

gutai art manifesto

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To today's consciousness, the art of the past, which on the whole presents an alluring appearance, seems fraudulent.

Let's bid farewell to the hoaxes piled up on the altars and in the palaces, the drawing rooms and the antique shops.

They are monsters made of the matter called paint, of cloth, metals, earth, and marble, which through a meaningless act of signification by humans, through the magic of material, were made to fraudulently assume appearances other than their own. These types of matter [*busshitsu*], all slaughtered under the pretense of production by the mind, can now say nothing.

Lock up these corpses in the graveyard.

Gutai Art does not alter matter. Gutai Art imparts life to matter. Gutai Art does not distort matter.

In Gutai Art, the human spirit and matter shake hands with each other while keeping their distance. Matter never compromises itself with the spirit; the spirit never dominates matter. When matter remains intact and exposes its characteristics, it starts telling a story and even cries out. To make the fullest use of matter is to make use of the spirit. By enhancing the spirit, matter is brought to the height of the spirit.

Art is a site where creation occurs; however, the spirit has never created matter before. The spirit has only created spirit. Throughout history, the spirit has given birth to life in art. Yet the life thus born always changes and perishes. To us today, the great lives of the Renaissance are nothing more than archaeological relics.

Today, it is only primitive art and various art movements after Impressionism that manage to convey to us a feeling of life, however inert. These movements extensively used matter—that is, paint—without distorting or killing it, even when using it for the purpose of naturalism, as in Pointillism and Fauvism. In any case, these styles no longer move us; they are things of the past.

Now, interestingly, we find a contemporary beauty in the art and architecture of the past ravaged by the passage of time or natural disasters. Although their beauty is considered decadent, it may be that the innate beauty of matter is reemerging from behind the mask of artificial embellishment. Ruins unexpectedly welcome us with warmth and friendliness; they speak to us through their beautiful cracks and rubble—which might be a revenge of matter that has regained its innate life. In this sense, we highly regard the works of [Jackson] Pollock and [Georges] Mathieu. Their work reveals the scream of matter itself, cries of the paint and enamel. These two artists confront matter in a way that aptly corresponds to their individual discoveries. Or rather, they even seem to serve matter. Astonishing effects of differentiation and integration take place.

In recent years, [critic] Tominaga Soichi and [artist] Dōmoto Hisao introduced the activities of Art Informel by Mathieu and [Michel] Tapié. We found them quite interesting; although our knowledge is limited, we feel sympathetic to their ideas as have so far been introduced. Their art is free from conventional formalism, demanding something fresh and newborn. We were surprised to learn our aspiration for something vital resonated with theirs, although our expressions differed. We do not know how they understood their colors,

lines, and forms—namely, the units of abstract art—in relation to the characteristics of matter. We do not understand the reason behind their rejection of abstraction. We have certainly lost interest in clichéd abstract art, however. Three years ago, when we established the Gutai Art Association, one of our slogans was to go beyond abstraction. We thus chose the word *gutai* [concreteness] for our group's name. We especially sought a centrifugal departure in light of the centripetal origin of abstraction.

We thought at the time—and still do—that the greatest legacy of abstract art is the opening of an opportunity to depart from naturalistic and illusionistic art and create a new autonomous space, a space that truly deserves the name of art.

We have decided to pursue enthusiastically the possibilities of pure creativity. We believe that by merging human qualities and material properties, we can concretely comprehend abstract space.

When the individual's character and the selected materiality meld together in the furnace of automatism, we are surprised to see the emergence of a space previously unknown, unseen, and unexperienced. Automatism inevitably transcends the artist's own image. We endeavor to achieve our own method of creating space rather than relying on our own images.

For example, Kinoshita Toshiko, who teaches chemistry at a girls' school, has created a marvelous space by mixing chemicals on filter paper. Even though the effect of chemical manipulation may be predicted to some degree, it cannot be seen until the next day. Still, the wondrous state of matter thus realized is her doing. No matter how many Pollocks have emerged after Pollock, his glory will not diminish. We must respect new discoveries.

Shiraga Kazuo placed a mass of paint on a huge sheet of paper and started violently spreading it with his feet. His method, unprecedented in the history of art, has been a subject of journalism for the past two years. However, what he presented was not a merely peculiar technique but a means he developed to synthesize the confrontation between the matter chosen by his personal quality and the dynamism of his own mind in an extremely positive way.

In contrast to Shiraga's organic method, Shimamoto Shōzō has focused on mechanistic methods for the past several years. When he threw a glass bottle filled with lacquer, the result was flying splashes of paint on canvas. When he packed the paint into a small handmade cannon and ignited it by an acetylene torch, the result was an instant explosion of paint in a huge pictorial space. They both demonstrate a breathtaking freshness.

Among other members, Sumi Yasuo deployed a vibrating device, while Yoshida Toshio created a lump of monochrome paint. It should be noted that all these activities are informed by serious and solemn intentions.

Our exploration into the unknown and original world bore numerous fruits in the form of *objets*, in part inspired by the annual outdoor exhibitions held in Ashiya. Above all, Gutai's *objets* differ from those of the Surrealists in that the former eschew titles and significations. Gutai's *objets* included a bent and painted sheet of iron (Tanaka Atsuko) and a hanging box like a mosquito net made of red plastic (Yamazaki Tsuruko). Their appeal lies solely in the strength of their material properties, their colors and forms.

As a group, however, we impose no rules. Ours is a free site of creation wherein we have actively pursued diverse experimentations, ranging from art to be appreciated with the whole body to tactile art to Gutai music (an interesting enterprise that has occupied Shimamoto Shōzō for the past few years).

A bridge-like work by Shimamoto Shōzō, on which the viewer walks to sense its collapse. A telescope-like work by Murakami Saburō, into which the viewer must enter to see the sky. A balloon-like vinyl work by Kanayama Akira, equipped with an organic elasticity. A so-called dress by Tanaka Atsuko, made of blinking electric bulbs. Productions by Motonaga Sadamasa, who uses water and smoke. These are Gutai's most recent works.

Gutai places an utmost premium on daring advance into the unknown world. Granted, our works have frequently been mistaken for Dadaist gestures. And we certainly acknowledge the achievements of Dada. But unlike Dadaism, Gutai Art is the product that has arisen from the pursuit of possibilities. Gutai aspires to present exhibitions filled with vibrant spirit, exhibitions in which an intense cry accompanies the discovery of the new life of matter.

Translated by Reiko Tomii. Originally published as "Gutai bijutsu sengen," *Geijutsu Shinchō* 7, no. 12 (December 1956), pp. 202–04.