

For two days in May Japan, and specifically Ise-Shima, was the focus of the world's media as it played host to the 42nd G7 summit. The summit, however, was largely eclipsed by President Obama's visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Park. At the centre of his speech were the *hibakusha*. But the *hibakusha* have by no means always been at the centre of the nuclear narrative, and in ***Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War*** Susan Southard presents the life stories of five *hibakusha*. Amazingly, she is among the first to document the post-bomb history through the eyes of the survivors with such emotional detail. In her review, Elizabeth Ingrams reminds us that the bombing of Nagasaki has its own particular resonance in the West for the fact that the city was for a long time at the centre of Japan's global interactions. Douglas Clark's ***Gunboat Justice*** focusses on a specific aspect of these relations, surveying the key players from the days of the extra-territorial courts in Japan and China. The three volumes focus largely on China, but Chris Roberts suggests that they add significantly to our understanding of the Japanese aspect for the light they shine on the

extra-territorial courts in Manchukuo, expanding a history that typically ends in 1899 and bringing it up to 1941.

In 2015 Penguin re-released Alex Kerr's seminal ***Lost Japan***, part ode to Japan's cultural inheritance, part polemic on the country's neglect of that inheritance. Originally published in 1993, *Lost Japan* has been out of print for some time, and in his review Harry Martin hopes that it will now come into the hands of and inspire a new generation of Japan enthusiasts.

Koreeda Hirokazu is well established as the master of the Japanese family drama, and Susan Meehan tells us that ***Our Little Sister*** is a significant addition to his oeuvre, taking a gentler direction to recent films *I Wish* and *Like Father, Like Son*.

Lastly, the striking image above was taken at ***International Dance Festival Birmingham***, where sculptor Ito Shun and choreographer Miyata Kei collaborated on a piece of performance art at the Municipal Bank. Dominika Mackiewicz was there for the Japan Society.

William Upton

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Editor

William Upton

Reviewers

Elizabeth Ingrams, Dominika Mackiewicz, Harry Martin, Susan Meehan and Chris Roberts

(Image: Ito Shun's *Cells*. Photo: Robert Day.)

Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War

by Susan Southard

Souvenir Press (2015)

ISBN-10: 0143109421

Review by

Elizabeth Ingrams

At a recent event I attended at the Daiwa Foundation, someone asked how it was that widespread ignorance about the dangers of nuclear warfare had managed to arise. Many of the answers are to be found in Susan Southard's magnificent, some might say, epic, work based on the official and unofficial history of the second atomic-bombed city, Nagasaki. Here on 9 August 1945, upwards of 70,000 people died and tens of thousands more have died since from the effects of the atomic bombing.

Nagasaki is a lot smaller than Hiroshima, with an estimated population of 240,000 at the time of the atomic bombings. Yet its history is perhaps more significant in the story of Japan's relations with the West. A cultural melting pot ever since the Portuguese – including St Francis Xavier – arrived in the 16th century, the city is probably the only one in Japan which could have been described as at all multi-ethnic. It has always been allowed some, if limited, foreign trade and included Western, Chinese and Southeast Asian residents, up until 1941 when foreigners were expelled.

Southard's work joins an increasing number of books in fiction and non-fiction about the enormity of suffering undergone and delivered by the Japanese more than 70 years ago. As a theatre maker and a former resident of Yokohama, who first visited Nagasaki around 40 years ago, Southard's motivation to research the story of the *hibakusha* (meaning literally 'explosion affected person') was crystallised when she met with Taniguchi Sumiteru, the president of one of the Nagasaki survivors' '*hibakusha*' organizations, in 1986. Taniguchi was then at the beginning of his career as a worldwide spokesperson for the *hibakusha*. Last year, aged 87, he could be seen live on NHK World speaking out against the revisions of the peace constitution

