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MONEY, TRAINS, AND GUILLOTINES: ART AND REVOLUTION IN 1960S JAPAN (THE PROCESS OF ART – excerpt by permission from Duke University Press, 2013)

Abstract:
Akasegawa Genpei's 1000-yen note project included both a hand-drawn, giant magnification of the 1000-yen note and single-sided, photomechanical reproductions of actual currency, printed life-size, in monochrome. The latter became the subject of state prosecution, using an 1895 statute against money imitation (not counterfeiting), which reduced the question of Akasegawa's intent to simple criminality. In this excerpt, through a close examination of the artist's contemporaneous short story, and of an invitation appearing on the back of the first printed notes, I demonstrate how Akasegawa's money-related art encompasses concerns with the body, with microstructures of domination, and with the dangers and possibilities of an insurgent, political art.

Key words: art, agency, imitation, critical art, money, crime, politics

On November 1, 1965, the artist Akasegawa Genpei, along with two printers whom he had never met, were indicted for criminal violation of the 1895 Law Controlling the Imitation of Currency and Securities (*tsūka oyobi shōken mozō torishimari hō*). Akasegawa had ordered some three thousand monochrome prints of the 1,000-yen bill from the print shops in the first four months of 1963. Following a prolonged, though fitful, police inquiry beginning in January 1964, his indictment closed this first phase of investigation, while commencing the trial and appeal process that would occupy him for the remainder of the decade. The terms of this prosecution open a window onto the nature of the contestation between insurgent artists and the state and the wider politics of culture.

Akasegawa Genpei's 1,000-yen project intervened in areas of practice and representation in which state legitimacy and power were highly invested. The evolution of state response – from fortuitous encounter (via surveillance of the League of Criminals and a shoplifting arrest) to multiple interrogations and on to indictment and trial – traces the state's gradual recognition of the troublesome nature of Akasegawa's critique. But it was the very submission to a trial process that brought about the greatest confiscation of his work.[1] In Akasegawa's case, a related, judicial mode presented a

contemporaneous instance of such confiscation: state authority deployed to reassert the police order and suppress Akasegawa's critical enterprise through the legal process, reducing artistic intent to simple criminality.

In this excerpt, I pose the question of intention seriously as a historical matter, tracing the immediate development of Akasegawa's critical and artistic notions. Akasegawa's works, and particularly his "model 1,000-yen note projects," together reveal an evolving concern with everyday life and its systems of order, with social reproduction, and with the body. Following the development of this work returns us to issues raised in his prosecution but foreclosed by the judicial process.

To trace this politics, and the complicated question of why Akasegawa created his model 1,000-yen notes, we must first look to his remarkable short story, "Aimai na umi."

"Supai Kiyaku" and "Aimai na umi" – On Simulation and Simulacra, or Spies and ex-Spies

In June 1963, Akasegawa published a short story in the art magazine *Image* (*Keishō*) titled "Supai kiyaku," or "Spy Rules." The piece was subsequently given the title of the poem contained within it, "Aimai na umi," or "The Ambiguous Ocean."[2] This was Akasegawa's first serious effort at writing; he purportedly initially intended to write a critical essay based on his and his compatriots' experiments in artistic "direct action". Instead his prose poured forth in the form of a rather odd short story.[3] According to his later, somewhat inchoate recollections, he had been thinking a great deal about the act of expression, and his thoughts led him to a hatred of "originality-based existence [*orijinaritei ni yoru sonzai*]," of system and organization, and his sense of his own identity as a single particle within that system.[4] When he tried to set down these ideas as critique, he ended up with a spy story.

AKASEGAWA GENPEI, *MODEL 1,000-YEN NOTE* (GREEN, INVITATION), OBVERSE AND REVERSE FACES. PRINTED MATTER, DOUBLE-SIDED. 7.4 X 16.1 CM. BACK: INVITATION TO THE EXHIBITION, ON THE AMBIGUOUS OCEAN, SHINJUKU DAIICHI GALLERY, FEBRUARY 5–10, 1963. COURTESY OF AKASEGAWA GENPEI/NAGOYA CITY ART MUSEUM

Though it was published in June, Akasegawa likely wrote "Aimai na umi" during the preparation of his first 1,000-yen print sets. Unique among his money prints, this first set featured an invitation to his similarly-named one-man show in February 1963, *Aimai na umi ni tsuite* (On the Ambiguous Ocean). The exhibition con-

tained a number of collage works that Akasegawa had created between 1961 and 1963, combining photos cut from film magazines with painted additions. The works show eerie montage scenes – bizarre landscapes, disarticulated body parts, egg shapes (suggestive of embryos, development, cells), clock faces, and other items, either superimposed on each other or drawn together by connecting lines and painted patterns.[5]

