

MAIN SECTION

Collections of the Present in the 20th Century and Beyond: Tokyo's Fieldwork and Guidebooks as Curatorial Practices

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ABSTRACT

Cities worldwide are transforming at an unprecedented speed. The technological advances of the 20th century have instilled significant transformations for urban centers around the world. In this context, the preservation of local communities is becoming a growing challenge for authorities worldwide. In times of such shifts for cities, the relationship between urban past, present, and future becomes a place of negotiation for academics and practitioners alike, with curatorial practices being at its center, creating a shift towards documentations of everyday ordinary life. Tokyo in particular, poses an exemplary case of urban transformations due to social, cultural, and economic restructuring that followed the opening of Japan's borders in 1868. As a result, fieldwork that took place in the 20th century and beyond evolved to be a vigorous practice that took different forms, aiming to "collect the present". These works can be retrospectively connected to discuss on notions of curation and interpretation of the city's transformation, and the role of the observer.

KEYWORDS

Curation; Tokyo; Fieldwork; Urban; Guidebook

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The technological advances of the 20th century instigated significant transformations in urban centers around the world. The fabric of metropolitan areas simultaneously expanded and densified, accumulating an excess of information, people and products. The increase in economic output and productivity resulting from technological development has also brought along unprecedented urban development and a drastic population increase, expecting to reach 8 billion people globally by 2026.¹ In times of such shifts in cities, curators are faced with the challenge of examining increasingly complex and disparate environments, as well as communities that are rarely homogeneous—where urban past, present and future become places of negotiation.² More and more authorities are acknowledging of the growing importance of “Contemporary Collecting” for curatorial practices,³ where preserving local communities is seen as an essential step that will protect them from eradication amid the city’s rapid changing.

Long before the notion of “Contemporary Collecting” emerged in academic discourse, the urban context of early-20th century Tokyo had created fertile conditions for exo-museological “collections of the present”. Tokyo has experienced a continuous “metabolization”⁴ ever since Japan underwent [rapid] social, cultural, and economic restructuring following the suspension of self-imposed autarky in 1868. Formerly named Edo and the feudal seat of government since 1603, Tokyo transformed into the nation’s modern-day capital in one generation. This metamorphosis was propelled by rapid changes in the economy, as well as by natural disasters and war.⁵

Activated by and with the purpose to document the transformations, the phenomenon of urban fieldwork books and guidebooks emerged in 1920s Tokyo and continues to this day, resulting in a multigenerational “relay race” of street observers. This study investigates this format of fieldwork and guidebook publications that appear following several paradigmatic events, arguing that they comprise a distinct mode of contemporary collecting of Tokyo’s changing urbanity. Authored by Japanese architects, designers and artists through the 20th century, the projects are assembled and cross-examined to map the representation of common topics across them, for example the commercial neighborhood of Ginza, street stalls typologies, fashion, city façade studies and more. Through

1 Michael Bhaskar, “Curation : The Power of Selection in a World of Excess,” 2016., 31.

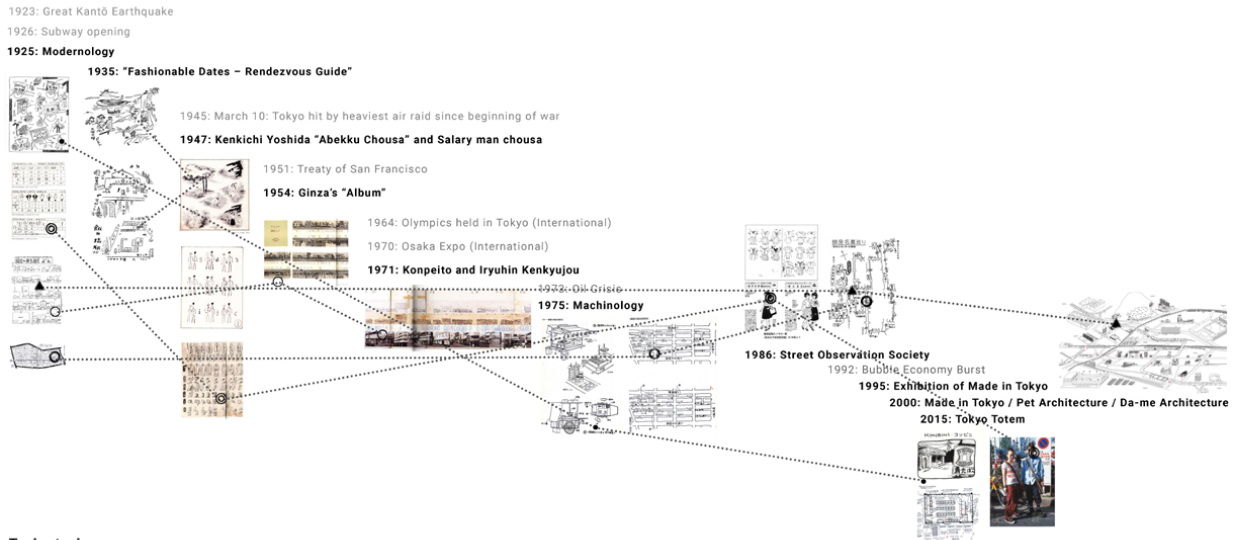
2 “New museology movement of the 1980s”...and 1990s toward civic engagement (Cameron 2007).” In Wayne Golding, Modest Viv, *Museums and Communities Curators, Collections and Collaboration* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2013.870694>.

3 In Zvezdana Antoš, “Collecting’ the Present in Ethnographic Museums,” *Ethnological Research*, no. 18/19 (2013): 115-28.

4 Notion described in Koh Kitayama, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, and Ryue Nishizawa, *Tokyo Metabolizing* (Tokyo: Toto, 2010), 10.

5 Namely, the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the Oil Crisis of 1973, and the Economy Bubble Burst of 1992. Perhaps add: post-war economic development

Timeline of Fieldworks and Guidebooks



Trajectories

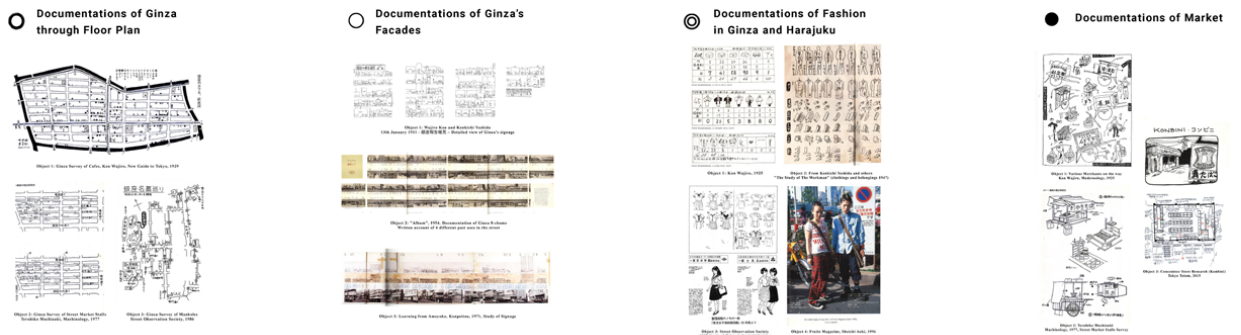


FIG. 1 Timeline of Fieldworks and Guidebooks and Trajectories of common themes across the cases.

employing the notion of “trajectory,” urban objects and representations are traced through distinct surveys that took place in different points of time, in order to piece together an ongoing, collective urban curation [Fig. 1].

Each of the selected cases had been created through the observation, documentation and reflection on the urban paradigm shifts its time, characterized by a preservationist attitude towards local communities, at risk of being lost amidst the metabolization of the city. Another common characteristic among the cases is their observation and documentation of the daily lives of ordinary peoples, and the way they continuously transform the city and create deviations from authorized planning. The self-positioning of these studies on the margins of the dominant urban discourse renders their authors as examples of “curators” who are active participants in the collections they produce. The historical and cross-cultural frameworks of the individual urban documentations of the present will illuminate aspects of the city previously not included in formal representations.

Urbanization and urban change until the 19th century relied on principles of formal design that evolved from authoritarian, structural, or symbolic prepositions.⁶ The Renaissance practice of restoring a town after war

6 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (MIT Press, 1988), 20.

