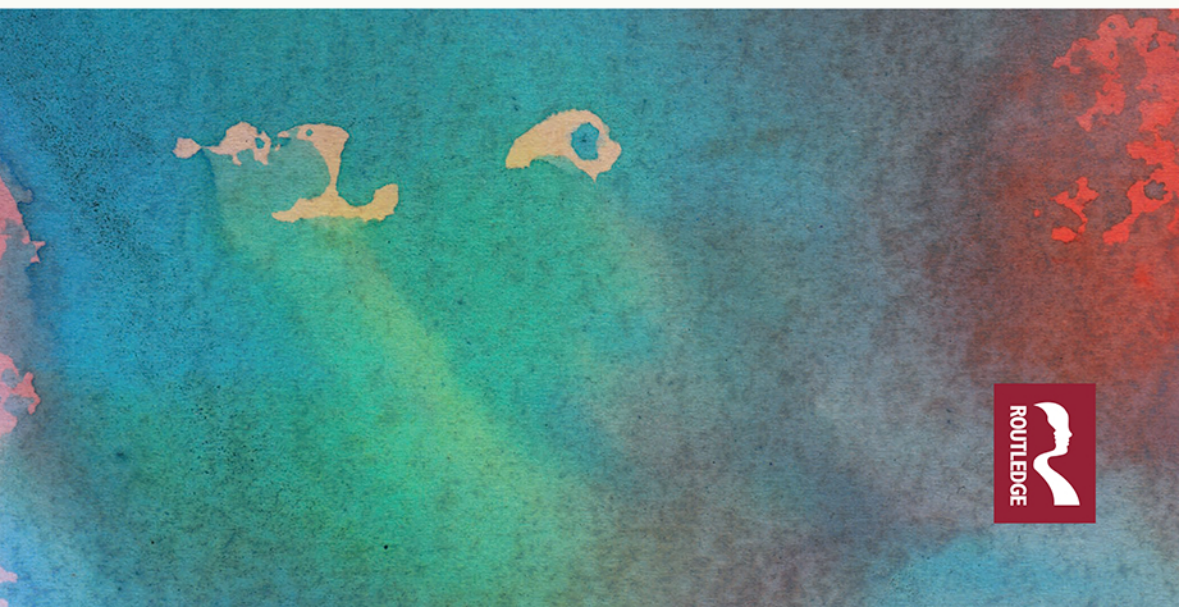
Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Japan

ART AND STREET POLITICS IN THE GLOBAL 1960s

YOSHIO NAKAJIMA AND THE GLOBAL AVANT-GARDE

Edited by
William Marotti



Art and Street Politics in the Global 1960s

Anarchic street performances in late-1950s Japan; inauguration of the first Happenings in Antwerp and charging of the "magic circle" in Amsterdam; Bauhaus Situationiste and anti-national art exchanges, networks and communes. As "Happener" and "Art Missionary," Yoshio Nakajima's storied career traverses an astounding range of locations, scenes, movements, media, and performance modes in the global 1960s and 1970s in ways that challenge our notions of the possibilities of art.

Nakajima repeatedly plays a role in jump-starting spaces of possibility, from Tokyo to Ubbeboda, from Spui Square and the Dutch Provos to Antwerp and Sweden. Despite this, Nakajima's work has paradoxically been largely excluded from accounts where it might have justifiably featured. The present volume represents an international collaboration of researchers working to remedy this oversight. Nakajima's work demands a reconceptualization of narratives of this art and politics and their specific interrelation to consider his exemplary nonconformity—and its exemplary exclusion.

This history demonstrates the inadequacy of notions of specificity that would oppose an authentic local or national frame to an inauthentic transnational one. Conversely, Nakajima manifests a key dimension of the 1960s as a global event in the interrelation between eventfulness itself and the redrawing of categories of practice and understanding.

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Acknowledgments

This project began with a chance encounter and unexpected new directions—a result that we have come to understand as typifying Nakajima's encounters over the years. It differs in one regard: the initial reluctance of Nakajima himself.

