



KOGANECHO A.I.R. MANAGER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
Post-Internship Report

Submitted by:
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AIR Manager Intern (August to October 2022)

SUMMARY

Koganecho Area Management Center (KAMC) has been running an Artist in Residence (AIR) program for 13 years since it was established in 2009. The AIR Manager Internship Program is a short-term offering that provides a practical opportunity to study the management side of running an AIR while staying in the Koganecho area. In August 2022, following the recommendation of my graduate school professor, Ms. Mayumi Hirano to apply for the program, and with the generosity of KAMC Director Mr. Shingo Yamano, I was selected to take part in the program after an application process with KAMC.



The program offered housing and living expenses in Koganecho where the AIR Manager Intern will be able to interact with the different artists-in-residence during the time period. During my internship, I stayed at CHAP-301, a cozy studio apartment that had everything I needed, located in a lively neighborhood a few minutes away from the main Koganecho Area Management Center office.

Through the AIR Manager Internship, I saw first-hand how KAMC has been organizing artist residencies in the area, and I was given the chance to coordinate with artists-in-residence from the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea during their residency process towards the organization of a culminating exhibition project. I was also able to visit different artist spaces and institutions during my stay to experience and gain more knowledge about Japan's contemporary art scene.

The experience gave me a lot of insight and a better view of how AIR programs are held overseas, and I was able to compare this to my own experiences in organizing residency programs back in Manila. Through the different artists and curators that I met, I was able to expand my network and learn more about Japanese contemporary art. Having worked in a museum setting, working at an independent art space like Koganecho was very refreshing, and the new environment helped me learn more about my own curatorial practice and preferences on where I wish to direct my career.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Following the open call, I submitted an application declaring my interest in the management of residency programs, where I wrote the following motivation statement:

I wish to join this internship through the Koganecho Area Management Center (KAMC) to learn more about the management of residency programs in Japan, as I see value in programs that are responsive not just to the creative goals and needs of individual participants, but also to the communities within and beyond the site of Koganecho. Community-based programs have become central in my own practice as a researcher and arts manager in Manila, and I find that my participation in KAMC's programs would be able to expand my own capacities in engaging with artists of different backgrounds and align with the organization's goals in managing and implementing its residencies. The program offers a new setting that would surely help in the shaping of my own practice, especially within the context of a changing international environment for contemporary art that has been transformed by our pandemic experience in the past few years.

As part of the curatorial team of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, I have been involved in the facilitation of short-term residency programs through the museum's partnerships with institutions overseas. These usually involved the production of exhibitions, most of which I have taken on as project coordinator. I have likewise taken part in a curatorial residency exchange program in 2017, where I had the opportunity to stay with National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts and help with the production of that year's edition of the Asian Art Biennial. My first-hand experience in these residencies have given me valuable perspectives in how similar programs are managed and would inform my own participation in the KAMC AIR 2022 Training Program, especially in finding ways to meaningfully support and engage artists-in-residence and their audiences. With forthcoming residencies underway in the next few years, this experience as an intern at KAMC will surely contribute to how I will be able to help the institution that I work for in developing a better residency experience for artists and curators in the future.

Since 2020, I have been undertaking graduate studies at the University of the Philippines Diliman. This internship will therefore inform my own practice and research interests in contemporary art-related programming, especially as I aim to take further studies and research overseas in the long-term. With all of this in mind, I hope to be able to contribute to the program by offering my arts management skills and knowledge in contemporary art, and hopefully lead to a meaningful and lasting collaborative relationship with the team of KAMC.

Personal Statement

Since 2015, I have been actively pursuing a career within the museum and institutional setting, which has provided me a specific perspective in the management of arts programs. International cooperation and exchange are important pillars to my own practice which have manifested through my participation in various research, curatorial, and publication projects that revolved around ideas of collaboration and conversations around culture. My own research endeavors have focused on the engagement of publics through contemporary art, and this interest has continued through my work as a museum professional. The idea of heritage and community engagement through contemporary art also entered my interests when I served as research assistant to a project and case study on the neighborhood of Escolta in Manila, a hub for many contemporary creative initiatives, including 98B Collaboratory. My role at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila in the past years has also made me curious about contemporary art practices elsewhere in the world, especially in my assignments for international art exhibitions and residencies. I aim to continue pursuing these research and

curatorial interests in the future, eventually expand my own practice overseas, and hopefully join and contribute in meaningful conversations around these ideas.

(Devela, 2022)

I had the chance to meet with Mr. Shingo Yamano, KAMC Director, and the rest of the KAMC team through an online interview via Zoom, where we spoke about my motivations and personal interests in participating in the program. I was elated to find out one month later that I had been selected for the program, and I hurriedly worked on securing my visa for my stay.

INTERNSHIP TASKS

Curatorial and Production Assistance

Throughout the internship period, I was tasked with assisting the coordinators of KAMC, Ms. Natsuko Kurashige and Mr. Tae Ho Han in developing the exhibition program that will serve as the culminating project of the five (5) artists-in-residence from China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and the Philippines. These artists were to form the exhibition entitled “Return of Exchange” which signifies the revival of Koganecho’s international AIR program, eventually building up to the return of the center’s flagship exhibition program, Koganecho Bazaar. My experience in coordinating artists-in-residence helped a lot in how I connected with the different artists, especially with Filipino artist Jazel Kristin, with whom I worked with in a previous project about heritage and urban communities.



