The Hiroshima Panels Visualize Violence: Imagination over Life
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ABSTRACT
Experiencing the atrocities in the immediate aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945, Chinese-ink painter Iri Maruki and oil painter Toshi Maruki began their collaboration on the Hiroshima Panels in 1950. During the occupation of Japan by the Allied powers, when reporting on the atomic bombing was strictly prohibited, the panels played a crucial role in making known the hidden nuclear sufferings through a nationwide tour. In 1953, the panels began a ten-year tour of about 20 countries, mainly in East Asia and Europe, and disseminated the stories of the sufferings in the age of the US-Soviet arms race. Acquiring perspectives that transcended national borders and ethnicities through dialogues with many people in these exhibitions, the Marukis embarked on collaborations in a new direction in the 1970s with their emphasis on complex realities of war in which the victim/perpetrator dichotomy was not clear-cut and on other forms of violence such as pollution and discrimination. The forceful images of the paintings give us an opportunity to know the memories of the dead that would otherwise be doomed to be erased from our collective memory, and to stimulate our imagination to recognize that we are always facing the problem of life. Understanding the “memories” that we have never experienced would constitute a torch to survive hardships in this world.

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Introduction
At 8.15 a.m. on 6 August 1945, an atomic bomb detonated over Hiroshima in its first wartime use in human history. Iri Maruki, a Chinese-ink painter who was born in Hiroshima in 1901, and his wife Toshi Maruki, an oil painter who was born in Hokkaido in 1912, rushed to Hiroshima in the immediate aftermath of the bombing and witnessed the devastated city.

The Hiroshima Panels are a series of 15 paintings jointly produced by the two painters with Chinese ink poured on Japanese paper. At present, paintings from the 1st through the 14th are owned by the Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels. The panels have long been regarded as a symbol of antiwar and peace movements, but it is only from the 1990s onward that they have become a subject of academic scrutiny. Art critic Yoshie Yoshida published the first analysis of its kind in 1996 (Yoshida 1996), followed by Setsuko Kozawa, who meticulously placed the Hiroshima Panels in the history of Japan’s postwar art and thoughts (Kozawa 2002). For analyses written in English, see Dower (1990) and Jesty (2018).
in Higashi-matsuyama in Saitama prefecture, while the 15th, NAGASAKI, is owned by the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The couple are nyūshi hibakusha (early-entrant atomic-bomb survivors); they were exposed to residual radiation in Hiroshima but did not directly experience what happened in the city on August 6. Nevertheless, they mostly drew the scenes of that day. They listened to the testimonies of numerous survivors, including their relatives, exerted their imagination as artists, and finally drew the scenes of the atomic bombing. In other words, their works are something reconstituted from the memories of others, but not from their own.

In the past, the Hiroshima Panels were often taken as a product born out of direct experiences of the Marukis in Hiroshima right after the explosion. But Setsuko Kozawa presents a different perspective by pointing out that the Marukis “experienced Hiroshima only several days after, or half a month after. A ‘distance’ from August 6 has to be taken fully into account when examining the Hiroshima Panels [...] For the couple who had no firsthand experience in the immediate aftermath of the bombing to complete the panels, the time to reconstitute the experiences of others, or, the experiences of those who directly knew August 6 was indispensable” (Kozawa 2002, 62–63).

In 1950, when the first trilogy of the panels was released, Japan was still occupied by the Allied powers. Reporting the effects of the atomic bombings was strictly prohibited. Thus, the paintings of the Marukis soon took a leading role in publicizing the hidden nuclear disaster through a nationwide exhibition tour. Until 1952, when the occupation ended, the Hiroshima Panels served as the almost sole medium that was able to portray the sufferings.

In 1953, the panels began a tour that would last for a decade in nearly 20 East Asian and European countries. The details of the tour have not been well explored, but what is notable is the panels’ prominent role during a nuclear arms race between the two superpowers, the United States and the USSR.

The couple’s collaboration substantially changed its orientation in the 1970s. Out of the subject matter of the atomic bombing, they uncovered complex realities of war in which the sufferings of the Japanese people were inextricably intertwined with the brutalities perpetrated by the same nation. In turn, the Marukis embarked on their endeavor to transcend the boundaries of countries and nations and represent the memories of the unspeakable. They finally captured a root of violence not only of the atomic bombing but also of the massacres in other wars or of environmental pollutions.

The shift in their subject matter was not necessarily an intended consequence based on logical thinking. Rather, dialogues with people through the production of paintings and exhibitions cultivated the couple’s thoughts during a time of change and under the influence of social movements.

This paper will trace the process of the production of the panels and the way they were perceived in society; examine the course of the couple’s lives, in which they rose from the experience of the atomic bombing and acquired a comprehensive perspective for looking at violence; and, finally, explore the issue of imagination over life.

