

A Report of 14 days visiting the

NATIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

BY FIONA CHENG

Sipping the Kisuki tea which I got from Hayashi's hands at the stall of Daichakai in Kitsuki. The smell of Sencha comes from the gentle and peaceful mountains, soft leaves release chartreuse liquid that shows the breath of new spring, quite different from the Taiwan tea. It was a good experience to join the activities of Daichakai in Oita as a researcher. It is significant also nostalgic, recalled the old time of studying Japanese culture.



The Theme:

DAICHAKAI

"Daichakai" is originated from Grand Kitano Tea Ceremony hosted by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in Kyoto in 1587, one member of BEPPU PROJECT Nakamura san told me. "That's why we made the theme as 'Daichakai', to aim it could open to everyone. No matter you are rich or poor, young or old, unintelligent or shrewd can come and enjoy." Like someone doesn't know anything about Sado still can get the chance to appreciate Sado. "Everybody can join," the words from Nakamura san has been lingering in my head for a while. Looking back the very beginning activities of BEPPU PROJECT, to the contemporary art festival "Mixed Bathing World", and then to now, you may feel the Japanese avant-garde's thread slightly flies over the whole activities and changing over itself. I just want to get more time to know how does the metaphor of Beppu PROJECT develop until now.

MOUNTAINS, KEMURI, SOY SAUCE



On the first day arrived at Japan, I looked out the window in the bus, watching the image moves back. I wrote on my note, "We passed through round-shape mountains and gentle slopes, like ocean. The vegetation on it looks coordinated with the environment while the curling onsen steam rises everywhere. The city is lively breathing."

Professor Yamaguchi san told me, the soy sauce culture in Oita is quite different than any other places of Japan, "Check out the supermarket", "you will see so many genres of soy sauce on the store shelves in Oita that is not a common scene in Japan". I hoped to know more about the soy sauce culture in Oita but I should focus on art this time.

TAKETA ART CULTURE & KUNISAKI



From the seaside to the mountains, the train brought us crossing through the valleys and flying over the river, then jumping into a tunnel and being revealed from the darkness. The time and space on the train is like portal box that moves us to another magical world. After the beautiful train journey, we followed a curator Hanada san's step walking around Taketa city. It is a little town in the mountains with rivers. At another day, Oyama san drove me to Kunisaki to visit Shinya Nakano san's studio.

Autumn is a tranquil season for walking. From Ushima' work at Former Chikuden Cottage, to Olectronica's sculpture at a local library; from Nagano san's La Paloma studio to the artist

couple's Suzumegusa studio. There were few renovated old houses by artists (that must be fun to do renovation by themselves) in Taketa and Kunisaki. In both places, we spent the whole afternoon or evening waking over sites along with artworks or art studio.

In Taketa, our final destination is Oka Han Shuotamaya Park where Olectronica with their friends were installing an artwork. Most of the audience who joined the guide tour including me and other peers, art students, friends of artists, all stayed until the ending event. What we did was just watching the process of installing the final artwork.



That was a gibbous moon night, people all work hard, look happily under the moonlight. Maybe it is just like what Nakano san has been doing at Kunisaki, all of them contribute their talent to making their living place as where they want to live¹ at. It's good to see how people work together to build the future for themselves, not just living without participation to the future. "All you need to do is just to give people a vision while there was nothing. An imagination can bring out the ideas out one after another²", "I feel like

1 (町を自分が住みたいところに作っている)

2 (誰でも想像しいうちに、あるイメージを与え出したら、次の発想はどんどん出てくる)

what I am doing is just making a place where I'm interested³." Nakano san says. "We are making the event that we could enjoy⁴", Olectronica says.

Even the creative immigrants slowly increase in those places, the amount of how many audience came to see exhibition is not really an important thing to the artist. The point is to continue making their artwork and enjoying the process of creating something. The situation is a little similar to what's happening in Taiwan that no one really knows the way to the future. But maybe that is exactly the interesting point, doing something no one knows⁵.

Let's think about the future of the place as an artist, rather than only from the view of being a local. Thinking individually doesn't mean selfish⁶. These visits gave me an inspiration to rethink the place I live. Better not to make individual dissolved in the community⁷.

After coming back from Japan to my home town, I started to plan a small event that totally came from my desiring. My own imagination to the future.

KISUKI

I joined one of Chakai in Ohara Family's House⁸ on my sixth visit day. The Chakai process was happened in a completely silence. It is captivating to see how the host and guests react to each other without saying anything but enjoying the tea. Later, I walked around this charming town and met a couple are listening to a guy who is the student of history department at Beppu University. This young guy guided us walking to various old houses and old street. From the Japanese thatching roof to the shape of stone on sloping road, he explained to us the historical background in detail that

³ (自分が面白いと思える町をつくっているような感じ)

⁴ (自分が楽しんでイベントをやっています)

⁵ (未来への道はまだわからないけど、わからないからこそ、面白い)

⁶ (その地域だけの視点で未来を考えるのではなく、もっとアーティストのように自分の視点から出発して考えてみましょう。)

⁷ (自分をキャンセルしてからコミュニティの公共性を考えるより、自分はコミュニティの一員として、自分が欲しいコミュニティの未来を考えてから行動したらよりよいと思われれます)

⁸ (大原邸)