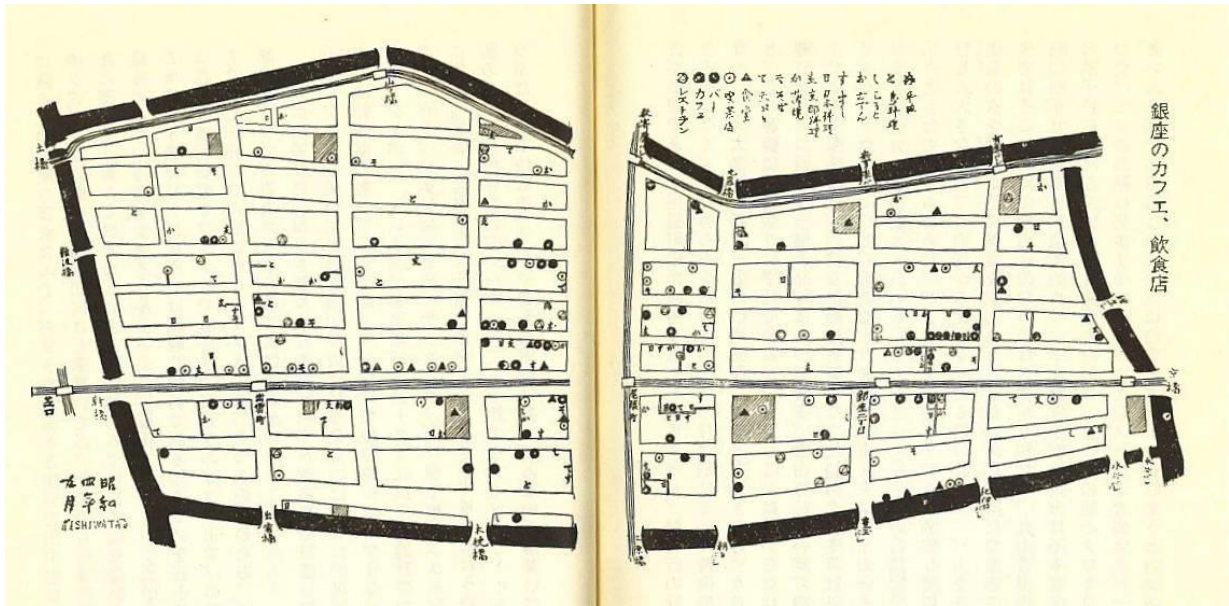


FIG. 2 Kon Wajiro, *Ginza's Cafés*, *New Guide to Tokyo*, 1929. (銀座のカフェ、新版大東京案内、1929).

or disaster served as a formal basis for conservation. Under this paradigm, significant events only moderately altered the city's image. On the contrary, cases of notable transformation emerged in the 19th century.⁷ The reconfiguration of the agricultural town into the industrial, planned city, resulted in a new urban setting in a matter of decades. Planning paradigms in the 20th century have enabled a faster and unpredictable rhythm of urban transformations, owing to the emergence of industrial capitalist and liberal models, whereas more recent developments include the introduction of shared-interest planning.⁸

Along with the growth of cities, the necessity to acquire data on urban processes had already appeared by the mid-19th century. As urban planners Nuran Zeren Gülersoy and Ebru Gürler point out, "[p]lain-style urban plans became the base maps for the emerging science of urban statistics, through which expanding state capitals and new industrial cities were to be regulated."⁹ Fieldwork was established as a method to collect data about urban space and to create comprehensive representations of urban phenomena with a primary aim of processing them as data. Guidebooks also served as an aid to navigate and make sense of the increasingly complicated city. The development of new technologies and infrastructures, and the imminent population transfer from an agrarian to urban contexts and lifestyles, coincided with a growing need for means of navigation in new and increasingly dense urban environments [Fig. 2].

7 Ibid.

8 Nuran Zeren Gülersoy and Ebru Gürler, "Conceptual Challenges on Urban Transformation," *ITU AIZ* 8, no. 1 (2011): 10-24.

9 Ibid., 54.

In Tokyo specifically, fieldwork evolved into a vigorous practice that took different forms ranging from “Design Surveys” to “Avant-Garde Surveys.”¹⁰ As one of many new technologies that saw rapid implementation in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century, the explosive industrialization of printing resulted in the more effective circulation of these projects in printed formats such as magazine or book publications, demonstrating the power of such media and technologies as enablers of self-curation. These projects marked the appearance of the documentation of urban space and its transformation, while also including interpretations of what the change could mean for the communities involved.

In these early guides and projects, Tokyo was being likened to an incomprehensible maze, a city like nothing previously known. In this context, fieldwork became an integral tool for urban discourse, accommodating the increasing need for information on how to inhabit the new environment. Small books with practical knowledge such as statistical data, guidebooks, historical documents, descriptions of landmarks, restaurant suggestions, places for dating, cafes, etc. served as tools to help Tokyoites navigate the new urban condition. With the ability to select from an array of choices, fieldworks and guidebooks singled out certain urban features as important, while omitting other aspects not worthy of display. In this manner, these publications contributed to the creation of narratives and conceptual frameworks, comprising the selected items and the routes/pathways to reach them physically, or ideologically. This type of urban curation has the capacity to reinforce, react to, or rescue chosen elements within the city.

Urban curation as social/ethnographic construction: Modernology (1925)

The origins of the phenomena of “Collections of the present” in Tokyo can be traced to Modernology (モデルノロジオ). Literally meaning the “study of modern things,” it was established by Wajiro Kon¹¹ and Kenkichi Yoshida¹² in 1925. What started as an exhibition in the newly opened branch of the Kinokuniya bookshop in the urban center of Shinjuku attracted the broad attention of scholars as well as the general public and was followed by publications in journals and books. Kon was an architect, a housing reformer, educator and scholar of daily life ethnography and customs of the inter-war period. He took part in fieldwork studies along with folklorist Kunio Yanagita,¹³ researching the vernacular houses of the countryside (*minka*) between 1917-1922. Later on, he documented the way people’s livelihoods

10 As distinguished by Izumi Kuroishi, “Urban Survey and Planning in Twentieth-Century Japan: Wajiro Kon’s ‘Modernology’ and Its Descendants,” *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 3 (2016): 557-81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144216635151>.

11 今和次郎, Wajiro Kon (1888-1973)

12 吉田謙吉, Kenkichi Yoshida (1897-1982)

13 柳田國男, Kunio Yanagita (1875-1962)

changed on the aftermath of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.¹⁴ The occurrence of the earthquake devastated the capital and “brought a break in history, comparable to the one World War I brought to Europe and the United States.”¹⁵ In the aftermath of the disaster over 44 percent of the urban area of Tokyo burned, and 73.8 percent of all households were affected in a substantial way.¹⁶

According to historian Miriam Silverberg, “[a]t this time ethnographers became interested in studying ruptures in social relationships through discourse preoccupied with mores and customs.”¹⁷ To document this paradigm shift, Kon and Yoshida focused on fieldwork conducted in the commercial district of Ginza, with a goal to document the newly acquired lifestyles and customs that ensued as a result of the earthquake and rapid modernization. The new objects of modern life and the relationships between people and their surroundings were pivotal for Kon and Yoshida, and their way of looking at urban phenomena essentially introduced a notion of “street heritage.”¹⁸ The pair together with students would go on to document and collect objects and details, ranging from “the signs drawn on pieces of scrap wood, to the kinds of clothes worn by people passing through the town.”¹⁹ The result was a collection of modern artefacts, likened to the typical processes of archaeological expeditions, or “an archaeology of the present”. Unlike archaeologists, “modernologists” can exert a major influence on the city and the future of its inhabitants. As Kon articulates in the paper “The Psychological Foundation of City Planning” (1918):

City planning should be considered through observing the change of streets from the perspective of a so-called change of character, manners, and mentality, clarifying the underlying cause of transition stage of civilization, coping with the concentration of the urban population, and sociologically grasping an actual situation.²⁰ [Fig. 3]

14 Midday of September 1, 1923. The ensuing fire went on to destroy almost half of Tokyo with 140000 killed or missing.

15 Jun Tanaka in Hiroshima City Modern Museum, *Rojō to Kansatsu o Meguru Hyōgenshi: Kōgengaku No Genzai [Expressive History of Street and Observation: Kōgengaku's Present]* (Tokyo: Filmart, 2013), 46.

