“Consumption, Violence, and Bodily Expression in Contemporary Japanese Art”

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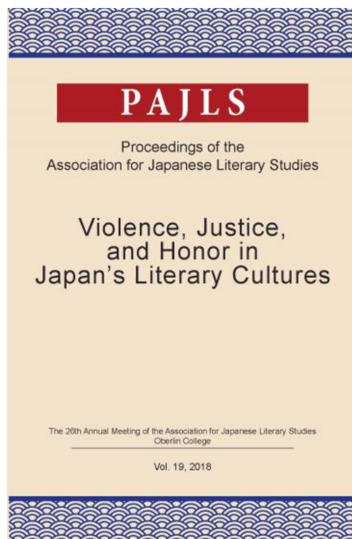

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CONSUMPTION, VIOLENCE, AND BODILY EXPRESSION IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART

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INTRODUCTION: REVISITING THE *SHŌJO* TROPE

The feminine body, often represented by the ubiquitous everyday iconography of the *shōjo*, has been a mainstay of Japanese popular culture since the turn of the 20th century. The subdued ethereal Taishō era *otome* 乙女 underwent a post-War manga makeover by the "1949ers" ("Year 24 Group" 花の24年組), whose work provided a stylistic revolution in the representation of young women.[2] The "1949ers" focused on young girls as the subject of their manga and brought forth a shōjo subjectivity and mode of characterization that was not seen before. They eschewed the standard rectangle panel layout, introducing innovative panel shapes, and softening or removing panel borders to liberate their characters' action. They also employed romantic icons such as flowers, stars, and hearts as backgrounds to convey emotion.

The collective shōjo imaginary further secured its place in Japanese popular culture as part of the Otaku culture that arose in the late 1970s.[3] Now shōjo, together with locomotives, weaponry, and plastic models formed the core of Otaku fantasy and desire. The Cool Japan campaign that emerged in the early 2000s further popularized the icon of the shōjo, with copious images of intoxicatingly colorful and excessively upbeat and decorative aestheticism. The Japanese government identified the youth/girl-centric culture industry as one of five potential areas of growth and, as a result, in 2010 the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry set up a new Creative Industries Promotion Office to promote Japanese pop culture under the rubric of "Cool Japan,"[4] an initiative that sought to

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[2] "Hana no 24nen gumi" refers to a group of female manga artists who were roughly born around 1949, thus of the first postwar baby boomer generation (dankai sedai), who are considered by critics and fans alike to have revolutionized the depiction of young girls in manga, creating the new style and genre of shōjo manga (girl's comic). This usually includes artists such as Aoike Yasuko (b. 1948), Ogio Moto (b. 1949), Takemiya Keiko (b. 1950), and Ōshima Yumiko (b. 1947). Their works foregrounded the *shōjo* as the main character and incorporated new sub-genres such as science fiction, fantasy, (homoerotic) love, and adventure.

[3] On Shōjo culture see Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley, 2005 and for shōjo in 1990's visual culture, see Sharalyn Orbaugh, 2003.

[4] Michal Daliot-Bul 2009, 247–266.

harness soft power and consolidate the cultural force into an exportable commodity.

This paper explores the covert violence that lies beneath the seemingly cheery and benign contemporary Japanese popular culture, focusing in particular on representations of bodily violence perpetrated on or by young females. I look, in particular, at representations of bodily violence by the contemporary artist Aida Makoto in his series of artworks with a shōjo-centric theme. As a controversial academically-trained artist who deploys tropes of popular culture in his mostly parodical, tongue-in-cheek works, Aida has been at the center of various controversies relating to ethical issues surrounding pornography, bodily representation, and violence. Aida's views on the vulgarization of art have provoked heated debates about the role of the art museum in contemporary Japan.

The current investigation focuses on his use of the trope of shōjo, comparing it with the treatment of the female body by more globally known artists such as Murakami Takashi and Nara Yoshitomo, and contemplates the dynamics of margin vs. center and highbrow vs. popular in the whole enterprise of the Cool Japan project. I hope through an examination of Aida's representational deployment of the *shōjo* body and his presentational performance that his work may serve as a productive way for us to think about issues such as gender, representation, and the aestheticization of violence in contemporary Japanese popular culture.