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2The Marukis recall the details and processes of the production of the Hiroshima Panels in Maruki (1958) and Maruki (1988). This paper is based on these memoirs. Iri and Toshi passed away in 1995 and 2000, respectively.
The Painters Saw the Bomb

In August 1945, the Marukis – who had taken refuge in Urawa in Saitama prefecture, after fleeing Tokyo to avoid air raids – heard of a report about an “attack with a new type of bomb.” Worrying about his parents and families of his siblings who lived in Mitakimachi in Hiroshima city, 1.5 miles away from the hypocenter, Iri took a train and arrived in Hiroshima on the night of August 9. He was followed by his wife Toshi, who presumably entered the city around August 20. During their stay, which lasted about a month, they tended to the injured, fixed broken houses, and fetched food. Toshi then drew two sketches of burnt land, but not of atomic-bomb survivors.

Soon after returning to Tokyo, the couple joined the Japanese Communist Party. Since Toshi once lived in Moscow as an employed house teacher for children of Japanese diplomats in 1938–39 and in 1941, she attracted attention as a woman who was expected to usher in a new age. Seeking to create a new art movement that would help establish a democratic society, Iri and Toshi became founding members of *Nihon Bijutsu Kai* (Japan Art Association) and *Zen’ei Bijutsu Kai* (Avant-Garde Art Association) in 1945. But the deterioration of their health due to exposure to radiation forced them to retreat to Fujisawa, Kanagawa, around the summer of 1948. It was around this time that they determined to produce what would later become the Hiroshima Panels, prompted by their acute recognition that war had left lasting scars in the mind of the youth.

Rising political tensions inside and outside Japan also contributed to the emergence of the panels. In 1949, the People’s Republic of China was born. In June 1950, the Korean War broke out. The US military, seeing an urgent need to turn Japan into an anticommunist bulwark in East Asia, began to shift its occupation policy away from the suppression of militarism to a crackdown on left-wing political forces including communists. An arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union had begun. In March 1950, the Stockholm Appeal was adopted in the third Permanent Committee meeting of the Partisans of Peace led by the Eastern bloc, prompting a worldwide petition campaign against nuclear weapons.

The first of the Hiroshima Panels was unveiled in the third *Nihon Andepandan Ten* (Exhibition of Japanese Independent Artists) at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in February 1950. At the outset, the painting, which would later be named No. 1 GHOSTS (Figure 1), was unveiled as AUGUST SIXTH, because the couple had been persuaded by their friends not to use “Genbaku” (atomic bomb) in the title. Reporting of the atomic bombing was still strictly prohibited under the press code imposed by the occupation force.
But pressure from the occupation forces that the Marukis had expected was not actually harsh on art expressions as on news report. Photos and publications were indeed censored, while no evidence has been found that indicates the implementation of censorship on the paintings about the atomic bombing. The Marukis then decided to entitle the painting “the Hiroshima Panel” in an exhibition that they independently held at Maruzen Gallery in Tokyo in March 1950. With this, the name was established.

Several artists before the Marukis had already tackled the atomic bombing as their subject matter. But the main objects in these paintings were a mushroom cloud or scorched land; humans were neglected. Acknowledging these precedents, the Marukis decided to focus on human beings on whom an atomic bomb was dropped, with no background drawn.

One of the most famous paintings drawn from the viewpoint of victims of an air raid is Pablo Picasso’s GUERNICA, which was then most influential as an “antiwar painting.” The Marukis must have been affected by this artwork. A panoramic large sheet of the Hiroshima Panels with a height of 1.8 meters and a width of 7.2 meters has much in common with GUERNICA. On the other hand, the Marukis depict humans realistically, while Picasso adopted abstractionism. The Marukis’ emphasis on women and children implies the influence of German antiwar painter Käthe Kollwitz. The paintings of humans in a group drawn in a realistic way helped their viewers share the memories of the atomic bombing and were instrumental in conveying hidden sufferings at the time when the release of photos for the same purpose was banned.

Utilizing and molding the other’s strength in a miraculous fusion, the two painters drew one painting. Toshi, who had learned the basics of Western painting, was good at realistic expressions and drew characters in sharp lines. On the other hand, Chinese-ink painter Iri, under the influence of Western avant-garde surrealism, poured ink from above so that their painting would not become over-explanatory. This sometimes created unexpected and profound effects with the Chinese ink flowing freely over the paper.

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9 For example, Teruo Niinobe, whose parents were killed by the Hiroshima bomb, entered the oil painting TASOGARE (Twilight) in Nitten (Japan Fine Arts Exhibition) in 1948, and the artwork was accepted. Other paintings on the atomic bombing produced and released under the occupation include: Kiyoshi Asai’s HIROSHIMA NO YUYAKE (Sunset of Hiroshima, 1945), Mutsumi Otsuka’s GENSHI BAKUDAN [HONEST JOHN] (Atomic Bomb [Honest John], 1947), Yoshio Fukui’s HIROSHIMA (1948), and Keisuke Yamamoto’s HIROSHIMA (1948).

