

## A Memorial to the Attacks of 9-11:

Roz Dimon's Digital Engagement with New Symbols for New York City

Gail Levin

### RESPONSES BY VISUAL ARTISTS TO 9/11

*A prelude and brief overview of various artists' responses to 9-11 as introduction, leading into*

### ROZ DIMON'S DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT WITH RESURRECTION

Perhaps because I grew up in the middle of the Bible Belt, contemporary art's engagement with religion fascinates. Imagine my surprise discovering Roz Dimon, a fellow Georgian in an open studio visit in New York. The singularity of her means of expression and her message continue to impress. She is not only a pioneering artist, working digitally since the 1980s, but also an Interfaith Minister, who for five years directed Communications at St. Bart's Episcopal Church on Park Avenue.

Dimon's work, *Pale Male*, now in the collection of the 9/11 Museum in Lower Manhattan, encompasses a technically complex new form of interactive digital storytelling, and yet the piece is also a prayer -- as she puts it, "made not by my hand alone." It emerged out of the detritus of 9/11 in lower Manhattan, where Dimon lived and worked for over ten years. Its multi-collaged imagery pits the secular with the sacred in a narrative that seeks to find home when all is lost. At the crux of the piece, one that is both "physical" and "virtual," one can interact by smart phone to discover not only a famous urban hawk's nest, but the image of the twin towers of the World Trade Center coming together, Christ on the Cross, and, barely visible, the radical commandment to "love one another."

Dimon's theme, the "phoenix rising from the ashes" echoes the symbol of our hometown, Atlanta, representing the city's rebirth after it burned down in the Civil War. In a time when all manner of imagery is accessible on the internet, Dimon, seeking a new meaningfulness out of what is otherwise a world in need of repair, hopes that bringing back the spiritual in art will create a new role for artists as shaman, as healer.

# American Icons and the City

Roz Dimon

*WOW: Windows On the World*, An American Artist's Reflection

## SHORT SUMMARY:

*Dimon will discuss how the events of 9/11 and her subsequent questions as to work and faith led her to expand from an artwork like **Windows On The World**, a dualistic approach, to a more complex and multi-layered worldview and narrative, "beyond duality," i.e., **PALE MALE: A Pilgrimage**, her first DIMONscape® – the most innovative work the artist had ever done in her 30 years working in digital media.*

## OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION:

The artist will show imagery from the first work she created post 9/11, *WOW: Windows On The World*. Created on a Mac Powerbook, the title references both an altered world view as well as the famous restaurant that once looked out over the city of New York from the top of *One World Trade Center*.

Dimon will discuss the multiple layers of this work where duality is emphasized, not only in the way the piece is constructed and presented but as an open-minded approach to examining the imagery and icons of two cultures which came to clash in the horizon of 9/11.

The artist will also discuss her evolution post 9/11 to her work today:

How her work evolved from *Windows On The World* to *PALE MALE: A Pilgrimage*

- How she moved from working in the heart of capitalism for ten years at The World Trade and Financial Centers to attending Seminary for an Interfaith Degree
- Her journey heading up communications practices for top corporations like The Wall Street Journal Online to working at St. Bart's, one of the most progressive churches in America

The artist will end with the piece *PALE MALE*, whereupon Dr. Levin will join her for a brief discussion covering such issues as:

- Religion
- Tolerance
- Growing up in the deep south
- NYC influences, urban influences, marches, feminism
- How progressive liberal practices in life and in faith are at odds with the America that Trump is espousing

# Risaburo Kimura's Representation of the City and 9.11

Keiko Sakagami

After emigrating to New York in 1964 until his death in 2014, Risaburo Kimura devoted his work to the subject of the city. In this work, he connects traditional Japanese printing representation forms to an overseas perspective through the use of mainly silkscreen techniques in his work.

Kimura produced over 600 works on the subject of the city, the vast majority simply entitled “City”. In most cases the specific city being represented is not identified. The style, evoking abstract, geometric, futuristic cityscapes, reveals some of the artist’s images of a ubiquitous city. The influence of New York is clear. When his work representing other major world cities is compared with his New York work, the representations of New York stand out for their abstractness and distinctiveness. In summary, we can say that for Kimura the city is New York.

Kimura witnessed the 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center from his Manhattan home. For an artist with a longstanding interest in themes of “urban creation, destruction and regeneration” it seemed like the day had arrived when the world of his art had become the world of reality. The artist said he thought the ideas coming from painters at the time were childish. At the same time, he was convinced that the city could once again be resurrected as if immortal. Furthermore, he had the bitter experience of feeling like an outsider in New York, which was no longer the cosmopolitan city he had imagined but a city for Americans. In this presentation, I look at Kimura, his continuing interest in the city, and his work in light of his experience of 9.11.