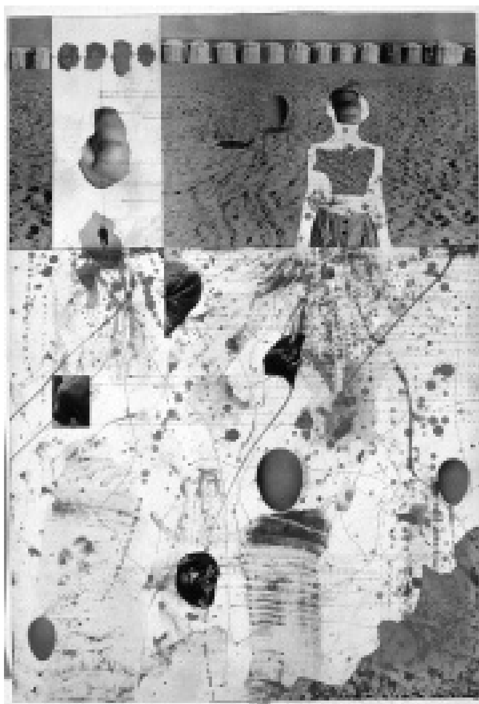
Taken as a whole, the works reveal Akasegawa's developing interest in issues related to the body, to a system that encompasses the body and its own order, and a search for an adequate critical medium to uncover this order and to work toward its overthrow. This critical impulse registers in all three of his projects associated with this exhibition: the collages, the 1,000-yen notes, and the short story. A transformed yet related form of this critique continued into the projects associated with the founding in May 1963 of the art group Hi-Red Center, whose principals were Akasegawa, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō. The moment in which Akasegawa wrote "Aimai na umi" thus corresponds to a key juncture in his practice and that of a larger group of activist artists with which he was associated. A close examination of "Aimai na umi" reveals the central concerns of this critique in perplexing forms, posing in turn the question of why they emerged in this fashion. Exploring these issues provides a tentative response to the question of intent raised, and abortively answered, by the courts: Why did Akasegawa print his model 1,000-yen notes? Or better, what sort of concerns and reflections are embodied in the work?

"Aimai na umi" concerns a spy who has just received a curious new gun, a *taijin'yō pisutoru*, or "antipersonnel [lit. "antiperson"] pistol." This weapon turns out to be the opposite of what a spy might wish for; it makes a loud noise like a howitzer but lacks penetrating power: "The power to penetrate frying pans, destroy combination locks to safes, smash fire engine pumps – in other words power beyond that necessary for killing a person – was completely excluded. Perhaps this pistol came into being so as to be very precisely limited to antipersonnel firepower, just enough for the bullet to penetrate a shirt and dive inside the flesh [*nikutai*]."[6] The spy reflects upon the utter inappropriateness of the thing; its use would instantly disclose his carefully concealed identity. Yet he remains strangely fascinated with the gun, and one day, when he is unlikely to need to resort to gunplay, he straps it on and goes out. In a restaurant he meets a person whom he plans to assassinate later, and he experiences a long fantasy about suddenly shooting the man and everyone else in the restaurant, the customers running about in panic as he loudly discharges the weapon at point-blank range. The fantasy scenario concludes with the arrival of the police, who take a couple of casualties but finally shoot the spy. He reflects that playing out such a scenario would fail to achieve his true wish: "The reason he became a spy was really based on a desire for a grand revenge [*yūdainaru fukushū*]," the "eradication of the entire population of humankind." The status of this target is made somewhat clearer as the narrative progresses.

There then follows the first of several fantastic reflections on the spy's body and humanity in general: he imagines trying to shoot all of humankind with the *taijin'yō* pistol and experiences the sensation of his own expansion and dissolution. His flesh expands into formlessness as his consciousness recedes to nothingness:

> When he holds that antipersonnel pistol before him, his flesh begins to expand outward. The flesh fills with oxygen, swells, and folds back upon itself just like popcorn.
>
> Or rather, his consciousness within this, his individual flesh, turns toward the interior, heads toward the final, existence-less center, and sinks into the infinitesimal. As this occurs, his flesh expands in precise inverse proportion, and as it swells to enfold the room, it is expelled out to cover the hallways, paint over the trains, and expand outward toward infinity.
>
> Perfect infinity is formless; as long as the limitless is unable to attain existence in this world, this individual flesh, the closest of all things to him, in heading toward the infinite, progresses toward nothingness [*mu*]. While growing until all of its details [*saibu*] become visible, it continues toward its own extinction.

After these reflections, the spy again takes the *taijin'yō* pistol and heads out to the seashore. What follows is a long poetic meditation and fantasy about bodies and flesh. The title of this poem was later adopted by Akasegawa as the title for the short story, attesting to its centrality to the work:



AKASEGAWA GENPEI, *AIMAI NA UMI 2* (THE AMBIGUOUS OCEAN 2), 1963. COLLAGE, INK, WATER COLOR, PAPER. 39.8 X 27.2 CM. COURTESY OF AKASEGAWA GENPEI/NAGOYA CITY ART MUSEUM

The Ambiguous Ocean
As flesh is enclosed by buildings
And buildings are enclosed by flesh
The sea is enclosed by the land
And the land is enclosed by the sea.
To the extent that the earth is a sphere.

Apply water to the human body and as it is diluted
It shudders violently,
And as the body's cells [*saibō*] separate, the cells become independent amoeba
As they swim about
Together with the water that filled the gaps between them
They become seawater and flow away.
That is why the ocean is viscous.
It is
Undying flesh's
Lifeless horizon
The ocean is flesh without system
The tapestry of flesh from which laws have evaporated.

Why did God condense the sea and make a system,
Give food to the system and make a human?
Why?
Not knowing the answer,
Flesh prefers the ocean to humans.
The ocean with the measureless body temperature
Of the flesh that lives even as it dies.
An unmistakable injection of Ringer's solution.[7]

Since God did not do anything more for me
I started myself.
In the depths of night
So as not to be suspected by anyone
With a scalpel, one by one
Under the swimming beach's shower
Careful not to do them any harm
I cut off the cells of my body.
My consciousness evaporated bit by bit
And the ocean expressionlessly welcomes in
The little seawater that runs off.
Even with me added to the ocean
The ocean neither rises nor falls.

And I am in there, but
There is no "me" to speak of.
I wonder if you understand.
I am in there, but
There is no "me" to speak of.

But I was just a bit mistaken.
The error of
A too proper
Illiterate virgin.
With too careful preparation
I chose night
And so my becoming seawater and joining with the ocean
Was suspected by no one.
Humans are well disciplined from the time of birth,
Are busy growing up, so
Only while swimming in the sea, is there an ocean.
I mistook the other's flesh.