While pursuing her doctoral study of the radical art academy, Bigakkō, and, in particular, the details of its offshoot, Suwa Bigakkō, Dr. Yoshiko Shimada discovered from organizer and former student Kosaka Mayu that Nakajima had visited the class of Matsuzawa Yutaka in 1972. With the aid of Nakajima's son, Anders Nakajima, Dr. Shimada found that Nakajima was in fact in Japan, and over the course of several phone conversations, managed to persuade him to meet and to talk about his past work. Reluctant at first, Nakajima's recollections came to coincide with a renewed interest in exhibition and performance, beginning with a small show in Ōkubo that seems to have rekindled his art and performance. In the process of participating in the unearthing of his own history and archives, Nakajima in a sense rediscovered himself—an unexpected result of an encounter with his own art as possibility.

At the time, Dr. Shimada was also spearheading the excavations of Matsuzawa Yutaka's personal archive, then in a state of neglect and disorder in his former atelier. Her many months of efforts yielded numerous discoveries, including voluminous correspondence between Matsuzawa and Nakajima and substantial other ephemera. Shimada's subsequent investigations, including interviewing a range of Mail Art interlocutors of Matsuzawa and Nakajima, also catalyzed a number of professional encounters that brought us together with our European colleagues. Through a series of intertwined and wide-ranging collaborations in Japan, the United States, Denmark, and Sweden—including explorations of Matsuzawa's complex legacy—the contributors to this volume began to unfold Nakajima's own remarkable involvements.

For her heroic labors in unearthing and preserving the broad and at-risk legacy of underappreciated and underexamined art in Japan and internationally, as well as her central role in envisioning and spearheading this project, we wish to give Dr. Shimada a special and heartfelt acknowledgment.

Our many thanks to Yoshio Nakajima, of course, and to Anders Nakajima and the Nakajima family for their many kindnesses, and for their continuing work maintaining the Yoshio Nakajima Archive at Rausstenkärlsfabrik and the Yoshio

Nakajima Art Hall. Our thanks as well to Yoshida Atsushi and Yoshida Kakuya; to Kumiko and Haruo Matsuzawa and the Matsuzawa family; to Gunhild Borggreen; to Nagasaki Yumiko, Gallery 58, and Hashimoto Toshiko; and to Takamura Mukata and Peter Arnessen, both ex-students of Nakajima's. A personal thank you to Amanda Coutts and Tatiana Sulovska for their careful proof-reading of the draft essays, as well as to Chris Nelson and students in my spring 2022 graduate seminar.

Art is indeed the next possibility; our deep thanks for all who help make that possibility possible.

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Introduction

Figure I.1 Yoshio Nakajima in performance in Halmstad, Sweden, ca. 1966, bursting through his own "art missionary" image on a poster referencing his exhibition. The poster also advertises the *Happening News*, a joint production of Hugo Heyrman, Panamarenko, Wout Vercammen, Bernd Lohaus and Nakajima (six issues from 1965–ca. 1966).

Photographer unknown. Courtesy Yoshio Nakajima Archive, Konstrundan Raus Art Center.

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Happenings on streets and trains in Tokyo and in front of moving trains. Travel from Japan to Italy by hitchhiking and transport by smugglers, selling small artworks and performing for donations. Performances inaugurating the "magic center" in Spui Square in Amsterdam and catalyzing the Provos, for whom he becomes both emblem and international advocate. Alternative Documenta with the Bauhaus Situationiste. Performance, conceptual, sculptural, and figurative art; installations and oils. Dada and CoBrA, Unbeat and Bauhaus Situationiste. An assault on an art critic on the steps of a museum, who becomes a lifelong supporter. Hosting the International Ubbeboda Symposium, the longest outdoor art festival in Swedish history (authorities bulldoze an earth art work by an invited Polish artist). Expulsion from Belgium. The first foreign student enrolled in the Valand Art Academy. Visit to the Soviet Union. Invitation to the Pompidou Center. These are the exemplary and remarkably productive movements of an "art missionary."

In ways that challenge our imaginings of the role, place, and possibilities of art, Yoshio Nakajima's storied career has traversed an astounding range of locations, scenes, and movements as well as media and performance modes. The paradox of Nakajima's work is that, despite its apparent exemplification of art's potential to move and to transform, it has largely fallen out of accounts in which its impact might have justifiably featured. The present volume represents an international collaboration of researchers working to remedy this oversight. Our accounts center on Nakajima's activities from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, a time in which movement across spatial, practical, and conceptual boundaries pushed against commonplace conceptions of both art and politics. We detail the ways in which Nakajima offered an inexhaustible, unauthorized, and unexpected set of interventionist events, perturbing practices and understandings wherever he went. From Japan to Europe, and from country to country, Nakajima's movements, creative engagements, and unscripted provocations arrived without warning, prompting confusion and stimulating imaginations.