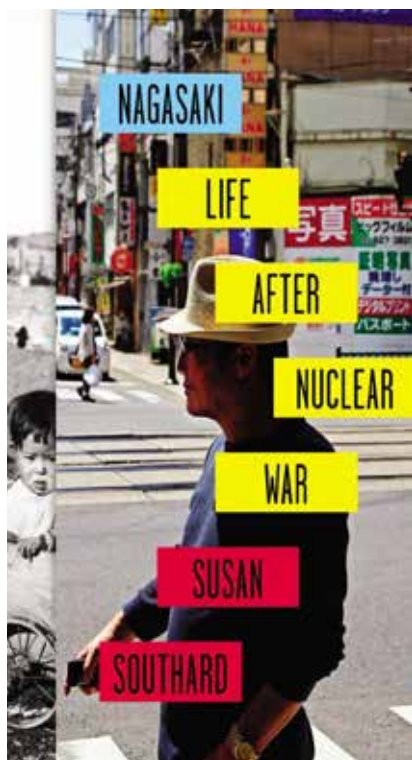
in front of Prime Minister Abe at the 9 August Peace Memorial Ceremony.

Southard's first interview with Taniguchi gave her insight into the scale of suffering and the silence surrounding it. It is telling that of the many *hibakusha* in Nagasaki, only 40 were *kataribe*, or public witnesses, when Southard was working there. Southard, as a US citizen, was concerned that the US had, in her words, 'trampled on' the rights of the Japanese in the Post-war period of occupation (1945-1952). One of her motivations was to illuminate the 'mushroom cloud' of misinformation, censorship, denial and counter-denial by historians on both sides of the Pacific.

Southard moves expertly between the life stories of the survivors she has interviewed (Doh Mineko, Nagano Etsuko, Yoshida Katsuji, Wada Koichi and Taniguchi) and others whose stories she has read; and the history of the end of World War Two. She claims in her introduction, that her aim is to 'bring coherence' to the chaotic nature of *hibakusha* stories, which has been exacerbated by the absence of serious research in to the life stores of those affected by 'whole body radiation' over time.

The US withdrew press and publication freedom in Japan from 1945-49; all film, photo, medical records, and written archives were shipped to the US and had to be reassembled decades later. Japanese scientific research on the atomic bombings was unpublished even up to 1952. Official US censorship was also combined with unofficial Japanese stigmatisation of radiation sufferers, at a time when Japan was still licking the wounds of defeat.

The book covers events leading up to the dropping of the atomic bombs in the US – Truman's decision to drop the bomb and the accompanying misgivings of scientists, journalists and generals, including Eisenhower – as well as the Japanese story. We read about the total militarisation of Japanese society, the *kokutai* (national militarisation of society), the much-hated secret police and peace preservation laws; the desire for peace but weakness of the Emperor and the divisions among the 'big six' in Japan's war cabinet in discussions around surrender in July and August 1945. Some may be surprised by the fact that the Soviet incursion into Manchuria and Kuril islands on 8 August played a larger role in final surrender discussions than either of the atomic bombs. This history, drawn from recent research, is now becoming the accepted view although it still does not make it into either the Japanese or US official version of surrender.



'Now, to be A-bombed, [there] is nothing really abstract in that' wrote Oyama Takami; and Southard's advantage in discussing the history is to keep it closely anchored to what can be seen through the eyes of the survivors, as well as the POWs and other visitors to Nagasaki in the aftermath of the bomb. Not wanting to be drawn into the game of blame and counter-blame which still accompanies historical discussions about World War Two, Southard brings the *hibakusha* stories to life through face-to-face interviews, photographic portraits from youth to old age, as well as life histories recounted in families, radio and TV interviews and official and private publications.

In an interview, Southard confessed that the research itself had a traumatic effect on her and indeed, to miss reading this book is to miss being traumatised by the massacre that occurred at Nagasaki. If you do not read it, you will miss eye-witness accounts of the *hibakusha* trailing their flesh like rags, arms outstretched like blind people; of parents and children, colleagues and friends, preparing fires to burn their loved ones' corpses to ashes before succumbing to radiation sickness themselves; of the Urakami valley (the bomb's unintended target) smelling of charred human flesh for months; of the place of 'tears turning black' where they fell and of 'no birdsong' even when the Allied troops arrived three months' later; of *hibakusha* captured on film, days and weeks after the bombing, mouths stretched open calling for their mothers as they died; of mothers giving birth to dead children in the 'graveyard' that was the ruins, only to be levelled with bulldozers by American troops weeks later; of doctors treating thousands of untreatable victims despite their revulsion; of local 'remedies' for *hibakusha* – persimmon tea, engine oil, vitamin shots and hot springs.