Flesh prefers the ocean to humans.

This is a kindness toward humans.
And yet, although it comes from my kind sympathies
I must first
Begin from flesh not of my own flesh.
One fine noon,
I conceal on my person a portable shower, microscope, and scalpel
And while strolling the beach swimming area,
Take care of them one by one.
Perhaps when showered with the saltwater spray
All of humanity's flesh
Will shudder violently
From a great antipersonnel earthquake.
Only at this point is care [*saishin no chūi*] required so as not to be suspected.

Afterward, God still does not do anything,
So I make an imitation system [*boku wa taikei o mozō suru*].
Only at this point, deep in the night, by the shore
Do I drag out a deep-sea diving suit
And force in with a gurgle
Six thousand drums of seawater.
The cells jostle together and cling

Packed tightly together with Ringer's solution between,
Once it becomes like a human
Warmed by the light of the moon
I remove the diving suit.
Ah, this glorious rebirth!
This is me.
It is but
The least I can do out of kindness
For the flesh other than my own.

As the ocean is enclosed by the earth
And the earth is enclosed by buildings
Flesh is enclosed by buildings
And the buildings are enclosed by flesh.
To the extent that the surface of the earth curves
To the extent that space has curvature.

Here we have yet another exploration of bodily boundaries and limits, now in poetic form, a work within the larger work echoing his collage creations.

The beginning and ending verse paragraphs of the poem echo the narrator's prior sensation of flesh swelling out of his room "to cover the hallways, paint over the trains, and expand outward toward infinity," asserting the mutual, paradoxical enclosure of flesh and buildings. These complementary verse paragraphs, introducing and concluding the poetic narration, speak to the imbrication of things and flesh upon the land, the inseparability of body and system, flesh and structure. The land, characterized by this structured and structuring flesh and the buildings as large-scale objects of its interaction, is in turn contrasted with the sea, depicted as a zone of chaos. At the beginning of the poem, we are led from interrelated systems on land to a contrast between land and sea, opening the way to considering the possibilities inherent in the latter.

As the poem moves into the second verse paragraph, Akasegawa elaborates upon this ocean: it is a zone of flesh without system, an anarchic concatenation of cells swimming about, independent of any order within bodies (hence the analogy between seawater and Ringer's solution). It stands for anarchic, unstructured potential prior to and beyond the systems on the land.

Having established the contrasting land and sea as zones of the given and the potential, the determinate and the anarchic, the temporal and the atemporal, Akasegawa then figures an impossible operation, a restructuring of the spy's own body through bodiless agency. First, we have a description of the narrator cutting away his cells one by one under a beach shower, continuing somehow until his body is completely disassembled and the cells flow back into the sea. Yet the conclusion of this act, the satisfaction of the "there is no 'me' to speak of" is gainsaid by the following para-

graph, which chides his actions for lacking effect. One might understand this first dissolution fantasy as contemplation of suicide, a fading away in the night "suspected by no one" and of no consequence, merely an exchange of land for sea.[8] What is required is agency in the midst of dissolution – the ocean exists only as potential to the extent that there is realization of body and structure on the land. Thus the paradoxical line, "only when swimming in the sea, is there an ocean," can be understood as an ontological statement to the effect that the atemporal ocean enters into time only through interaction with temporal bodies. It is the relation of primordial anarchy to the physicalized order of the moment.

With this reflection, the poem returns to renarrate a bodily disassembly, but this time there is a space for some sort of ghostly, noncorporeal agency: after deconstructing himself, the narrator surrealistically rebuilds his body. In contrast to the ineffectualness of mere dissolution, this scenario for an attack on "system" imagines all bodies under the salt shower, "shudder[ing] violently from a great antipersonnel earthquake." It is an image of the shock of utter transformation triggered by the creation of a single "imitation system." By packing cells and seawater together in a deep-sea diving suit, the narrator reconstitutes himself as a body that has been freed of the present system through reassembly according to a different logic. This human simulacrum would be disruptive to that system, as it would lack those networks of order which manifest and reproduce the systemic status quo.

Reflecting a degree of optimism inherent in this fantastic solution, the concluding verse paragraph reverses the order of the items alluded to earlier. The beginning of the poem leads from land to sea, or from status quo to chaotic potential; its conclusion instead proceeds from sea to land, or in other words from potential to actualization, in terms of Akasegawa's iconography.

Following the poem, Akasegawa's hitherto loosely narrative, allusive story changes form yet again, this time to a series of declarations. Direct statements about the role of spies, bodies, and money clarify the target of this fantastic critique:

> Spies reject the entire system of private property [*jiyūzaisanseido*] which includes the body [*nikutai*] as well as the consciousness which accompanies the body.
>
> There are among the spies activities related to the rejection of the system of private ownership: the destruction of the currency system. They possess suitably elaborate counterfeit bill manufacturing techniques to throw it into commotion [*sono kakuran no tame no nise satsu seizō de wa sōtō seikō na gijutsu o motte iru*]. But manufacturing counterfeit humans? Well, although God's last exertion, woman, seems to be something that can be made from two or three ribs and some other sort of shit mixed together, making a human seems to be not quite so simple a task.
>
> Recently in Italy it seems that they've succeeded in making an embryo in a test tube, and have grown it for a month, but since the raw material was real human sperm and ova, it still seems a ways away from

> the production of a real counterfeit human. At this point there is no other option but to counterfeit counterfeit humans out of the humans currently in circulation today.

The spy's target (or rather Akasegawa's target) is thus identified as capitalism, putting Akasegawa's general orientation in line with other forms of left-oriented criticism in his day – but with the addition of an evolving and potentially sophisticated notion of the mutuality of thought and practice and its implicatedness within systemic reproduction. It is at this level of everyday interaction that Akasegawa was to develop his art and critique most thoroughly.

