CLOSURE AS PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

IKEDA MANABU'S NEGATIVE SPACE THROUGH COMICS STUDIES

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Ikeda Manabu (b. 1973) creates monumental images that emerge from an aggregate of unrelated miniature motifs. These small motifs are made from an accumulation of short, colorful lines drawn on paper canvases. Taking *Buddha* and *Regeneration* as case studies, this thesis investigates Ikeda's effective use of the paper surfaces between his lines, focusing on the "silhouetted figures," which are the undrawn spaces in the shapes of people and creatures. I employ the analytical frameworks of Comics Studies proposed by Will Eisner and Scott McCloud, such as *non-frames*, *bleeds*, and *closure,* to argue how Ikeda's negative spaces create room for perception and interpretation for the viewers, like the paper surface between the comic panels (the *gutter*). This thesis helps us understand the post-Murakami Takashi (b. 1962) generation of Japanese artists and how their mode of production reemphasizes the use of one's hands and impacts the audience's engagement with their works.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Born in Saga Prefecture, the Japanese artist Ikeda Manabu (池田学, b. 1973) earned his BFA (1998) and MFA (2000) in Design from Tokyo University of the Arts and debuted in 1998 in a group exhibition called "Expression to the next generation vol.6," at the Obuse Museum and the Nakajima Chinami Gallery.[1] Ikeda draws in the medium of acrylic ink on paper to create uniquely detailed works where a larger image emerges from a conglomeration of hundreds of unrelated, miniature motifs stemming from his everyday experience, memories, and impressions of recent world events. From afar, Ikeda's works may appear coherent, but when viewers move close, they realize that all the small motifs devolve into a collection of individual short lines on white canvas paper drawn using a round nib pen (figure 1). Amazingly, Ikeda never produces an underdrawing for his larger works but simply begins drawing at one corner of his blank paper canvas, letting his stream of consciousness guide his hand.[2] Although he is concerned about his piece's overall coherence, Ikeda claims that he never fully knows his

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[1] Although Ikeda did work as a courtroom artist early in his career, his professional recognition was almost instantaneous upon his debut. He began participating in many group exhibitions beginning in 1998 and had his first solo exhibition in 2001. His later career is outside the scope of this study. However, to summarize, in January 2011, he moved his family from Japan to Vancouver, Canada under the sponsorship of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs as a research artist. While abroad his family experienced the devastating Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami of March 11, 2011from television screens in Vancouver. This devastation inspired three new works that addressed the evolving situation in Japan. March 15th, 2011, Ikeda participated in his first U.S. group exhibition *Bye Bye Kitty!!! Between Heaven and Hell in Contemporary Japanese Art* at the Japan Society in New York City. From 2013-2016, he participated in an artist residency at The Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin, where he worked *Rebirth* (2017). In the middle of his residency, he had a major exhibition curated by Laura Mueller *Garden of Unearthly Delights* in 2014 that introduced him to the American art world. When he finished *Rebirth* in November 2016 his major traveling exhibition *The Pen* began in 2017 that opened at the Saga Prefectural Museum in his hometown. Manabu Ikeda, *The Birth of Rebirth* (Kyōto: Seigensha Art Publishing, Inc., 2017), 165-175.
[2] For his smaller works Ikeda typically sketches his layout ahead of time using underdrawing. For his large works, he sometimes uses pencil lines as guide to lightly mark where his pen lines will fill in but not consistently. Tracy Jones, "Exclusive Interview with Ikeda Manabu," *Hi Fructose*, 2013, https://hifructose.com/2013/06/11/exclusive-interview-with-ikeda-manabu/.

final image until he is halfway through the process.[3] His creative process is an exploration even to himself. Due to this production process, Ikeda's large works always present a complex combination of time and space, infusing his works with layers of meaning.

