

1979 Pink Floyd as Reconstruction Mood
at Royal College of Art Gallery, 7pm, March 22, 2007

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Magazine Section in the performance

Hoor Al-Qasimi, Ji Yoon Moon, Matt Williams

Video Operation

Yumi Mukai

Special thanks to:

Fiona Parry, Claudia Pestana, Michael Polsinelli, Emily Smith

Mukai Mari's Editorship for Architecture

E: Can people say you like to build as a hobby?

M: Yes.

E: You check "home decorating" category if you were to introduce yourself online, for instance.

M: No. It's more like necessity to me.

E: I'm glad to hear you say that. It's like a need.

M: Yeah, it's more than a hobby or things I like to do. That's why I think I'll get bored with the place I got in Koenji (in Tokyo).

E: I know. That's interesting.

M: I'd say my hobby is craft works to avoid further explanation. People ask too many question if I say I am into building walls.

E: So you get frustrated if you can't build walls, excuse my choice of words here, but isn't it like mental case? (laughter)

M: Right. My living environment needs to be convincing to me. It's hard to describe the level of satisfaction for me but for example, these (pointing at walls around her) are convincing. I am surrounded by walls I built, where I want them to be. And my favorite objects surround me.

E: If you really think about it, it' pretty cool to have walls you built runs across the space

M: That's why I am satisfied, or rather convinced. The space in Koenji doesn't give me the same satisfaction. I can't see the place as my living environment for a long time.

E: Isn't all Japanese housing like that?

M: It doesn't matter. The place I rented on Washington Ave. or St. James Pl in Brooklyn, I never really liked them either. You know how I get impulsively obsessed sometime. I don't quite follow myself sometime, but when something tells me there should be a wall, I must build it. (laughter)

E: Right. I like that. The word impulse.

M: That's the only way to describe it. Almost self-hypnotizing.

E: How are you going to satisfy that in Japan? Where does your bottled up frustration gonna go? You will commit a crime.

M: Probably I get caught shoplifting. (laughter)

E: Mummy, a strange woman is building walls fiercely. (laughter) Perhaps?

M: I should be careful. But I might find myself living in a place like abandoned public bathhouse in Japan. Or living in Yakuza building in Kabuki cho for two years where the landlord doesn't care if I tear down existing walls. I saw a Karaoke bar for a cheap rent somewhere in Tokyo. So it might be possible. If you know the right people, you can live in place like that in Tokyo. I can see myself winding up in place like that and start building again.

E: You used the word "challenge" before, I think it's interesting to choose location like a bathhouse or a Karaoke bar and build things upon what already exist. Bathhouse could be interesting. You are going to use the bath as your own bath, if it can still be used.

M: I think old Japanese buildings are too underrated. Not too many people see value in it. They deserve more attention.

E: Old buildings carry history and memory with it. To renew it completely by demolishing it completely and build a brand new architecture on top of it is somehow related to the overwhelming amount of new information in Tokyo. The amount so overwhelming, it exhausts you. You can't take all in. You have to let it pass you and can't let it stay. Interesting.

M: It's like I am editing the space.

E: Are you saying your construction has the similar base to your actual job.

M: It is. So I should say I have edited my living place here in Clifton.

E: Really? What a surprise. Has it anything to do with the place being an undergarment factory before?

M: Yes yes yes. The front half of the building was a bar. Different people used the space for different purpose, then I came along and started living here. If I were to live in a public bathhouse in Tokyo, I would take my meaning and emotion to the space. I loved the fact that our building used to be an undergarment factory. The phrase "To live in a panty factory" had magic to it. When I first came to see the place, sawing machine tables and panty tags were all over the place, and huge iron staircase right in the middle of the space. It was so romantic.

E: Romance and impulse are similar words. When did you start applying the word "editing" to your construction?

M: I just came up with the idea. Can't remember how long ago. I just ran into the word "editorship" one day.

E: Could it be when you were majoring in Journalism in college?

M: Definitely during my college year, but not in class. I was reading something one day and there it was. Usually I take out phrases or words from reading and forget where I met the words or the context in which it was used. When I met the word "editorship" I was touched. I couldn't come up with right Japanese for that. The word carries sense of very existence of responsibility in it. Writer's, editor's sense is in very existence.

E: You mean professionalism.

M: Yes. I got attached to the word. I used to think people are their own life's screenwriter and a producer. You produce your image by living. When I say produce, I say it with Japanese Katakana interpretation, it's more like "purodusu", like the "purodusa" behind the idols on TV, you know?

Ei: As long as they are dealing with the image, there is a difference between the image and actual themselves.

M: I came to realize these are all in the category of editorship; your way of living, thinking and your connection to what surrounds you. In other words, pre-existing things or places has its own being already. I don't want to be disconnected from them. People with editorship should try to see the being, or the truth beyond outer shells.