16 Yorifusa Ishida, “Ougai Mori and Tokyo’s Building Ordinance,” in *Tokyo: Urban Growth and Planning 1868-1988*, by Hiromichi Ishizuka and Yorifusa Ishida (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), 83-86.

André Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2002), 125.

17 Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing The Japanese Ethnography Of Modernity,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992): 30-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2058346>.

18 Jun Tanaka in Hiroshima City Modern Museum, *Rojō to Kansatsu o Meguru Hyōgenshi: Kōgengaku No Genzai [Expressive History of Street and Observation: Kōgengaku's Present]*, 46.

19 Teronobu Fujimori, “Under the Banner of Street Observation,” in *Street Observation Studies Primer*, by Genpei Akasegawa, Teronobu Fujimori, and Shinbo Minami (Tokyo: Chikuma Shōbō, 1986), 6-22, <http://forty-five.com/papers/154>.

20 Kuroishi, “Urban Survey and Planning in Twentieth-Century Japan: Wajiro Kon’s ‘Modernology’ and Descendants,” 5.

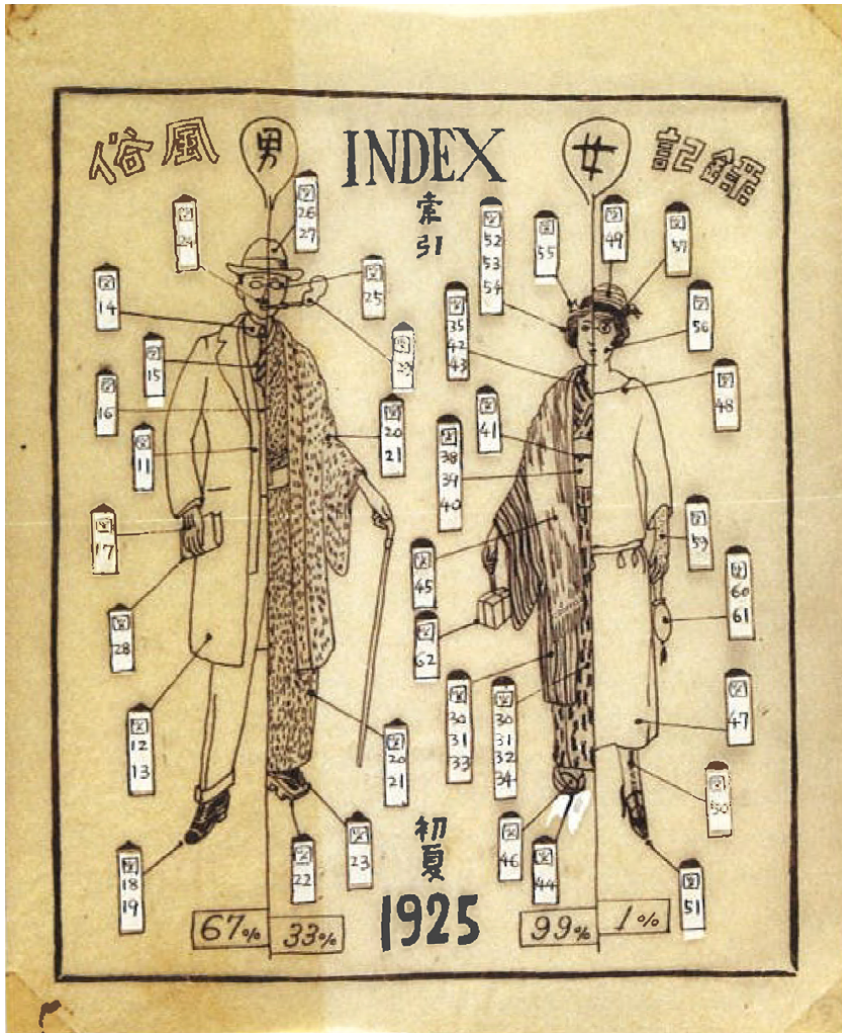


FIG. 3 Kon Wajiro, *Modernology*, observation of Ginza's fashion.

In *The New Guide to Tokyo*,²¹ Kon claimed that it was the opening of Tokyo Station in 1915, rather than the devastating Kanto Earthquake, that effectively created new social and professional classes in Japan—groups of people that would meet and interact in the vast public spaces in Tokyo. Rather than conceptualizing society through the framework of “civilization,” the metaphor of “construction” appears to be the prevalent motif for describing the ethos of the post-earthquake, and subsequently the post-war, period. This notion of construction was not only limited to the establishment of the urban environment but also extended to the “construction of everyday social activities”.

The new approach to urban space in *Modernology* included, for the first time, the productive and material realm of the newly established middle-class, drawing parallels between their practices and their everyday objects in a manner typical to ethnographic studies. It also brought awareness to the transformation of the city's social ethos by emphasizing ways of life alongside physical urban settings. Through detailed accounts of material objects that locals used, the drawings of *Modernology* provided

21 Wajirō Kon, *New Guide to Tokyo (Shinpan Dai Tokyo Annai)* (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1929), 12.

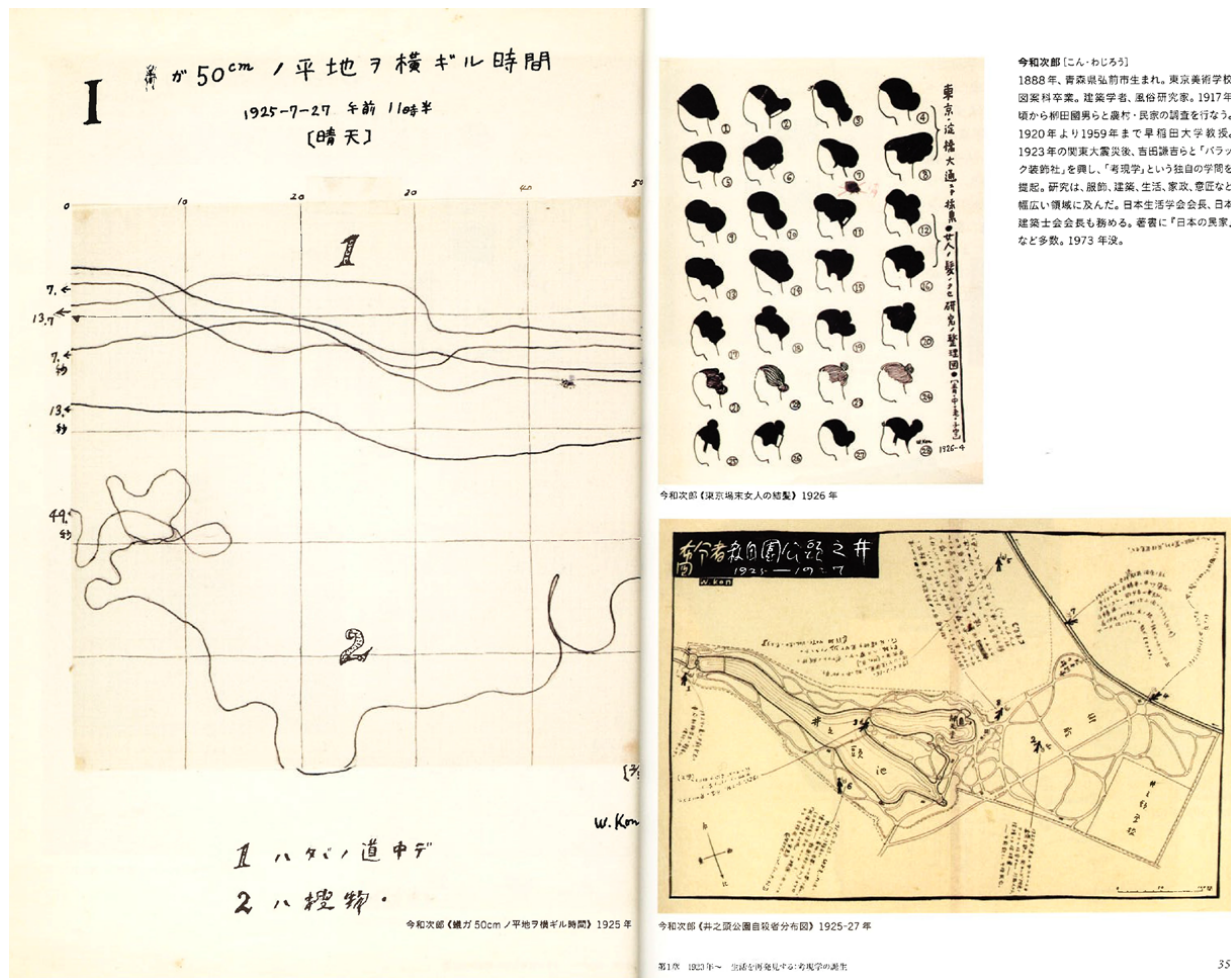


FIG. 4 Kon Wajiro, 1925-1927, Drawings of the movement of ants in a 50 cm space, female hairstyles, and fieldwork in Inokashira Park.

a sense of daily life in the particular settings studied. Such drawings range from westernized women's hairstyles, the movement of ants in a 50 cm space, drawings of city spaces, and many more [Fig. 4].