10 Toshi said in a roundtable discussion held in Hiroshima in October 1950, “When it comes to the atomic bomb, people often think of a rising cloud or burnt land. What they do in the film Nagasaki no Kane (The Bells of Nagasaki) is just praying. For me, people’s death is more heartbreaking and irritating. So I just had to draw only humans” (Tsuboi, Akamatsu, and Maruki 1950, 31).
The spectators whispered, “This is exaggerated,” or “Did they draw naked people because they are painters?” Atomic-bomb survivors complained, “It was much more cruel. They drew it too neatly.” Some said that the couple was not able to express the horror of the atomic bombing because they had not actually seen it. But lack of direct experience on the part of the painters eventually brought about a remarkable characteristic of the Hiroshima Panels: numerous memories of others are poured into the paintings, which work as a container.

In August 1950, half a year after the release of No. 1, the Marukis completed No. 2 FIRE and No. 3 WATER, and organized a “Trilogy Commemorative Exhibition” at Maruzen Gallery and Ginza-Mitsukoshi in Tokyo.

In No. 2 FIRE (Figure 2), they depicted people in agony under blazing fire after the explosion. As noted above, they did not actually witness the scene. In an attempt to visualize a “world of death” and make people aware of it, the couple applied their imagination.

In No. 3 WATER (Figure 3), the Marukis portrayed different points in time, flowing in sequence from right to left: those who head to river for water, those who finally perish in the river, and a pile of corpses awaiting cremation. An approach to the “fact” in such an expression like picture scroll is all the more possible in paintings. A mother holding a baby at the center of the screen reminds us of the Holy Mother and her child, a traditional subject matter in religious paintings. Toshi regarded the mother and child that they depicted as a symbol of sorrow in the 20th century.

**Nationwide Tour of the Hiroshima Panels**

When the trilogy was completed, a nationwide tour of the panels began to be planned. Although Japan was under the censorship of press and the oppression of the Communist

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**Figure 2.** The Hiroshima Panels No. 2 FIRE, 1950.

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**Figure 3.** The Hiroshima Panels No. 3 WATER, 1950.
Party, it was still possible to make the atrocities of the atomic bombing known through cultural movements such as exhibits. The Marukis made the panels portable by remaking them as a hanging scroll. A tour began with an exhibition in Goryuso near the hypocenter of Hiroshima under the sponsorship of Warera no Uta no Kai (Our Poem Association), over which the poet Sankichi Tohge presided.

In the initial stage of the tour in Western Japan (Northern Kyushu and San’i’in regions) and the Tohoku region, the Marukis traveled by themselves with the panels, only to find the tour not so successful. A turning point was the Comprehensive Atomic Bomb Exhibition held in Marubutsu Department Store in Kyoto from July 14 to 24 July 1951. In the exhibit, organized by Kyoto University’s student council, experts and students who majored in medicine, physics, law, or literature displayed photo panels from a wide range of perspectives. The large number of students who visited the exhibit helped appease people’s suspicion to it, which they had thought was led by communists. No. 4 RAINBOW and No. 5 BOYS AND GIRLS were unveiled for the first time and displayed along with other materials from Hiroshima.

The success of the Kyoto exhibition that had attracted nearly 30,000 spectators prompted similar comprehensive exhibitions at universities in Hokkaido, Tokyo, Aichi, Shizuoka, Yamaguchi, and other cities. The tour in Hokkaido was so large that exhibitions were organized in 30 venues from January through the beginning of May 1951. In the summer of 1952, Tokyo Heiwa Kaigi (Tokyo Peace Congress) led a tour in which the Hiroshima Panels and the other panels produced by students of the Tokyo Metropolitan University were displayed all over the Tokyo metropolitan area. Furthermore, young people who lived in the Marukis’ studio, such as Yoshie Yoshida and Tohru Nonoshita, voluntarily traveled with the Hiroshima Panels and organized exhibitions in various places. At the same time, the Marukis made a reproduction of the trilogy of the panels by themselves at the request of organizers of an exhibition in the United States at the end of 1950. The reproduction was loaned, which made it possible to organize multiple exhibitions concurrently.11

The tour was proudly described, to take one example, as follows: “The exhibitions of the Hiroshima Panels held in 108 venues all over Japan attracted as many as 1.02 million visitors coming from all the strata, ages, and gender (as of June 1952)” (Maruki and Akamatsu 1952, 120). But the press code and the paucity of records – the organizers consciously avoided having them for fear of oppression by the occupation forces – prevent us from knowing the details of the tour. Okamura (2015) has recently managed to estimate that at least more than 170 exhibitions were held for more than 600 days combined between February 1950 and the end of 1953.

The significance of the Hiroshima Panels as a social movement lies in the way that they visualized the sufferings of nuclear disaster at the time when they were concealed because of political pressure. The panels were meant to be not only a reminder of the atrocities of a past war but also a means of resistance to violence happening at the time and in future.