Poster of *Return of Exchange*

In assisting the curatorial team, I was assigned to help Jazel Kristin in her production process, specifically in brainstorming and coming up with ways to accomplish her planned exhibition works for the residency program. I closely monitored her progress and was occasionally involved in the production of her works. This included the sourcing of materials in coordination with Taeho and Natsuko, the planning and production of acrylic molds that she will be using for her resin work, workshopping her ideas and commenting on the direction of her project, and other tasks related to the realization of her work. Likewise, I was also involved in developing the layout and installing the artworks for the artist’s exhibition space prior to the exhibition opening on October 1.



With Filipino artist-in-residence Jazel Kristin (photographed) at the Site C workshop, assisting her in the production of her acrylic resin mould



Jazel Kristin working on her cutouts to be used in her millipede collages



Trial run of Jazel's resin mold for one of her artworks



Photos of Jazel's cutouts to be used in several of her artworks. During my visit to her studio, Jazel explained her artistic process and the direction to which she wants to bring her works.



Meeting with Jazel, Natsuko, and Gen-san, the art installer assigned to hang the artists' works.



The *Return of Exchange* exhibition team, with KAMC coordinator Taeho, Filipino artist Jazel Kristin, South Korean artist Minjun, Taiwanese artist Jay-en, KAMC coordinator Natsuko, Thai artist Kom, and myself.

Installation

Having been tasked to help with the installation of Jazel's works, I coordinated with Natsuko the timetables for the exhibition program and see to it that the artist is able to meet the deadlines set by KAMC in time for the opening on October 1. I participated in the plotting of the exhibition layout and directly assisted in the hanging of the artworks for Jazel's space in Site A, and also assisted Natsuko in some installation work for Liu Libin's videos in Hachibankan. Working with Gen-san, the designated art installer for the exhibition, was a great learning experience and was a huge collaborative effort in finding solutions to installation-related issues.



Jazel Kristin's artworks laid out on her table prior to delivery and installation at Site A.



The artist contemplating the layout of her exhibition at Site A.



My work involved looking for usable exhibition components such as tables and pedestals for the artist's artworks.



Working with Natsuko and Gen-san was a great learning experience and made me want to learn more and be more directly involved in the installation of artworks for exhibitions.

Editing

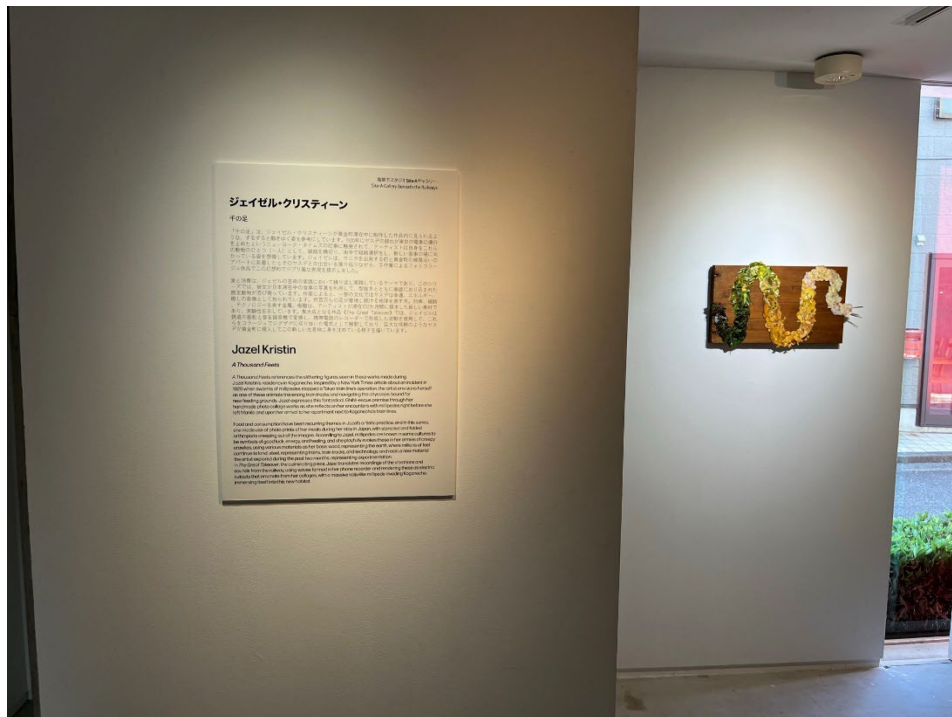
As part of my internship, I was also assigned to go through some of the English translations of KAMC's promotional materials, including the exhibition brochure and the exhibition texts of the artists involved in the project.



Photo of a brochure stand at BankART Station, with myself holding the *Return of Exchange* brochure which I helped edit the translation of.