Curating spatial expectations: "Abekku"²² Rendezvous in Public space (1935)

Information on urban space in the early modern period was circulated in different formats to serve multiple roles: firstly, to embrace popular culture along with the new ways of interaction between men and women; and secondly, to advance a new bourgeois subjectivity of everyday life compatible with the modern economy. The formation of new social classes tied to the rapid industrialization of the nation also produced new audiences, and a concurrent search for new forms of entertainment serving them. Herein lies a notion of curation different from the "construction of

22 The French word "avec", meaning "together", was imported to Japanese to describe romantic dating.

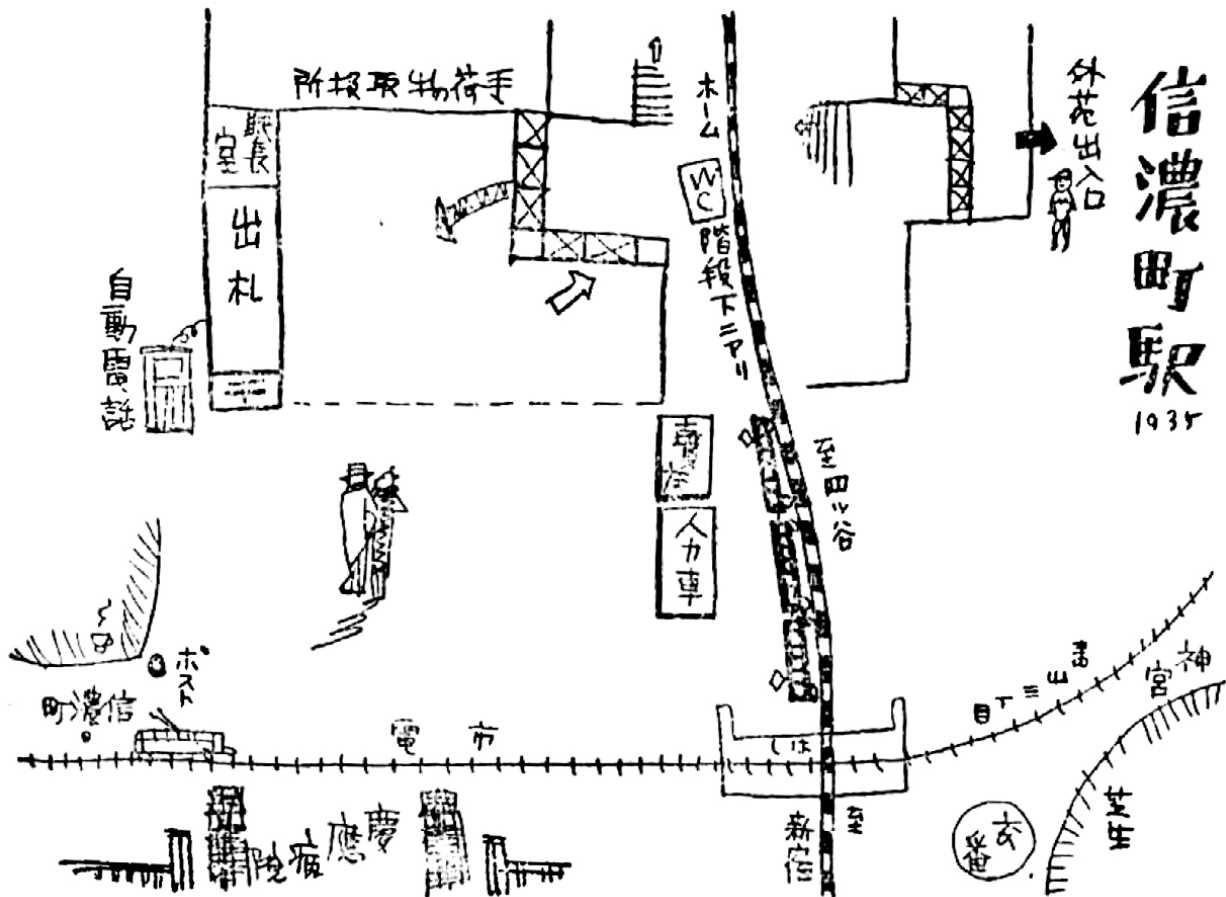


FIG. 5 Fashionable Dates – Rendezvous Guide, Meeting at Shinanomachi Station, 1935.

the everyday” seen in Modernology, that of urban behaviors reflecting the expectations instilled by printed media.²³

If conventions expressed in guidebooks generated and standardized forms of information about the city, they also simultaneously described and prescribed modes of urban experience. In the Tokyo of the 1920s and 1930s, new ways of co-existing in the city were curated, and in turn, instigated, through printed materials such as guidebooks and magazines. The selective aggregation and ordering of spatial information—concerning its typology, density, order, and meaning—itself contributes to the production of spatial specificity and thus to the creation of expectation, resulting in new behaviors.

In the case of *“Fashionable Dates - Rendezvous Guide,”*²⁴ the act of romantic dating was mapped as an activity in urban space. Journalist Ogawa Takeshi created the guide to inform young couples on how to date in the city. He offered advice on how to use the city’s twelve most popular train stations of Tokyo by providing detailed descriptions of the spatial layouts and locations of these spots [Fig. 5], along with accounts of the types of people that frequented them. Ogawa describes thirty different dating

23 Here we can draw parallels to “Touristic Reflexivity... In John Urry,”1. *The Tourist Gaze*, *The Tourist Gaze*, 1990., 141-142.

24 Takeshi Ogawa, *Randebū No Annai: Ryusenkei Abekku [Rendezvous Guide: Fashionable Dates]* (Tokyo: Marunouchi shuppansha, 1935).

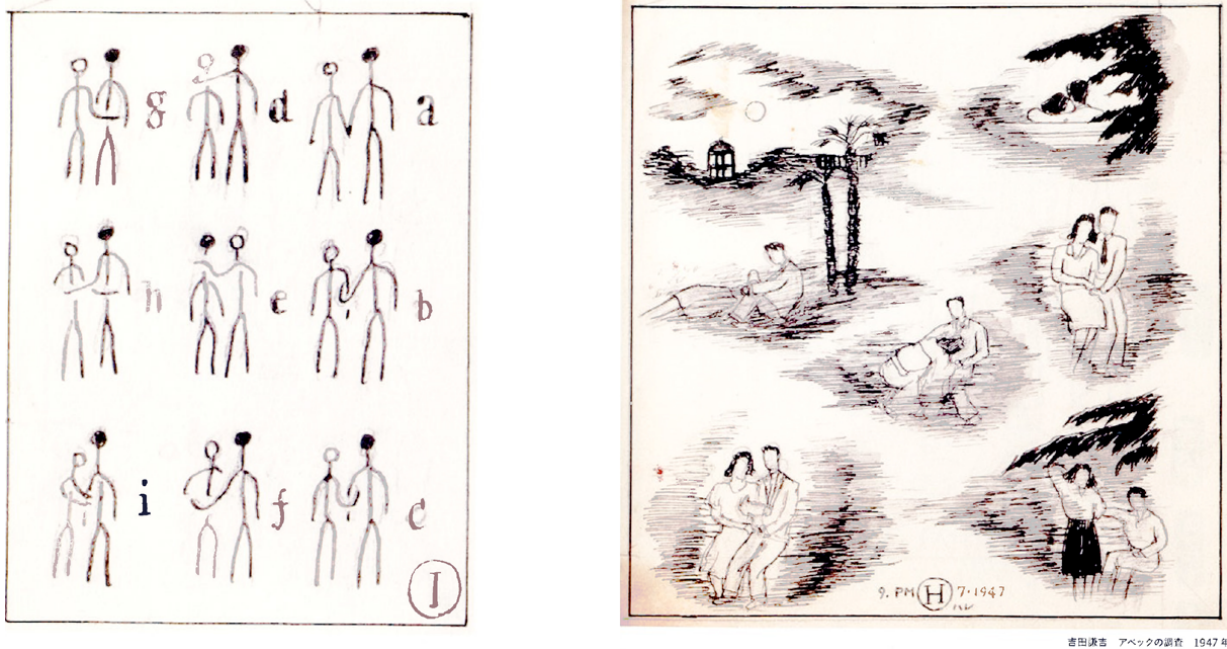


FIG.6 Rendezvous Survey (Abekku Chousa), Kenkichi Yoshida, 1947.