However you will also miss out on the extraordinary motivation of these five survivors and their predecessors to find decency and respect, let alone the words to tell the stories: to overcome discrimination or the desire to kill oneself. Taniguchi, for instance, begged nurses to let him die rather than treat him until he could move, which took three years.

Many more *hibakusha* suffered the guilt of survival (when so many had died) and the constant fear of cancer (to which many have succumbed); they also



Susan Southard is a creative writer and theatre director based in Arizona.

cared for family members who resented them for surviving when others died. The book's black-and-white inset photographs bear witness to an extraordinary triumph of the human spirit alone. They start with the atomic desert of 1945, with pictures of mutilated sponge-like faces and bodies of *hibakusha* and continue to contemporary portraits of the survivors speaking at international conferences, constructing memorials for the dead; running peace NGOs.

It took thousands of survivors' accounts, movies and books to counter the cover-up of holocaust denial. These five survivors perceive the same counter-narrative is needed before the atom-bombed cities are lost in the 'hole of history'; for them there is no enemy apart from war itself; they want to promote a 21st century which is based on compassion and sensitivity rather than self-destruction. They are true internationalists who find that with the whisper of life they have been granted – although the verb they use is the ambiguous *ikasareta* (to 'be allowed' or 'made to live') – they want to help others understand. It is hard to think of another book like this, which conveys the emotional detail of how the stories are told, not only then but now. The only comparable book is perhaps John Hersey's well-known *Hiroshima*. Emotional details leap from the page: like that of a survivor 'choking' as they recall a story; another tells us that at night when she takes a bath, the scenes of seventy years before still recur to her.

Some criticisms can be mentioned: Southard's view is that democracy and a peace constitution were 'forced' on the Japanese when in fact millions were relieved when the war ended and embraced the occupation as it brought progress and democracy; it could also be argued that additional discrimination was levelled against the *hibakusha* of Urakami valley because many were Catholics and some were *burakumin*, the Japanese 'untouchables'. These criticisms aside, this great contribution to atomic bomb research could not be timelier or more welcome.

Elizabeth Ingrams is a researcher on the lives of the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima. For more information visit: thelast survivorsofhiroshima.wordpress.com. Her book *Japan Through Writers' Eyes* was republished in 2015 by Eland, price £12.99, ISBN: 978-1906011-08-6, travelbooks.co.uk. §

Gunboat Justice: British and American Law Courts in China and Japan

by Douglas Clark

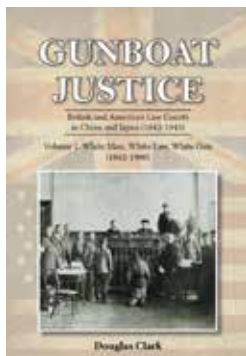
Earnshaw Books Ltd. (2015)

Volume I: White Man, White Law and White Gun (1842-1900), ISBN-13: 978-988-82730-8-9

Volume II: Destruction, Disorder and Defiance (1900-1927), ISBN-13: 978-988-82730-9-6

Volume III: Revolution, Resistance and Resurrection (1927-1943), ISBN-13: 978-988-82731-9-5

Review by Chris Roberts



Douglas Clark is a practising lawyer in Hong Kong who has lived and worked there and in China, Japan and Korea for over 25 years. In these three volumes, he looks at the workings of the British and American Courts in China and Japan during the days of extra-territoriality. This subject has been achieving greater coverage in the literature in recent years. Clark's particular contribution is bringing these courts to life through the personalities of the judges who sat in them, the lawyers who appeared in them and a large number of the litigants – both well-known (or notorious) and those who would otherwise have remained unknown to history.