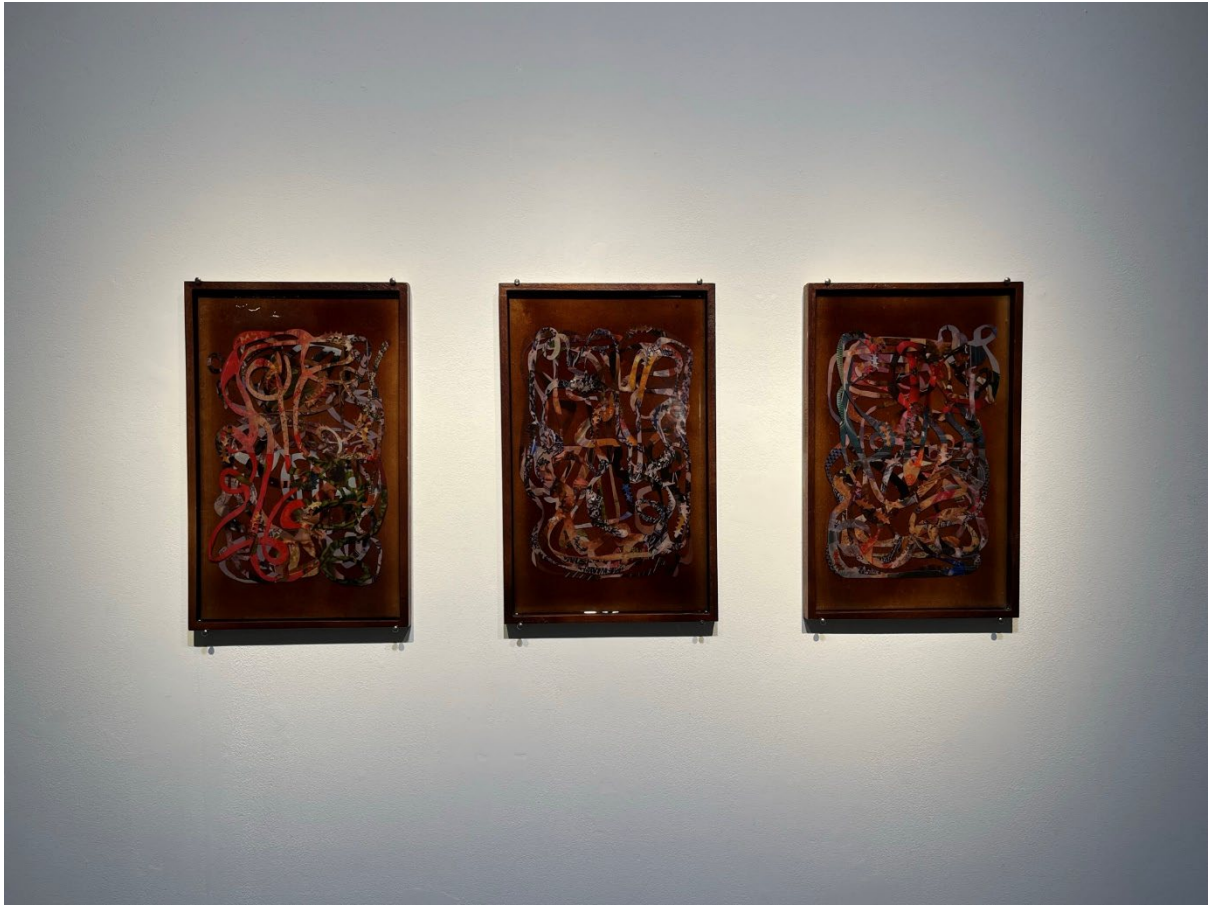
Exhibition Notes for Jazel Kristin

With my involvement in Jazel Kristin's planning process, she approached me and asked if it would be possible for me to write her exhibition text, by describing the works in her project. I wrote the following text as I understood her works, and had it approved by both Jazel and Natsuko.



A Thousand Feets references the crawling figures seen in these works made during Jazel Kristin's residency in Koganecho. Inspired by a New York Times article about an incident in 1920 when swarms of millipedes stopped a Tokyo train line's operation, the artist envisions herself as one of these crawling animals traversing train tracks and navigating the cityscape, bound for new feeding grounds. Jazel expresses this fantastical, Ghibli-esque premise through her handmade photo collage works as she reflects on her encounters with millipedes right before she left Manila and upon her arrival to her apartment next to Koganecho's train lines.

Food and consumption have been recurring themes in Jazel's artistic practice, and in this series, she made use of photo prints of her meals during her stay in Japan, with stenciled and folded arthropods crawling out of the images. According to Jazel, millipedes are known in some cultures to be symbols of good luck, energy, and healing, and she playfully evokes these in her armies of creepy crawlies, using various materials as her base: wood, representing the earth, where millions of feet continue to land; steel, representing trains, train tracks, and technology; and resin, a new material the artist explored during the past two months, representing experimentation. She translates recordings of the vibrations and sounds from the railway, using sound waves formed in her phone recorder and visualizing these into electric cutouts that emanate from her collages.







Installation views of the exhibition and Jazel Kristin's artworks for *A Thousand Feet*

Reflection Essay

As part of the *Return of Exchange* program, it was suggested that I contribute as well to the exhibition by offering my insights into the idea of “return of exchange”, or the revival of Koganecho’s international AIR exchange programs. I connected this to my personal experience where I spoke about how all roads led me to Koganecho, and all of the convergences and coincidences that happened throughout the past five years have come to this point in my career as a cultural worker.



“At first, I showed this [My Kitchen Anthropology Museum] only to my friends who came to visit, without notifying anyone in particular, but their reactions and conversations made me realize many more things. We talked about what they had chosen and reminisced about their travels and encounters. This led to a very personal exchange of ideas about other people’s cultures. It was an intimate conversation that I have never had in any museum or art gallery. The junk shown here has little cultural or economic value, but each has a personal story to tell. By exchanging those stories, we can share and exchange a bit of our worldview with others in an intimate way. And the institution of art, with its public nature, with its imperative to serve and provide for the unspecified, leaves no room for this kind of personal intimacy. But almost all of my experiences with art are based on this kind of intimate exchange through art. As a curator, the question of how to pass on such intimate dialogues I have had with artists to others, has always troubled me. This project for a trivial kitchen museum, therefore, I decided to try out the direction of ‘creating a place for a specific few’, in contrast to the mission of a public museum, serving for an unspecified public. And I reaffirmed that I was actually looking for this intimate relationship through art for a long time.”