Nakajima's role in all of this comes in the form of an improbable, radical self-authorization. As artist and scholar Dr. Yoshiko Shimada relates in her chapter in this volume, "DAM ACT: Yoshio Nakajima in Japan, 1957–1964," Nakajima was the third son of a farming family from Saitama prefecture, without money, prospects, or connections. Nakajima struggled with a severe stammer as a child but was encouraged in art by an elementary school teacher.[1] Moving to Tokyo in 1955 (at the age of 15) in search of employment, he enrolled in an evening high school and immediately engaged with a newly dynamic art scene surging with international currents and local experimentalism. Nakajima began a manifold approach to an art practice comprising drawings, painting, provocative installations, and interventionist performances—the latter a signature mix of "spontaneity and calculation," as Shimada argues. He formed an art club at the night school, joining with classmates to host festivals on "Dada" and "Art and Anti-art" as the "Unbeat Organizers." Combining documentation and extensive oral history work, Shimada reads Nakajima against art-historical exclusions and even against his own self-representation, revealing Nakajima in context as both attuned to his moment and impressively groundbreaking as an artist. Even within this moment of "action art" and

increasing attention to performance and the body, Nakajima and his Unbeat artist group emerge as the first in Japan to develop practices that were exclusively performance-based—and which echoed contemporaneous transformations in political activism. Shimada reveals a much more engaged and intentional Nakajima than might be apparent from his wild-seeming actions or from his own accounts while giving weight to the risk and power of his performances as an "art missionary."

With encouragement from Dutch artist Daniel van Golden, Nakajima left Japan in 1964, again following a meandering, improbable route from Hong Kong to Saigon, across India, and all the way to Italy via Nepal, Egypt, Turkey, and Greece, supported by smugglers, hitchhiking, improvisational busking performances, and art sales. Arriving in Venice in September of 1964 during the 32d Biennale, he serendipitously met with a former acquaintance, artist Ikewada Yuko, wife of Austrian artist and architect Friedrich Stowasser, a.k.a. Friedensreich Regentag Dunkelbunt Hundertwasser.

From there, as Peter van der Meijden, Stefan Wouters, and Tania Ørum detail in their chapters in this volume, Nakajima moves across a stunning range of locales and connections, bringing his performance intensity from scene to scene. His inexplicable, undeniable presence within already vibrant scenes catalyzes new possibilities for both art and politics, from Amsterdam to Antwerp, from Robert Jasper Grootveld's "magic circle" to the Provos and to the Bauhaus Situationiste. He enrolls in the Rotterdam (1964), Antwerp (1965), and Valand (1966) art academies. We separate these travels into distinct locales in order to examine in detail the particular scenes of Nakajima's performances and interactions and to consider his peripatetic presence and its uncanny appeal against more familiar, parochial accounts of them.

Peter van der Meijden's chapter, "DANCER, HAPPENER, PROVO: Yoshio Nakajima and the Dutch Happening Scene, 1964–1965," traces Nakajima's role in catalyzing a potent and dynamic mix of performance and politics in Holland. Nakajima's actions contributed to lending key spaces an air of expectation and transformation and to opening the way for a politics operating within these newly opened vistas of possibility. This was Provo, a movement and a concept grasping the practical transformability of the everyday world. Such potentials, and the means to dramatically call them into practical being, had become envisionable via the inchoate actions of Nakajima in concert with better-known figures such as Robert Jasper Grootveld. Van der Meijden elaborates the range of Nakajima's reception and his participation in what Grootveld would name the "magic circle," a charged performance space drawing participants and observers into its counter-magic opposed to the practices and significations of Capital. Provo would subsequently occupy this undefined territory between activism and aesthetics, and, through its insistence on ludic activism and *homo ludens* as a way forward, further develop the intertwined dimensions of aesthetics and politics. Within Provo, images and accounts of Nakajima's actions retained circulation as icons of creative action in the present and of the creative human being of the future—even as his own name often dropped away.