After these expository paragraphs, the narrative resumes, returning to the story of the spy dedicated to the destruction of humans. He has constructed a new *taijin'yō* pistol, to be smuggled throughout the country in mass quantities:

> It's like a small "bazooka"; upon leaving the muzzle the bullet itself acquires rocket propulsion; the pistol is just for ejecting the bullet outward. After that, the bullet enters the body by its own rocket propulsion, and there, its rust-corroded iron gets mixed into the blood.
>
> For basically, he really didn't like murder.

The story concludes with a remark to the effect that these guns are already circulating.

Akasegawa's unusual narrative contains numerous contradictory impulses which reveal a range of fascinating ideas, critical notions, and considerations. We see evidence that in his critical thought and practice Akasegawa had turned, like so many of his artist contemporaries, to the problem of the body. The text enacts two of the major dimensions of this turn to be found at the time; in the person of the spy we have the body as a site of action and infiltration, and in the targets and constructs the body is examined for the operations of hegemonic systematicity and authority within its very makeup. The former figures a kind of fantastic enablement of possibilities for radical action against what is revealed in the latter.

Thus the humankind that is the spy's target is not merely people but rather a humanity that structures and is structured by a hegemonically ordered everyday life. Akasegawa's desire to radically restructure this reality is figured in the story first as a fantastic wish for total destruction, then as an equally fantastic wish for total self-reconstruction and the remaking of all people (after a brief and rejected contemplation of self-obliteration). This targeted reality extends all the way inside the very constitution of humans, organizing them from the cells up – a metaphorical illustration that attempts to grasp the interconnected levels of what Akasegawa refers to as "system." The spy's dedication to the destruction of humankind, therefore, is a commitment to this system's overthrow, with the understanding that human practice and consciousness would need to be transformed.

The story is not a manifesto; its suggestions and fantasies register both optimism and despair at the possibilities for this transformation. Thus we have the doubly imagined fulfillment of this transformation: the fictional work and, within it, a pres-

entation of the spy's own imaginings – and also pessimism and renewed commitment in the spy's sober reflections on the possibility of effecting change at the desired level. Akasegawa's fictional solution, contemplated against the fate of the 1,000-yen artwork he was producing at the time, embodies elements of hope and critique differently articulated within his artistic production.

The strange attraction of the *taijin'yō* pistol itself (personified in the work as "waiting" for the spy) seems to embody both the ineffectualness of opposition and a sense of its utter necessity nonetheless – a poignant figuring of the bind faced by activists of all sorts in the early 1960s, and felt with particular acuity by Akasegawa and his like-minded compatriots. Relating its fictional description (including the spy's fantasy scenario in which it is used) and form to the specifics of Akasegawa's 1,000-yen project reveals common threads in different forms across his art and writings. The gun's attractiveness seems particularly linked to its absurd qualities: not only its unsuitability as a spy's weapon but also its capacity to reveal in an instant the spy's identity as a spy upon its use. It is this unmasking operation that seems at issue.

The ultimate goal of Akasegawa's fantasized gunplay, however, is revolution – revolution as a total transformation of thought, system, people. Here too is a source of the gun's attractiveness: it figures both the desire for revolutionary transformation and its concrete possibility through a radical unmasking procedure, albeit one with direct consequences for the agent, or spy. In this Akasegawa perhaps elaborates upon one of the canonical texts of avant-garde art and revolution, André Breton's "Second Manifesto of Surrealism" of 1930 and his intransigent depiction of the "simplest Surrealist act":

> The simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd. Anyone who, at least once in his life, has not dreamed of thus putting an end to the petty system of debasement and cretinization in effect has a well-defined place in that crowd, with his belly at barrel level. The justification of such an act is, to my mind, in no way incompatible with the belief in that gleam of light that Surrealism seeks to detect deep within us.[9]

In the words of Maurice Nadeau, Breton's "Second Manifesto" trenchantly asserts that surrealist activity "posits first of all a radical break with the world as given by the exercise of a constant and universal violence." If we posit that Akasegawa's story responds to Breton's "act" (which seems rather close to Akasegawa's first fantasy sequence, the killing spree in the restaurant) and to his challenge to create a radical practice of "absolute revolt, of total insubmission, of formal sabotage" in opposition to "the world as given," then Akasegawa's pistol represents in part an extended surrealistic contemplation of the potentials and pitfalls of this "simplest Surrealist act" – or in other words, the possibility of revolution through art, the classical goal of an avant-garde.[10]

In comparing Akasegawa's 1,000-yen note project to counterfeiting, I have suggested that this relation is one of simulacrum to simulation, or the copy that declares its own falsehood, in contradistinction to the copy that attempts to pass as the original object. The former challenges the status of the original itself, while the latter seeks to participate in the networks and status associated with that original. This relationship seems personified in the difference between spy and ex-spy related in "Aimai na umi"; specifically it seems to embody Akasegawa's conundrum as an artist interested in making works questioning the status of money. The loud bang of the gun and the unmasking of the spy might be read as a fantastic appreciation of the direct challenge to state authority involved in Akasegawa's printing of money simulacra: potentially a first noisy shot exploring the possibilities of revolution.