GLOBAL OR LOCAL? SITUATING AIDA MAKOTO WITHIN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ART

Aida Makoto occupies a top spot in the Japanese contemporary art scene. He contrasts with other more globally renowned contemporary artists, like the leader of the Superflat art movement, Murakami Takashi. Both are of the same generation (Murakami was born in 1962, Aida in 1965), and trained in the same elite art academy, Tokyo University of the Arts, where Murakami majored in *Nihonga* (Traditional Japanese painting) and Aida specialized in oil painting. The two artists also make frequent references to Edo period art. While Aida's use of Edo motifs serves as a mechanism for critical parody, Murakami's elicitation of the by-gone era, as Marc Steinberg argues, is guided by "a logic of compositing that is far more informed by contemporary modes of digital imaging than by the mode of appropriation and quasi-historization that characterized the use of Edo in Japan's postmodern 1980s and 1990s."[5]

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[5] Marc Steinberg, 2004.

Murakami is known as the initiator of the art movement referred to as Superflat, which arose in the 1990s and early 2000s.[6] The term refers to various flattened forms in Japanese graphic art (manga, anime, ukiyoe, emaki etc.), including pop culture and fine arts, as well as the "shallow emptiness of Japanese consumer culture." Although Aida Makoto was one of the original participants in this first Superflat exhibition in New York (2001), his exhibited work *Giant Member Fuji vs King Gidora* (1993)[7] evoked an anime-style shōjo fighter (in pilot uniform) entangled in an erotic posture with a giant monster that is reminiscent of mythical giant monsters in Edo-period ukiyoe. Aida has subsequently somewhat distanced himself from the movement and focuses his art production on more realistic depictions of his subject matter.[8]

Murakami Takashi forms the theoretical backbone of the Superflat movement. He and his cohort such as Nara Yoshitomo, appropriate elements of Otaku culture to create an edgy and "stylized fantasy 'neo-Tokyo' to sell to the world as J-Pop."[9] Their cosmopolitan aesthetic and stylistic sophistication fit well into the global art scene. Superflat artists appropriate tropes and motifs from anime and popular cultural elements that are readily recognizable even to foreign viewers. Some of them, including Murakami himself, adopt teamwork in his production that is reminiscent of Edo period production of popular art such as ukiyoe prints, theater booklets, or popular fiction.

Murakami's studio/workshop Hiropon Factory (now known as Kaikai Kiki) also reminds one of Andy Warhol's Factory, where artists produced artworks as a collective. Each work is reproduced and merchandized with gusto. His workshop has mass-produced items such as toys, keychains, and t-shirts and in 2002 he began a multiyear collaboration with Marc Jacobs on the redesign of the Louis Vuitton monogram by directly incorporating the Vuitton monograms and patterns into his paintings and sculptures.[10] Murakami's collective works also employ postmodern techniques of pastiche and quotation, and use recurring imagery (e.g., the Mickey Mouse-like character "DOB", the ubiquitous eyes, the hallucination-

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[6] Murakami Takashi, 2005.

[7] Since it is difficult if not impossible to get copyright for images by contemporary artists I will provide links to the images discussed in this paper. See http://www.uspaceart.com/web/bbs/board.php?bo_table=work&wr_id=136&sca=3.

[8] See the interview of Aida Makoto on the eve of his *Bye Bye Kitty* exhibition where he mentions that the purpose of his exhibition is to let people outside of Japan know that there are artists in Japan other than Murakami Takashi and Nara Yoshitomo.

[9] Adrian Favell, 2018, p. 448.

[10] https://gagosian.com/artists/takashi-murakami (accessed June 30th, 2020).

induced mushrooms, cheerful face-like plastic flowers, and life-size figures, or seemingly unending portraits of mischievous little girls) to create works that embody a "factory produced, high-gloss quality." This artistic effect and its commercial success make reference to, but also at the same time are complicit in the "mass-produced commercialism" of the international art scene.[11]

Unlike the "factory produced, high-gloss quality" of Murakami's art, Aida's works are often described as frank, raucous, bold, tacky, brutal, ugly, over the top, and nihilistic. Aida sticks to an old-fashioned modernist approach to his artistic endeavor by painting intricate details of his massive mural-size paintings stroke by stroke all by himself. He has described this process as "like watering a desert," because it takes tremendous willpower and perseverance.[12]

The global reach of its international fans and the penetration of the global art market has placed the Superflat movement at the center of Cool Japan. Aida Makoto's works, on the other hand, are often considered too culturally specific, suited only for domestic consumption. As opposed to Superflat's anime-manga-like aestheticism, Aida presents a more realistic (sometimes hyper realistic) version of Japan and offers a less-cool, less futuristic, less high-tech, less glamourous backstreet (male) popular culture. In other words, if Superflat reflects the culture of Akihabara, a sacred realm where Otaku congregate, Aida's art mirrors the grittier troposphere of the salary man culture of Ueno or Shinjuku.

