

VARTANIAN

ARTWORK
SEEING INSIDE THE
CREATIVE PROCESS

NX160
.V37
2011

60



If an artwork is an artist's garden,
the notebook is the miniature garden.

by Yoshio Suzuki

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Tadanori Yokoo is a painter, graphic artist, photographer, and writer. He is one of Japan's most successful and internationally recognized artists and graphic designers. In 1972, his work was shown as a solo exhibition at Museum of Modern Art in New York, his first of numerous exhibitions abroad. His collaborations have included work with Yukio Mishima and Shuji Terayama. He has produced a prolific body of work covering numerous media and disciplines. He lives and works in Tokyo.

Yoshio Suzuki is a journalist, editor, and university lecturer. He has been reporting on the art scene in Japan extensively, principally as the art editor for the widely read periodical *Brutus*, creating features on subjects from classic to contemporary art, most notably covering the work of Yoshitomi Nara, Takashi Murakami, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and the manga artist Takehiko Inoue. Suzuki is also an active blogger on art and exhibitions in Japan. He lives and works in Tokyo.

"Even if I am complimented [about my journals], I'm not happy in the slightest. The reason being that journals operate outside the perimeter of art, without much creative intent. But if in having these journals seen gives some a hint to the created artwork, then I suppose it is okay to show them."

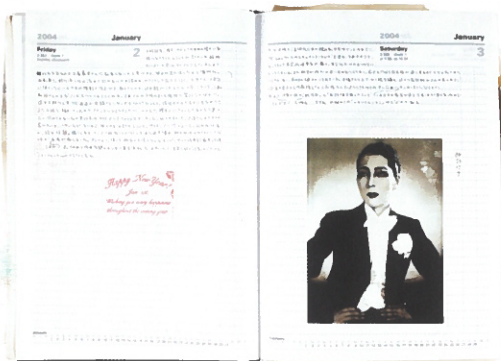
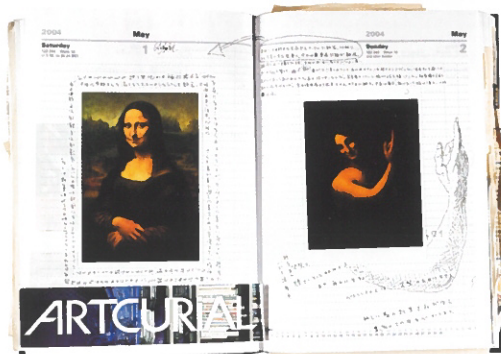
Despite the artist's opinion of them, Tadanori Yokoo's exhibitions of his journals are quite popular. His written works, at least in their first incarnation, start as journals, and even in their finished form are inseparable from their origins as journal entries. Beginning with the 1969 publication of his collection of early essays *1-meter-70-centimeter Blues* (subtitled "Tadanori Yokoo Journal"), the journals serve as the source material for numerous reformations. The following year, Yokoo released the autobiographical essay collection *Escape to the Incomplete*, which draws from a 1959 journal that chronicles the trepidation of changing jobs and the anguish in moving from western Japan to Tokyo to do so. The anguish of this time and the emotional state of Yokoo's young days are a continual presence in the journals.

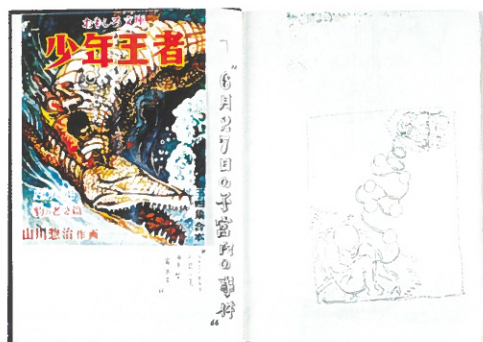
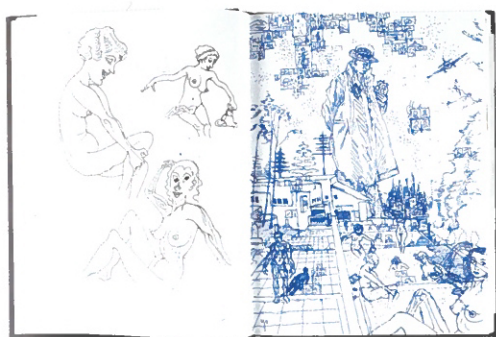
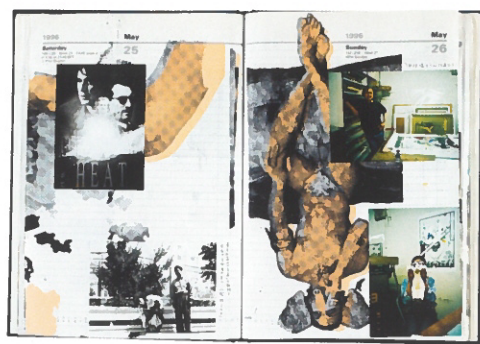
There are highlights certainly present too: In 1967, a poster of his was purchased for the permanent collection of New York's