Akasegawa's work is playful, and he is far from the stereotypical revolutionary type.[11] Yet evidence does point to his own increasing sense of anxiety over the implications of his own activities. According to his statement to the police, Akasegawa had concerns about the legality of the act from the beginning and discussed it with his friend Ōnishi Tenshi before even attempting to get prints made. Thus the depictions of the limited range and power of the *taijin'yō* pistol, the spy's fate in his fantasy shootout at the restaurant, and the like, all present fictional analogies contemplating the possible results of his own limited production, display, and circulation of money simulacra-based works. In fact the scenario in the restaurant neatly presages the actual results of his act. The gun's strange attractiveness and the temptation to reveal oneself as a spy are related to the personal, curious attraction Akasegawa felt to making these works, regardless of the consequences to himself. The compulsion to make the 1,000-yen pieces, despite all setbacks and all of his worries, speaks to the inseparability of his critical, artistic sensibilities and his practice. Here we see the boundaries of this desire played out within a different art form, a short story, within which the combination of art and criticism was, by Akasegawa's own description, self-emergent, independent of his initial intentions.

The story's conclusion, with the spy discovering a new sort of pistol, seems to show this desire reviving, having identified a new avenue for possible action, with a different and more hopeful outcome. Viewed broadly, this second weapon, a small bazooka-like gun with self-propelled bullets, figures a solution to the problem of lack of firepower faced by activists, both literally – their lack of adequate force to combat the state – and figuratively: their impotence in the face of state actions. The self-propelled bullets that infiltrate and somehow transform the body, the comment about the gun's being already in circulation – this comes very close to metaphorically describing a project for which the model 1,000-yen works really might be a model: the rejection of money, either by its overt private printing or through some sort of general popular refusal of its status. It also gives fantastic form to the imagined effects of his and his compatriots' insurgent art practice upon the quiescent body politic after the diminution of protests following the summer of 1960.

I would not suggest that these sorts of ideas were completely worked out (and indeed the brevity with which the new gun is described at the end of the story argues for their having been only minimally conceived by Akasegawa at that time). It does provocatively accord with Akasegawa's expressed interest in the potential of masses, brought home to him not only through artworks (such as Ai Ō's *Pastoral*) but also by the popular demonstrations and protests culminating in Anpo in 1960.[12] For Akasegawa, the fascination of masses seems to have resided not in their ultimate failure but in the potential they spectacularly embodied. He seems to have viewed these political actions as artistic objects, whose potential might be realized politically through art – a neat reversal of the usual conceptual understandings of art and politics. While this conceptual displacement speaks to the status of both art and politics in Japan in the early 1960s, it also marks a truly political shift beyond the sociological category of art.

Akasegawa Genpei, Ex-spy

Akasegawa's initial explorations of the potentials of his 1,000-yen prints reveal a continued broadening of critical concerns and understandings, registered through the medium of the artistic works themselves. The slowness with which he incorporated 1,000-yen simulacra into his primary work also perhaps reflects his continuing uneasiness over the project. I would like to consider the first two of these 1,000-yen works to extract the outlines of a broad artistic problematic that might shed light on the question of Akasegawa's intent.

According to Akasegawa, his first 1,000-yen work was his large-scale, tatami mat–size drawing of the note.[13] This 1,000-yen note magnified two hundred times was an exacting color imitation done painstakingly by hand over a number of months.[14] Akasegawa entered it in the fifteenth *Yomiuri Indépendant* in March 1963, still missing the Prince Shōtoku portrait and other portions, under the title *Fukushū no keitaigaku (korosu mae ni aite o yoku miru)* (The Morphology of Revenge: Take a Close Look at the Opponent before You Kill Him).[15]

Although he had apparently begun this hand-drawn enlargement prior to the printed 1,000-yen works, Akasegawa continued his work on the *Enlarged 1,000 Yen* (*Sen'ensatsu kakudaizu*, the colloquial name by which Akasegawa and others commonly refer to the work) throughout the period of their printing, from the first set of invitations in January 1963 almost to the date of the final set of prints in May. Ultimately the work itself begs the question of the artist's intention: Why take the time and excruciating effort to create such an exacting, yet giant duplicate of the 1,000-yen bill?

Akasegawa wanted to stay just within the boundaries of legality during his 1,000-yen project from its very beginning: rendering this imitation by hand at two hundred times lifesize allowed him latitude to commence an accurate reproduction, in full color.[16] Even as a painting, mechanical reproduction was explicitly suggested by the image's exacting precision, by the colloquial title of the work as an "enlargement" (in the sense of a photographic enlargement), and by its very incompleteness. The gaps in the picture and the pencil-drawn scale grid clearly visible at its margins and within

the work mark its status as a duplication in progress and portended further work to follow.

In a sense, the work represented the limits of a painterly reproduction of the 1,000-yen note, its mass-printed object. Conversely in its exactitude (where it differed notably from contemporaneous works by artists like Robert Dowd and Phillip Hefferton – of which Akasegawa was unaware), it pushed the legal limits of reproducibility. As part of Akasegawa's artistic production in early 1963, the *Enlarged Yen* served as a foil to his printed notes (which it briefly antedated), opening up a complementary set of complexities raised by interrogating the form and status of money – an original or real thing, which is nonetheless a *reproduction*[17] – to the extent that it could be interrogated by its strange opposite, a painted, and therefore original, copy.

Akasegawa made his first set of three hundred lifesize prints of the 1,000-yen note as invitations for his *Aimai na umi ni tsuite* exhibition of February 1963. This fact might suggest that he had not yet fully embraced the prints as part of his artistic output but only as a secondary creation to advertise his more conventional solo exhibition of collage works. And yet these three hundred printed invitations and his remarkable method of distributing them to his list of around 150 invitees – through registered mail in envelopes used for sending cash – reveal his moving toward a sort of performance art that would not neatly fit within standard artistic conventions of works and their exhibition, a trajectory that would lead him to cofound the remarkable artistic group Hi-Red Center in June that year. While similar turns to performance were in evidence in both the international and domestic art scenes, these developments in his art came about as an organic result of his developing artistic and critical sensibilities and were neither a fashionable turn to performance nor mere formal innovation for its own sake.