Stefan Wouters details similarly explosive effects in "Yoshio Nakajima and the Interplay of Art and Activism During the Mid-Sixties in Belgium." Wouters makes

a case for Nakajima's powerfully transformative effects upon an already thriving "Live Art" scene, hitherto nearly unrecognized in scholarly analyses. Examining Nakajima's provocative first "Happening" on the Groenplaats, Antwerp, in September of 1965, Wouters details a multilayered collaborative performance event with Wout Vercammen; Hugo Heyrman (in a "battle"); and others (including Henri Van Herwegen a.k.a. Panamarenko, present only as a photographer). The provocatively ambiguous event drew together site-specific references to the nearby bomb shelter, to the Vietnam War and the threat of nuclear annihilation, to pollution, and to deadly car crashes. With the passing out of candles, spectators were brought into an active role. Nakajima's event triggers the belated adoption of the term "happening" and provides a performance vocabulary for subsequent local events. Moreover, as detailed by Wouters, it appears to have catalyzed the subsequent Belgian offshoot of Provo with its presentation of a "brutality that implicitly criticizes brutality" and with its energizing of the Groenplaats as an eventful space, a status that persisted for years after. Wouters traces Nakajima's further exploits with Vercammen, Heyrman, and Panamarenko, culminating in the visit of Thom Jaspers at an event that puts police in an involuntary participatory role—and that results in Nakajima's expulsion from the country as a "danger to public safety." Wouters makes the case that, while Panamarenko's subsequent fame has overshadowed that of Nakajima and others, it was in fact Nakajima who inaugurated a happening scene with both artistic and political ramifications.

After a series of such international moves, often compulsory at the hands of police, Nakajima settled in Sweden. Tania Ørum elaborates Nakajima's transformative work and connections outside of the boundaries of the narrowly national focus of art-historical accounts in her chapter, "Yoshio Nakajima: A Japanese Artist from Sweden." Ørum traces Nakajima's expansive and ever-growing network, one that led him to Sweden following his expulsion from Belgium to enroll as the first-ever foreign student at the Valand Art Academy. As a student, Nakajima supplemented his studies with exhibitions, the creation of a gallery, and performances both locally and throughout Europe. During this time, Nakajima became an active member of the dissident Second Situationist International, or Bauhaus Situationiste, and participated in their wide-ranging art activism, performances, and declarations. His Ubbeboda Symposium of international sculpture, a 100-day outdoor self-organized art festival (the longest in Swedish history), engaged Nakajima's extensive mail art networks to bring together artists from as far as Poland and Japan to the small village to create iconic sculpture and land art, and spurred the creation of an artists' commune. The extended event reached a national and international audience when the local politicians demolished a work of land art by the participating Polish artist, Teresa Murak, an incident that was followed by a similar act of oppression in the Soviet Union, the "Bulldozer Exhibition." Ørum considers the strange recognition and non-recognition of Nakajima—noting how, after a stay in Japan (1974–1977), Nakajima was welcomed "*home* to Sweden," receiving a measure of local appreciation and growing respect, even as his global and extensive work remained outside of the purview of self-provincializing scholarly accounts.

Such absences typify the career of this prolific "art missionary." Despite his manifold involvements, Nakajima is nonetheless missing from scholarly accounts where

his work ought to belong, including those ostensibly celebrating the long 1960s moment of international contemporaneity and proliferating, complexly interwoven, and parallel practices. Understanding the ways in which Nakajima has contributed to transforming perceptions and practices can help us grasp the unpredictable capacities of art in the world in ways that go beyond nation-centric notions of artistic belonging.

In my own chapter, "When Art Grabs You: Grasping Art and Politics in the Global 1960s with Yoshio Nakajima," I consider Nakajima's work in relation to the global 1960s, to an evolving practice of happenings, and to the specifics of a local dynamism in Japan. I address the challenges for conceiving of the changing roles of art and politics in this moment, while considering the specifics of Nakajima's career and its untimely, uncharacterizable dimensions as an aspect of these transformations in practice. Examining Nakajima's deep connections and askew relations to internationalized art contexts and the politics of the moment, I argue that his untimeliness provides, paradoxically, a paradigmatic case of the relation of art and politics within the 1960s and for the continuing stakes of that relation in the present. I, in turn, elaborate a framework for considering such work, drawing from theorizations and practices that themselves emerge from this moment.

Taken together, our approach has been to proceed from close examinations of Nakajima's exuberant productivity and complex connections to find an avenue out of frameworks that have hitherto excluded such activity—and with it, a crucial dimension of the interrelations of art and politics in the 1960s and beyond. Artistic practices—like Nakajima's—repeatedly exceeded normative categories. Such transgressions could, in turn, yield new perceptions and understandings of both art and politics, even as they provoked puzzlement and nonrecognition within conventional frameworks. Unfathomable rituals and magic circles in Spui Square or on the Groenplaats, for example, might make subsequent practices such as those of the Provos both thinkable and recognizable as politics, even as they paved the way for new forms of performance.