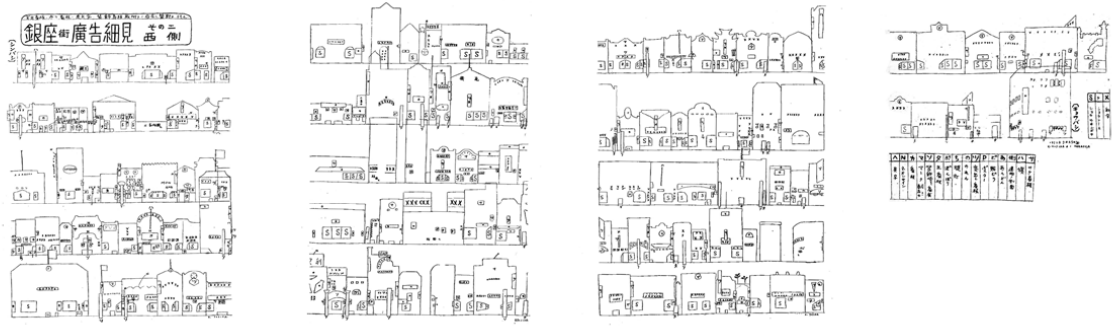
samples, using scenarios, fake diary entries, hypothetical conversations, budget tables and more.

Introducing the activity of “dating” to a place has transformative power over it in the same sense that to describe experience in many cases can mean to prescribe experience. Guidebooks inherently engage in the latter activity, saving their audiences the mental work of decision by both deciphering the workings of the spatial environment and providing a framework for decision-making. These acts of taking the raw materials of the city and integrating them into a working image requires the identification of distinct objects and the events that will happen amongst them—an activity showing strong parallels to curation. By choosing what to highlight and what to ignore, the urban curator creates a feedback loop: describing the current uses of space, thus influencing people’s behavioural patterns; in turn leading to future curators describing them all over again [Fig. 6].

Konpeitou²⁵

In the late 1960s, students of the Department of Architecture at Tokyo University of the Arts formed the group “Konpeitou” (“star candy”) to investigate a commercial district of Tokyo called Ameyoko. Attempts were made to record all the phenomena, from alleys to shops, product displays, billboards and paperboards, soundscapes and so on. In doing so, the group was attempting to take an experiential perspective on the city, disregarding the viewpoint of the planner. Konpeitou published two special features in the magazine *Urban Housing* in 1971 under the title: “Ameyoko is a village in Tokyo.” The group members expressed particular interest in the

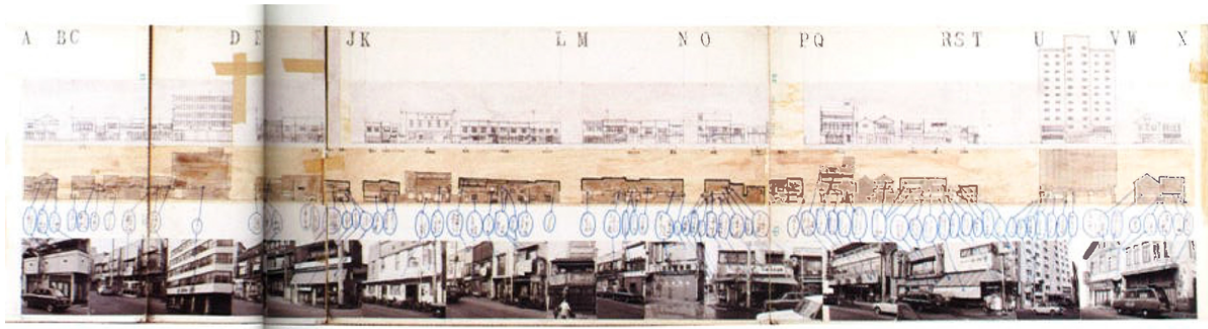
25 コンペイトウ・star-candy



**Object 1: Wajiro Kon and Kenkichi Yoshida
13th January 1931 - 銀座報告細見 – Detailed view of Ginza’s signage**



**Object 2: "Album", 1954. Documentation of Ginza 8-chome
Written account of 4 different past uses in the street**



Object 3: Learning from Ameyoko, Konpeitou, 1971, Study of Signage

FIG.7 Trajectory of Facade Studies, documented by different individuals 1931, 1954 and 1971

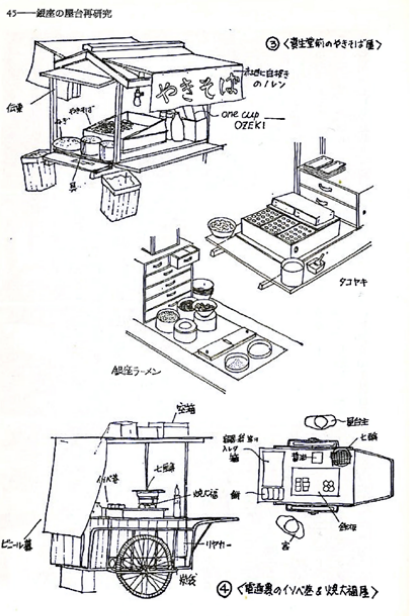
various decorations and posters found in the city. As Makoto Motokura, a member of Konpeitou claimed, “[i]t is possible to think that cities are made like collages or assemblages.”²⁶

Konpeitou’s documentations of Ameyoko’s signs and posters resemble Kon Wajiro’s 1925 survey of Ginza’s signage. These two projects can be viewed vis-à-vis “Album,” a photographic documentation of the Ginza Hachome district back in 1954 by Kenkichi Yoshida, forming a constellation of urban observers [Fig. 7]. In the first two surveys Ginza is depicted on different premises, the documentation of signs on buildings in the

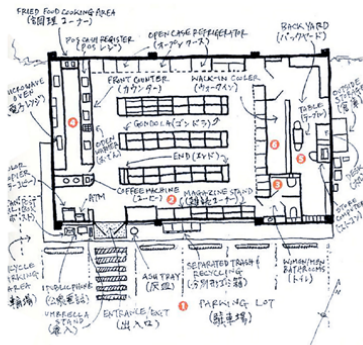
26 Hiroshima City Modern Museum, *Rojō to Kansatsu o Meguru Hyōgenshi: Kōgengaku No Genzai [Expressive History of Street and Observation: Kōgengaku’s Present]*, 42.



Object 1: Various Merchants on the way
Kon Wajiro, Modernology, 1925



Object 2: Teruhiko Mochizuki
Machinology, 1977, Street Market Stalls Survey



Object 3: "Konbini Morphology"
Whitlaw, Gavin Hamilton. 2015.
Convenience Store Research
in Tokyo Totem: A Guide to Tokyo,
Edwin Gardner and Christiana Fruneaux,
eds., Tokyo: Flick Studio,
pp. 284-287. Tokyo Totem, 2015

FIG.8 Trajectory of Street Stalls and their replacement by convenience stores. Documentations by separate individuals in 1925, 1977 and 2015.

1930's, and the rapid change of uses through photographic accounts in the 1950's. A characteristic layout of street facades extending horizontally and vertically almost like sentences in a book is employed and is formally consistent in the account of Konpeitou in the 1970's.

In the following decade, yet more groups and individuals took to the streets to document their city. Among them were the Institute of Relics (Iryuhin Kenkyujou), and Machinology (Townology) by the architect Teruhiko Mochizuki in 1977. The latter undertaking was a survey focusing on street activities and temporary architecture such as *yatai* (market stalls). Mochizuki's aim was to instil discussion about the preservation of such structures, as in his view they provided valuable ways of building community in urban areas where relations between people were

not given but had to be built by communicating with each other. Such temporary and portable structures had also been documented by Kon Wajiro's *Modernology*. Wajiro and Mochizuki's fieldwork drawings form part of the broader trajectory of observations on the life of these mercantile objects, and their eventual extinction and replacement by the still dominant *konbini* or "convenience store" [Fig. 8].