For example, in an exhibit in Tachikawa in Tokyo (where a US military base was located) from August 15 to 17 August 1952, the spectators had the ongoing Korean War in mind (Figure 4). A visitor stated in a report on the exhibit that “Even now, the chilling

11The reproduction is now owned by the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). It was displayed with the original trilogy at the Maruki Gallery of the Hiroshima Panels from April to June 2016 and at Hiroshima MOCA from September to November 2018.
roar [of US military planes] hovers over us, shaking our lives” (Tachikawa Heiwa Kondankai 1952, 10). Young people who got together at the exhibition founded Tachikawa Heiwa Kondankai (Tachikawa Peace Group), which became a core of the local peace movement, for example by producing a gentou (film strip) titled “Base Tachikawa” with profits earned from the exhibition of the Hiroshima Panels.

Exhibitions were also organized in Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture, another town with a US military base, and a Korean neighborhood in the Ikuno ward of Osaka. On numerous occasions, petitions calling for the end of war and the elimination of atomic weapons were collected. The movement were eventually incorporated into an international petition campaign that had been spurred by the Stockholm Appeal.

Although the Hiroshima Panels themselves were not subject to censorship, the exhibitions were under surveillance, suspected of violating the regulation No. 325 of General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP), which stipulated that acts to disrupt the aims of occupation were illegal. The occupation forces made inquiries to local authorities regarding the exhibition. During an exhibit in Sapporo in November 1951, an organizer was arrested for having an anti-American essay in display.13

12“On investigation of an exhibition of the Hiroshima Panels that Iri Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu jointly produced,” a letter from the head of Yama Regional Office to the head of Keitoku village, Fukushima Prefecture (presently, Keitoku town, Kitakata City), 31 May 1951 (in Japanese), Editing Unit of an official history of Kitakata City. The document is presumably part of an investigation of communists and their supporters.

13“Atomic-bomb exhibition organizer arrested” (in Japanese), Hokkaido Shimbun, 23 November 1951. “A voice of citizen’ seized: Praised atomic bomb exhibit under suppression” (in Japanese), Hokkaido Daigaku Shimbun, 5 December 1951.

Figure 4. Tachikawa, Tokyo, (1952).
Despite suppression, many people supported the tour. The panels were displayed in various places such as union halls, community centers, schools, temples and shrines, parks, cinemas, stations, department stores, or public halls. The venues were often packed with visitors. The concealment of information and the oppression of political movements fueled people’s resistance and stimulated the exhibitions.

Not all the visitors and supporters of the exhibitions flocked to them under a single political cause: an old woman in a rural village prayed in front of the panels with her palms together; a temple held a ceremony to commemorate the victims of the atomic bombing; and the president of a department store where an exhibition was held got so excited to see his store packed with so many visitors that he distributed monetary gifts to customers. A great achievement of the Hiroshima Panels nationwide tour that peaked a few years after 1952 was that it constituted an exceptional case in which artistic expression formed a network in society and spawned diverse imagination over war.

When Japan (except Okinawa and Amami) was liberated from occupation following the entry into force of its peace treaty with the Allied powers on 28 April 1952, it became possible to disclose photos on the atomic bombings without hindrance. The August 1952 issue of the magazine *Asahi Gurahu* (The Asahi Picture News) featured the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marking the first time a Japanese serial publication had done so and creating an unprecedented sensation. The Hiroshima Panels were disseminated in the form of a pictorial book, film, *gentou* (film strip), and symphony.  

The growing use of photos of the atomic bombing gradually changed the role of the Hiroshima Panels as a medium. The incident of tuna boat *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon No.5), which sailed from Yaizu, Shizuoka, and was exposed to radioactivity released by a US hydrogen bomb test, created a groundswell of opinion and prompted a new movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs. But it is not easy to trace exhibitions of the panels in those days through newspaper and magazine articles.

**World Tour**

The decreasing interest in the Hiroshima Panels in Japan was partly caused by the beginning of a world tour. The Hiroshima Panels was given the World Peace Award by the World Peace Council in January 1953 for their contribution to the petition campaign of the Stockholm Appeal. In June, Toshi was sent to the second World Women’s Assembly held in Copenhagen, Denmark, as the vice leader of Japan’s delegation and then participated in the World Peace Council in Budapest, Hungary. She had the trilogy of the panels with her, so she asked the council to give her permission to have them displayed. The council allowed her to do so, and she organized an exhibition at the Budapest National Museum for five days from June 17. That was the first time the Hiroshima panels were displayed in a foreign country.