Nakajima's work thus provides a compelling case for evaluating approaches to these transformations of art and politics and to their specific interrelation. Nakajima's peripatetic practices are exemplary in their nonconformity and demonstrate the inadequacy of notions of specificity that would oppose an authentic local or national frame to an inauthentic transnational one. Conversely, they manifest a key dimension of the 1960s as a global event in the interrelation between eventfulness itself and the redrawing of categories of practice and understanding.

A Note on Names

Names of Japanese artists in this book are presented in their usual form in Japanese—surname first, personal name second: Akasegawa Genpei, for example—unless the name of the artist in question is commonly featured in an English name order (and without macrons) such as Yoko Ono and Yoshio Nakajima.

★ ★ ★

A Note on Translations

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the respective authors.

Note

1 Nakajima has maintained a lifelong interest in education that addresses children and adults equally. See Shimada and Ørum's essays in this volume.

1 DAM ACT

Yoshio Nakajima in Japan, 1957–1964

Yoshiko Shimada

Nakajima's Early Experiences

I interviewed Yoshio Nakajima for the first time in 2013, on the subject of his actions as a member of the artist group "Unbeat" in the early 1960s. At the time of the interview, he was living in Japan after nearly 50 years in Europe. Nakajima had been largely forgotten in Japan and didn't want to talk to me—especially not about his performances. He had enjoyed some success as a painter in Sweden, and the people who managed the sales of his paintings didn't want to reveal his "crazy" past to mainstream art lovers and collectors. Nakajima himself insisted that he was first and foremost a painter, and that performance was something he had done merely to attract an audience for his paintings back when he was selling them on the streets of Tokyo. But as I saw more of the photographs of "happenings"—performance events he had staged but enacted extemporaneously all over the world—I started to suspect there was a lot more to these actions.[1] Yoshida Yoshie, an art critic who had noted Nakajima's actions early in his career, wrote: "He understood alternative communication intuitively and physically. His action was made up of involuntary, convulsive and manic gestures coming from his inner consciousness."[2]

From the old performance photographs, one can sense the urgency and desperation of the artist. After further research and interviews, Nakajima confided in me that there had in fact been no "practical" reason behind the performances: he just felt compelled to do them, and their roots lay far back in his childhood.

Yoshio Nakajima was born in 1940, the third son in a farming family in Fukaya, in the Saitama prefecture, about 70 kilometers northwest of Tokyo. He was a healthy and active child but had a severe stammer which caused him to be teased by his peers. He was sometimes frustrated at his inability to communicate well verbally and also felt restless in his small rural community. He felt an urge to "do" something extraordinary. In his autobiography, he tells of an accidental fall into a river and near-death experience when he was two or three years old, and he told me that there had been another such instance, this time not an accident but rather quite intentional.

On this second occasion Nakajima was about eight years old and playing with his friends near a small but quite deep irrigation reservoir. One boy had dared him to dive in, teasing him that he had survived his earlier fall and could do it again. Nakajima looked at the gushing water and suddenly felt a strange attraction to it. Before he knew it, he had dived in, and in the water he found the opening of an

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Figure 1.1 Street performance in Ginza, circa 1961.
Photographer unknown. Courtesy Yoshio Nakajima Archive, Konstrundan Raus Art Center.

outflow tunnel which was just about large enough for him to go through and leading to one of the rice paddies several meters away. He swam through it, came out unhurt, and stood in the paddy. He might have been in the water for only a minute or so, but he experienced it as being a much longer period. He had felt first total fear, then the power of the water and the joy of overcoming and surviving it. Nakajima said it was something he could never forget—it had left him feeling totally powerful and alive. He also saw it as the origin of his personal form of performance. He had dived in not to show off to other children, he said; he might have done it even without their provocation. Though he had enjoyed his audience's awe and admiration, he himself was shocked to feel so alive in the face of death. In just a moment this one simple act transformed his reality, making everything feel alive, strong and beautiful.