Whereas both camps allude, stylistically and thematically, to both past history (ukiyo-e woodblock prints) and contemporary pop art, Murakami and the Superflat artists generally avoid direct social and political commentary and strive to maintain a palatable "child-like state," a state that reflects a postwar system under the cultural and military sway of America in their works that turns "Japanese hardcore into Japanese kitsch."[13] Aida, on the other hand, while also taking his inspiration from the ever-present subculture, cannot help but inject into his creative endeavors a much more critical stance toward Japanese society and the subculture. His works consistently blur the boundaries of highbrow and lowbrow, academic and popular, contemporaneity and the classical to formulate a counter-narrative to the positivist postwar developmentalism

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[11] Tom Looser 2018, 435.

[12] See the interview of Aida Makoto on his creative process, with footage of him painting Ash Mountain (Accessed June 30th, 2020) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TvMxSX9KfE&t=633s. In the film he also reveals that he has ADHD and that painting suits his temperament well.

[13] Tom Looser 2018, 435; Adrian Favell 2018, 448.

that came to a crushing halt in the post-bubble era. In other words, unlike the Superflat artists who distill and transform Japanese hardcore into Japanese kitsch for a global audience, Aida collapses the hardcore and the kitsch to reveal the binary contradictions in Japanese society (such as kawaii/pornographic). This distinction may be the reason that while Murakami maintains his lofty and celebratory place as an artist with a universal appeal, Aida's works precariously balance the playful and the forbidden and frequently inspire controversy.

THE BAD BOY ARTIST AND THE MORI MUSEUM INCIDENT

On November 17, 2012, the Mori Museum in Tokyo opened the exhibit "Aida Makoto Retrospective." The exhibition was well received by the media and art circles; NHK broadcast a documentary on the exhibit of December 30th of the same year. The Mori Museum, aware that several of his more controversial paintings might offend some audience members, decided to house these works in a separate room that only individuals eighteen years and above could enter. However, as the exhibition went on, some expressed their displeasure with the exhibition, in particular several works that involved female nudity and violence.

Then, in early February, 2013, at the midpoint of the exhibition, a public meeting was called to discuss the exhibition. As Nicholas Bornoff points out, sex and consumerism characterize a strong current in contemporary Japanese art, but rarely without dissent. Yet, as Bornoff sees it, "meaning is not always a prerequisite in Japan. That the images shock is dissident in itself."[14] The discussion came down to a classic debate about what constitutes pornography, what is violence, and most importantly, what is art. Feminist groups protested Aida's use of naked female images, some depicted with violence. The complex question concerning the distinction between pornography and art is beyond the scope of this article. Japan in particular is a place where government policy and public consensus related to pornography can be vague and inconsistent. A similar exhibition with most of the same artworks was presented in Fukuoka the previous year without any protest.[15]

The legal consequences for art that violates societal moral standards or legality are inconsistent. Although heavily criticized by feminist groups for "hugely infringing on women's dignity," Aida was never charged and the exhibition continued.[16] This cannot be said of other artists. For

[14] Nicholas Bornoff 2003, 44–45.
[15] See Fujimaki Mitsuhiro (2016) for a detailed account of the protest.
[16] Fujimaki Mitsuhiro 2016, 47.

example, not long after the Mori Museum controversy, another case of art vs. morality played out in public. A feminist sculptor and manga artist with the pseudonym Rokudenashi-ko ろくでなし子 (“Good for nothing Girl,” a.k.a. Igarashi Megumi [1972-]) produced artwork using a 3D printer that transformed her female genitalia into cute, brightly colored objects. She was arrested in 2013 and again in 2014, on the charge of indecency and obscenity. In 2017 Rokudenashi-ko was deemed partially guilty (*ichibu yūzai* 一部有罪) by the Highest Court of Metropolitan Tokyo. The verdict stated that the exhibition based on 3D data of her vagina was not illegal. However, her sale of the same 3D violated criminal law number 175 for distributing objects of obscenity, and the artist was fined. This was the first time the high court had issued something other than a guilty judgment on issues related obscenity in thirty-five years; the last not guilty verdict was for Oshima Nagisa, who directed the film *Realm of the Senses* (*Ai no korīda* 愛のコリーダ) in 1989.[17]