He uses the individuals' life-stories and the human side of the cases that came before the courts to tell the story not only of the extra-territorial system itself in Japan and China but also of expatriate life in those two countries – particularly Yokohama and Shanghai.

Clark has scoured the archives, journals and relevant family records for photographs and sketches of the principal legal players so as to build up a fairly comprehensive picture gallery of them all – the most comprehensive one published to date. In addition, the text is lightened by apposite cartoons and sketches from contemporary publications. He has, where possible, spoken to descendants of those involved in administering British and American justice in Japan and China and recorded much anecdotal family information. This all adds to the highly personal and colourful nature of the book. He has also examined the personal papers of Sir Hiram Shaw Wilkinson, one of the British lawyers and judges – in both Japan and China, that are held in the Northern Ireland Public Record Office and brought to light new points on Wilkinson's career.

Of course, extra-territoriality had a longer history in China (1842-1943) than in Japan (1859-1899) and so nearly two thirds of the narrative focuses on China. Japanophiles will be principally interested in Volume I, the first third of Volume II and the huge middle section of Volume III. Volume I's coverage is divided almost equally between coverage of Japan and China. It covers the period from 1842, when the British first obtained extra-territoriality in China, through 1859 (when foreign extra-territoriality came to Japan) up to 1899 when Japan ended all foreign extra-territorial rights in its territories. This switching between Japan and China demonstrates how, during this period, the practice of foreign laws was intermingled between the two countries. Not only did the individual judges of the time have first-hand personal experience of both countries; but so did many of the lawyers. Decisions and approaches in one country influenced approaches in the other. There was also considerable social intercourse between the expatriate communities in both countries – particularly as many expatriates in China saw Japan as a place of retreat from hot Chinese summers.

The first third of Volume II will interest Japanophiles for two reasons: one, it covers Wilkinson's Chief Justice-ship (1900-1905); secondly, it looks at the 1907 and 1908 trials of Ernest Bethell in Seoul at the instance of the Japanese authorities there. Thereafter, Volume II is principally of interest to Sinophiles; as is, in many ways, Volume III. However, Japanophiles may find Volume III interesting for its coverage of the inter-play between the British (and American) authorities and the Japanese authorities in 1930s China in relation to extra-territoriality: particularly in China's North-Eastern provinces which were the puppet-state of Manchukuo occupied by Japan. Histories of extra-territoriality and Japan usually end in 1899 so this coverage adds an interesting perspective. Here, Japan, for its own geo-political reasons, continued to recognise the existence of British and American extra-territoriality until 1941.

Despite the length of each volume, they all move at a cracking speed as Clark weaves the story around individuals and the court cases. The fast pace means that the reader never becomes bogged down in detail – an issue all too common with other books on the subject. It does, however, lead to one criticism: in order to give an aura of excitement and interest to the subject, Clark has a fancy for the dramatic subject title (such as 'The Japanese Empire Strikes Back'). Further, he neither allows a good or amusing, well-known and oft-repeated, story to be side-tracked by

an examination of its detailed accuracy nor does he re-examine the traditionally viewed short-comings of the system in order to assess their validity: he takes them at face value rather than questioning them.

That said, the volumes will be of interest to the general reader interested in the Japan and Shanghai of the time – particularly expatriate life. As for the more academic historian, the sketches and photographs that Clark has collected and the personality insights that he gives add considerably to the corpus of knowledge of the system – even though the Japan

Society's *Biographical Portraits* series has, in recent years, covered the Japan experience of a number of the individuals.