The invitations were the first set of 1,000-yen prints that Akasegawa created and were the subject of count 1 of the state's indictment: "a life-size obverse of the 1,000-yen bill on the face of cream-colored high-grade paper in green ink," featuring on the reverse "information as to a painting exhibition by defendant Akasegawa."[18] In fact although the works were notable for their precision, their high-grade, cream-colored paper, and their method of delivery, the information on their reverse was at least equally provocative, though unindictable.

The invitation portion of this first set of 1,000-yen prints was both visually and numerically subdivided, with numbered legends on several of its features. Across the top, labeled "1," was the title of the exhibition, preceded by a curious statement: "1. Human body [8 trillion individual cells combined] = seawater [about 6,000 drums]. On the Ambiguous Ocean. . . . ." The details of the first line echo Akasegawa's depiction in the as yet unpublished "Aimai na umi" story of the fantastic creation of a new human. The nearly identical exhibition title not only closely associates exhibit and story but also is connected explicitly with a statement about the cellular constitution of the human body – a point of interest common to the exhibition, the invitation, and the short story. Particularly in the collages from early 1963, ocean, body, and bodily

constitution are all closely associated; fragmentary body parts and incomplete body shapes, images of the oceanside, and striated or wavelike washes of blue and green oceanic colors are all in evidence in several of the works. All of these visual images notably find textual interrelation within the short story, again arguing for an extensive commonality of focus among story, exhibition, and invitation.[19] In fact all of the details of the invitation relate first to the body and second to money, and all of them point toward either the exhibition or the short story of the same name (which often seems to textualize the visual imagery).

On the right, much like a portrait on a bill, is an image of a dark-colored mask or bronze face, partially obscured by a white ellipse at dead center, bearing the label "2. The Destruction of the System of Private Property." To the left of this image, in smaller print, is the following:

> The destruction of the system of private property, that includes the body as well as the consciousness accompanying that body.
>
> The sophistication of the methods and techniques of [the Akasegawa Genpei Co., Ltd.], which is concerned with the destruction of the currency system, is common knowledge. But counterfeit humans are extremely difficult to make, still technically impossible, so for the time being we will be counterfeiting them out of the humans currently in print.

The text closely follows the series of direct statements that appear after the long poem in "Aimai na umi," from the target (of the spies) – "spies reject the entire system of private property which includes the body as well as the consciousness which accompanies the body" – to the secondary focus, the "destruction of the currency system." They share a prescriptive solution as well: the counterfeiting of humans "out of the humans currently in circulation today." Again bodies and consciousness are implicated in the system whose destruction is to be plotted, but here the plotting is not by spies but explicitly by Akasegawa Genpei Co., Ltd., whose large-type moniker occupies the bottom center of the invitation (complete with an office address), next to the modestly sized listing of the date and location of the exhibition, and just below the manifesto-like statement translated above. Such an avowed goal may very well have influenced police, prosecutors, and the courts to take a hard line against this young artist and his otherwise ambiguous project. It represents a declaration against the system as loud as that of the spy in Akasegawa's story firing off the *taijin'yō* pistol, in that moment becoming an ex-spy.

The detail labeled "3" features a pair of symmetrical oval shapes on the left side of the invitation. The leftmost of these is an image of a sculpted human ear; to its right is a black ellipse cut by an internal white oval, such that the whole resembles a large image of a zero. Within the zero is the caption "3. Da'en seizō," a rather ambiguous term. The *da* appears in *katakana*, for emphasis, with *en* in the *kanji* for circle or for counting money. It thus permits two readings: *da'en* as "ellipse," echoing the two shapes of the detail as well as the shapes of detail 2, and *da'en* as "useless or insignificant yen." The second reading accords better with the full caption, which would thus

read "3. The Manufacture of Useless or Insignificant Yen," the meaning of which is readily explained by the reverse of the invitation itself. The reading "ellipse," however, suggests a second level of meaning, bringing together the production of useless yen and the oval images. Within the collages of the exhibition advertised by this "useless yen," egg-like shapes abound, linked by lines to human figures, or hovering, rebus-like, in a landscape amid cells, body parts, watches, and other visual puzzles.[20] The egg shapes in the collages might be read within this artistic context as suggesting bodies in the process of formation (much like the cells of detail 1 and of the short story and the closely associated ocean) or, where they appear linked to heads, human minds incubating. In either case they suggest enigmatic possibility and potential. The mask from detail 2 similarly assumes a rather egg-like form. The oval, egg-shaped ear in the invitation further recalls the images of ears and various other body fragments within the works, as well as being a part of the human anatomy that a number of artist associates of Akasegawa were focusing on (including Kazakura Shō and, soon after, Miki Tomio, whose ear series became a near obsession). Finally, the zero shape, which looks somewhat like a value denomination for a bill, suggests the value of the "useless yen" – zero – and neatly presages Akasegawa's yen-printing project of 1967, the *Dainippon Rei'ensatsu* (Greater Japan Zero-Yen Note).[21]

Yet a third reading is possible, combining the exchangeably ovoid, mask, zero-oval, and *da'en* as "useless circle," as references to faces on bills, that is, the practice of portraiture on currency. In the case of this B-series 1,000-yen note, the specific target of this potential critique raises its stakes: it features a portrait of Prince Shōtoku (573–622 CE, conventionally), the imperial prince and regent who, among his other conventionally credited accomplishments (variously including becoming a deity, founding Japanese Buddhism, introducing Confucian moral principles, establishing Japanese art, and fathering the state), enacts the Seventeen-Article Constitution of 604, which centers the emperor as the source of authority – providing a plausible link for modern commentators between Constitution, nation, and emperor from the deep recesses of the ancient past.[22] According to Okakura Kakuzo, a major author of the modern Japanese nationalist aesthetic canon:

> Prince Wumayado, commonly know as Shotoku-Taishi, the Saint among Princes, who becomes the great personification of this first Buddhist illumination . . . as regent of his aunt, the Empress Suiko, wrote the seventeen articles of the Japanese constitution. This document proclaims the duty of devotion to the emperor, inculcates Confucian ethics, and lays its stress on the greatness of that Indian ideal which is to pervade them all – thus epitomising the national life of Japan for thirteen centuries to follow.[23]

Prince Shōtoku thus serves as a historical figure for a mythic history binding the nation and the imperial line in an archetypal moment of imperial national authorship.