In this study, I will explore Ikeda's early large-scale works, *Buddha* (ブッダ, figure 2) and *Regeneration* (*Saisei* 再生, figure 3), to examine his use of details and negative spaces. In 2000, Ikeda first introduced the "silhouetted figures" of undrawn negative space, which later become his signature motifs. Produced in 2000 and 2001, *Buddha* and *Regeneration*—which feature a colossal statue of a seated Buddha on a cliffside and a sunken WWII Japanese naval ship, respectively—are Ikeda's transitional works where he first introduced these motifs. An examination of them demonstrates how Ikeda Manabu effectively utilizes lines, or more precisely, the undrawn surfaces between the lines, inviting viewers to move back and forth to appreciate the emergence of positive forms out of negative space. I argue that due to his unique image-making method, Ikeda's works are fundamentally interactive and are never fully finished until the viewers mentally transform his assemblage of lines into coherent series of images.

Scholarship

Critical reception on Ikeda has addressed his works in relation to the following themes: the merging of past, present, and future within his images; how he constructs space and his techniques within the context of modern design and traditional Japanese

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[3] Laura Mueller, "Interview with Ikeda Manabu: Disciple of Detail," in *Three Directions: TEAMLAB, Tenmyouya, Ikeda* (Wisconsin: The Chazen Museum of Art-University of Wisconsin, 2014), 44-49.

art; and the relationship between humans and nature.[4] Ikeda identifies his recurring theme as the relationship between civilization and nature, which is interpreted by his critics to predominantly mean a balance connecting humans and nature by addressing natural and manmade disasters. Scholars have also emphasized the movement of time and space within his works by examining his unique production process.[5] Kataoka Mami considers how Ikeda builds the kaleidoscopic collage of time and space in his large images out of miniature motifs taken from his personal experience and memory.[6] Ikeda Asato argues that Ikeda's art freezes historical moments of disaster to engage in the social and political issues surrounding the often-forgotten victims of a traumatic event.[7] Others have also attempted to contextualize his technique. Laura Mueller, for instance, introduces this connection by discussing Ikeda in the context of *takumi* (匠, master craftsman), an artisan who has chosen a medium and become a skilled master.[8] Mueller also argues that Ikeda transforms images from *ukiyo-e* (浮世絵) woodblock prints of the Edo period (1615-1868) into a new Japanese identity that can critique the modernized world. Building on Mueller's latter argument, Fuse Hideto observes visual similarities between Kano-style screen painting of the Edo period and Ikeda's depiction of cypress trees.[9]

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[4] Asato Ikeda, "Ikeda Manabu, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and Disaster/Nuclear Art in Japan," in *The Asia Pacific Journal* Vol. 11, no. 13 (2013): 1-11.

[5] Sayako Akiyama, "Ikeda Manabu and the Universe of His Imagination," in *The Pen: Ikeda Manabu* (Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2017), 155.

[6] Mami Kataoka, "Voids in the Universe," in *Ikeda Manabu gashū* 池田学画集 [Ikeda Manabu Art Book], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hattori Shoten, 2010), 104.

[7] Ikeda, "Ikeda Manabu, the 2011," 1-11.

[8] Laura Mueller, "Traditions Altered: 'Japaneseness' in The Global Now," in *Three Directions: TEAMLAB, Tenmyouya, Ikeda* (Wisconsin: The Chazen Museum of Art-University of Wisconsin, 2014), 65.

[9] Hideto Fuse, "Viewing Rebirth," in *The Birth of Rebirth* (Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2017), 176–78.

The most relevant piece of information to my investigation of negative space and Ikeda's undrawn figures is Uchiro Hiroyuki's condition report on the *History of Rise and Fall* (*Kōbōshi* 興亡史, 2004, figures 4 and 4a). This report is the only close investigation into Ikeda's production process and is a crucial resource to understanding how he produces the white figures of humans and other wildlife creatures.[10] Kataoka Mami and Laura Mueller referred to Ikeda's figures as "unpainted silhouettes" that play on the paper's negative space. Kataoka argues that the figures' shapes embody the Buddhist concept of "emptiness"—that is, our erroneous perception that the immaterial is material—and a spiritual presence not bound by space or time.[11] Kataoka also comments on the unique viewing experience of Ikeda's works, stating, "it is wonderful to be able to travel freely back and forth, from the tiny world of insects to the Galaxy, once in a while stopping to look up at the grand mountains."[12] Mueller follows suit with a similar observation but argues that the figures' main purpose is to act as a point of entry for the viewer into Ikeda's images.[13] Akiyama Sayako, on the other hand, builds on Kataoka's discussion observing that in Ikeda's works, there is a clustering of motifs that creates a series of microscopic worlds and invites the viewers' eyes to wander across the picture-plane to become a part of the image.[14]

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[10] Hiroyuki Uchiro, "Condition Report for Ikeda Manabu's History of Rise and Fall," in *The Pen: Ikeda Manabu* (Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2017), 157.
[11] Kataoka, "Voids," 104.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Mueller, "Traditions Altered," 66.
[14] Akiyama, "Ikeda Manabu and the Universe," 155.