The Rokudenashi-ko verdict generated a heated debate about art and social morality. Aida Makoto and Murakami Takashi had different reactions. Aida expressed his concurrence with Rokudenashi-ko. He “confessed that when I heard the news of the arrest I thought to myself ‘We lost!’” Murakami Takashi once constructed life-size anime-like human figures such as the much discussed “My Lonesome Cowboy” (1998), in which a naked blond boy uses his spurting stream of semen as a lasso[18] but he apparently no longer wished to be associated with this type of art. However, instead of addressing the female artist by name, Murakami tweeted “that someone (he used the term *bōshi* 某氏) got arrested once again caused Murakami to be ridiculed. ….There’s a gap between that someone’s (artistic) expression and the message of my expression.”[19] These differing reactions to the controversy reflect clearly the different temperaments of these two artists. Murakami, mindful that his productions cater to a broad global audience, has veered toward more

[17] For more information on this Rokudenashi-ko Incident, see https://www.j-cast.com/2014/12/05222581.html?p=all (Accessed June 30th 2020) and https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/f7ca47058c5ab79a0988cfc9e4cc119c46ac9016 (Accessed July 2nd 2020).

[18] For image, see http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/contemporary-art-evening-auction-n08441/lot.9.html (Accessed July 4th 2020).

[19] Murakami Takashi’s public response to Rokudenashi-ko’s re-arrest is very different from Aida’s, he distanced himself from her by stating:「某氏の逮捕でまたもや村上ボコられてます」「某氏の表現と、ワシの表現のメッセージにはズレが有ります。ワシは日本人のエロに関して、語っており、某氏はジェンダー的な自由について語っておられると思うのです。向こうのほうが純粋な表現です」 https://www.j-cast.com/2014/12/05222581.html?p=all (Accessed July 2nd 2020).

neutral and safer ground to avoid controversy and criticism, whereas artists like Aida and Rokudenashi-ko address more directly the commodification and commercialization of domestic Japanese society.

In these two cases, feminist groups protested ardently against Aida's work, and yet no feminist groups came to Rokudenashi-ko's defense. It again reveals that art is indeed in the eyes of the beholder; opposition to freedom of expression is a slippery slope, and the enforcement of obscenity laws is often arbitrary. Below I will examine several of the most vigorously debated images in order to read the fissures between the surface visuality and their layers of meanings.

VIOLENCE AND THE MANY LAYERS OF MEANINGS

Many art historians and critics refer to Aida Makoto's art as "appropriation art" or "simulation art" because of its frequent appropriation of existing works and styles.[20] He uses a specific theme or genre that is readily recognizable and that holds a special place in the collective cultural memory in order to reveal the psychological fractures between past and present, and between elegance (*ga* 雅) and vulgarity (*zoku* 俗). Through these fractures, building on the tacit and conventional understanding of the original image, a new meaning emerges. One of Aida's parodic works, for example, is his *Water Fall Painting* (*Taki no e* 滝の絵, 2007). This painting appropriates Katsushika Hokusai's 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849) iconic waterfall print, replacing Hokusai's signature cobalt blue water with images of school girls in blue athletic uniforms.[21] Another example is Aida's take on the established national artist Higashiyama Kaii's 東山魁夷 (1908–1999) painting depicting a path through a rice field, *Azemichi* 畦道 (1991).[22] Higashiyama's work has been touted as a paragon of modern Nihonga and was praised for its balanced construction and understated embodiment of the cultural aesthetics of a bygone Japan. Aida aligns the pathway with a shōjo's (obviously in a navy blue sailor uniform) hair part, transforming a subject-less landscape into an image with a clear point of view, that of a schoolgirl. The art critic Sawayama Ryō points out that the aestheticism manifested in Aida's *Azemichi* subsumes Higashiyama's artistic conservatism.[23] Aida's praxis of postmodern

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[20] Fujimaki Mitsuhiro 2016, p. 55 and Andrew Maerkle's interview with Aida Makoto at Art It, https://www.art-it.asia/en/u/admin_ed_itv_e/ysx8xtnygdjws7orl0zc.

[21] See http://nahohamada.blogspot.com/2013/03/blog-post.html.

[22] See https://artscape.jp/focus/10066870_1635.html.