The exhibition of the panels overseas was instrumental in exposing US war crimes in the context of the Cold War. At the outset, some in the East were cautious about giving

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14 Images of the Hiroshima Panels became prevalent in the media through such works as Maruki and Akamatsu (1952); the movie “Hiroshima Panels” (produced by Akira Iwasaki and directed by Tadashi Imai and Michiharu Aoyama, *Shinsel Eiga Sha*, 1953); *gentou* “Hiroshima Panels” (presented by Kinuta Yokoshine, distributed by Tokyo Studio, supervised by Nihon Bunkajin Kaigi [Japan Intellectuals’ Congress] and produced by Yokohama Shinema Seisakusho [Yokohama Cinema Production], 1953); and symphony No. 5 “Hiroshima” (composed by Masao Ohki, 1953).
permission to the exhibition for fear that the unimaginable atrocities depicted in the panels would lower people’s morale. Toshi’s stay in Moscow was bitter, since the Soviet Union refused to have an exhibition. In Beijing, the Chinese leaders allowed an exhibition exclusively for intellectuals and experts because they did not want to damage people’s morale in fighting the Korean War. (Nevertheless, it almost was opened to the general public because of massive repercussions.)

The panels were then displayed at the corner of the National Museum of Art of Romania on the sidelines of the World Festival of Youth and Students in Bucharest in 1953. Also, Danish peace activists made a four-day exhibition possible in Copenhagen. Toshi entrusted the panels to European activists and returned home with Japan’s delegates. The panels left by the painter then embarked on a European tour, which began with a year-long tour in Denmark. The panels were sent to Britain in March 1955 and displayed in several cities. The World Peace Council coordinated an exhibition at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in the Netherlands from November 27 to December 1955. It seems that a tour was held in Italian cities such as Rome, Milan, and Turin from March 1956 on, but the details are not available.

Toshi, after returning to Japan, designed a poster for the first World Conference against A- and H-Bombs in 1955 and subsequently released with Iri No. 9 YAIZU (on the incident of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru) in 1955 and No. 10 PETITION (on the petition campaign against atomic and hydrogen bombs that had spread out from Suginami ward, Tokyo) in 1956.

When ten paintings were completed, the trilogy on the European tour was integrated with the other seven paintings. This led to the formation of the International Exhibition Committee with a view to carrying out a larger world tour. The first overseas exhibition of the ten paintings was held in Beijing, starting on 4 August 1956 (Figure 5). In September, the tour moved to cities in Asian communist countries including Pyongyang and Ulaanbaatar. Skipping the Soviet Union because of concerns that holding exhibitions there at first would make it difficult to hold additional ones in Western Europe later, the tour then went to Rotterdam, Schiedam, and Amsterdam in the Netherlands and then to Brussels from January to May 1957. The panels subsequently were displayed in Switzerland in May, Sri Lanka in September, and then in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa. But no records of these exhibitions have been discovered.

In 1958, an exhibition at the Museum of Sydney met a harsh response and was forced to be canceled after only three days: people’s memory of Japan’s ill treatment of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) at Changi Prison in Singapore was still fresh. The panels caused a public debate. While a letter to call for cooperation to abolish nuclear weapons was published in a local newspaper, people’s reaction was largely chilly. So the

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15St. Mary’s Hall in Coventry (March 3–18), the College of Preceptors (March 26–April 7), and South London Art Gallery on Heckham Road (July 10–August 4), to name but a few (Maruki 1972, 247).

16The members of the committee included Robert Giron (Director of the Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels), Thomas Grochowiak (Director of the Städtische museen, Recklinghausen), A.M.Hammacher (Director of the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo), Bartlett Hayes (Director of the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover), Sir Philip Hendy (Director of the National Gallery, London), René Huyghe (Professor, Collège de France, Paris), Franz Meyer (Director of the Kunsthalle, Bern), Arnold Rudliger (Director of the Kunsthalle, Basel), Lionello Vonturi (Professor, Rome), A.B. de Vries (Director of The Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis), and E.L.L. de Wilde (Director of the Abbe-museum, Eindhoven). It is said that there were changes of members later, but the details are unknown. For the world tour, see Bijutsu Undo 55: 1, 17–19 (April 1958).
organizers decided to send the panels to Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth in Southwestern Australia, where anti-Japanese sentiment was weak. Since the exhibits were regarded positively on the western coast, some in Sydney began to question the organizer’s decision to end the display in the city after only three days. This made possible the return of the panels to Sydney in July; they were then accepted favorably with 80,000 visitors.

Then the panels moved to New Zealand, where they were displayed in Auckland Art Gallery from September 26 to October 17. Here again, the panels sparked public debates over Japan’s responsibility for the war. The exhibition had a lasting impact on the antinuclear movement and on art and music in the country (Sawada 2018).

The tour then went to Leningrad, Kiev, Stalingrad, and Novosibirsk in the USSR, to Náprstek Museum in Prague in 1960, and back again to Moscow via Hungary. Because the details of and reactions to the world tour have not been chronicled very well, it is not easy to evaluate the effects of the tour. At a minimum, the role of the tour as a pioneer should be recognized. The panels, in the form of paintings that were easily understandable beyond the boundaries of language, prevented the memories of pain of humans and life from fading into oblivion in foreign countries where people did not have much information about the realities of the atomic bombing in the age of the fierce US-Soviet nuclear arms race.

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For example, about 15,000 people went to see the panels at Perth Museum in a day.