Lines, Timelessness, and *Closure*

The observations on silhouette figures in preceding studies are astute. However, they do not address the most interesting aspect of Ikeda's works, that his drawings are produced through an accumulation of almost mechanically executed lines. Instead, they treat his works as if they are regular paintings or drawings with outlines. In addition, though Kataoka makes a passing reference to the viewers' participation, no studies thus far have analyzed the centrality of the back-and-forth motion to the wholistic experience of Ikeda's large pieces. For audiences to appreciate the overall composition while taking in the details that reveal the piece's deeper meaning, they must constantly and repeatedly adjust their positions vis-à-vis the canvas, making the experience of viewing his works performative.

In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud argues that what may appear to be a blank space between panels, which he calls the *gutter*, is not blank at all but is where the reader's imagination joins the images separated by the panels into a coherent narrative through the process of *closure*. I believe the *gutter* and concept of *closure* can be applied to examine Ikeda's use of undrawn space and "silhouette" figures. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, although Ikeda does not draw in a comic book style or use closed panels, this analogy is still effective in how he takes advantage of the raw paper as negative space like modern-day comics. The core analytical framework of this thesis will be augmented by other concepts introduced by McCloud (namely the *bleed*) and those of another prominent figure in the Comics Studies field, Will Eisner, including *non-frames*, *stereotypes*, and *icons*. I will demonstrate that the negative spaces in Ikeda's works are comparable to what Scott McCloud calls the *gutter* and that they rely on conventions of

stereotypes and *icons* in which the human brain's essential workings of *closure* inject life into Ikeda's undrawn figures. In the audience's minds, the silhouettes metamorphose the raw paper into human and animal shapes, mechanically drawn short lines come together into monumental landscapes, and blank background becomes the sky and ocean.

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 2 compares Ikeda's works to another internationally respected artist of his generation, Yamaguchi Akira (山口晃, b. 1969), to confirm the distinctiveness of Ikeda's production process and underscore his typical trope of aggregate composition. Chapter 3 examines *Buddha* as Ikeda's earliest piece to use figures in negative space. I will apply Will Eisner's *non-frames* and what McCloud calls *bleeds* to position the newly introduced figures in negative space within the temporal and spatial expanse of this piece. Chapter 4 features *Regeneration* as one of the earliest representative works of Ikeda's mature technique. It explores how the white surface of the paper serves as the *gutter* but also is rendered visible in the minds of the viewers through the process of *closure*.

Ikeda's Contribution to Japanese Art

One common theme in Japanese contemporary art is the (re-)exploration of standard narratives of the nation's cultural history as established since the modern era (post-1868). Drawing inspirations freely from *ukiyo-e* prints of the Edo period and medieval ink painting or the globally recognized "J-pop" culture such as manga and anime, the Japanese contemporary art scene is diverse and complex. One of the most influential figures of the postwar Japanese art is Murakami Takashi (村上隆, b. 1962). He studied at the Tokyo University of the Arts, receiving a doctorate in *nihonga,* which

contributed significantly to his developed artistic style. He originated the concept of "super-flat," which mixes low and high art into complex images. Tadayasu Sakai explains, "[Murakami] combines the anime and manga character aspects of Japanese geek culture with the drawing method of the 'eccentric painters.'"[15] Murakami's popularity has grown into an industry that speaks to both *kawaii* culture and traditional arts as a commentary on Japan's development in the post-war period. He even organizes GEISAI, an annual art fair to discover new artistic talent.