[23] Sawayama Ryō 2015. https://artscape.jp/focus/10066870_1635.html (Accessed July 6 2020).

juxtaposition brings in elements that usually do not co-exist in the same visual frame. His works form a hybrid text that collapses canonic motif and futurist pop (as in *Giant Member Fuji vs King Gidora*) and blurs the line separating highbrow (Higashiyama's *Azemichi*) and lowbrow (Aida's parodic *Azemichi*).

In his treatment of the iconography of the shōjo, Aida gradually moved away from this type of purely jester-like parody and gradually adopted a darker and more critical stance toward society. The works that aroused the most controversy were all produced around the turn of the twenty-first century, in particular after the Fukushima Triple Disaster. These artworks, though still employing the shōjo motif, engage in a critical discourse on consumption, violence and shōjo. For example, the screen painting titled *Telephone Poles, Crows, and Others* (Denshinbashira, karasu, sono ta 電信ばしら、カラス、その他, 2012)[24] is a parodic allusion to Hasegawa Tōhaku's 長谷川等伯 (1539–1610) monochromatic pair of screens, *Pine Forest Screen Painting* (*Shōrinzu byōbu* 松林図屏風).[25] Tōhaku's masterpiece depicting pine trees in the evening dusk is praised for its balanced and poised composition that evinces the stability and calm of a solitary twilight. At first glance, Aida seems to have refashioned the line of pine trees into an equally unobtrusive modern cityscape, replacing pine trees with telephone poles, adding crows (a common urban fowl seen in Tokyo) perching on the poles and the electrical lines. On closer examination, however, one notices that some crows have small objects in their mouths which turn out to be pieces of school girls' sailor uniforms, human fingers, and eyeballs. Compared to his appropriation of Hokusai's *Waterfall painting*, the parody is no longer a formalistic exercise but ventures into a much darker cognitive realm.

The same thing can be said of two works at the center of the Mori Museum controversy. These works illustrate Aida's commentary on consumption of feminine bodies as an act of violence. These two images, one playing with the tradition of Nihonga, the other referencing contemporary Western-style acrylic painting, both gesture to the same anxiety concerning the asymmetrical gender dynamic (the gazer and the gazed; the consumer and the consumed) inherent in the consumption of the shōjo image in order to provoke a response from the viewer.

The series of paintings titled *Dog (Snow Moon Flower)* 犬（雪月花) (1998) depicts beautiful girls, in the style of Taishō era paintings of

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[24] See https://media.thisisgallery.com/works/makotoaida_12.

[25] See Hasegawa Tōhaku's Painting of the Pine Forest at https://www.pinterest.com/HuangJIAHUI88/hasegawa-tohaku/.

beautiful women (*bijin'e* 美人絵), portrayed against serene backgrounds depicting the four seasons. The expectation of a placid, pure Nihonga quintessence is shattered by the portrayal of girls chained up like dogs with amputated limbs.[26] Another massive mural size painting titled *Juicer Mixer* ジューサーミキサー (2001) shows a gigantic blender with red juice-like liquid emerging from the bottom. Upon closer scrutiny, the material in the blender is hundreds of naked young girls.[27]

The shocking effect of the Dog series lies in the juxtaposition of the traditional tranquility of the Nihonga tradition against the violence done to the bodies of the iconic innocent shōjo. The arrangement of the two in one single space and the psychological incongruity and discomfort it elicits disturbs the audience. The shōjo image, or its earlier iteration of the *otome* 乙女, was rooted in the depictions of beautiful women by Utamaro and Takehisa Yumeji 竹久夢二 (1884–1934). This ideal of beauty was further developed and intensified by manga artists including the 49er group, who made the images even younger and more childlike, bringing the image of the shōjo front and center.

Whereas violence is conspicuous in the Dog Series, in *Juicer Mixer* a seemingly mundane kitchen appliance suddenly reveals that extreme cruelty has been done to the shōjo body. Aida created a sister painting a decade later using the same trompe-l'oeil. His *Ash Mountain* (*Haiiro no yama* 灰色の山, 2009–11) presents a subdued Mount Fuji-like mountain, yet upon closer look, it is composed of the bodies of salary men with their office furniture and computers.[28] Aida attempts, through his provocative images, to call attention to what Bornoff calls the "cumulative effects of transmedia connectivity in terms of affective involvement induced by the mangaesque, ranging from cute kawaii to more sexualised *moe* affect."[29]