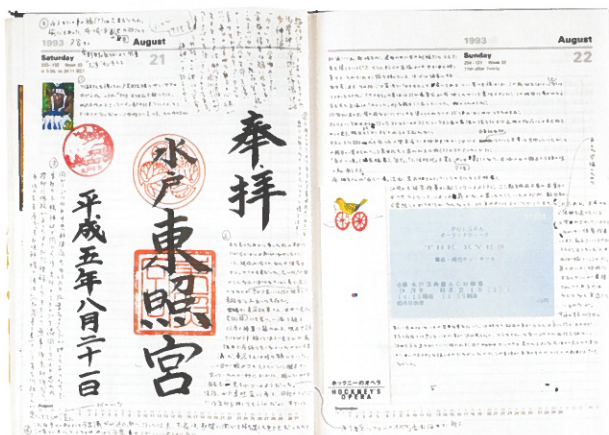


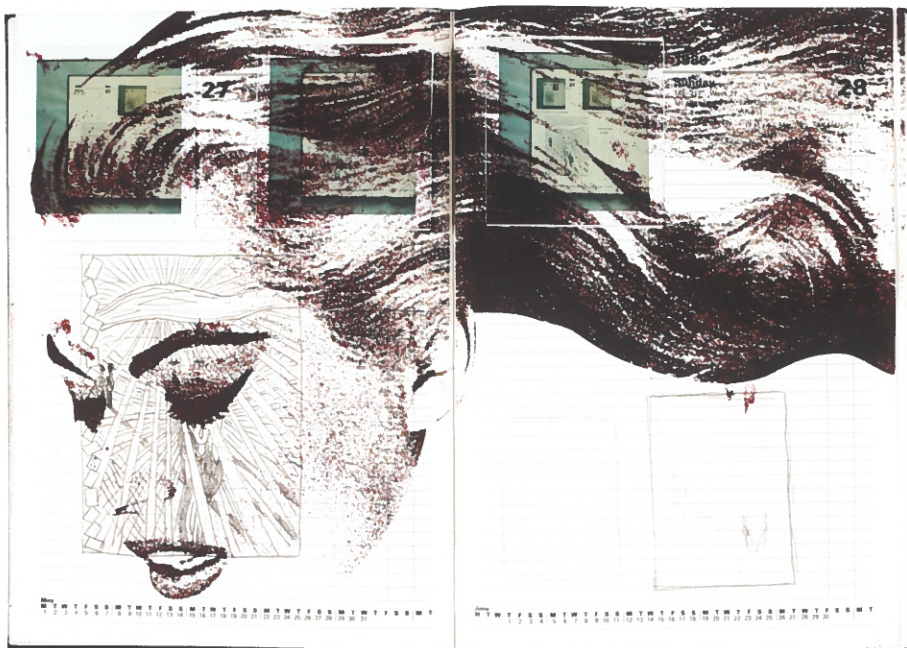
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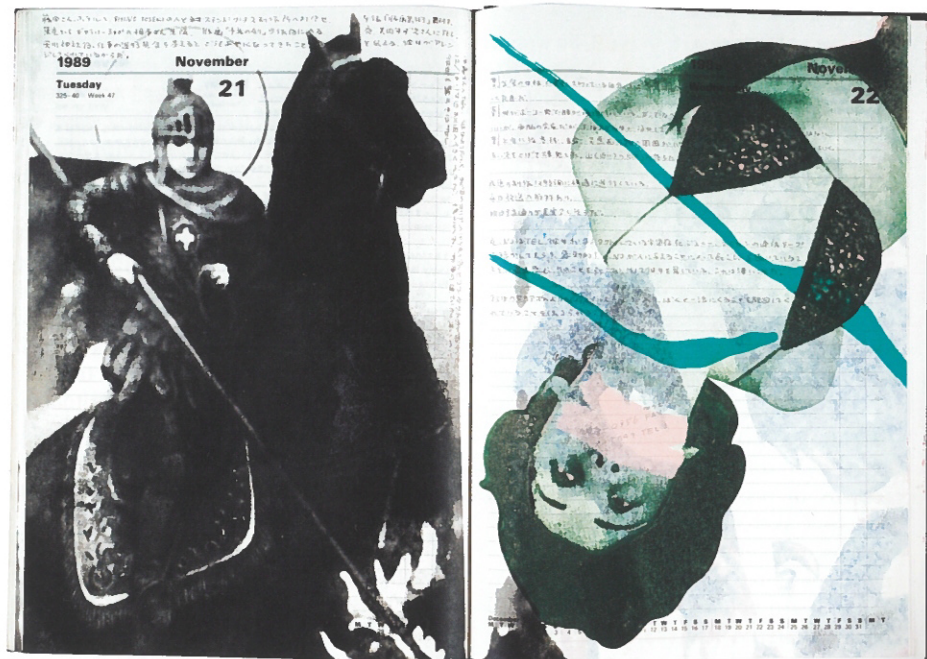
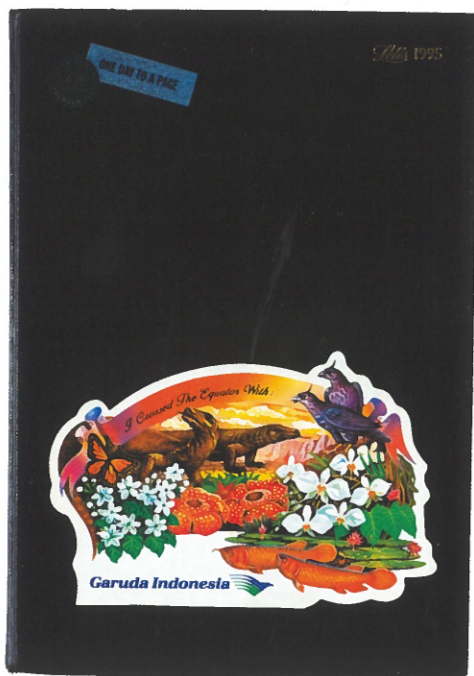