Collective curation of the marginal: Street Observation Society (1986)

Claiming to be descendants of *Modernology*, the "Street Observation Society" (Rojou Kansatsu Gakkai / 路上観察学会) was formed in 1986 by Tenpei Akasegawa (1937-), Terunobu Fujimori (1946-), Minami Shinbou (1947-) and others. Some of the individuals had been already active in documenting aspects of the city since the 1970s. For instance, Akasegawa catalogued utility holes and redundant objects such as stairs and doors leading nowhere, while Terunobu Fujimori founded a group in 1974 to study the Western-style buildings of Tokyo, called Tokyo Architecture Detective Agency. As historian Jordan Sand argues, the Street Observation Society's activities took "anti-monumentalism to the extreme" and eventually "...Street observation became a fad, spawning spin-off groups and imitations in youth oriented magazines and on television."²⁷ The group attracted widespread attention and was invited to publish in magazines and other media, as well as featured in a television program on rediscovering cultural resources in various parts of Japan. Their influence inspired local cities to form their own groups of observers of the streets [Fig. 9].



FIG.9 The founding of the Street Observation Society, 1986.

27 Jordan Sand, "Monumentalizing the Everyday: The Edo-Tokyo Museum," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001): 351-78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710121867>.

7日午後4時25分-4時5分		西側南行 (歩行者と隣) KON				
206人						
北 (尾張町)	5	25	30	34	1	0
南	2	16	28	56	8	1
計	7	41	58	90	9	1
%	3	20	29	44	4	(1/20)

今和次郎「東京銀座街風俗記録」より(カラー) (図14) 1925年

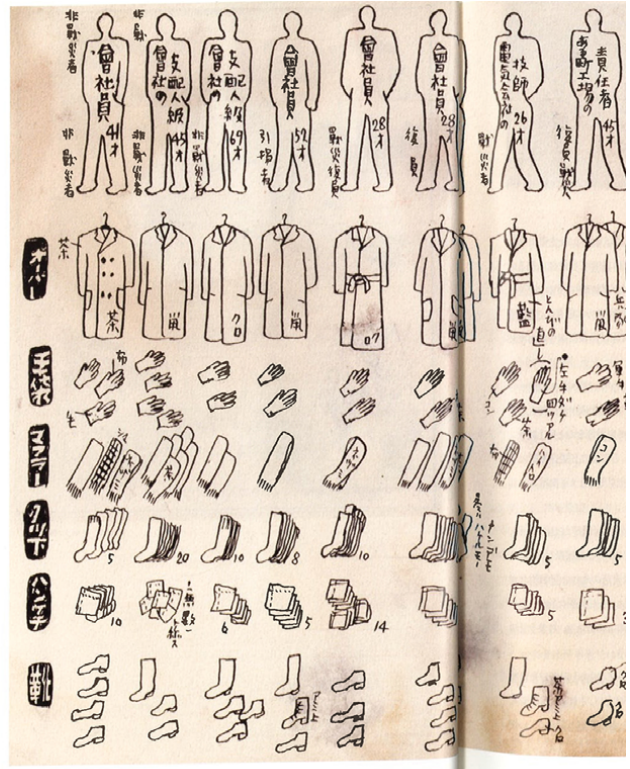
9日午後1時55分-2時12分・西側北行		KON					
45人							
北 (尾張町)	0	4	3	1	3	3	0
南	0	17	2	2	5	5	0
計	0	21	5	3	8	8	0

今和次郎「東京銀座街風俗記録」より「男の着物」(図20) 1925年

9日午後3時45分-4時15分・西側北行		KON						
59人								
北 (尾張町)	22	28	8	1	0	0	0	0
南	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
計	22	28	8	1	0	0	0	0
%	38	48	14					

今和次郎「東京銀座街風俗記録」より(化粧) (図56) 1925年

Object 1: Kon Wajiro, 1925



Object 2: From Kenkichi Yoshida and others "The Study of The Workman" (clothings and belongings 1947)



ウワサの純白セーラーは英国人の発案
21 東京女学館高等学校

入試倍率は都内の女子高で1位
28 富士見丘高等学校



整理段階のメモの一部
『東京女子高制服図鑑』85年版より

Object 3: Street Observation Society 1985 Study of Tokyo Schoolgirl fashion



An inside image of issue No.1 of Fruits Magazine (Aoki 1996).
『Fruits』の創刊号

Object 4: Fruits Magazine, Harajuku Fashion Shoichi Aoki, 1996

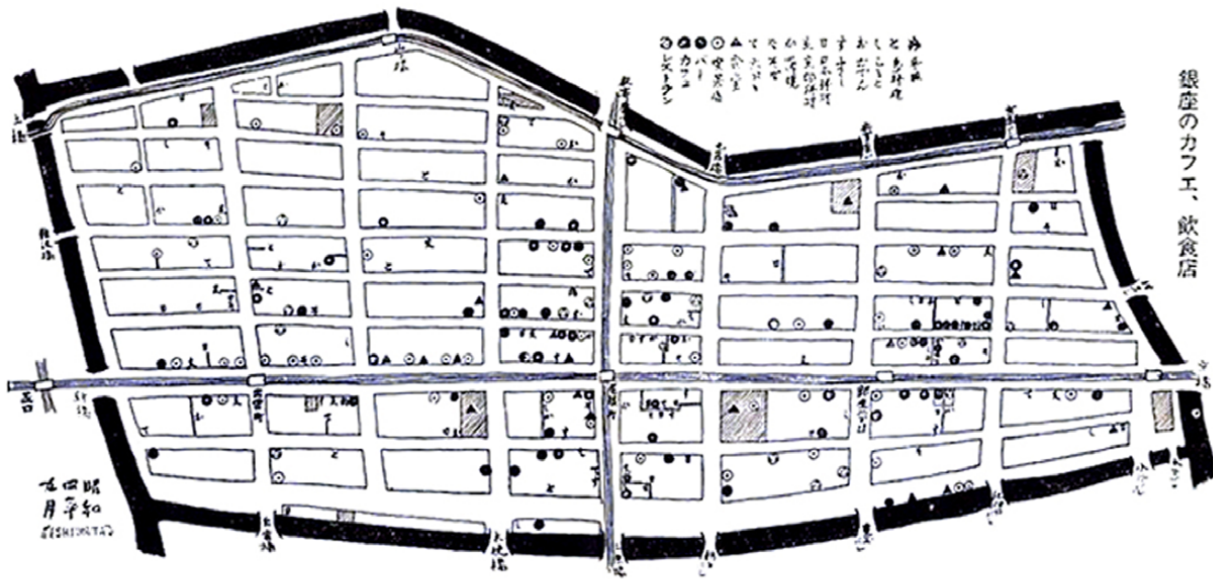
The relationship between politics and curation often becomes present in the methods of collecting the city. Jordan Sand discusses the significance of an object for the 20th century history museum curation as lying in its usage rather than its mode of production, pointing to the shift from human-to machine made objects.²⁸ The evolution of society narrated through the development of such exhibits (automobile, computer, airplane, etc.) leads to their positioning as singular symbols of progress. This notion of curation unconsciously establishes consumerism as a representation of cultural maturation. Refusing this trajectory, Street Observation Society took a radically anti-monumental approach, claiming that “[...] we have become sick of intentional things.”²⁹ [Fig. 10]

The “things” the Society sought after exist in another realm that “deviates from the boundaries of intention” —traces and (by)products of incidents or accidents that, instead of being produced, await to be discovered and documented as inconsumable totems. “Marginal” curations of the everyday juxtaposed with “monumental” curations reveal the latter as a mode of representation rather than a way of life. The group aimed to criticize the development of institutional planning that showed no interest in the preservation of local and historical characteristics, and thus interpreted fieldwork and observation as a way to instil grassroot considerations in planning.