The volumes remind us yet again that, while the life of British and American communities in Treaty Port Japan and China is already fairly well-covered in the literature and commentary on extra-territoriality has increased recently, there is nothing published (in the English language at least) on the, admittedly smaller, communities of other nations, or the workings of their extra-territorial systems, in Japan and China. §

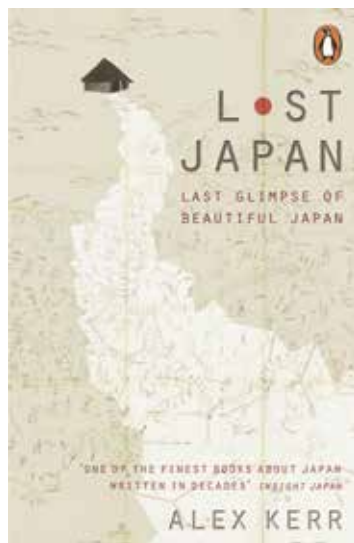
Lost Japan

by Alex Kerr

Penguin (2015)

ISBN-10: 0141979747

Review by Harry Martin



Since its original publication in 1993, *Lost Japan* by Alex Kerr has stood within the ranks of the more revelatory and nuanced works in a long line of publications unpicking the seeming exoticism and essential unfamiliarity of Japanese history and culture. From the very first page readers find themselves being guided through the author's extraordinary Japanese journey through vivid accounts of traditional Japanese life, from the dramatic landscape of Shikoku to the dressing rooms of Tokyo's most exclusive theatres and tea houses. The narrative throughout expresses not only the author's passion, but also a personal lament for what he perceives as the deterioration and loss of Japan's native traditions, comprising an ardent and heartfelt plea to Japanese readers to sit up and take pride in their national heritage before it is gone forever.

The somewhat esoteric and obscure themes explored by this connoisseur of Japanese culture are enlightening and novel, featuring subjects such as traditional thatching (a subject on which had a great deal of first-hand experience having twice rethatched the *kayabuki* roof of his two-hundred-year-old Japanese house in the Iya Valley), *kabuki* rituals and a brief history of the exquisite world of Japanese calligraphy and antiques. Kerr's passionate, animated writing style lifts these weighty subjects off the page and into the

reader's imagination, bringing to life vivid scenes from a past world. Although the primary focus of the author is very much on the past, he does not neglect modern Japan, and presents sobering and insightful accounts of contemporary Japanese politics, economy and architecture to set the scene in a much wider context.

Like many who have spent long periods in Japan, Kerr has a distinct conflict of emotions regarding the country he now calls home, and his writing frequently lays this bare. On the one hand he expresses impassioned admiration and praise for the native culture, while on the other he suggests a thinly veiled sense of disapproval for what he sees as the modern Japanese disregard for their past. This reprimand sets the tenor of the book and seems to be directed at a largely apathetic urban Japanese audience which the author feels needs reminding of its nation's origins. As acknowledged by the author in his prelude, *Lost Japan* was intended for the Japanese reader (it was first published as *Utsukushiki nihon no zanzō*, *Last Glimpse of Beautiful Japan*), with the translation and publication for western audiences somewhat of an afterthought; as a non-Japanese reader I did indeed feel a little outside of his focus at times, but nevertheless found the themes and subject matter stimulating and compelling.

With Penguin's re-release of *Lost Japan* there is now the opportunity for a new generation of Japan enthusiasts to wander through this curious and complex mixture of biography and history. This nostalgic and evocative world is brought to life by Kerr's expressive writing, which issues a clear and heart-felt call for the preservation of the fading jewels of Japanese culture. His stories evoke a vivid sense of a disappearing past which is likely to capture the imagination of any reader and inspire a desire to (re)visit and read further into this fascinating culture and history. §

Our Little Sister

Director and scriptwriter: Koreeda Hirokazu, based on Umimachi Diary by Yoshida Akimi

Curzon Artificial Eye

DVD, 128 minutes, PG

Review by Susan Meehan

With *Our Little Sister* Koreeda Hirokazu has produced another gentle masterpiece – a family drama dealing with death, desertion, vulnerability, responsibility and loss. It is far from harrowing, however, unlike the distressing *Nobody Knows* (2004) and *Like Father Like Son* (2013). The tone is altogether lighter, more open, optimistic and with humour. The subject matter, family life, may not be to everyone's taste, however.