Museum of Modern Art. In 1969, he won the Grand Prix of the Biennale de Paris, in 1970 at the Osaka World's Fair he was involved in a large-scale project. Entries include his experience as a movie actor and photographer, and in a broad range of other activities. All of this exuberance was put to an abrupt halt by a traffic accident. After that he declined all design and illustration work, taking a hiatus from writing, too, but for one magazine wherein he penned a column called "Writing Hiatus Proclamation Journal," which is also included in the *Escape to the Incomplete*.

As the pages of his journals are shown here, from 1980 he started to use the Letts brand oversize diary. Up until then he kept records of his travels in a diary format and kept sketches, idea notes, and other memos in a separate notebook. The blank notebooks that would serve as his travel diaries were bought at the travel destination, in part communicating some of the local color. As a consequence, the sizes and

formats differ from notebook to notebook. (Given the small size of the notebooks, he didn't use them as scrapbooks.) Apart from the travel diaries, from his early days he also kept a dream diary. These also are not meant to be the basis for any of his artistic output as is.

With the use of the Letts diaries, his journaling style found its final form, as its oversize pages were able to house all disparate elements: dream diary, travel records, exhibition ideas and plans, sketches and reproductions of masterpieces, transfer rubbings, newspaper clippings (obituaries abound), letter correspondence, postcards, picture postcards, postage stamps, stamps, snap photographs, and Polaroids. The daily recordings have a close and apparent connection with Yokoo's artwork, but Yokoo claims he had never considered converting those materials into artwork, and he maintains his relationship to the journals as something different from his art.



2005

October

Friday

280-85 Week 40

Dream Power



(ジョン・レノンとヨーコ 2005)

何回も見た映画が、あんなに感動的。5時間、
すばらしい日本映画と云われている。
夕方より、武蔵野のオー・オー・コンサートホールで、
より、ハワード・コンサート・ホールで、タクシード・
2時間、ハワード・コンサート・ホールで、タクシード・
終、ハワード・コンサート・ホールで、タクシード・
ジョン・レノンの誕生日にあつた、60年代の作品を
コレセント・レーン・オー・オー・コンサート・ホールで、
已、野村浩一、由、市、野村浩一、由、市、野村浩一、由、市、

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20051007

全席指定

1席

席-A
列

38番

¥1,500



KYODO TOKYO

ジョン・レノン音楽祭

Dream Power ジョン・レノンスーパー・ライブ

2005年 10月 7日 (金)

17:30 開場 18:30 開演

全席指定

日本放送館

2130800_0_1826_0144_029

主催: ジョン・レノン音楽祭実行委員会2005

協賛: ジブラルタ生命保険株式会社

後援: テレビ朝日/朝日放送/ニッポン放送/東京大学

スプリング・カウシル

協力: 東京エレクトロニクス・レノンミュージアム

電報: ザ・ビートルズ・クラブ 企画制作: フラグ・システム

品問合: 03-3498-8888

21308 051007

¥8,500 (税込)