Beyond the aestheticization of violence (for example, some compared Aida's work to Tarantino's *Kill Bill*), Aida Makoto's works reveal the unconscious way that contemporary mainstream Japanese society refracts the Japanese male-dominant society's desire to have shōjo remain pure and unattainable yet obscene and available at all times. Living in contemporary Japan means one is exposed to thousands of shōjo images every day, from manga, anime, and advertisements that sell everything. Applying visible violence and pain to the shōjo body is to disrupt this normalcy and to form a (mockingly) subversive counternarrative to the national fetishism of

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[26] See https://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_ed_contri9_j/jbuyw8eovuaq9i15nffs.
[27] See http://puku0427.hatenablog.com/entry/20130225.
[28] See https://media.thisisgallery.com/works/makotoaida_05.
[29] Nicholas Bornoff 2003, 44–46.

young girls. The visual representations, however disturbing they may be, generate a meta-dialogue that critiques the inherent violence of pedo-eroticism. Aida questions the obsession with shōjo, including his own preoccupation with using it in his own works.[30]

While Murakami Takashi's works deploy similar tropes that gesture to the Otaku ideal and lifestyle with agile playfulness, they are surprisingly humorless. Aida's works, on the other hand, are imbued with self-reflective humor (sometimes hilarity), satirical jest, and irony. They are self-referential, self-diagnostic, and full of self-mockery. While the Superflat Movement tends to linger in the safety zone of the mangaesque and shies away from the depth of an inner self, Aida's more realistic, at times photographical hyper-real representation of the body exposes more of the author's male gaze and male desire and easily lands him in trouble with some viewers.

Aida's deployment of the shōjo body thus is both radical and strategic. His conceptualization of body is closer to Deleuze and Guattari's articulation of the "body without organs" in *Anti-Oedipus* (1970) and later, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).[31] Using the metaphor of the "body without organs," they point to the habits, movements, affects, etc., that constitute "the deeper reality underlying the whole of our parts or being." Similarly, Japanese male desire for shōjo (and their bodies), is not one man's desire activated by one image of a naked shōjo, but the product of an accumulation of shōjo images, originating in ukiyoe beauty portraits, mediated by Taishō bijinga, resulting in anime, manga and Aida Makoto's shōjo, that is constructed and merchandized as desire for men in Japan, Otaku or otherwise.

Aida's contentious act of creation has the potential to mine the unconscious, to force a reconsideration of the origin of desire, and to expose the process that results in the consumption of shōjo (both in a biopolitical and an iconographical sense). To prove that the actual body is not what he is aiming for, Aida (who is also a performance artist) produced a video where a naked Aida Makoto masturbated standing in front of an enormous sign, a white fabric with only two gargantuan ink-brush characters, *shōjo* 少女, written on it. Here, Aida condensed the controversy surrounding his (mis)appropriation of the feminine body into a conceptual logo.

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[30] Aida Makoto *Seishun to hentai* 青春と変態 2013.
[31] *Anti-Oedipus* 1972; *A Thousand Plateaus* 1987.

CONCLUSION

Aida Makoto refers to his own style as Erotic Grotesque Eroguro エログロ作風.[32] Images created by Aida Makoto are indeed provocative and often stir up strong reactions, prompting the viewer either to take the side of disgust and shock or to appreciate his tongue-in-cheek style of satire and his superb technical skill. As an artist, Aida Makoto is an agitator and a trickster. He lets his creative instinct take him to the deep, dark core of male fantasy in contemporary Japan. His modus operandi is tongue-in-cheek as he playfully pokes fun at male fetishism (which he acknowledges he participates in) and at the hyper consumerism and unequal gender power dynamic in society as a whole. As the controversy over Aida's exhibit shows, his work raises many issues of ethics, representation, and pedagogical concerns that are beyond the scope of this paper. It is not the intention of this paper to reinforce, reproduce, and regurgitate the clichéd trope of shōjo. Quite the contrary, it argues that images (and not just Aida Makoto's) are deceiving and might require more contextualization and a more nuanced reading to reach multiple layers of embedded meaning. In a visual and logocentric culture like Japan, Aida's resistance to a mangaesque representation of shōjo and his injection of violence and body politics into his art court controversy. But he reminds his viewers that images of violence do not have to be gruesome or visually ugly. His inclination to agitate and to provoke, as well as his willingness to venture into a self-referential practice of visual performativity distinguish him from other contemporary artists.

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[32] Aida Makoto, 2012: 223.

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