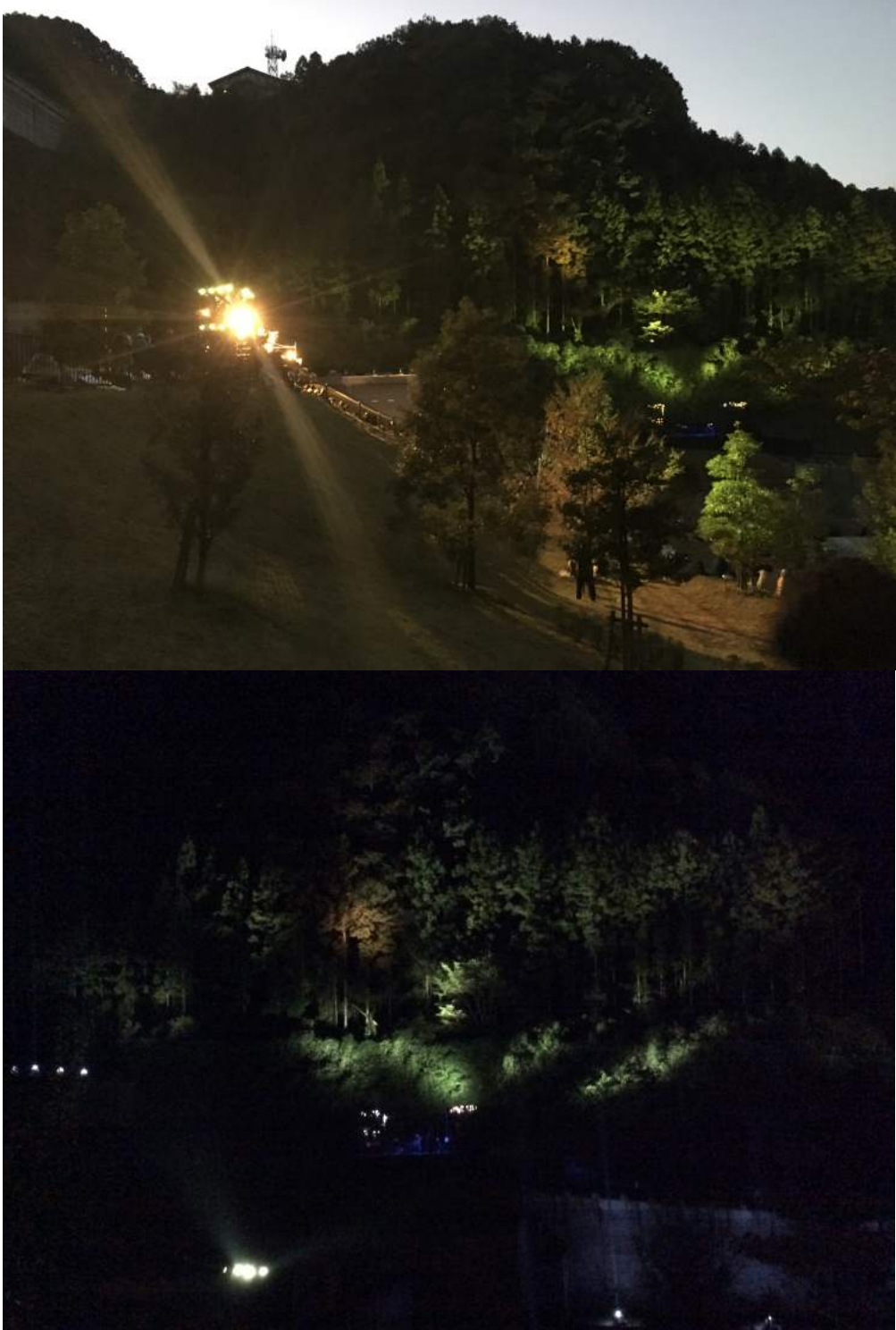
changed our way of seeing. It was fun to imagine people's mind and life during old era from his information. We feel much engaged with the place.



HITA'S MOUNTAIN, RIVER, LIGHT, AND SOUND

Before the event, no audience knew where will be the venue, all audience were just being carried by arranged buses. At the last moment audience just knew that a concert is going to happen beside Oyama dam. The wall of the dam is magnificent, 99m×370m, occupied half of the sky. It is really an excellent place to make theatrical performance. People sit on the lawn or lied down casually. The light in the night shape our feeling to the

space. Though I expected a little more with the performance that I think it should play more with this exceptional space, no doubt that the whole project was just fascinating.



ACTION!

In Taiwan there are some organisations work with the elderly and disables, but not yet having an exhibition digging the topic with the people so deeply like what I see at Oita Prefectural Art Museum. The exhibition "Action!" shows the rich layers of rethinking the society that we used to be familiar with. Standard of the society can be changed when the standpoint changes. The exhibition shows the shifting of standing point though the delicate setting and the way of display. This exhibition naturally brings the audience into an experiential situation that let us imagines a changing structure of the present society, and creates a potential dynamics for a real change.



SUMMARY, AND SOME OTHER THOUGHTS

Professor Yamaguchi san has told me that there were almost no artist in the National Cultural Festival before 2018 and focusing on disables. Both are new to the event. If you see on the whole, National Cultural Festival 2018 definitely has evolutionary intention to create an impact on the local cultural administration. Someone told me that the art is related to human right in Oita because it aim the openness to the society. From the delicate Japanese culture, I felt what BEPPU PROJECT emphasises is the importance of making a better diversity society in Japan.