Makiko Hara, “My KIitchen Anthropology Museum,”
(2020)

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In this passage, Vancouver-based Japanese independent curator Makiko Hara spoke of the project “My Kitchen Anthropology Museum,” which she started at the height of the COVID19 lockdowns. Hara’s essay resonated personally because of how amid grief and anxiety, the pandemic had similarly offered me a way to see art and curatorial work from a different perspective than what I knew.

Much of my curatorial experience comes from working in museums, and because of this, I have collected over the years a significant amount of institutional (traditional, rigid, unbending, uncompromising) baggage in the way I experience art. Alongside these tendencies, I have also kept a certain distance from art, its production and circulation,

especially if found outside the institutions I belonged to. This detachment stems from my own hesitation in identifying as a “curator”, a label laden with expectations that I find bothersome to claim and difficult to live up to. I focused on my institutional work as a “cultural worker,” where I found the comfortable balance of keeping art within arm’s reach, yet still achieving the necessary distance from “curatorship” that I wanted, all to keep myself from breaching these lines I had drawn.

The past two or three years unraveled these labels and boundaries I built around myself. On a personal level, I have been dealing with the loss of my father in 2019, and when the COVID 19 pandemic came in early 2020, I felt a deep fear of losing more loved ones from illness. I lost my maternal grandmother to COVID and old age just earlier this year. At work, museums throughout the Philippines closed down, and were considered “non-essential” to a Filipino public that was made to endure endless lockdowns and ridiculous policies. Museum workers like myself scrambled for ways to keep ourselves employed, staging webinar after webinar for an increasingly virtually fatigued public. Typical of how self-preservation is so ingrained in our work, we held town halls to share our personal experiences during the crisis and see how we could move forward together. There was a feeling of solidarity forming among my peers, and a lot of us expressed discontent in how institutions, despite claims of transformation in crisis, continued to gravitate towards the more familiar and regressive practices from before.

Around the same time, I was also starting my journey through graduate school, when all university classes had to migrate online. Despite the anxieties brought by COVID, I also had the fortune of meeting some of the most encouraging people in my professors and classmates. Virtual classes, while somewhat impersonal in nature, gave me the chance to have a sense of community as we commiserated about our personal struggles, as well as the artworld-related things that weighed us down. A lot of them became close friends, and we pushed each other to seek opportunities that would help us grow as people and cultural practitioners in a sociopolitical climate that has become increasingly unsympathetic to our line of work. It was also through one of my classes that I first read Makiko Hara’s essay, and virtually met the curator herself through my professor, Mayumi Hirano. These encounters from the past couple of years somehow led me here to Koganecho.

I write this as I mark the halfway point in Koganecho Area Management Center’s internship program for managing artist residencies in Yokohama. I feel extremely fortunate to join a truly community-based program that offers support for artists, curators, and researchers; this has been a refreshing change of pace that has given me the time to recuperate from the trauma of the past few years due to COVID. In working with artists like Jazel Kristin, I found again the value of flexibility and communication, and how much the process has always been just as important as the final product when working with art. *Return of Exchange* signals not just a resumption of conversations around art, but also the emergence of new perspectives for a constantly changing environment, and Koganecho has shown us it is built to power through the call of the times.

The past few weeks since coming to Japan have felt like catching up to a backlog of experiences lost due to the pandemic, and it also became an opportune time to reconnect with people, and to make new connections at the same time; to revisit old ideas that I left to stagnate, and to learn fresh ways of doing things in the process. All this to say that my stay in Koganecho has solidified my has reshifted from distance and detachment, to communal and intimate exchanges, and I look forward to the remaining days ahead.

Essay for *Return of Exchange*
Koganecho Area Management Center
Roberto Daniel C. Devela
2022

Artists' Walkthrough

As part of the *Return of Exchange* program, an artists' walkthrough was organized by KAMC as a collateral event that facilitated discussion and sharing among the artists regarding their process and how their personal journeys led to the creation of each of their residency art projects.



KAMC Director Shingo Yamano-san leading the artists walkthrough



Filipino artist Jazel Kristin preparing for her artist talk



Taiwanese artist Lee Jay-En talking about his installation work at Yamamoto Apartment



Thai artists Kom and Poy speaking about their installation works at Yamamoto Apartment



South Korean artist Jeon Minjun speaking about his immersive art installation in Hachibankan

ACTIVITIES

I feel extremely grateful for the opportunity to take part in the Koganecho AIR Manager Internship Program as it gave me the chance to experience so many different things and see so many different places in the span of two months. The program offered me more than I had hoped for, and I am thankful for the hospitality and generosity of KAMC in selecting me for the program. Throughout my two-month stay, I was able to witness the camaraderie and community within Koganecho, and I also met a lot of different artists, curators, and ordinary people with whom I related to in such meaningful ways. Apart from my own independent visits to different art spaces, I was also offered a study trip to Aichi Prefecture to see the Aichi Triennale, and I am really thankful for that experience.

Participating in the Monthly Cleanup Drive and the Monthly Artist's Meeting



I felt a great sense of community watching everyone take care of their environment during the clean-up patrol around Koganecho. It was great meeting everyone later on during the online Zoom meeting with all the resident artists.

Visiting Kodomo Bazaar 2022



Kodomo Bazaar was an interesting project that I hoped to someday realize in the future. A children-driven exhibition program would surely benefit a lot of kids in my country.

