personal reasons – to be with family. But, I don't believe the freedom I acquired leaving Iraq is greater than what is in Iraq.

Even in the West, in America, there is censorship and you cannot be totally free. This is a real tragedy. When we try to be free and build our country, these free places like Japan and Europe and America, they try not to help, but in the media they say, yes we will help you.

Then I think after these years out of Iraq, I personally feel I was more free in Iraq under the Saddam regime than now under Obama or Bush or the other guy – what's his name, the French President? I felt I was more free when I was in Iraq.

Ellie We never know that kind of thing unless we ask.

Ushiro Ryuta You're right.

You might have been repeatedly asked this question, and I'm afraid it might be irritating, but what did you feel when the United States attacked Iraq?

Halim Al Karim They attacked us several times and every time they have the same fake goal. They say they want to liberate the Iraqi people, but in fact they killed more Iraqis than Saddam did. They destroyed the country.

But we stand and resist exactly how you did in Fukushima. Iraqi people, they resist. Suddenly when we discover the truth, after a few days they declare themselves to be occupiers. It will take just a few more years to get rid of them. Now I hope we will be friends again, but we will never accept, not Americans, not Japanese, not anyone else telling us what to do and how to live our lives. Exactly like any other nation. I am not just talking about Iraq, it's human nature.

Ushiro Ryuta I understand. As Kondo-san mentioned, there are similar situations in Iraq and Japan. Going back to the subject, I'd like to ask if there are politics involved.

No matter where a man lives, he lives as he likes. There are no restrictions on human spirit. I was convinced of it when I photographed *Ki-Ai 100*. As there was no longer any system or rules, we became very positive about our own system and rules, even though we had such a horrible accident.

That's why we are able to display our positive energy in Japan. I'm afraid it sounds odd, but I think the very gravity of our situation has given rise to a freer atmosphere among those directly affected.

Probably Iraq is in a similar situation now.

Kondo Kenichi As we're running out of time, lastly I'd like to ask the three of you again about this session's main subject, "bearing witness." How important is it for artists to produce their works as a witness? In addition, what kind of achievement makes your artistic activity successful? Halim, will you give your comment first?

Halim Al Karim I'm really sorry. I couldn't hear the question.

Kondo Kenichi The subject of this session is "the artist as a witness." What is his or her role? What makes you satisfied with your work? First, I'd like to ask the two speakers from Chim ↑ Pom.

Ushiro Ryuta Recently I've come to consider this a very difficult subject. I appreciate people paying attention to us as "Chim ↑ Pom who did something for the disaster," but the disaster that I witnessed must have had a marked impact on all artists.

Even if the impact isn't immediately apparent, I'm sure it must be appearing in their art. Even when a work reflects an artist's inner mentality, there must be some influence. We are not supposed to judge what's right in the work.

So, as we aren't representing all artists, I don't know how to answer the question "what do you think as an artist?" All artists are more or less influenced and that shows in different ways. Thus each has his or her own answer.

As Ellie mentioned, I want to convey vivid descriptions of the disaster at that particular moment to people 100 years from now when they look at our work. That's our answer, to keep it as simple as possible.

Halim Al Karim I think the role of the artist is in his or her work. I think the work talks about what the artist witnesses, and becomes a piece of evidence and testimony.

Maybe the artist cannot talk about his work like me, but I believe that all art is a kind of testimony from the artist to what he experiences and witnesses. There is another point about witnessing. I feel there is actually no difference between artists and ordinary people. I really believe that you cannot be truly human if you witness something and don't talk about it. If you keep it... you can keep it for a while and when you are able to talk about it, you have to. You should.

Kondo Kenichi Now it's time for a Q&A session.

The gentleman over there: Please press the button on the mike on the table.

Audience member 1 I'd like to ask Halim a question.

The theme is "bearing witness," but when I saw your works, I felt each piece was extracted from your accumulated experience rather than events you witnessed.

You've been out of Iraq for some years now, so must have cumulative experience in the United States and UAE.

As you work internationally on the world art scene, you emphasize what you've observed in Iraq as an Iraqi. How do you think your experience outside Iraq will be reflected in your work in the future?

Halim Al Karim Thank you for the question. I have to remember the question now. I really have this feeling that when I see my work, it is totally different from what I thought I was doing.

Really when I look at my work, I feel that I am a really selfish person or selfish artist. I feel like I did this work just for myself. In this work I feel like I just made this work because I witness myself and witness nothing about society; but because I am part of the society maybe it reflects what I witness.

But mainly, when I look at my work I really feel that I'm just witnessing myself. There is another question too, you asked me something else. I forget. Sorry.

Kondo Kenichi The last part of the question is "you've accumulated what you've witnessed outside Iraq: how will you reflect this in your future work."

Halim Al Karim I am really not sure about it because I am witnessing the same situation even outside Iraq. I see people are suffering. In Iraq, we suffered under a dictator and here in the West people are suffering from the system. They are in a real war. I saw how people live. War doesn't mean just using weapons or guns. I really feel even in the West, there is still no peace. Thus, I would continue in the same situation: what I witnessed in Iraq I am witnessing here too. And I am sorry for this. I thought I would find peace outside of Iraq, but no, I haven't.

Kondo Kenichi Do you understand?
Are there any questions? That lady in the middle row. Please press the button of the mike.

Audience member 2 I'd like to ask the two artists from Chim ↑ Pom.

You've been producing works on social issues ranging from the atomic bomb in Hiroshima to this nuclear plant accident. What are you interested in and what kind of work do you want to produce in the future?

Ushiro Ryuta We just don't know what will happen in the future.

Ellie Before the earthquake, we had no idea of this current situation.

Ushiro Ryuta The possibility of another major earthquake is still high, apparently 70 percent in greater Tokyo. I'm not sure, but for example, the rats mentioned a little while ago...

Ellie If something happened tomorrow, we'd have to think of making an appropriate version of our work. About other versions, let's hear from Ushiro-san.

Ushiro Ryuta There must be different, non-emergency versions. We are not producing works solely because there have been dramatic events like the earthquake and nuclear accident.

Ellie It is not like we have to produce art whenever something happens. That's very important. Chim ↑ Pom is often considered to be a group that creates works in the immediate aftermath of an event, but that is not necessarily the case at all.

Ushiro Ryuta That's right. Let me go back to the case of Hiroshima. Nothing is happening there now. It happened years ago, but at present, nothing is happening. That's why we could be "participants." Nothing has happened in our era, but we know of the disaster. We are not directly related to the atomic bomb, though we know about it. I wanted to express myself as a participant who is no longer someone actually involved. It's not my intention to create a work for every topic.

We witness many different things in our lives. All our experiences come from what we've witnessed although we are neither participants nor witnesses. As we are Japanese, they will probably be related to Japanese society and linked worldwide. I'm not ready to give any specific topic as I don't have any in mind, but that's my way of thinking.

Kondo Kenichi Thank you very much. We're now out of time, and this is all for the first day's session. Let's give our guest speakers a big hand.

All Speakers Thank you very much.