## After the Quake: Japanese Art in the Post 3.11 Period

Mika Kuraya

As a result of the *Great East Japan Earthquake* that occurred on March, 11, 2011, the thinking of Japanese artists, critics, and curators has completely changed. For the past 50 years or so, against the background of a stable society, the Japanese art world has emphasized purely aesthetic issues. However, following 3.11, a great number of artists have come to address social issues directly in their work.

In this presentation, I will begin by introducing various manifestations of post-3.11 artistic expression. In particular, I will focus on the artist's collective Chim↑Pom and their intervention at the Shibuya station mural, the actions of the anonymous artist from the Fukushima nuclear plant, *The Finger-pointing Worker*, and the films of Koki Tanaka.

Following on from this, I would like to discuss some of the connections between art and society, considering how thinking has changed since the disaster. In pre-disaster Japan, in response to the social need for the regeneration of decaying provincial areas, art events staged in de-industrializing urban areas and de-populating rural areas flourished. This trend with its origins in the 1990s accelerated post-3.11 with the influx of a range of theoretical perspectives, such as *Relational Aesthetics* (Nicholas Bourriaud), *Art of Antagonism* (Claire Bishop), and Socially Engaged Art (Pablo Helguera). These developments have fostered a new criticism and evaluation.

Rooted in the experience of 3.11, artists are re-considering the most appropriate forms of expression. Critics and curators are thinking about how to interpret and evaluate these new works. The Japanese art world continues along this path of exploration while looking to open dialogue with artists from other parts of the world with similar experience of disaster.

## Vision and the avant-garde

—the case of post 3.11 interpretations of the work of Tetsumi Kudo

Tomohiro Masuda

Tetsumi Kudo (1935-90) was a leading figure of the Japanese 'anti-Art' avant-garde movement of the early 1960s. From 1962 he relocated to Paris where he became active on the European scene.

In the late sixties, images of deathly human figures suffering the effects of nuclear-based environmental destruction appeared in his work. Stemming from this work, and the extraordinary post-3.11 discourse within Japan, Kudo has come to be regarded as an artistic pioneer foretelling nuclear disaster and the failure of contemporary civilization. The early works of this avant-garde artist have undergone a significant reappraisal from a recent perspective. Of course, there is nothing especially unusual about an artist or his works returning to the spotlight in response to events or change. In fact, it is possible to think of art history as a series of such re-evaluations. However, there are some issues concerning this particular re-evaluation. Once the artist's vision became reality, we can say that reality has overtaken the avant-garde. In regarding Kudo as a critic of the current situation, we are able to criticise the present through his work, but the work itself does not attract any new interpretations.

In this presentation, I revisit and analyse the artist's own words from that time, and discuss his work from this base. What I aim to stress is that Kudo's human images were not merely victims of contemporary civilization (environmental pollution), but they suggest the possibility of coexistence and hint at change in the human form. Using this as a starting point, it now becomes possible to interpret Kudo's work in light of current developments.

## Art of three: Decision and Reaction After 3.11

Takayuki Yamada

In this presentation, I introduce *three*, a group of artists formed in 2009 by three men from Fukushima. So far, *three* has produced numerous three-dimensional works based on manga, anime, and game figures, which have been highly regarded both domestically and overseas. In this vein, they have created three-dimensional works and participatory installations using individually packaged candies and fish-shaped soy sauce pots as materials, pursuing their interest in mass production/mass consumption, together with relations between the collective and the individual.

Based in Fukushima since their formation, the events of 11 March, 2011 had a profound influence on *three*. Their environment immediately changed as “Fukushima” became a worldwide synonym for natural and nuclear disaster, as well as radiation, and the group was inevitably sucked into this context. Originally they had no clear political or ideological aims. However, feeling it unnatural as artists born and brought up in Fukushima to have no reaction to events, they came out with *Eat Me* (2012), investigating production-consumption/Tokyo-Fukushima relationships. *RAW* (2012), made from newspapers supplying information on daily radiation doses, *Tokyo Electric* (2013), inspired by the nuclear reactor building at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power station, and *CAUTION Not Contaminated Do not Care* (2016), looking at unconscious prejudice directed towards Fukushima. An important common component shared by these works is the irony and emptiness hidden beneath a beautiful appearance. Here, *three* directly reflect the ‘insider’ perspective and experience of people living in Fukushima.