Attending the Online Talk of Mayumi Hirano and Nozomu Ogawa, and Meeting the Artists-in-Residence for the first time



Photo courtesy of Natsuko Kurashige

Visiting the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo



The National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo is usually one of the first museums I visit whenever I go to Japan considering its astounding collection of Western art and lineup of international art exhibitions, something that I don't typically experience in Manila. It was an opportunity for me to see artworks by Western masters, some of which I had only seen in books or photographs.

Visiting Mori Art Museum



I also visited the Mori Art Museum to see their exhibition that focused on the post-pandemic experience. It was thrilling to be able to freely go to museum exhibitions again after two years of not being able to.

Visiting Aichi Triennale



As part of my study visit to Aichi Prefecture, I was able to go around three of the venues of the Aichi Triennale. The exhibition at Tokoname City in particular brought back so many memories of home. Glenda Leon, whose work you may see above, was the first artist-in-residence I had the chance to work with back in Manila in 2018. There were also video works that were filmed in the Philippines, which was refreshing and comforting to see, and it helped me with some of my homesickness.



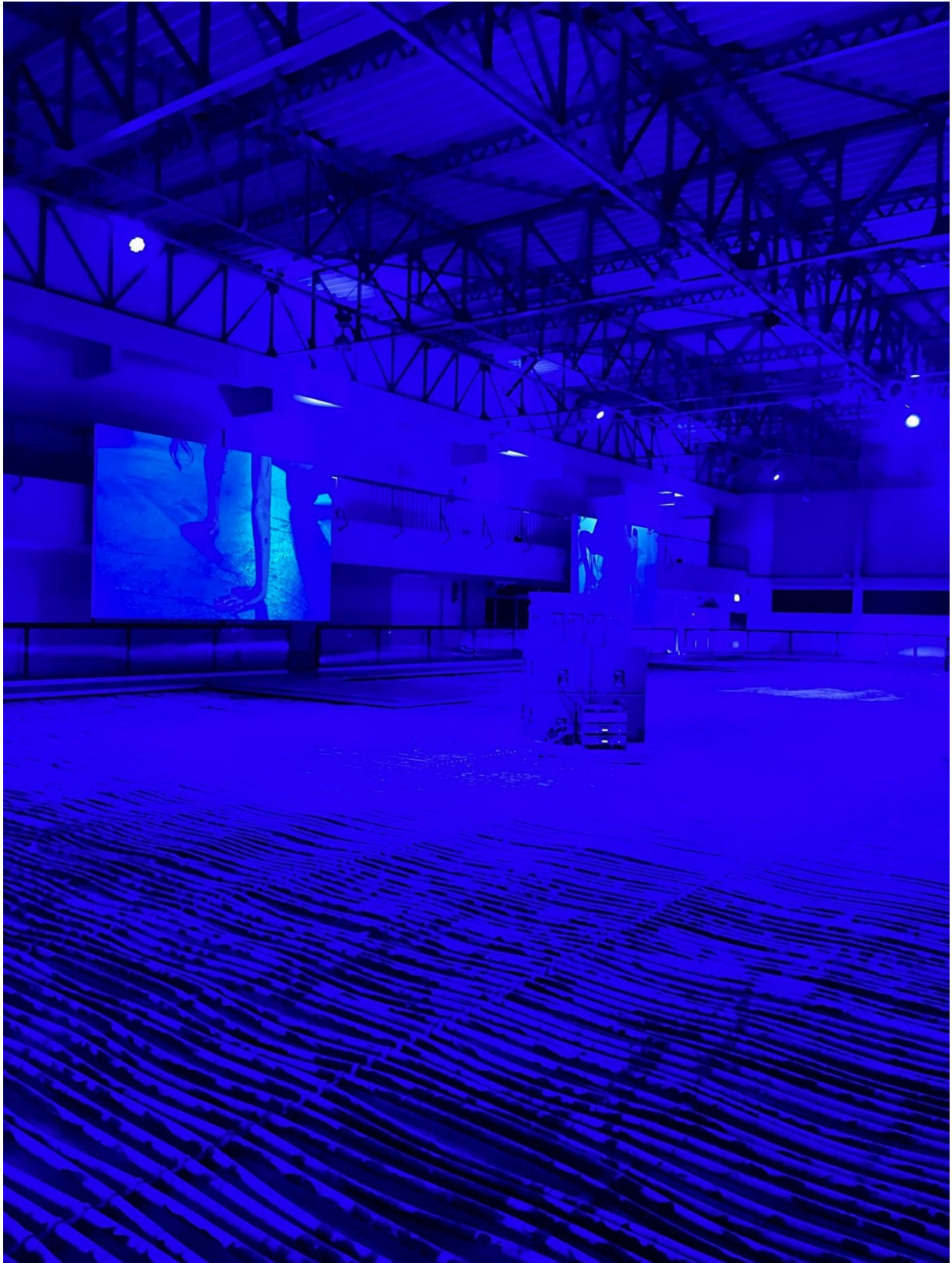
The artworks at Aichi Arts Center were also quite memorable and featured some of the key pieces of the exhibition. This artwork that dealt with the passing of time as seen through the trunk of an ancient tree was very interesting to me.



