

# Natsuyuki Nakanishi - chiasme

Takayo Iida  
Curator

*I do not look at a chaos, but at things – so that finally one cannot say if  
it is the look or if it is the things that command.*

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>1</sup>

The atmosphere Natsuyuki Nakanishi's atelier was tense, but images of one after another of his works were connected together, swaying gently and overlapping. A topological space had arisen with the nature of a reciprocal interpenetration of the visible and the invisible, or to use Merleau-Ponty's term, a chiasm (*chiasme*). Disengaged from their positions as separate and self-contained pieces, Nakanishi's works were bunched together in the magnetic field of his atelier in accordance with some unknown principle. The effect was reminiscent of the way that the arc in the artist's *Tangent Arc* series induces anticipation of a full, incredibly large circle.

The idea emerged of reproducing the circumstances of Nakanishi's atelier at SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, which is the venue for this exhibition. SCAI THE BATHHOUSE was once a public bathhouse until times changed and it fell out of use. Later, the bathhouse was remodeled to become a studio for the Dainana-Byoto theater company, which used it as a venue to present Tojuro's *Tomb of Music Box* (with performers including Renji Ishibashi and Mako Midori). After being empty again for some time, the building then re-emerged as a gallery, SCAI THE BATHHOUSE, gaining a new life as a venue for contemporary art.

The aim of this exhibition was to transfer the intertwining<sup>2</sup> that had occurred in Nakanishi's atelier to SCAI unchanged. We abandoned the methodology of displaying each individual piece separately in a white cube as a self-contained work, and instead deliberately attempted to generate a chiasmic topological space like that of Nakanishi's atelier. In *Thoughts on Natsuyuki Nakanishi*, Shuzo Takiguchi made the following comment:

[Natsuyuki Nakanishi's] tableaux do not go as far as being anti-art. They actually have a quiet but clear appearance as tableaux. Nevertheless, the structure, movement, and combinations of colors convey a sense that the works, located within a tense continuity, are still alive.<sup>3</sup>

The exhibition contrasts to the modern painterly methodology that isolates art from place. Instead, it seeks out an approach to painting predicated in a complex manner on the distinctive yet anonymous place that is SCAI THE BATHHOUSE.

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1: "The intertwining—The chiasm" (Referenced as Japanese version, Merleau-Ponty Collection, Chikuma Gakugei Bunko; English tr. Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 133.)

2: Intertwining, or crisscrossing, is a synonym for the chiasm concept. "This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange." (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (Referenced as 1989 Japanese edition, Misuzu Shobo p.176, 181-215; English tr. Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 133.)

3: "Jikai ni Sotte - Nakanishi Natsuyuki Ko (Aligned with the Magnetic Field - Thoughts on Natsuyuki Nakanishi" (Shuzo Takiguchi, Minami Gallery catalogue, 1976)