

Notes on Hisachika Takahashi / Time, January 2023

*3015 calendar (1972/2015)*

Reaching the future / overtaken by time

Postponed future / skipped Millennium

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A calendar, subsequently given an additional 1000 years, after the present caught up with the future.

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Throughout his life and artistic career, Hisachika Takahashi has been working with, but also, as it were, against the course of time. It has shaped his trajectory, led to his serendipitous life. And vice versa, time itself has worked with and against Takahashi.

One of Takahashi's first works, which he created as a young art student – a massive concrete monument for a historical warship – today lies on the seabed off of the city of Yokosuka. Possibly perceived as disturbing or no longer meeting new demands, the sculpture was sunk into the sea, making way for a parking lot. Swallowed and ingested by the deep sea, not searched for until this day. Like *Petrified Bible* (1971), a drawing of a future vision, in which a Bible emerges after millions of years fossilized, the sunken monument suggests another Takahashi-esque time capsule, a testimony of a bygone era made for the future. Reappearing only in thousands, maybe millions of years.

Another moment of disparate strands of time: When Takahashi first showed his pattern paintings in Italy in the mid-1960s, he received little recognition. A few years later, in an exhibition at Wide White Space in Antwerp, again, the interest in the works kept within limits. Subsequently, the paintings disappeared in the storage of the gallery, where they remained, hidden and forgotten, for the next four decades. Only much later, in 2013 – thanks to artist Yuki Okumura – did they resurface and received acknowledgement and are now spread throughout the world.

As time progressed, Takahashi made an adjustment of its course due to another delay as he already knew it. In 1972, he intended to create a calendar for the year 2000 which then seemed far in the future. By using solvent, he transferred the ink of various readymade calendars to twelve sheets of waxed paper. His vision was that the years 1972 and 2000 - which both were leap years - would have

the first identical calendar. However, he did not realize the project in 1972. The year 2000 was reached even before the calendar had even been made and come to use. For an exhibition in 2015 at Annet Gelink in Amsterdam, Takahashi retrieved the twelve sheets he had prepared forty years before and eventually completed his project of the calendar. However, with a significant adjustment: Since the year 2000 was already long gone, he shifted the date even further into the future, to the year 3015. In *3015 calendar* a play with temporal cycles manifests itself. An idea from the past is reactivated, brought into the present and directed towards the future. A reoccurrence of reuse, reactivation of the past, a refusal of becoming the past, perhaps.

The thought of everlasting cycles in time, as I perceive it in Takahashi's work reminded me of a short note, a typewriter written one-liner, that Cy Twombly had written to Takahashi in 1976:

“Romantic continuum familiar only in the obsessiveness of nature and the insistence of the artist.”

I came across this yellowed page, brittle and marked by the years, among correspondences from and to Hisachika – personalized post cards, letters, and thoughtlessly drawn notes – in a hitherto untouched box at the archive of the Rauschenberg Foundation at 381 Lafayette Street; the building in which Hisachika spent almost four decades of his life, closely entangled in New York's art scene of the bustling 1970s.

The continuum to which Twombly refers here, that is only known to the cyclic phases of nature, he sees as transferred to the artist, where it manifests itself in an essentialist obsessiveness and unconditional perseverance. Pursuing an artistic practice requires endurance, a willingness to start over again and again. The concept of continuum is illuminating about Takahashi's work. His repeated reworking of the past, moving back and forth between the old and the new, projecting the past into the future. Takahashi creates inconsistencies between past, present, and future; asynchronous threads of time, that he invites us to retrace.

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