Maruki (1972, 11–17) recalls the tour in Australia in detail. According to her, the tour eventually led Australians to send a 20-member delegation to the World Congress Against A- and H-Bombs the following year.
But even such a large-scale tour had to come to an end. In 1964, Japan’s antinuclear movement was sharply divided over the Partial Test Ban Treaty. The Marukis submitted an opinion letter to the Japanese Communist Party with other artists including Setsu Asakura, Churyo Sato, and Shin Hongo, which led the party to oust the couple from it in 1964. It was in this year that the Hiroshima Panels finally returned to Japan after a ten-year journey.

The Late Hiroshima Panels and Diversification of Subject Matter

The next item on the Marukis’ agenda following the world tour was to construct a museum to preserve and display the panels permanently. After the Marukis’ initial plan to have the museum in Hiroshima had stalled, they finally opened the Maruki Gallery of the Hiroshima Panels on their own in a piece of land next to their home in May 1967.

Even after the panels got their permanent home, they were often sent overseas for exhibitions. These activities gave the couple opportunities to reflect on the essence of war and violence from multiple perspectives that transcend national borders and ethnicities.

The most striking turning point was a US tour from the end of 1970 through the next year that began with an exhibition at the New School Art Center in New York (Figure 6) and went to eight venues (Maruki 1972, 53–54). The tour, however, got an unfavorable reception as is evident in the following article carried by the New York Times on 22 October 1971: “The panels are perfectly dreadful. Combining Eastern and Western styles disharmoniously, they are not even effective as designs. But they are worse than bad art.” A mother who lost her son in Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor rushed to a venue in protest. Toshi told the American woman that US POWs had also been killed in Hiroshima, and that atomic bomb should therefore be a common problem for humanity. Toshi recalled later that she had had a mutual understanding with the woman. Back in Japan, Toshi conducted a fact-finding tour in Hiroshima to make a drawing about the POWs.

During their visit to Hiroshima, the Marukis met ex-soldiers and others who came to see the couple thanks to the solicitation of local newspaper Chigoku Shimbun and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. According to their eyewitness account, a US POW whose hands were tied together in a street after the bombing was hit to death with a bar.

The couple had planned to expose the threat of the atomic bomb, which does not distinguish enemies from friends by robbing all of them of their lives. The painters soon

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19 Generally, Japanese communists considered nuclear tests of the Soviet Union as peaceful, while other left-wing forces opposed to all the tests.

20 Amid a growing movement against the Vietnam War, Quakers in the United States helped arrange the exhibition. The tour went to the New School Art Center in New York (October 14–15 December 1970); Wilmington University in Wilmington, Ohio (February 14–6 March 1971); the Unitarian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota (March 21–April 10); the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California (May 5–26); the Arkansas Art Center in Little Rock, Arkansas (June 9–30); Oakland Museum in California (planned to be held July 21–August 11, but held only for three days around August 6 due to the “renovation of the venue”); the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida (October 6–27); and Wichita Art Museum in Wichita, Kansas (planned to be held on November 10–December 1, but canceled due to the “renovation of the venue”).

21 The Chugoku Shimbun and the Saitama Shimbun reported on February 12 and 17 February 1971, respectively, that the Marukis had an interview with the head of a special cooperation unit of the Japan Army’s Military Police Headquarters and an ex-soldier who belonged to an Army infantry supplementary unit and took care of the US prisoners of war.
noticed that the realities of the atomic bombing could not be well captured in victim/perpetrator dichotomy. This recognition led the couple to work on what would later become No. 13 DEATH OF AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR, which depicted residents of Hiroshima silently walking to frightened US soldiers (Figure 7).\textsuperscript{22} Toward the completion of the painting, the couple was in anguish. They were not sure if it was appropriate to depict Japan’s atrocities. Perhaps because of his distress, Iri even went out of his house for a while without telling where he was going. But they finally made up their mind – without addressing Japan’s atrocities, their painting would not be perfect as something to depict war.

More than a quarter of a century after the Asia-Pacific War ended, the sense of victimization among Japanese – often couched in the phrase “the only nation that suffered the atomic bombing” – had gradually been eroded. Included in those who

\textsuperscript{22}For details, see Maruki (1972, 56–78). Thanks to an investigation by Shigeaki Mori, the facts that are different from those found in Marukis’ investigation have been established with regard to the number of POWs in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing, and their sex (Mori 2008).
were killed by the bombs are not only Japanese, but also forced laborers under the colonial rule of Japan and non-Japanese people such as international students and POWs. In the 1970s, growing attention was paid to lawsuits to seek support for overseas atomic bomb survivors, and the issue of Korean drafted laborers was “discovered.” Michiko Ishimure was the first writer to pick up the issue in her report “Chrysanthemum and Nagasaki: The remains of Korean atomic victims in silence” (Ishimure 1968). The image presented by the writer – a crow was pecking the corpse of a Korean who had been abandoned due to discrimination that lasted even after death – stimulated the Marukis to produce No. 14 CROWS in 1972 (Figure 8).  

