

Hisachika Takahashi

Introduction

Executed in 1966–1967 by Japanese artist Hisachika Takahashi, the seven paintings presented here form a nearly complete re-creation of his solo show at Wide White Space, Antwerp, 1967.

Active from 1966 to 1976, Wide White Space is renowned as a legendary gallery that focused on cutting-edge conceptual art practice of the time. There is a comprehensive book on its ten-year activity, and when I was flipping its pages at a bookshop in Tokyo, I came across an unfamiliar Japanese name, Hisachika Takahashi. Showing no photos, it only indicated that this artist had had a show at the gallery in 1967 with ten “Untitled” oil paintings. Out of curiosity, I decided to research more on Hisachika and his work during my coming stay in Belgium.

Before my departure, I consulted the Internet. From the few results I hit, including a blog post by curator Daniel Baumann, I came to know that Hisachika had been deeply connected to the art scene. First, he was an assistant of Lucio Fontana in Milan (they even collaborated on a painting together), and then again assistant to Robert Rauschenberg for many years in New York, while occasionally serving sushi at FOOD, the restaurant run by Gordon Matta-Clark. I was also led to images of this mysterious artist’s own works in various forms made and exhibited during the 1970s. Above all, the best news was that it seemed that the artist was still alive.

Soon after I arrived in Belgium, a friend introduced me to Anny de Decker, who had run Wide White Space with her husband, the artist Bernd Lohaus. The fact that they did not even take photos of Hisachika’s installation in his 1967 show was disappointing, but Anny then told me she had kept six of the ten originally-exhibited paintings, with another work held by a collector. In the dim light of Anny’s warehouse in Antwerp, as the flower patterns on his canvases seemed to begin to glow (I later came to know he was one of the first painters who used fluorescent

paints), I made up my mind: I would like to have his exhibition tour, to time travel in a sense, from Antwerp 1967 to Brussels 2013, in order to make his works re-interact with people’s perception for the first time in 45 years, and to finally take photos of the installation.

Several weeks later, with the help of Hisachika’s friend who was in contact with Daniel, I met the artist in Paris, who generously accepted my offer. He told me many episodes from his exciting life, and about his ideas regarding art. The most impressive fact for me was, however, that his mother was a master of Icabana, the Japanese traditional art of flower arrangement. I like to consider his paintings not only in the historical context with the gallery’s renowned program, or in comparison with his contemporaries such as Daan van Golden, Konrad Lueg, and Andy Warhol, but also as an experiment where all-over abstraction met Hisachika’s own aesthetics inspired by Ikebana and kimono.

Above all, the most personal factor for me in doing this project is that I see myself in Hisachika. First, my current situation is similar to his in 1967, as a Japanese artist who is just starting his artistic career in Europe. Secondly, the more I learn about his later works, the more I feel our artistic areas of concern overlap. We both question artist’s authority and roles through our practice as a mediator rather than a creator (those patterns on his early paintings, which were in fact simply transferred from embossed handy rollers for home wall decoration, were already a sign). So, for me, re-organizing his first exhibition in Belgium, which doubles as my first exhibition in the same country, ultimately can be seen as a way of translating our identification with one another into reality.

I am very happy to be able to present his show here in Brussels.

Yuki Okumura
15.05.2013

Hisachika Takahashi

Credits

Hisachika Takahashi

16.05 – 30.05.2013

Curator

Yuki Okumura

Coordination

Devrim Bayar

Registrar

Ari Hiroshige

Installation

Fredji Hayebin

Documentation

Shogo Matsushiro

Complementary Programme

Artist Talk by Hisachika Takahashi

15.05.2013, 19:30

Black Light Night Party

29.05.2013, 22:00

Special thanks to

Daniel Baumann, Anny de Decker, Isi Fiszman,
Agathe Gonnet, Stella Lohaus, Mihnea Mircan,
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Misako Rosen, Drik Snauwaert,
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Simon Thompson

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