E: Sometimes I have impressions that you have less bias than others. It makes sense to me that Carol Greene called you "unconventional yet grounded". (laughter) Your idea is unique yet your foot is on earth. It makes you an interesting person. I think it's similar to the editorial attitude. You take something conventional and edit it with your flexible yet practical interpretation.

M: Yeah because I actually live in it. I had people live in it, too. Amazing. I really thought about the six-bedroom house in Otsuka where Reiko (her friend) went to check out. The house is surrounded by parking lot. Sounds very interesting. Yakuza used to live there, then illegal Chinese workers. Reiko told me there was one dark and dumpy room where she didn't even

want to enter. You know somebody died in there. When I heard about the place, I got bit obsessed with the idea of living in a crazy house, to the point where I made a walking map from Koenji to Otsuka so I can commute there with Uma. Somehow the idea of illegal Chinese workers' hidden hide out touched me. But things didn't work out so we are not moving in after all.

E: New Reena Spaulding's gallery is located above a restaurant in China Town. And it used to be a brothel, and radical people lived there. That's why John and Emily liked it. The fact that they could feel the spirit. The idea of Chinese hookers living in it.

M: Wow, sounds cool. I found out that an old violinist lived in Koenji before me. I don't feel anything about it though. (laughter)

E: Probably the only relation you have with the violinist is the noise, you worry Uma's barking cause trouble with your quiet Koenji neighbors. (laughter)

M: I feel no connection to the place. The only thing I like about the place is the vacant lot behind the house. That's all.

E: It's not like he renovated the space for it. It could have been different if he made the wall sound proof.

M: Like massive shelves on the wall for his violin collection. There's no memory of former tenants in the space.

E: You need it in order to emotionally connect to the space.

M: I thought about moving again after my lease expires in two years, but I paid so much money just to rent the space so I should live there for a while.

E: I understand you apply your own editorship to your construction. So how does it work with your publishing work? Just like you edit the panty factory or editing the fishy house in Otsuka with studs and drywall, when do you feel you are "editting" the words? If you are putting together a book, you must insert your editorship somewhere.

M: When I insert love. You are paid to sell the book, so you can't make a book only by what's right to you. Not too many people need my point of view.

E: If you had a total control of the book.

M: Then it will be love all the way.

E: What do you mean by inserting love? How do you do that with editing?

M: The first book I worked on as an editorial stuff in Tokyo was a book about depression and how to cope with it by a popular psychiatrist. He writes an essay on right page, then the left page is filled with diagram and graphics explaining or elaborating what he says on the opposite page. My job was to fill the left page. The title of the book was going to be "Understanding and curing your depression". When I read the essay, I felt like nobody is going to be saved by reading his book. It was too shallow. I questioned myself, wouldn't it be a crime to publish book like this. What if somebody I know suffers from depression read this book, and driven to despair and kill himself? (laughter) But that's the type of books that sells. Light touch. You can't save everybody. Just like the other book about a single woman in Japan. People just want to read it to peek into somebody else's life. When I say love, I want to people to read it and think it's OK to be strange and you deserved to be loved.

E: Do you think the book you just explained is going to sell? I don't think so.

M: I don't think so either. But when you are dealing with the mass, what's right to you, your philosophy or your moral don't matter. The only thing that matter is whether or not what you are saying appeals to the mass. If it does, then you have a winner.

E: What you are saying is very familiar to me and I'm sure it's everywhere, but the depression book doesn't have to be appealing to the mass. It's for people who need the help.

M: From the publisher's point of view, the book must sell to the mass. You don't need a seriously researched book or a good writer. You need a book on the stand in seven-eleven that people can take home with a beer and read it. One editor I know said he wants to quite his job because all the editor he knows die before age of 50. He says it's stress. You have so much to say to the public, and so much passion in saying it, but nobody needs to hear it. So a good editor is someone who makes a book that sells, and the super editor is the one who sells the product with what he belief in it.

E: That makes sense. Not all hit products have the gut research and the best writers to sell a book. Sometime it's just as simple as timing and good promotion. I think Japan tend to have that.

M: Because of mass consumption.

E: But if you really want to do it, you have to spend lots of time on it.

M: Everyone wants to do it that way. Editors are group of strange people with strange philosophy. The product they are selling is more than a book. It's different from someone in real estate business. It's more personal if their products don't sell. That's what he meant by stressful job.

E: When you say "henshu", you mean more like a producer in a Hollywood movie.

M: Yeah.

E: English translation of "henshu" is not exactly translated as "editor". It's closer to the someone who works for a director in Hollywood.

M: That's why the word "editorship" appealed me. It clarifies the responsibility that's missing from Japanese word "henshu". It's hard to find the same word in Japanese.

E: "Editor in chief" has more responsibility in the word. Like agenda. You know?

