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This paper introduces the Sakima Art Museum in Okinawa. What makes the museum so significant and committed to the message of peace not only the architectural design, but also the director's encounter with Toshi Maruki, known as one of the most leading oil painters and illustrators for children's books, and Iri Maruki, who received training in suibokuga, or paintings in India ink. Together, they are known as the Picassos of Japan with their collaborative paintings of the “Hiroshima Panels.” Just as Picasso painted the civilian targeted air raid against the city of Gernika in his “Guernika,” the Marukis have always brought to the fore the stories of the local people whose existences were erased, their voices muted.

Under the blue sky, a tropical paradise consisting of an emerald green ocean, white sand beaches, and tropical fish that swim among the magnificent coral reefs stretches along the islands of Okinawa, or Ryukyu islands. At first glance, the landscape of the islands is that of a resort area located in the midst of a natural environment. Yet upon closer observation, one cannot but be reminded of the fact that the island of Okinawa is still dominated by the presence of the United States military bases. In that respect, not much has changed since Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972. As recent as September 2004, more than 30,000 protesters gathered at Futenma city. Joined by the mayor, Okinawans gathered in Ginowan city to rally against the presence of the military bases on their island after a Marine Corps helicopter crashed on the Okinawa International University and local police and officials alike were prohibited from entering the site even for investigation purposes. Following conventional wisdom, one would not choose to build an art museum next to a military base. However, this is exactly what Michio Sakima, director of the Sakima Art Museum, chose to do a decade ago.

Unlike peace museums that are built on sites that do not have much historical significance, the Sakima Art Museum stands on the very site that was once used as the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station, known as the Futenma base. Indeed, the base occupies forty percent of the entire city of Futenma. Furthermore, as of 2002, although Okinawa occupies only 0.6 percent of Japan's total land space, 75 percent of the American military bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa. One can say that Okinawa exists in the middle of a large military base, and not vice versa.

Leading to the rooftop of the museum are stairs that end after six steps, after which is a landing, and then another twenty-three steps follow. These numbers have symbolic reference to the date, June 23rd. Yoshikazu Makishi, a local architect designed the stairway so that people might appreciate the beams of the setting sun which beams are designed to come straight through the square hole at the end of the stairway—but “straight” only on the special memorial day at seven o'clock in the evening on June 23rd. When I asked Mr. Sakima if this was true, he confessed that while the architect wanted to memorialize the day in his architectural design, it was by pure coincidence that the number of stairs turned out to be six, followed by twenty-

three. The only request Mr. Sakima had made to the architect with regards to the design was that he did not want the museum to be of a traditional Okinawan architecture, characterized by a red-tiled roof, as it is the case with the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum. Mr. Sakima has told me that he was initially skeptical and anxious about the designing plan until he himself actually saw the sunset on June 23rd coming through the square hole at the end of the stairway.

On this day, sixty years ago in 1945, the Battle of Okinawa took place. While August 6th and 8th, dates that fall on school summer vacation holidays, are commemorated to mourn the lost lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the mainland after the two atomic bombs were dropped in the respective cities, June 23rd is officially designated as a prefectural Okinawan holiday, allowing peace memorial events to take place throughout the Okinawa islands.

From the rooftop of the museum, one can command a view of the surrounding air base. One is reminded that preparation of war and war itself is not a thing of the past but of the present. The Futenma military base spreads on 1,188 acres of land and is surrounded by the growing urban city of Ginowan. It is said that the air base is leased from approximately 2,000 private landowners, including the Sakima family. When the end of the lease contract approached in 1992, the Sakimas decided not to extend the lease to the central government, which in turn leases the land to the United States. Instead, the family decided to build an art museum on their ancestor's land.

In 1972, Okinawa was finally returned to Japan from the United States Occupation. At the same time, the price of land and leasing cost increased, allowing the family to receive extra income regularly. Influenced by his father who often took him to art museums, Mr. Sakima contemplated on how to make use of the money. He then decided to collect artwork. Starting from Japanese block prints of ukiyoe from the Edo period, and later expanding his collections to modern Japanese and non-Japanese artists, he continued to collect artwork long before he decided to build an art museum. With the strong support of local grassroots organizations, their land was partially returned. Consequently, despite its location, or perhaps because of it, the Sakima Art Museum in Okinawa has been a haven for visitors since 1994. The garden outside the museum building holds the family kikkoubaka, a large family tomb that can be found only in Okinawa and not in mainland Japan. The tomb is in traditional Okinawa style in the shape of a turtle back and womb, symbolizing life and death. There is serenity, and there is art on Sakimas' land.

The three themes throughout the permanent exhibition at the Sakima Art Museum are centered on “life and death,” “suffering and salvation,” and “humanity and war.” The museum director had already collected many artworks during the decades prior to the opening of the museum, with a special interest in art works by the French religious artists, George Henri Rouault (1871 – 1958); paintings by the German Expressionist printmaker and sculptor, Kathe Kollwitz (1867 – 1945); and Makoto Ueno (1909 – 1980), known for his woodcut on “Nagasaki and A.” and “The Ruins,” both of which are currently exhibited at the National Gallery of Arts in Tokyo. The director founded the museum hoping it would become “a place for meditating,” away from the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, a place to contemplate and reflect upon the human disasters throughout the world. The paintings collected in the museum articulate in quiet whispers, such resounding statements that cannot be expressed by words alone. These are words that echo throughout the sad history of Okinawa.