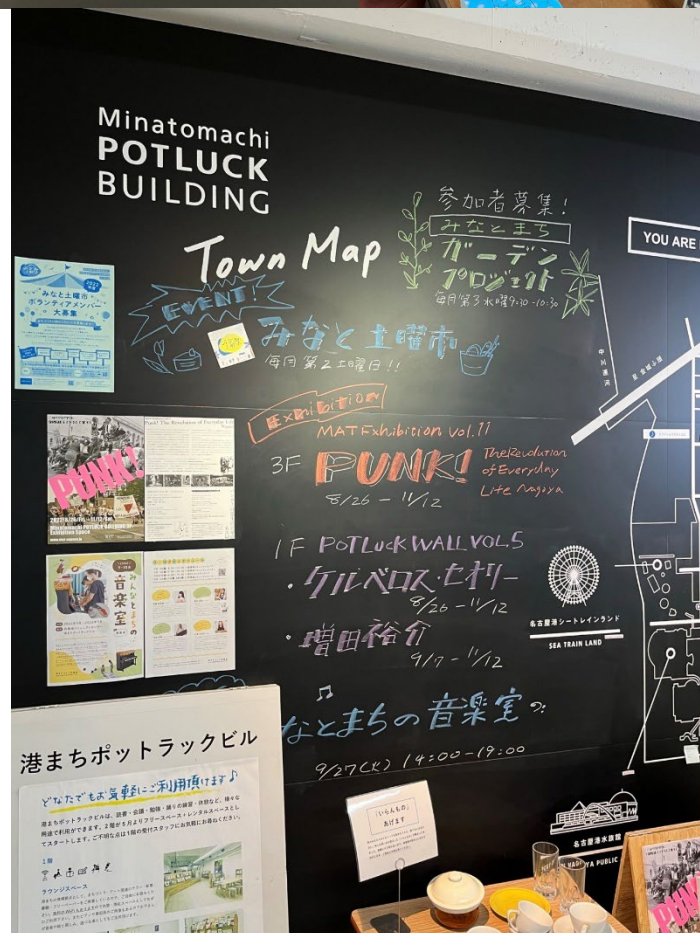
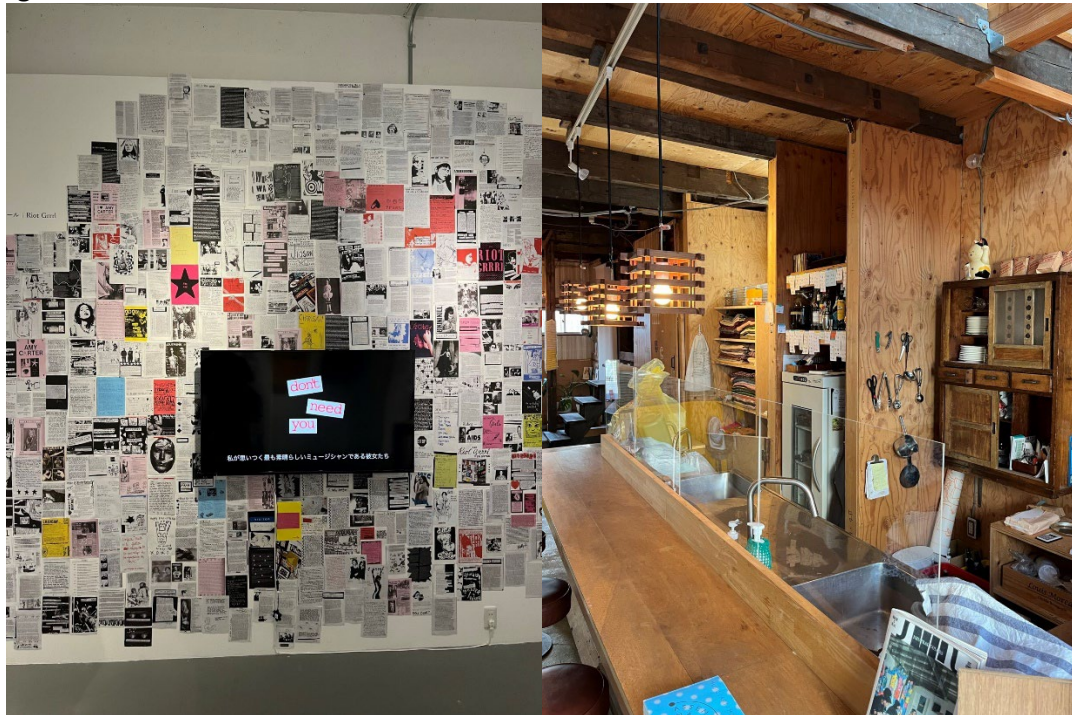
On Kawara's work were also quite memorable, as I had only seen these works in books about Japanese art and during discussions in class.



However, some of the most haunting works that made a lot of impact on me were shown in Ichinomiya City, the last venue of the Triennale which I visited. Located in a defunct school for medical workers, it was immensely cathartic to view works that responded to the experience of the pandemic.



Visiting Minatomachi Art Table



Natsuko also took me to Minatomachi Art Table (MAT), Nagoya where I met Yoshida-san and the rest of the MAT team. It was really interesting to learn about their experience running their own independent art space in Nagoya, and to see their exhibition programs, one of which dealt with the history of punk culture.

Visiting Nagoya Castle



Visiting Nagoya Castle was an opportunity to learn more about the history of the city and see how audiences respond to it. It was also an opportunity to geek out and pretend to be a ninja with these actors.