He repeated this existential explanation when I asked him about one of his first public actions at Ochanomizu station in Tokyo, in 1957. Ochanomizu is a busy railway station in the center of Tokyo, near Shōhei High School, where Nakajima had attended night classes after working in a factory by day. According to Yoshida, who heard about this performance from an eyewitness, Nakajima claimed himself to be a "moving object" as he started an intense action in front of the station, then went inside and jumped off the platform in front of an oncoming train.[3] He was familiar with both the train schedule and the length of the train cars, so when he jumped off, he knew exactly when and where the train would arrive. Nevertheless, it was very dangerous to stand in front of a train moving into the station, and the commuters on the platform were horrified. The station security staff was summoned, and he was

detained but not arrested. This was well before the word "happening" was first introduced into Japan and also five years prior to the better-known Yamanote line incident.[4] What was Nakajima's intention? Was he seeking attention? Was it a joke? No, Nakajima said. It was his expression. He wanted to transform an everyday scene with his action. He wanted to shock people and to be shocked himself.

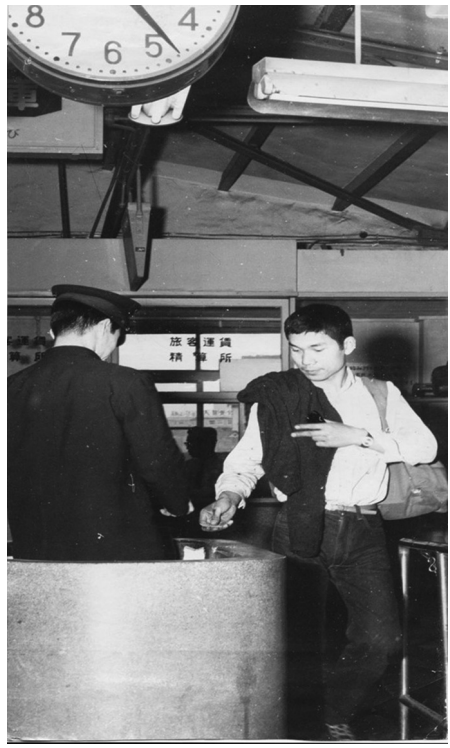

Figure 1.2 Nakajima at Ochanomizu station before his action in 1957.
Photographer Noda Michinori. Courtesy Yoshio Nakajima Archive, Konstrundan Raus Art Center.

This action is emblematic of a strange mixture of spontaneity and calculation in Nakajima's performance. Although it looked as though he had carried out his action on a whim, he had in fact planned it carefully in order not to get killed. His preparation was, of course, unknown to those who witnessed the action, and Nakajima himself had no preconception of what was to happen once he jumped off the platform. For all of those present, an instantaneous action would transform everyday reality, and Nakajima became a part of this alternative reality, in which he felt omnipotent.

The 1950s: Radical Changes in Postwar Japan

Perhaps the "everyday scene" Nakajima wanted to transform requires some explanation. For Japan, the 1950s and 1960s were decades of great change. After its

military defeat of 1945, the country was under US occupation for seven years. The old hierarchies were dismantled, and a more democratic system of governance was introduced. However, after the onset of the Cold War, and by the mid-1950s, politicians and bureaucrats from the prewar era had returned once more to form a conservative, pro-American government.

The so-called "1955 system" was established that year through the political alignment of the newly established conservative *Jiyūminshu-tō*—the Liberal Democratic Party, which was formed in November of that year by merging the *Jiyū-tō* and *Minshu-tō* (Democratic Part[ies]) then in power, with the *Shakai-tō* (Japan Socialist Party). The LDP continued to hold power for nearly 40 years, until 1993.

Abject poverty and confusion in Japan during the immediate postwar period were overcome as a result of the Korean War (1950–1953), which revived Japan's industrial and economic growth. Indeed, in July 1956, *Keizai hakusho*, the government-issued annual economic report, declared that "[Japan] is no longer in the post-war [period]."[5] With the economic upturn came huge demand for workers in urban centers, and the emigration of young people from the surrounding countryside to

Figure 1.3 Nakajima childhood with his neighbors (Left, standing with a baseball glove) circa 1950.