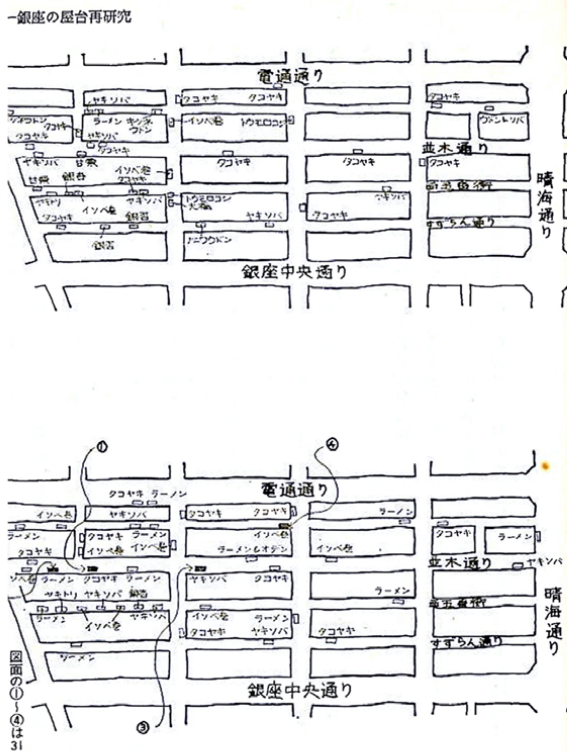
The self-portraits of anonymous, ordinary people in the margins of the dominating urban discourse operate on the terms of self-preservation. Street Observation Society established its “collection of the unintentional” by documenting “anti-products” and introduced an approach towards the recording of daily life that is interested more in matters of perceptibility rather than in objects and their commercial extensions. Assuming the active role of “detective” research counteracted the passive user-consumer subjectivity. The group called for an activate community of detectives always on the ready to document unexpected urban events, embodying an ethos not unlike Jane Jacobs’ “eyes on the street.” In this context, curation comprises a multi-authored text produced by community collecting and intending to establish grassroots, bottom-up and decentralized agency in the urban realm [Figs. 11-12].

28 Ibid. 358

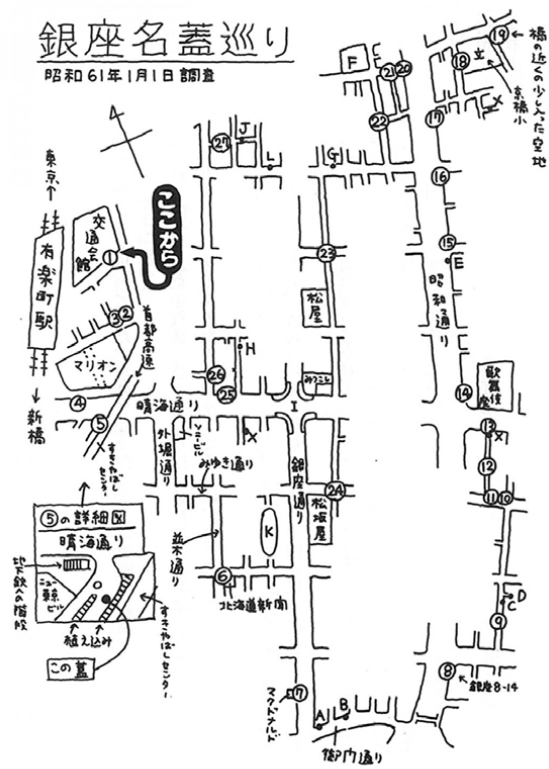
29 Teronobu Fujimori; and Thomas Daniell, “Under the Banner of Street Observation,” n.d.



Object 1: Ginza Survey of Cafes, Kon Wajiro, New Guide to Tokyo, 1929



Object 2: Ginza Survey of Street Market Stalls Teruhiko Mochizuki, Machinology, 1977



Object 3: Ginza Survey of Manholes Street Observation Society, 1986

FIG.11 Trajectory of Ginza's floor plans. Different individuals survey the city in search for different objects. Cafes, Street Market Stalls and Manholes, 1929, 1977, 1986.

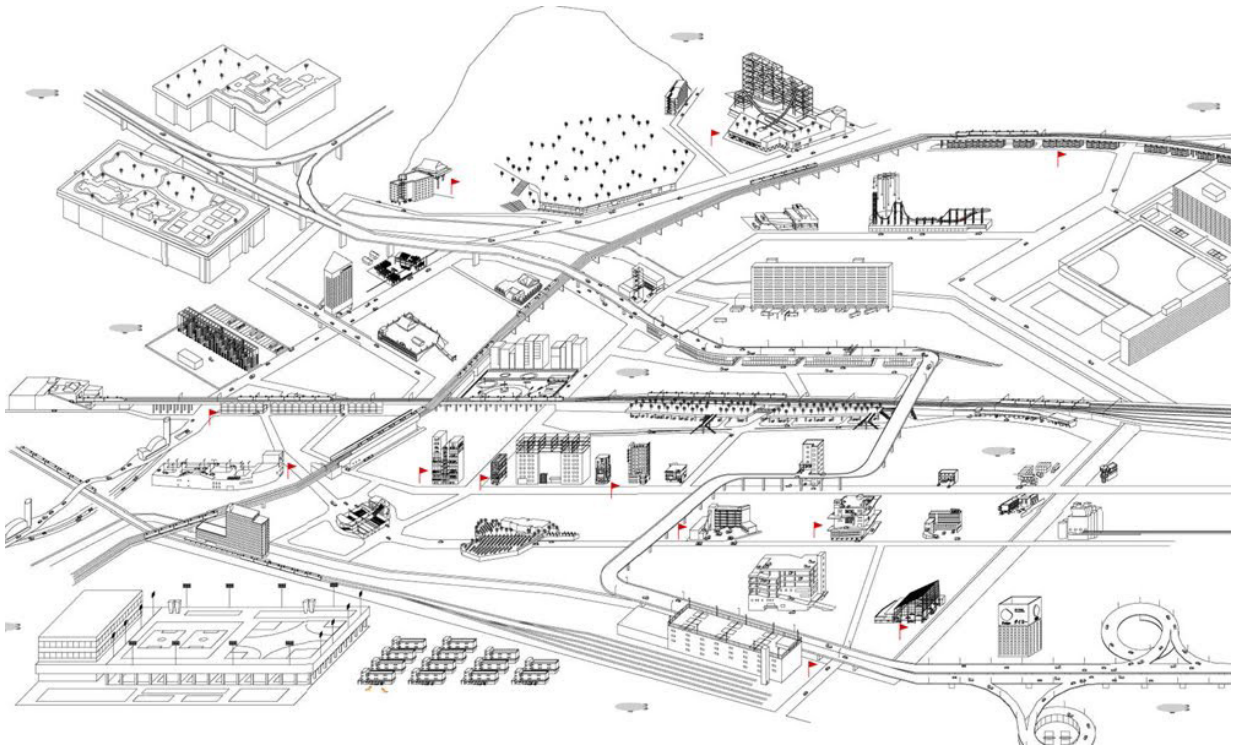


FIG.12 Made in Tokyo, Atelier Bow-Wow and Junzo Kuroda, 2001

Curating as caring: Made in Tokyo Guidebook (2001)

During Tokyo's "Bubble Economy" years (1986-1991), speculative real-estate development and an unprecedented rise in land prices produced an unintelligible landscape of conflicting building programs that reflected loose urban regulations and the absence of effective planning policies. The architecture practice Atelier Bow-Wow attempted to make sense of the resulting incoherent urban landscape through the exhibition and subsequent guidebook of "Made in Tokyo".

In Tokyo, buildings are exhibits, and by walking around with a guidebook in one hand, the city is turned into a museum. What does the guidebook do? It teaches how to appreciate architectural works, and how to view and read architecture.³⁰

The project was first presented as an installation at "Camera Obscura or the Architectural Museum of Revolutions,"³¹ an exhibition curated by the architect Arata Isozaki and featuring the work of four young practitioners on the theme of urban transformation as a result of social revolution. An updated and expanded version of the project was published in 2001 as a book.

30 Jun Tanaka in Hiroshima City Modern Museum, *Rojō to Kansatsu o Meguru Hyōgenshi: Kōgengaku No Genzai [Expressive History of Street and Observation: Kōgengaku's Present]*, 13.

31 (Met Hall, Metropolitan Plaza of Ikebukuro 1996) "No Title," n.d., http://www.dnp.co.jp/museum/nmp/nmp_b/watch/Dec24_e.html.