1席
席-A
38番

November

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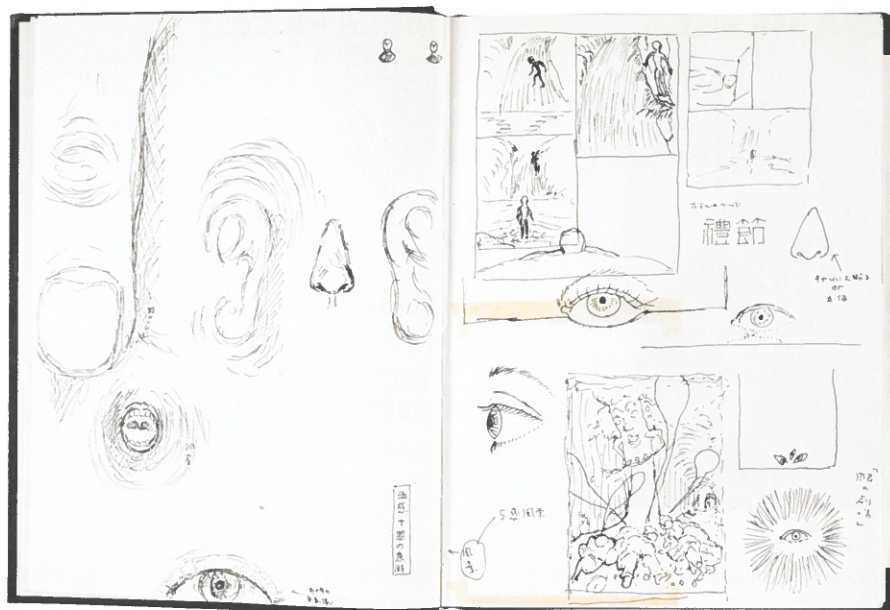
The journals, given Yokoo's prolific and continued practice, can be taken as a body of work of sorts, and several compilations of the journal entries have appeared over the years. How the journals are edited and organized reflects the open-ended scope of the journals. The book *Yokoo Tadanori Journal Life* (1995) served as a digest of these Letts diaries, covering roughly ten years' worth of journal entries from books swollen to a heft with various elements pasted in. The publication covers 365 days, but not a consecutive progression of dates. January 1 is from one year, January 2 is from another, and January 3 is from yet another year. The book proceeds in such a manner, dispensing with linearity, breaking down and reassembling the time model. "The dates follow in succession, but the actual days are not connected, as though for ten years or so I was flying about at random," Yokoo writes in the book's afterword.

Books of journals by writers and painters up until then were fundamentally different from Yokoo's book. Here, the journal

was not something that operated on a time axis or a media that communicated the record of thought and ideas. Rather, each page became artworks unto their own, which were then accumulated in the form of the book.

For Yokoo, there are several other books that are based on his journals or books that take the form of the journal. One of these, *Journal of Painter Yokoo Tadanori* (1987), begins with an epiphanic moment in 1980 when, upon seeing a Picasso exhibition at MoMA, Yokoo decided to change from being a designer and illustrator to being a painter.

Other book-length works, on the other hand, cover brief—albeit highly condensed—periods of time that capture a cacophony of destinations, people, episodes, discoveries, and self-reflection. Regardless of the speed of events, the slowness of consideration persists. This fluid approach to the journals is in keeping with his playfulness regarding his own death. Soon after his debut, he released a poster that incorporated an image of himself having committed suicide



by hanging himself. In another instance, one of his early publications was entitled "The Posthumous of Tadanori Yokoo," and he ran an obituary/advertisement in magazines. And similarly, his return to motifs that he painted at the beginning of his career is not so much a revisitation of past themes but an addressing of his former self in the third person. There is the Yokoo of the now, and all the other Yokoos.

The pages of Yokoo's journals are made up of various elements collaged together in a dynamic manner. At the same time, on the same sheet, Yokoo's handwritten text is quite organized and composed of carefully rendered character forms lined up neatly. This pattern is also visible in his artworks on a much larger scale. If we consider his artwork to be gardening, these journals are miniature gardens.

Whatever he was feeling at the time is usually directly reflected in the journal: what he saw, felt, or whatever he attempted to record; whatever work he was engaged in; thoughts that draw on master artists from

old and new, East and West; exchanges with friends; where he has come from and where he is headed to. These are perennial topics taken up with great care and consideration, changing shape, repeating, and reflecting. His miniature garden is sustained with the greatest of care—a practice he still maintains today. Looking at the journal pages, his thoughts are captured in suspended animation. In the end, for him the painting in itself is like a journal, and in that regard, he has a strong resemblance to Picasso.

From his afterword for *Journal of Life*: "Generally in my case, making something has a strong journalistic element. Paintings are always drawn with the feeling of that day, so just as the feeling changes depending on the day, the painting itself also changes rapidly degree by degree. In that sense, you can consider my paintings journals, and perhaps it is okay to consider the journal an artwork too."