Meeting Makiko Hara and Visiting BankArt Station

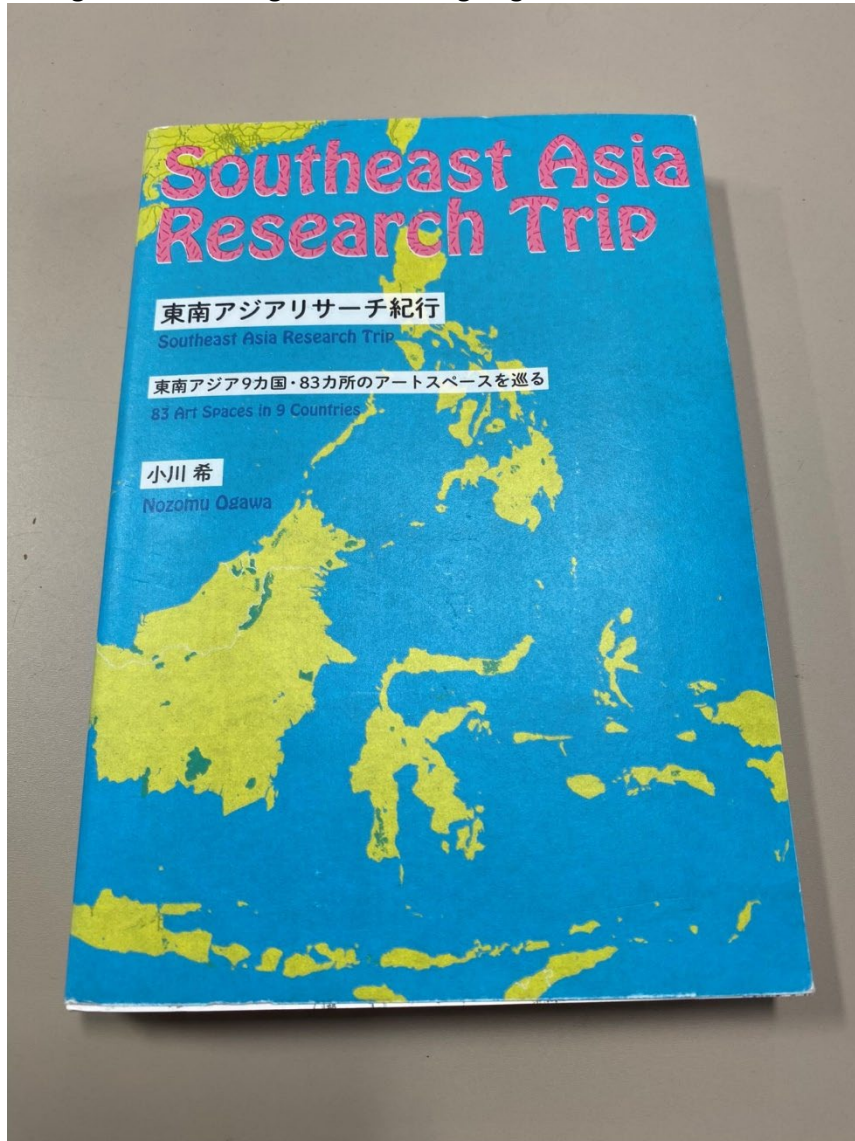


I had the fortune of meeting Makiko Hara, a curator whom I previously met online through one of my graduate school classes with Mayumi Hirano. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to take a photograph with her, but she was gracious enough to give me a tour around the Koganecho area where she used to live. The photo above shows a rack outside a skin clinic that shows plaster casts presumably previously used for procedures, which Makiko and I found so bizarre. I enjoyed meeting Makiko a lot and I always looked forward to hearing her insights and thoughts on certain matters about contemporary art.



After our coffee break, Makiko and I took a cab to BankArt to visit their exhibition space and meet with one of their staff.