Photographer unknown. Courtesy Yoshio Nakajima Archive, Konstrundan Raus Art Center.

big cities marked the largest demographic change in Japan's history. By the mid-1950s, junior high school graduates—known as "golden eggs"—were being recruited *en masse* from the surrounding farmland to work in Tokyo's factories. Nakajima himself followed this pattern. The third son of six siblings, he was destined to be a farmer, cultivating a small patch of land allocated to him by the eldest son and taking a local girl as his wife. But after the Agricultural Land Reform Law (1947–1950) was implemented by the Japanese government and the Occupation authorities, Nakajima's family, who had been medium-scale independent farmers, actually lost some of their land. Therefore, with no land to spare for him, Nakajima's parents told him to make a choice: emigrate to Brazil, be adopted by a distant relative, or seek employment in Tokyo.

Nakajima discovered the paintings of Van Gogh at around this time. Once, during his fourth-grade Japanese class, he was attracted to an illustration of a painting in a textbook and set about copying it. Tanaka Chu'ichi, his young teacher, saw this and, instead of scolding him, praised his copy and gave a short talk about the painting and the artist, Van Gogh. Mr. Tanaka himself had aspired to be an artist, and he encouraged Nakajima to pursue his interest in art. This was a period of democratization in Japanese education, and the Fundamental Law of Education, introduced in 1947 by the American Occupation authorities, advocated the importance of individuality. Some teachers, too, experimented with innovative methods that nurtured children's self-expression, such as the *Seikatsu-tsuzurikata-undō* (everyday-life writing movement), which focused on writing about daily experiences, and the *Sōzō-biiku-undō* (creative art education movement). Nakajima started school in the year the law was passed and he was therefore a child of the democratic education reform in postwar Japan. Mr. Tanaka continued to be his teacher while Nakajima was in junior high school and kept encouraging his aspiration to become an artist. In 1955, Nakajima partook of the "golden egg" mass employment opportunity by moving to Tokyo and finding work, first at a retail stationery company and later, because his employers did not keep their promise to let him attend evening high school classes, at a metal manufacturing factory, which did allow him to do so. In 1956, Nakajima enrolled in Shōhei High School, which strongly emphasized art education.

Art Informel and Anti-Art

Life in Tokyo was not as rosy as Nakajima had expected. He worked during the day and went to Shōhei High School at night, although he still found some time to create abstract paintings. He had no formal art training, and his paintings were expressionistic even during that early period, showing an impulsive outpouring of energy. Nakajima's abstract form of expression coincided with the so-called "Art Informel whirlwind," an abstract expressionistic style from France that was unleashed by the Art of Today's World Exhibition. This event was held in Tokyo in November 1956, then traveled to Osaka and Fukuoka the following year, leaving a strong impact on artists throughout Japan. The French artist Georges Mathieu came to Japan for a solo exhibition in September 1957, and his public painting demonstration in the Shirokiya Department Store made a deep impression on

Figure 1.4 Nakajima in his studio circa 1956–57.

Photographer unknown. Courtesy Yoshio Nakajima Archive, Konstrundan Raus Art Center.

Nakajima. He said Mathieu's action painting confirmed the direction in which he had already been headed, making him think "I can do it too, and better."

However, his paintings were repeatedly turned down by the juries of various group exhibitions organized by the powerful societies (*Kaiha*) formed around established artists. Nakajima, a self-taught working-class teenager, had no connections to the art establishment. Yet he had some enthusiastic supporters such as Honme Yūichi, an artist and a director of a local library, who frequently came to see Nakajima's paintings, which were exhibited on the sidewalk. Honme himself belonged to *Shin Kōzō*, an artistic society that held annual exhibitions at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. However, he told Nakajima not to join the society as his paintings, which were so original and unconventional, would not be accepted by a conservative group such as his. In truth, the dominance of these *Kaiha* in the Japanese art world was already fracturing toward the end of the 1950s. In their place emerged a number of young artist groups that sought to break away from academism and the establishment, such as the Neo-Dadaism Organizers/Neo Dada,[6] *Kyūshū-ha*,[7] *Zero Jigen*,[8] the Music group (*gurupu ongaku*),[9] and others. Their main playground was the annual *Yomiuri Indépendant* exhibition (1949–1963), a non-juried, "anything goes" annual event sponsored by the Yomiuri newspaper and initially offering much-needed freedom to these frustrated young artists. The works in the *Yomiuri Indépendant* ranged from a portrait of pop singers by an amateur artist to a room installation of penis-like objects hanging from the ceiling by Kudō Tetsumi to pure junk—a pile of waste materials sent by *Kyūshū-ha*. In his review of the exhibition, the critic Tōno Yoshiaki called Kudō's work "junk and Anti-art."[10]