That the four main protagonists are women with strong, weighty roles give it a great touch, and that this in itself seems surprising or unusual, says a lot about the film industry, or at least about the majority of films shown in the UK. It was incredibly gratifying to see these women in such complex and interesting roles.

The principal characters, the Kodos, are three sisters in their twenties who have been living by themselves in a large house in Kamakura for the last fourteen years. Their parents divorced, the father moved out and their mother followed suit within a year. The girls simply got on with their lives, with the eldest, Sachi, taking care of the household and becoming the parent figure, or 'dorm mother', at the expense of her childhood.

Having had almost no contact with their parents since being deserted, the sisters they decide to travel to their father's funeral. It is here that they meet Asano Suzu, their half-sister, and herself an orphan, with only a self-absorbed step-mother left to call family. Suzu is self-composed, welcoming, poised and mature beyond her fourteen years, having nursed her father in his last days. She loves the father whom Sachi remembers as merely careless with money and fond of women.

Suzu jumps at the offer of moving in with the Kodos, and Koreeda shines in his skilful interweaving of the sisters' family and professional lives and his portrayal of an open, loving and honest sisterhood. There is a strong sense of transience here, as it soon becomes clear that their comfortable, supportive life together can't last forever. Tensions simmer below the surface as serial dater Yoshino, the easy-going Chizu and the stern Sachi come into conflict. Was Sachi bringing Yuzu into the fold a last vain effort to sustain the family bond?

This is a film in which emotions are discussed openly and issues are confronted head-on. The women have all experienced parental desertion and death and the consequent loss of childhood, but somehow it is Suzu, whose parents had both died by the time she was fourteen, who seems to deal with the loss best. There is little focus on repressed selfless selves, a common Japanese stereotype; only Sachi finds it hard to cast off the responsible persona she has had to develop.



Our Little Sister, starring Ayase Haruka, Hirose Suzu, Nagasawa Masami and Kaho.

The film's Japanese scenery is breathtakingly photogenic as the different seasons are skilfully captured over the course of a year and dinky one-carriage trains are shown gliding through the Japanese countryside. Anyone familiar with the Shonan coast will recognise Enoshima and feel nostalgia at shots taken from inside sea-view restaurants. Equally beautiful are

the shots of *yukata*-clad Suzu enjoying the summer fireworks with friends and then contentedly playing with sparklers at home with her sisters.

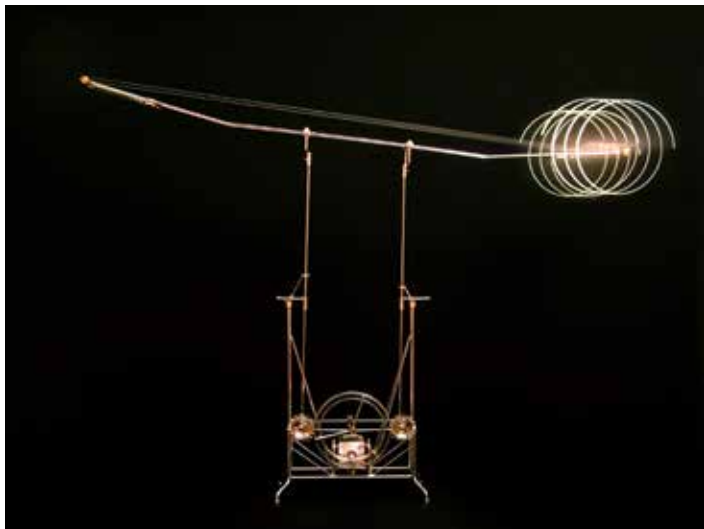
It is an enchanting, uplifting and moving film which ends with an updated appreciation of their father by the three Koda women. The Kodas' acting is sublime and Suzu is particularly luminous. §

Ito Shun at IDFB 2016: Cosmic Birds

2 to 20 May 2016

Birmingham Municipal Bank

Review by Dominika Mackiewicz



Spinning World, stainless steel and LED (2009). Photo: Ito Shun.