Since the "Empress Jingū note" of 1883 (with an imagined rendering by Edoardo Chiossone), imperial mythohistorical figures had long been featured on currency. Prior to appearing on the 1,000-yen note, the prince's portrait had graced the 100-yen note, both during and after wartime: all of the figures appearing on the postwar currency were first carefully scrutinized and approved, in secret, by SCAP's Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) subsequent to an administrative order banning certain subjects from currency and stamps, SCAPIN-947.[24] Whether or not Akasegawa intended it, the image of the semimythical prince adds an additional imperial dimension to the forms of state authority his imitation transgresses. Suggestively, both the district court's and Supreme Court's opinions identify this particular bill by the portrait of the prince rather than by its series of issue.

The last detail on the invitation is the only item which departs from the monochrome green ink scheme of both sides of the note: it is Akasegawa's fingerprint, in ink, placed just to the left of the paragraph discussing the counterfeiting of humans and the destruction of the system of private property. It too assumed a roughly oval shape and, being located directly to the right of the two ovals of detail 3, adds a third association of ovals with bodies and body parts. Yet as a fingerprint it adds two dimensions: that of identity and of an association with crime. The criminological implications of a fingerprint resonate with the conspiracy-like tone of the text of the invitation and with the near-criminal implications of money simulacra such as was printed on its obverse. When Akasegawa was first interrogated by the police, on January 9, 1964, he was shown one of these invitations and apparently asked whether the fingerprint on the back was his own. His statement identifies it as the print of his right thumb and adds the wry comment, "This unexpected act [of being confronted with this fingerprint identification by actual police under these circumstances] is also perhaps a kind of artistic act."[25]

The sort of suggestive play with signs of criminality multiply present in the invitation typifies not only Akasegawa's project but also a range of artistic activities at the time, such as the League of Criminals group (Hanzaisha dōmei). Anti-authority stances of this sort proclaimed a varying level of commitment among artists at the time, one which tended to attract, at a minimum, police interest. It was in a sense a shortcut to a critical perspective which did not by itself necessarily signify a targeting of the elements of Rancière's police order. In this case, much like the textual details of the invitation, it likely acted as one more stimulus sustaining police interest and inquiry, identifying Akasegawa as a promising target for an educational display of preemptive state coercive force against a potentially troubling emergent politics.

And yet play with the signs of criminality, or skirting the boundaries of legality as discussed above, was neither gratuitous nor mere fashion. Rather it arose from the very nature of this artistic and critical activity, which necessarily was operating at a point between the unproblematic poles of either conformity or criminality, with more conventional understandings and practices of Art constituting part of the former. Indeed the fingerprint may be seen as a canny embrace of both the criminal and the artis-

tic, substituting, on its reverse side, Akasegawa's "criminal" authorship for the conventional forms of portraits of national symbols and for a conventional artistic signature – and challenging national production of real notes with his private, criminal-artistic production.[26] The reduction of Akasegawa's project and of his intention to Art and Crime was an attempt by the state to forcibly resolve the challenge to police order posed by this emergent politics.

The oval form of the fingerprint raises another possibility: the presence of an undetected crime. Put into the equation of *da'en* as "useless circle," mask, and other oval shapes that pointed to the image of Prince Shōtoku, the oval fingerprint might reference the merging of different registers of identity on the 1,000-yen note itself in the presence of the prince's portrait. Imperial portrait, historical entity, mythohistory, the practice of artistic portraiture, commemoration, state authority, the "figure of Japan," the genuineness of currency, money as the universal commodity – had not a fraud been perpetrated? If the face of the 1,000-yen note is itself a crime scene, perhaps we can see the evolving elements of a criminal indictment in Akasegawa's invitation text and imitation bill.

Notes :

[1] *Confiscation* is Ross's term for the dual retrospective modes that have served to occlude the participatory politics of May 1968 in France: the biographical and the sociological perspectives. Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 4.

[2] "Aimai na umi" is reprinted in *Obuje o motta musansha: Akasegawa Genpei no bunsho*, 205–19. The book's title is *The Proletarian* (literally, The Man without Property) *Who Possessed Objets: The Writings of Akasegawa Genpei*.

[3] Akasegawa and Kikuhata, "Taidan," 21; Akasegawa, "Akasegawa Genpei jihitsu nenpyō," 81: "I intended a discourse on our direct action expressions, but by the time the writing finished, it had become a short story."

[4] Akasegawa and Kikuhata, "Taidan," 21–22.

[5] See Akasegawa, *Akasegawa Genpei no bōken*, 55–59, for surviving examples of these collages.

[6] I translate *nikutai* as "flesh" in this story, although "body" is also possible. I favor the former here due to the emphasis on dissolution, and in contrast with the also possible *shintai*, which Akasegawa does not use. All quotations from "Aimai na umi" are from my own translation.

[7] A saline solution including salts of potassium and calcium invented by Sydney Ringer (1834–1910), chiefly used to preserve cells and tissue apart from bodies for laboratory purposes. Akasegawa apparently consulted with a physician about some of the technical details of this story, further evidence of the extent to which he was excited by these notions at the time. Akasegawa, interview with author, October 18, 1997, Tamagawagakuen, Tokyo, Japan.