As for the American POWs and Korean victims, not many primary sources have been preserved. The memories are still subject to public debates over their authenticity. Nobody can prove their pain and anguish. But the Marukis successfully collected the ignored voices of the dead as if they were a type of folklore of the 20th century and, through their imagination, gave form to them in paintings.

Over the course of the 1970s and the 1980s, the Hiroshima Panels made another tour, which is remarkable in that it was supported by various local groups and that No. 14 CROW was displayed in the most venues along with the early works. The panels produced during this period stimulated imagination among viewers of the panels to prevent Japanese from repeating the atrocities.

Thanks to the opening of Sanyo Shinkansen (bullet train) in 1975 and a proposal of Tamotsu Eguchi, a junior high school teacher in Katsushika, Tokyo, there was an increasing number of Japanese high school and junior high schools that visited Hiroshima on school excursions to listen to the stories of atomic-bomb survivors. This created growing opportunities for the schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area to visit the Maruki Gallery to prepare for the excursion. Surrounded by students, Toshi often talked about the atrocities of war from the perspectives both of victims and of perpetrators in front of THE RAPE OF NANKING in which Japanese soldiers cruelly raped and slaughtered Chinese people.

In 1975, the Marukis visited the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland for the first time. Two years later, after a long preparation, the couple finally completed a large-scale AUSCHWITZ with a width of 16 meters. Numerous images of the oppression of Jews were illustrated as if they swirled in a screen: an iron gate with the slogan “Arbeit macht frei”;
a procession of people who were ousted from their town; a punishment of hanging and shooting as a warning to other detainees; barbed wire with high-voltage electricity; the striped uniform of detainees; a pile of cut hair; and naked women who groaned in a gas chamber. Although Toshi used photos and resources for her reference, she confessed that “the interior of the gas chamber was an exception. I drew it only through my imagination.”

There is no one who survived the gas killing to tell us about it. Whether it is Nanking, Auschwitz, or Hiroshima, people who knew what happened on the very spot are nonexistent.

In the summer of 1978, the panels toured ten cities in France. The young people who helped arrange the tour belonged to the groups that were concerned about the nuclear issue from an environmental point of view. Prompted by the question about pollution in Minamata in Kumamoto prefecture that French participants raised, the Marukis visited the city for the first time in November 1979. Guided by people including Michiko Ishimure, they met victims of organic mercury pollution – an extremely shocking journey for them. In MINAMATA, a large-scale painting with a width of 15 meters, they depicted people and animals who groaned in paralysis, drains discharging mercury, and fishing boats floating on the Shiranui Sea in an unfettered fashion with no distinction between sky and land, thus creating a world of chaos. The Marukis stated that “Minamata disease is a delayed atomic bomb.”

Furthermore, the Marukis visited Okinawa for the first time in 1978 to hold an exhibition of the Hiroshima Panels. In the island, they listened to the voices of people who had gone through fierce ground battles involving civilians. One thing that astounded the couple was the tragic story of mass suicide.

In 1982, the Marukis released No. 15 NAGASAKI (Figure 9). Although they had already drawn small pieces such as MITSUBISHI STEEL WORKS and REMAINS OF THE CATHEDRAL in 1953, this was the first opportunity for them to address the issue

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Figure 9. The Hiroshima Panels No. 15 NAGASAKI, 1982.

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24 Chugoku Shimbun, 17 February 1977.
25 Cherbourg (May 13–17, 1978), Molay (May 19–21), Nantes (May 22–24), Bayonne (May 27–June 6), Millau (June 5–11), Chambéry (June 21–25), Haguenau (June 29–July 2), Metz (July 4–6), Haguenau for the second time, and Paris (dates unknown).
26 A pollution caused by methylmercury discharged from a chemical factory to the sea in the south of Kumamoto prefecture. This caused paralysis and disorders in the central nerves of local residents, and even killed some people.
27 Director Noriaki Tsuchimoto produced a film called “The Minamata Murals” in 1981. Michiko Ishimure read out her own poem, and composer Tohru Takemitsu offered music for the film. The film was highly praised and won the 23rd Mainichi Geijutsu Sho (Mainichi Art Prize).
28 In the battles, Japanese soldiers induced, forced or even ordered many Okinawans to kill themselves. Indoctrinated with the belief that being held captive by the enemy was shame of the highest order, many people “voluntarily chose” to take their lives by themselves. Toshi wrote that “In Okinawa, I was told to draw war in Okinawa. If I can draw the Battle of Okinawa, the true perpetrators will come out” (Maruki 1978, 11).
of Nagasaki in the series of the Hiroshima Panels. For the couple who witnessed the barbarities in Hiroshima, what happened in Nagasaki was remote. They might have begun to feel compelled to draw the event in Nagasaki, the other city devastated by the atomic bomb, through their encounters with Nanking, Auschwitz, and Minamata, as they did not have firsthand experience with any of those. NAGASAKI eventually became the last in the series of the Hiroshima Panels.