Meeting Nozomu Ogawa and visiting Art Center Ongoing

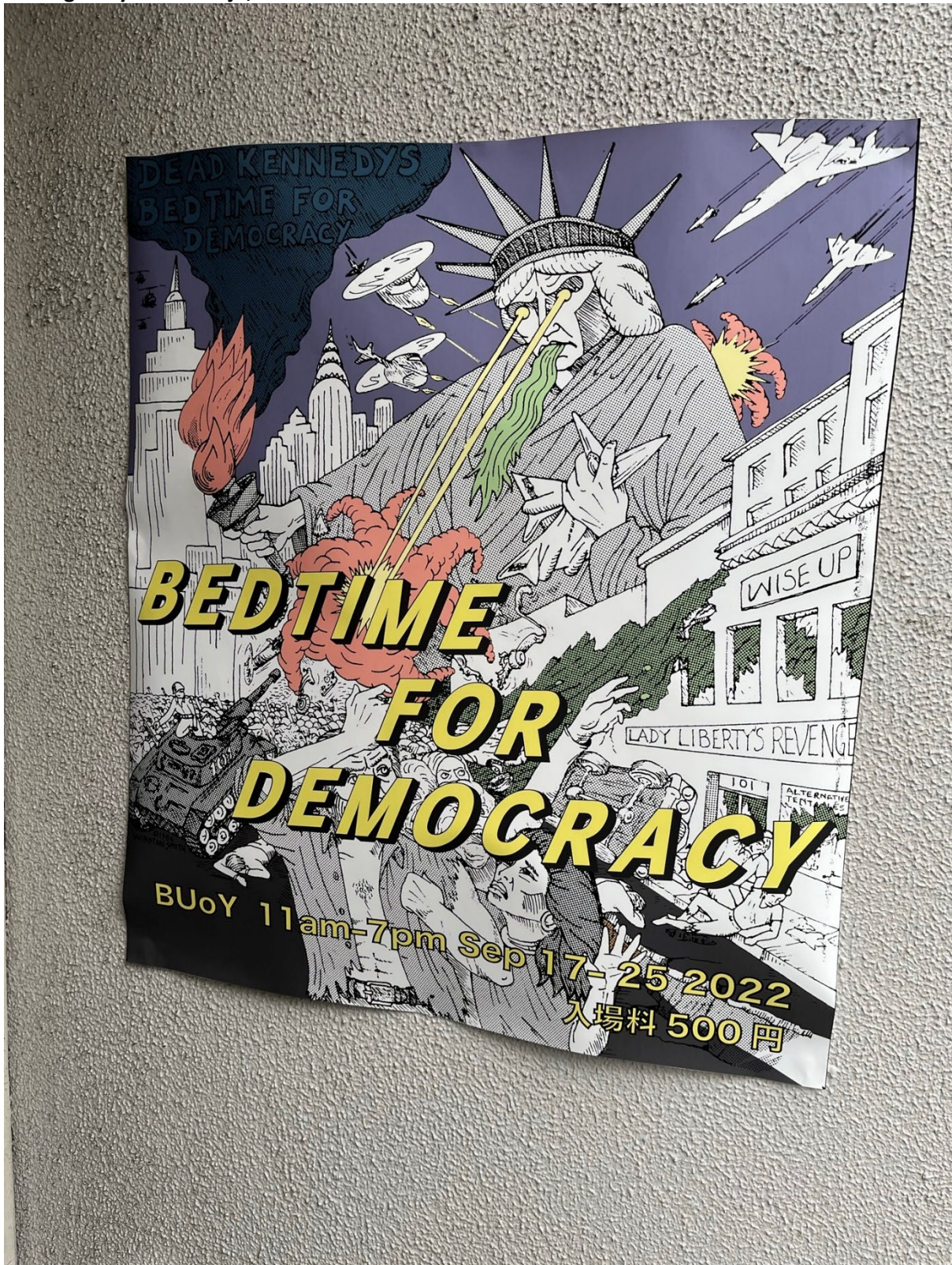


During my research breaks at the KAMC office, I occasionally read through this book by Nozomu Ogawa about his travels around Southeast Asia and visits to different artist-run spaces. I found his insights interesting and his writing style humorous, so I took a liking to the book. When Makiko invited me to her talk at Art Center Ongoing, the space which Nozomu runs, I immediately included it in my calendar.



I visited Art Center Ongoing and was able to meet Nozomu Ogawa in person after listening to his talk with Mayumi online. The resident artist, Karilynn Ho, spoke about her own experiences and work, and later on, Makiko led a discussion about developing independently-run spaces and programs.

Visiting Buoy in Kitasenju, Adachi-Ku



A lot of my friends from the Philippines who moved to Japan lived in Kitasenju, so when I found out that there was an exhibition space nearby, I took the first opportunity to visit it. I saw this exhibition called Bedtime for Democracy, which showed several video works and conceptual pieces that questioned the status quo of today. This exhibition hit deep in particular as part of my lived experience in Manila deals with the politics that it spoke about.



Posters exhibited in BUoY.

Farewell Party with KAMC Staff and Artists



This culminating party was quite heartwarming as we all shared our last meal together. It was also an opportunity to meet some of the newer batch of resident artists in Koganceho. Photo courtesy of Jazel Kristin.

Miscellaneous Culture Trips



Weekend visit to Hakone and Lake Ashi



Lighting up summer fireworks with my college friends

FUTURE PROSPECTS

As part of my ongoing research for my graduate studies, I have begun reading on Koganecho's artist residency program and the participation of Filipino artists through existing reports in the English language. With encouragement from Jazel Kristin, I have compiled some reading materials that will be useful in the my studies, and I believe it would be a good opportunity to reunite previous participants of the Koganecho AIR Program from the Philippines through a research project that could possibly culminate with a return exhibition of sorts. It would be interesting to see how each of the artists' goals have aligned with the objectives and principles of Koganecho Area Management Center, and see how their participation in the program contributed to their artistic practice.



Artists that I have found materials on so far include Mark Salvatus, Zeus Bascon, Robert Gutierrez, Mimi Tecson, Joey Cobcobo, Paul Mondok, Joseph Gabriel, and Jazel Kristin.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION



My favorite view of Koganecho

As written in my *Return of Exchange* essay, my participation in the Koganecho Area Management Center AIR Manager Internship program felt like a culmination of my experiences since starting my journey into curatorial work. More than an ending, however, it feels more like the beginning of a new chapter and I am immensely, profoundly grateful for the experience it gave me. The way KAMC manages artist residencies gave me new perspectives on how programs like this could be organized, and I am in awe of the support and camaraderie I saw among everyone within the community of Koganecho. KAMC was established as a transformative organization that sought to bring art to the community it serves, and it is only fitting that a “return of exchange” be seen not only just as a return to form, but also an opportunity to evolve following our pandemic experience. The Koganecho team had shown this in their receptiveness and collaborative spirit throughout the process of conceiving the exhibition program *Return of Exchange*, and it is this kind of openness to new ideas that would help the revitalize Koganecho’s landscape. With this, I am excited to see where these new trajectories would lead myself and KAMC, and I only look forward to the next time our roads intersect. Once again, I am truly grateful for the experience, and I want to thank Yamano-san, Natsuko, Tae Ho, the rest of the Koganecho team, and all the artists and curators I met during the two months I spent with KAMC. Until we meet again!