When several years ago two friends, Japanese kinetic sculptor Ito Shun and Birmingham based choreographer Miyata Kei, met in the UK's second city, they came up with an idea for an interdisciplinary project, combining art installation and dance performance. Inspired by the rich industrial heritage of the Black Country, Ito and Miyata travelled across the area and absorbed the atmosphere of abandoned warehouses and workshops, filled with the sounds of metal, machines and human presence. This experience resulted in Ito's exhibition *Cosmic Birds*, part of the International Dance Festival 2016 in Birmingham. Both ex-dancers, Ito and Miyata (the curator of the show) made movement a unifying theme, expressing not only a very personal understanding of motion, but its meditative and scientific aspects.

Cosmic Birds comprised twenty mechanical assemblages dancing in the ghostly offices and spaces of the old Municipal Bank located in the very heart of Birmingham. The site of the show contributed to the pervading sense of otherness; the Bank remains closed to the public, rarely opening its heavy, cast-iron doors,

and this architectural treasure, boasting the grandeur of its atrium and a maze of more dilapidated rooms, was once more brought back to life through Ito's artistic intervention. His use of movement served to guide attendees through the building, the machines casting an intricate array of shadows and light, creating an immersive atmosphere and a strong sense of having stepped into a memory. (Indeed, throughout the bank, one is confronted by signs and symbols that hark back to a different age. One inscription reads 'Thrift radiates happiness'.)

While some sculptures were small and innocent in their merry-go-round structure and angelic appearance, others were clearly inspired by the Futurist movement, dynamic metal skeletons exposed. Wires, gears and cogs, all made from scratch, performed hypnotising dances as they span, climbed and fell. The way they cut through the air, much like archaic astronomical models, recalled the titular 'cosmic birds', combining mechanical, scientific and aesthetic sensibilities.



Orbit One, stainless steel, Halogen light and glass (2006). Photo: Ito Shun.

Central to Ito's artistic experiments is gravity and his sense of its profound beauty. In this exhibition he considered what gravity looks like and how it sounds. This effort came across most clearly in his trio of kinetic sculptures *Cosmic Birds*, which lend their name to the exhibition. Situated side by side, these three identical sculptures expose the engineering mechanisms that pass the movement continuously from one part onto another. Inside each of the steel frames, a satellite-like 'cosmic bird' is moving up and down as if on a trapeze. The hypnotizing effect of this piece is additionally heightened by the heartbeat-like sounds emanating from the speakers. Created by spinning air and the amplified movements of the three cosmic birds, this is Ito's rendering of the sound of motion.

Cells, a giant mobile suspended from the ceiling of the Bank's main hall is the piece inspired and made in Birmingham. Consisting of two hundred steel rings that rotate slowly thanks to gravitational pull, the installation echoed the shape of the old Bank's clock and emphasised the impermanence of life, a very potent symbol in Japanese aesthetics. The contemplative character of the sculpture, as well as its

simplicity and universality was used by Kei Miyata for *In a Landscape*, a dance performance based on the beauty of 'mindful' movement. Created with an ensemble of local people practising dance, yoga and martial arts, the choreography presented a dreamlike landscape, where humans met in an austere place and influenced each other in often invisible, yet profound ways.

Dressed in black, the dancers performed repetitive movements among the hanging Cells and exercised their own and the audience's attention. Each brought their own emotional and physical quality to the dance, but only together were they able to create a symbiotic collective. In this way, they formed a muted, rhythmical surrounding for Miyata's expressive performance.

Miyata, inspired by the writings of Miyazawa Kenji (also a key influence in Ito's work), created a spectacle more abstract than narrative, where words are replaced by movements reminding us of *shodō*, the Japanese art of calligraphy: controlled but spontaneous, focused and impulsive. As a result, *In a Landscape* conveyed an impression of living art that is strongly related to nature and life; art that comes from the individual's inside and is motivated by simply being part of the world. [S](#)



In a Landscape and *Cells*. Photo: Robert Day.

Interested in writing for the Japan Society Review?

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