What makes the museum so significant and committed to the message of peace is Mr. Sakima's encounter with Toshi Maruki, known as one of the most leading oil painters and illustrators for children's books, and Iri Maruki, who received training in suibokuga, or paintings in India ink. Together, they are known as the Picassos of Japan with their collaborative paintings of the "Hiroshima Panels." Just as Picasso painted the civilian targeted air raid against the city of Gernika in his "Guernika," the Marukis have always brought to the fore the stories of the local people whose existences were erased, their voices muted. Like Picasso, the Marukis painted the "Hiroshima Murals" of a city in total ruin at a time when even using the word "atomic bomb" and taking photographs of the destroyed city were forbidden. They painted, as they wanted to show the world what they themselves had seen in the city three days after the dropping of the bomb. Lest we forget, they painted.

Japanese culture is known to value and celebrate the seasonal changes in many ways. Yet, in the ancient Ryukyu Kingdom, or Okinawa Islands, winter never arrives. It is here where artists Iri and Toshi Maruki decided to work on panel paintings of the last and most brutal battle fought on Japanese soil during the Pacific Asian War: the Battle of Okinawa. The Marukis' panel paintings have always dealt with human agonies, from the victims of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa, and the Nanjing massacre to those of the Minamata disease caused by mercury poisoning. Their powerful paintings have traveled around the world, and are mostly collected in an art museum, which they themselves built in Saitama prefecture in the late 1960s.

Today, the Maruki Art Museum, like the Sakima Art Museum, has become a place for peace education. Their fifteen "Hiroshima Murals," taking three decades to complete, depict the effects of the atomic bombing on Japanese, Koreans, and American prisoners of war who were in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing. The early panels first traveled throughout Europe in 1953 soon after the United States Occupation ended, and have since been viewed by ten million people around the world. John Dower, the 1999 Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Embracing Defeat* produced a documentary film, *Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima*, which depicted the Marukis working on the murals. The film was nominated for an academy award in 1988. Director of this film, John Junkerman, has recently completed another documentary, entitled *Japan's Peace Constitution*, which premiered in April 2005 in Tokyo. The film is a collection of interviews of John Dower, Chalmers Johnson, Michel Kilo, Lebanese journalist Josef Samaha, Beate Sirota Gordon, Ban Zhongyi, Shin Heisoo, Hidaka Rokuro, and Korean historians Kang Man-Gil and Han Hong Koo. In the film, the Sakima Art Museum was chosen as the site for an interview with C. Douglas Lummis, author of *Radical Democracy*. During the interview, the mural of the Battle of Okinawa painted by Iri and Toshi Maruki can be seen in the background.

The paintings of Iri and Toshi Maruki resonate the traditional Japanese ink painting. As Dower writes in *Japan in War and Peace*, they show "anger, complexity, and humanism . . . unparalleled in the Japanese artistic tradition; indeed one is hard pressed to find counterparts in the non-Japanese traditions of high art." Their paintings are distinctive and powerful, yet the Ministry of Education does not allow the image to be used in elementary social studies textbooks. It has been rejected as being too disturbing, depressing, and dark, while Toshi Maruki's best selling children's book, *Hiroshima no Pika* [Flash of Hiroshima] has been published in seven languages. Often times, their paintings are interpreted as reflecting a sense of propaganda or given a symbolic meaning as Picasso's "Guernika." However, first and foremost, no one can dispute the fact that their paintings are works by accomplished artists of black and white traditional suibokuga.

At Sakima Art Museum, an entire room is occupied by the Marukis' paintings, with the central piece of the "Map of the Battle of Okinawa" completed in 1984. While this large painting, 4 meters in height and 8.5 meters in width, is displayed for the public to see throughout the year, the other four parts that complete the "Map of the Battle of Okinawa" are rotated once a year. One can see gruesome scenes from the killings committed by the Japanese military against the Kumejima islanders, the forced mass suicides that took place at Yomitan village, and the burning of the entire island by the Japanese troops against the Tokashiki Island residents who, too, were ordered to take their own lives before being captured by the approaching American soldiers. On the bottom left side of the painting, in the hands of the artists, is written: "mass suicide is massacre committed indirectly."