M: It's consciously intentional and there's sense of will in it. Do you remember a science thriller by a scientist called Suzuki? It was a big seller in Japan.

E: Rasen?

M: Year, that's it! Mitochondria acts upon consciousness. I was shocked to read the book. There is an object you believed to have no consciousness or determination suddenly have will. Take this Kerosene heater in front of us. I turned it on to get warm, but the truth was that it has a will to make me warm (laughter). I never thought about it before. You know what I mean?

E: I'm almost there. So you turn it on yourself. You thought you got warm by doing so. But actually you were made warm because of clear intention of the stove.

M: Or it was somehow staged. What I thought happened wasn't what happened. Like mitochondria with determination and will. I thought I was living. But the truth was I was led to live. It blows my mind.

E: It's not so clear to me yet. When we do a performance, we set up certain tasks. It's determined. We have will. But from the audience's point of view, sometimes it looks as if we have no will. It appears empty. Back to the mitochondria story, my performers are acting with determination but audiences can see it as mitochondria's involuntary movement. We are as if automatic machine. To me that's interesting.

M: It's opposite.

E: Our involuntary action has a determination and goal. I was told so in France in January. In London, I am going to make a magazine while we construct. So I am happy to learn what you said about applying editorship to the construction is coincidentally related.

M: Exactly. I used mitochondria as an example but the same thing can be said about Michelangelo. I was moved when I was a child.

E: Michelangelo said the shape and design already existed.

M: Right. He just took it out.

E: The transformation of viewpoint in the mitochondria story.

M: The Buddha maker said the same thing. He sees the Buddha inside the wood and he just takes him out

E: It's similar to editorship.

M: It is. But my understanding is that the tree and Buddha exist with it's definite intention and....

E: I mean, the panty factory was here. Then you came along and saw beyond what's there. You just helped it come out.

M: If you put it that way, it's similar. I think Michelangelo and Buddha maker had stronger determination, though.

E: I don't think so. You share the same modesty as Michelangelo. You help take out what's already there. You didn't make it. It already existed.

Uma, the Fat

Very beginning. Mari Mukai was the first person who I could speak to in New York. When I moved in here, my English was very coarse. I couldn't communicate with almost any person listed in the roommate service but Mari. She was the only Japanese speaker in the list. I stayed Mari's apartment briefly, one month or two months. Mari started to have a dog. She named her Uma.

Almost nine years later. Tonight, Uma is next to me. I am taking an anti-biotic. It is already in March, but still freezing like February. I sleep facing left. My backbones make a curve. My knees folded so that I can keep my temperature warm. Uma enters in me to make a coil like a snake only very warm. Under my head, in front of my stomach, Uma is glad to find a regular spot. I don't like Uma as much as Mari does. I know Mari knows that. I couldn't sleep, thinking various small things. Maybe the combination of anti-biotic and a pill for cold made me awake. I started to write this story on the notebook, writing down fragments of sentences.

I realized Uma is an equivalence of my stay in New York. Or I should say a settlement. I came here from Japan when I was 20, this year I become 30. During last nine years, my stay became something not temporal. I didn't mean to settle in New York, but I found a reason in nine years. I am giving a massage to Uma grabbing her warm meat under her skin. Then, Uma's fat suddenly means to me that this is my nine years. I sensed peculiarly physical about my settlement.

Uma is a part of Mari Mukai. She brings Uma to Japan next month for the first time because Mari now has a job, her family and friends over there. Legally, you have to wait more than 6 months before you export an animal outside USA. Slow process. When Uma arrives to Japan, Mari's return from USA to Japan will complete. I wrote down "Mari spent her entire twenties here, like myself." I switched the side of my body left to right. Understandably, Uma was disturbed, and got up. Soon, she gets out of futon, leaving to the door, probably to where Mari sleeps. Hell no, Uma. I needed her body tonight. Too sick and too cold without her. Without a pause, I am struggling to imitate the voice of Mari. "Uma-chan! Uma-chan!" The happy tone that gets always Uma's attentions. Uma is looking back at me. Silently staring at. 4am just past. Uma doubts the true tone in my voice. I wanted Uma making a big mistake if she leaves me. I hold up the corner of futon showing her how warm it is inside. So why don't you come back to me? It is me, that needs Uma's fat. Seconds later, Uma came back. The plan is working still, or Uma has it worked.

Then, I started writing again on the notebook. "Uma is arriving to Japan on April 2nd, 2007 according to Mari's current plan." Uma of 9 years is my "lost" twenties (if I allow myself that the perspective is from Japan). Now this lost period will re-settle in Japan as Uma. Once again, I felt this peculiar physicality of my twenties. This is a substance of duration . . . Quickly, my attention goes to a coming thirties which are already beginning in a way. I couldn't sleep at all.