After 1982, the Marukis visited Okinawa almost every year. In Okinawa the essence of war – that the military does not defend civilians – was clearly visible. The Marukis considered that drawing the Battle of Okinawa was the best way to portray war in general. Listening to the survivors inspired the Marukis to hold a paintbrush.

Eventually, they produced a series of 14 paintings on the Battle of Okinawa. In 1983, there was a series of eight: KUMEJIMA ISLAND MASSACRE I, KUMEJIMA ISLAND MASSACRE II, TURTLE SHELL GRAVEYARD, THE CAVE, CAPE KYAN, MASS SUICIDE, HIMEYURI MONUMENT, and WAR GAMES AT DAYBREAK. In 1984, THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA. In 1986, they produced CAPE KYAN and THE CAVE, and in 1987, a series of three paintings on Yomitan village: CHIBICHIRI CAVE, SHIMUKU CAVE, and ZANPA OJISHI.\textsuperscript{29} In the Marukis’ collaboration, the number of paintings on Okinawa was surpassed only by the 15 Hiroshima Panels. In the Okinawa series, they drew a wide range of scenes, such as massacre of civilians by Japanese soldiers, people who killed themselves in a cave, and female students who were killed while caring for injured soldiers. In particular, THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA was a masterpiece that had a long-lasting impact on viewers: The painting, a large-scale work with a height of 4 meters and a width of 8.5 meters, portrayed various memories of the battle in a single screen with a contrast of black Chinese ink with a white blank in the bottom right (this might be a blank of memory), and with an eye-catching blue of sea and vermillion of flames (Figure 10).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure10.png}
\caption{THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA, 1984.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{29}In the village, more than half of about 140 residents who ran into Chibichiri cave were forced to kill themselves. In contrast, nearly 1,000 people in Shimuku cave surrendered to the US forces and survived. The Marukis depicted the contrast in a series of three paintings.
At the outset, THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA was displayed in the Maruki Gallery, but moved to Sakima Museum, which opened in 1994, for permanent display. To build the museum, which he heads, Michio Sakima, after a long negotiation, reclaimed his ancestors’ land that the United States had expropriated to construct Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (Sakima 2014). Currently, Okinawa is still roiled by the issue of military base, as is shown in the construction of a new base in the Henoko district of Nago in northern Okinawa. The significance of THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA stands out in this context. It not only tells the memories of war, but also connects the ongoing problem with past history in a museum that is located next to a US base. The role played by the painting may be analogous to the one played by the Hiroshima Panels in the 1950s.

**Conclusion**

The collaboration of the Marukis that began with the Hiroshima Panels is startling in its radical shift in, and the breadth of its subjects. But a close look at their paintings reveals their steadfast preoccupation with history from the perspectives of the most seriously affected. Also invariable throughout their life is their way of producing paintings: they tried to listen to others’ voices and pour numerous memories into a painting in multilayered expressions, rather than relying on their own firsthand experiences. American historian John W. Dower also noted that “historical memory is fickle and the influence of powerful visual images is incalculable. Much of what the Marukis have painted might well be nearly forgotten already if they had not given us such strong images to hold on to” (Dower 1990, 205).

History is shaped by an accumulation of people’s memories. But the perspectives of the vulnerable are all too often neglected and forgotten as time passes. How thoroughly can we listen to the memories of individuals that are often left unnoticed in the records based on the grand narrative of history? How can we construct our own ideas from these memories? These are the questions that the paintings of the Marukis have posed.

It was inevitable that the Marukis, having started with the issue of the Hiroshima bombing, came to fundamentally question the meaning of violence through their exchanges in exhibitions all over Japan and the world. Violence has existed at all times and in every single society. The atomic bomb is only part of it. It can even be said that the world is sustained by structural violence such as pollution, poverty, discrimination, and military bases. Young people who live in today’s complex society might be victimized even without war. Nevertheless, it is not as easy for us to feel others’ pain as to feel our own. While suffering that takes place in one’s own country is discernible under a stream of information in education and the media, the pain of people in other countries is easily forgotten both consciously and unconsciously. This is where imagination is called for.

By extending our imagination over the dead in the past and imbuing them with a renewed life, we can build a bulwark to prevent similar atrocities from being perpetrated. Passing down the memories of pain may also invigorate people who are suffering in different contexts. Violence tears people’s minds apart and threatens their lives. But imagining the pain of others can eventually be life-saving by preventing further violence from being repeated.

We are always facing problems in life. Behind the paintings that the Marukis have left stand the memories of countless numbers of people who have suffered and died. It is imperative for us to listen to the voices of the voiceless dead and try to understand the “memories” that we have not experienced, as a torch in our survival in this world full of hardships.
Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

Yukinori Okamura is a curator of Maruki Gallery for the Hiroshima Panels in Japan since 2001, and has also studied how arts interact with society, especially focusing on the works of the Marukis. He received an award from Peace & Cooperative Journalist Fund of Japan in 2016.

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