For a long time, the Japanese history textbooks did not interpret the mass suicides as forced acts. Instead they were referred to as acts voluntarily committed by the residents of Okinawa who were willing to die for the country. The three times I have visited the museum since 2002 during the week of the Okinawa peace memorial holiday, two of the three-part paintings of the distressing history of Yomitan village were on display. They each symbolized life and death brought upon the residents who were hiding in the gma, or cave, when American soldiers landed on their island. The Japanese Imperial Army used these caves found only in the southern islands, as fortifications of defense and also as hiding places for the civilians. The paintings cover most of the wall space, one on each side, depicting the Chibirigama and Shimukugama caves in the same Yomitan village, respectively. According to the surviving witnesses, about 140 residents were hiding in the Chibirigama cave, when they heard that the enemy soldiers were arriving on April 1st, 1945. Told that they would be raped and killed in a brutal manner, and sixty percent of these civilians being under the age of eighteen, they committed mass suicide. However, separated by only a distance of 1 km eastward from the Chibirigama, around 1,000 residents who were hiding in the Shimukugama managed to survive. They had followed the leadership of returning immigrants from Hawaii, who insisted that if they all surrendered and became prisoners of war, none of them would be killed. In the end, they all survived, albeit interned to tell their stories to later generations. The stories of the Yomitan village painted by the Marukis are well known and are narrated in the front pages of a history textbook, *Ryuku Okinawashi* (The history of the Ryukyu Okinawa) used in Okinawa today. The lessons we can draw from the story is that military forces cannot protect people, only people can protect people.

It was not until textbook writer and historian Saburo Ienaga who sued the central government for not allowing his textbook to tell the historical truth that the Japanese Army was finally recognized as being accountable for their gruesome actions during the war. Moreover, unlike some history textbooks used in the mainland, the *Ryuku Okinawashi* textbook does not fail to discuss the harsh treatment of other colonial territories by the Japanese Imperial government during the war. The legacy of the Ienaga trials comes alive in these paintings, and the voices of the local residents who wish to tell their stories are no longer muted. In this room, surrounded by the powerful murals of the Battle of Okinawa, concerts, and special lectures, oftentimes, an entire class of students is invited to sit in to learn about the mural paintings. Hence, the room itself becomes a gallery of events that are pertinent to the aforementioned three themes of the Sakima Art Museum.

People from the local community are also involved in the artistic activities that take place at the Sakima Art Museum. In 1996, for example, students of the nearby Okinawa Prefectural

Kaiho High School, Department of Art, initiated an art project called "Voices of Stone." In this project, students wrote numbers on a small stone until they reached the number of 236,095. This is the number of lost lives which includes Americans, Chinese, Taiwanese, Koreans, and Japanese whose names were inscribed on the granite Peace Cornerstones erected at the Peace Memorial Park as of 1996. The neatly piled stones became a temporary monument that summer, and the project movement spread to other schools in other prefectures. In the end, more than six hundred people were involved in this project, including non-students and tourists from abroad that just happened to visit the Sakima Art Museum when the project was being carried out. The project was completed on June 23rd on Peace Memorial Day, when a prayer siren wails throughout the island for a minute, and people offer a minute of prayer to comfort the souls that perished in the war. Today, the "Voices of Stone" can still be found scattered in the front garden of the Sakima Art Museum.

According to the newest edition of the Peace and War Museum Guidebook published by the History Educationalist of Japan Conference in 2004, there are currently 134 peace and war museums listed in Japan. Most of them are administered by public funding. Some funded by the central government, others prefectural, and yet others by municipal and towns halls. In other words, a completely privately operated peace art museum such as the Sakima Art Museum in Okinawa is rarely found. Additionally, despite the fact that Okinawa is the poorest prefecture in the country, it has the largest number of peace and war museums in the country, in fact, 23 museums, second to Kyoto Prefecture where 10 museums are listed. Contrary to common belief, there are only six peace and war museums in Hiroshima and seven in Nagasaki Prefecture.

Mr. Sakima, who went to college in Tokyo, recalls that whenever he recounted the historical experience of war in Okinawa, his friends would remind him of the war damages caused by air raids in the mainland. Chided for placing emphasis on the Okinawa war experience, he had remained unsure of how to refute his friends. This all changed when he encountered the paintings of Iri and Toshi Maruki. A picture is worth a thousand words, and their paintings expressed exactly what he wanted to say. Unlike in the mainland Japan, in Okinawa, it was a war fought on land, ocean, and air. Moreover, what distinguishes the Battle of Okinawa from other battles fought on land during the Pacific War such as the Battle of Iwojima, is the fact that Okinawan civilians were mobilized to participate and assist the Imperial Japanese Army. Males aged fifteen

to sixty and females aged seventeen to forty were ordered to join the National Patriotic Combat Units. Young students enrolled in schools were mobilized to act as messengers and nurses, and more than half of the students never returned. An all-out war, using mostly suicide kamikaze missions symbolically demonstrates the tragic history of the Battle of Okinawa.

As philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote in one of his last essays, *The Concept of History*, "It is more arduous to honor the memory of the nameless than that of the renowned. Historical construction is devoted to the memory of the nameless." Benjamin's words venerate those who are caught in the crossfire on both sides of the battlefield. The voices of Okinawan civilians who were caught between the Japanese Imperial Army and the American military forces, too, have been kept out of sight from history textbooks until the 1980s. If we listen carefully, the powerful paintings of Iri and Toshi Maruki bring back to life the once muted voices of the nameless. At the Sakima Art Museum, art and architecture call for peace.

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