[8] There may be a somewhat autobiographical component here too: Akasegawa speaks elsewhere of a near-drowning experience in 1959 during typhoon-related flooding, when he was trapped and the flood water rose to just below his nose (*Akasegawa Genpei no bōken*, 6).

[9] Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," 125–26. Breton defends the violence and seeming simplicity of this act in an extensive footnote.

[10] I understand "avant-garde" here as a revisiting of the historic avant-garde's aspirations to

trigger thoroughgoing revolution. While the activities of groups such as the Dadaists and Surrealists also radically expanded the institution of art, I see this as an effect, not a primary goal. I would depart from Peter Bürger's classical formulation of "avant-garde" on several points, particularly in his insistence on art as a kind of totality. For Bürger, "the avant-gardists proposed the sublation of art—sublation in the Hegelian sense of the term: art was not to be simply destroyed, but transferred to the praxis of life" (*Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 49). Viewing the relative autonomy of art and the art institution as a totality in itself rather than as mediately related to the social totality that is capitalism prompts Bürger's recourse to an *Aufhebung* of art—instead of allowing avant-garde practice to arise from art but depart from its limits. Even as sublation, Bürger's formulation—"What distinguishes [the avant-gardists] from [the aestheticists] is the attempt to organize a new life praxis from a basis *in art*" (49, emphasis added)—returns the avant-garde to art itself. In a sense, Bürger's theorization produces a return of the art institution that is his principle complaint about the "neo-avant-garde," which "institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions" (58). On capitalism as a social totality and the object of Marx's critique, see Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 183–85, 388.

[11] Akasegawa was quite terrified by his experience of direct political action during the Sunagawa River protests and his witnessing of the results of police violence ("people with their eyes hanging out of their heads"). Akasegawa, interview with author, Tamagawagakuen, December 21, 2004.

[12] Akasegawa, interview with author, October 18, 1997, Tamagawagakuen, Tokyo, Japan.

[13] Akasegawa, "Kisai Akasegawa Genpei nōnai rizōto tanbō," 33.

[14] Allegedly to the point of stomach convulsions, according to Akasegawa (interview by author, October 18, 1997, Tamagawagakuen, Tokyo, Japan).

[15] The title of the work echoes Akasegawa's short story. The spy is a spy out of "a desire for a grand revenge [*yūdainaru fukushū*]," the "eradication of the entire population of humankind."

[16] The *Enlarged Yen* was never the subject of any part of the *mozō* prosecution.

[17] A reproduction, ultimately, without an original—the printing process of money is authorized by an authenticated machine process, not by any "true bill."

[18] "Kisojō," 2.

[19] See especially the collages A-9 through A-14, and A-17, in Akasegawa, *Akasegawa Genpei no bōken*, 58–59.

[20] Among the reprinted samples in Akasegawa, *Akasegawa Genpei no bōken*, see figures A-1, A-4, A-5 (1961), A-12, A-10, A-15 (1963), 55–59. Another likely reference was the egg-shaped works of Akasegawa's friend Nakanishi Natsuyuki, employed in a performance the previous October.

[21] These further variants on his yen project were printed, two-sided zero-yen notes, created entirely by Akasegawa. He maintained that these were real but valueless—real notes of a zero denomination—which he advertised and sold for 300 yen. Cash or coins would be sent to him, and he would return zero-yen notes. His notion in so doing was to gradually replace all currency with his real but valueless currency.

[22] See Deal, "Hagiography and History," 316–22.

[23] Okakura, *Ideals of the East*, 42. Okakura echoes Ernest F. Fenollosa's assessment of Prince Shōtoku as "among the great creative sages of Eastern Asia," crediting him with creating the Horiuji Kannon statue, "the first great creative Japanese work of art in the matter of spiritual power" (Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, 55–56, 64).

[24] "Prohibition of Certain Subjects in Designs of Japanese Postage Stamps and Currency" (SCAPIN

947) was issued by CI&E on May 13, 1946.

[25] Furuishi, January 9, 1964.

[26] Akasegawa had previously experimented with the nature of the artist's signature as early as 1958. His first submission to the *Yomiuri Indépendant* that year was a silhouette work, an abstract sort of self-portrait, with a "signature" in mechanical typeface, larger than the image. See Akasegawa, "The 1960s," 86.

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**NOVAC, VOZOVI I GILJOTINA:
UMETNOST I REVOLUCIJA U JAPANU 60-IH
(PROCES UMETNOSTI – izvod uz saglasnost
Izdavačke kuće Univerziteta Djuk, 2013**)

Sažetak:
Projekat Akasegave Genpeija 1000 jena sastojao se od crteža znatno uvećane novčanice od 1000 jena i jednostrane, fotomehaničke reprodukcije iste novčanice, štampane monohromatski, u realnoj veličini. Potonja će 1965. godine postati predmet pažnje državnog tužilaštva shodno japanskom aktu iz 1895. o zabrani imitiranja novca (ne falsifikovanja), čime je Akasegavin rad banalizovan i sveden na nivo kriminala. U ovom tekstu – detaljnim razmatranjem, istovremeno nastale, umetnikove kratke priče i pozivnice na poleđini prvih štampanih novčanica – biće pojašnjena veza između Akasegavine umetnost koja se bavi novcem i kritičkog razmišljanja o telu, mikrostrukturama dominacije i političkoj umetnosti, sa opasnostima i mogućnostima pobune.

Ključne reči: umetnost, imitacija, kritička umetnost, novac, kriminal, politika

(KATEGORIJA ČLANKA: NAUČNI ČLANAK – ORIGINALNI NAUČNI RAD)