Made in Tokyo proposed a new architectural type, that of “Da-me Architecture” (“No-good architecture”) as a unit through which to interpret urban space. Comprising a survey of seventy idiosyncratic, at times bizarre, cases of vernacular and commercial architecture across the city, the project was an attempt to find certain rationales behind the blending of disparate forms and functions through contextualizing them in relation to the diversity of spatial conditions that comprise the unique environment of Tokyo. According to Atelier Bow-Wow, if “urban chaos” is read through a different lens—as an interaction and unison of divergent functions such as distribution, transportation, communication, production, or residence—then the end-product acquires new value as an “urban problem-solver”. In order to arrive at this “discovery,” a sincerely questioning attitude toward what makes a city “good” is necessary—both the establishment of new criteria of judgment that transcend common sense, and the confrontation of existing values. If seen from this perspective, the peculiarities of Tokyo’s urban space become reasons to celebrate “Tokyonesse”. These idiosyncratic expressions, then, become reflections of seemingly disjointed and chaotic urban activities, characterized by an underlying rationality that informs and connects each seemingly autonomous urban unit.

For example, in the case of Cine-Bridge³² [Fig. 13], pedestrian infrastructure and underground shops merge into a whole to accommodate the different stakeholders’ needs for land use. If evaluated through the lens of aesthetics, the result can easily be deemed a failure. However, if the framework changes to the effectiveness of addressing multiple urban needs within a single entity, then this same building can be judged as successful. Thus, the urban curatorial framework of “Da-me architecture” revalues these heterogeneous spatial assemblages from ugly to valuable entities. The seeming lack of meaningful connections within the city’s fabric exposes and at the same time fills the gaps in the way the city is perceived and experienced. In this case, curating becomes a form of “caring and saving” these urban entities from unjustified metaphorical or literal demolitions. As the authors of the more recent publication *Architectural Ethnography* articulate, Made in Tokyo “describes an architecture that, far from attempting to control the surrounding environment, is itself defined and shaped by the accidents of the site and the participation of the people who inhabit it.”³³

32 Tsukamoto Yoshiharu; Momoyo Kuroda, Junzo; Kajijima, *Made in Tokyo: Guide Book* (Kajijima Institute Publishing Co., 2001), 48.

33 Momoyo Kajijima, Laurent Stalder, and Yu Iseki, *Architectural Ethnography: [Japanese Pavilion Venice Biennale 2018]* (Tokyo: Toto, 2018), 8.

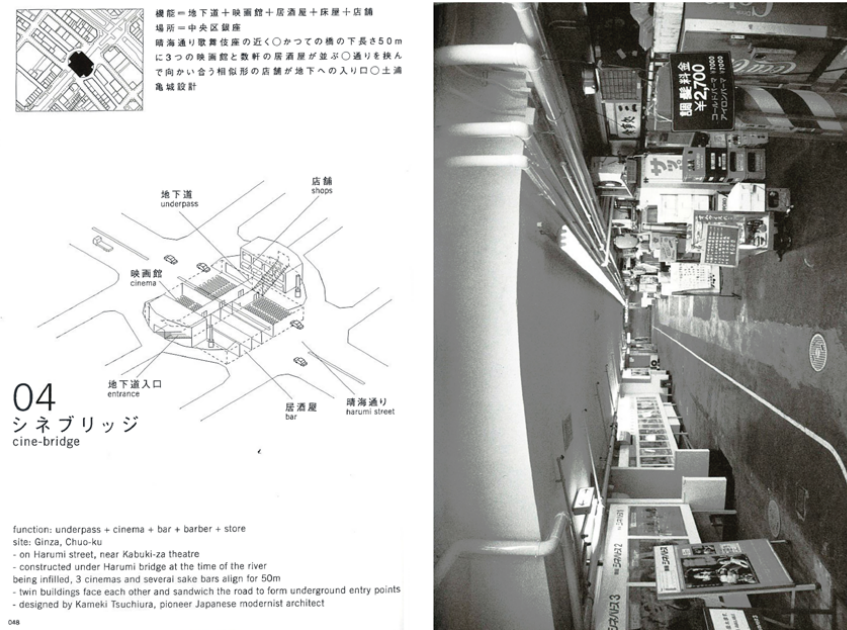


FIG.13 Cine-bridge, Made in Tokyo, 2001

Conclusion

Tokyo's fieldwork projects and guidebooks emerged in times of urban transformation throughout the 20th century, as a result of the work self-organized groups and individuals who undertook documenting and interpreting of a rapidly changing urbanity. Along the way, these projects contributed to the discourse on what parts of the city are worth collecting. The artistic intentions, the selection of the represented themes, and their justifying narratives give a decidedly curatorial dimension to these fieldwork and guidebook publications. In the same manner that a curator carefully selects and arranges the objects that will be displayed in an exhibition, works by Kon Wajiro, the Street Observation Society and Atelier Bow-Wow identify and discuss seemingly unimportant or marginal elements. These objects and buildings are selected not for being the main protagonists of the transformation of the city, but due to their imminent disappearance. Essentially then, the city's change can be understood and measured through the extinction of things that used to be taken for granted, amidst the emergence of new, unexpected aspects.

Surveying becomes an important strategy for representing the entities disappearing from the urban fabric, allowing for a contextual reading³⁴. Positioning objects in their urban setting and providing the contextual relations of their use comprises a Lefebvrian cartography of representational or lived space. Firmly grounded in the material realm, it is a way to contextualize objects vis-à-vis the people who use them. This approach extends the scope of urban curatorial practices and establishes a new object of urban curation: citizens' interpretations of their living environment. Starting with Modernology in the 1920s, this urban curatorial

34 In Antoš, "Collecting' the Present in Ethnographic Museums," 120.

approach also created a new mode of urban subjectivity: the figure with large eyeglasses, pen and sketch paper in hand, taking to the streets ready to describe soon-to-be-extinct objects. The subject-as-consumer, formed in the context of modernizing Tokyo, gave way to a new perspective, that of reading space through the material realm and the assembly of objects. The study of the subject's relation to these objects became a focal point for the reading of urban phenomena, establishing a new relationship within the city.

The "collections of the present" discussed in this study have been cross-examined to map historical trajectories of urban objects, a process in which the observing subjects themselves becomes the object of curation. In the four trajectories drawn out in Figures 7, 8, 10 and 11, urban fieldwork that took place in different points in time have been juxtaposed into an assemblage of interpretation and a history of the observer. The selection of objects, the attempt to understand their qualities and their subsequent categorization into different groups resulted in trajectories of different "collectors". These are: (1) façade studies (2) street stalls (3) fashion surveys and (4) ginza's floor plans. The working together with recurring themes, narratives and ways of organizing the information collected from the city informs the notion of the lineage discussed in the paper. Even though seemingly unconnected, the works adopt a vocabulary that forms part of a common language, where the way to live and collect the city has a precedent in the ethnographic work of Kon Wajiro following the 1923 Great Kanto Disaster. Ever since, vigilant eyes have attempted to document in the same manner things that are considered vulnerable or survived Tokyo's metamorphoses.

If the face of the contemporary city changes constantly as a result of major social, political and economic transformations, the citizens who conduct their lives within this context are left to step in as meaning-makers for the city, compensating for the gaps of the planning process. A clarity of reading, unable to be accomplished by architectural design and urban planning alone, can be achieved by establishing new vocabularies to engage the city. Each of the publications examined in this paper takes a unique stance towards the way urban transformation occurs, producing its own curatorial narrative in the process. Once a vocabulary for reading the city is in place, it allows to mentally reorder it from bits and pieces to a meaningful whole. This act of reading goes against the grain of the status quo of spatial production that is incoherent, dispersed, follows real-estate imperatives, leaving the task of meaning-making unaddressed.

Nearly a decade after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and immediately before the postponed Olympics of 2021, contemporary Tokyo is yet again experiencing urban transformations that are reshaping its identity, propelled by neoliberal processes. Curating Tokyo in this context calls for many voices, media and fields of inquiry, so that the reading of the

city can comprise a multiplicity of layers. A new generation of fieldwork studies and surveys are underway,³⁵ attempting to make sense of the new developments and archiving the things that are expected to disappear sooner or later. The maze of Tokyo's tightly packed downtown streets and its complex railway network, all crisscrossed by old and new media, remains the fertile site of urban curatorial practice: reading and shaping the city through fieldwork and guidebooks.

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35 For example, Tokyo Behaviorology by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto laboratory at Tokyo Institute of Technology, Shibuya Research by Kuroishi Izumi Laboratory at Aoyama Gakuin University to name a few

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