It is no exaggeration to say that all Japanese artists who debuted after Murakami's international success were (and are) compelled to make a stance vis-à-vis what Murakami represents within the discourse of contemporary Japanese art. Ikeda Manabu is part of this post-Murakami generation alongside Yamaguchi Akira, Yamamoto Ryūki (山本 竜基, b. 1976; figure 5), Miyazaki Yūjirō (宮崎勇次郎, b. 1977; figure 6) and Amano Yoshitaka (天野喜孝, b. 1952; figure 7). Like Murakami, Ikeda also freely appropriates images and ideas from popular culture, particularly anime such as the famous movies by Miyazaki Hayao. Furthermore, he also looks back to Japan's past and engages with compositional tropes and motifs that are now considered traditionally "Japanese," for instance what one finds in the premodern genre of painting such as *Scenes in and around the Capital* (*rakuchū rakugai-zu* 洛中洛外図; hereinafter *rakuchū rakugai*), (see Chapter 2 for a further discussion).

However, Ikeda chooses to pull away from the inorganic flatness, or super-flatness, of Murakami-esque pop art. Instead of generating one's work efficiently and

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[15] Tadayasu Sakai, *The 20th Century Art in Japan* (Tokyo: Tokyo Art Club of the Company Heibonsha, 2019), 346.

quickly by employing an army of assistants or utilizing digital technology (as does

Murakami), some post-Murakami artists, including Ikeda, are returning to making art by

brush and hand, taking the time to produce unique images.[16] Investigating Ikeda's works

helps us understand how this return-to-brush approach reengages the audience in an

active and interactive mode of viewing.

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[16] Kataoka, "Voids," 104.

CHAPTER II: LINES AND COLORS:

COMPARING IKEDA MANABU AND YAMAGUCHI

AKIRA'S MODES OF PRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss the similarities and differences between Ikeda Manabu and Yamaguchi Akira's works to clarify the uniqueness of Ikeda's images made from individual lines and combined motifs. Comparing Ikeda's *History of Rise and Fall* (2004, hereinafter *History*) and Yamaguchi Akira's works including *Tokyo Landscape* (*Tōkyō sansui-ga* 東京山水画, 2012) highlights how Ikeda incorporates and departs from traditional genres of Japanese painting (figures 4 and 8).

History depicts a massive structure of overlapping castle rooftops. A twisted giant tree penetrates the core of the structure and rises into the sky. Meanwhile, *Tokyo Landscape* implements a more traditional composition that stretches horizontally across several canvases and depicts a modern cityscape juxtaposed with Edo period imagery. The strategy Ikeda and Yamaguchi employ to produce a panoramic scene through an aggregate of smaller motifs is one that has been employed by other contemporary Japanese artists, including Aoshima Chiho (青島千穂, b. 1974) in *Graveheads* (2005, figure 9) and Aida Makoto (会田誠, b. 1965) in *Ash Color Mountains* (2009-11, figure 10). For an informed audience, the way in which Ikeda and Yamaguchi position these motifs within an extensive topography instantly recalls a premodern painting genre known as *rakuchū rakugai* (figure 11). Established in the sixteenth century, *rakuchū rakugai* were typically a set of six-panel folding screens that depicted the famous sites in

and around the imperial capital—present-day Kyoto—peering through golden mist in a bird's-eye perspective. The painted scenes offered an idealized view of the capital, presenting a prosperous, peaceful, and joyous city. The most common theme in *rakuchū rakugai* was the changing of the seasons, beginning with summer at the far right-hand side of the screen, moving to the left with fall, winter, and finishing with spring. The passage of time is signaled by flowers and annual festivals dispersed throughout the famous sites according to their seasons.

Scholars of Yamaguchi Akira, such as John Carpenter, Sawaragi Noi, Asai Toshihiro, and Hashimoto Mari, have already commented on his appropriation of the *rakuchū rakugai* genre.[17] As for Ikeda Manabu, although some of his pieces exhibit obvious similarities to this genre, no significant connection has been drawn between the two, except Kataoka Mami, who described in passing that the changing of seasons in *History* and the "three-dimensionalized" cloud mists is representative of what one finds in *rakuchū rakugai*.[18] The parallel between Ikeda's compositional strategies and *rakuchū rakugai*, I believe, is too rich to ignore. A comparison of Ikeda Manabu's *History* with Yamaguchi Akira's works will articulate the function of lines in Ikeda's images.

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[17] John Carpenter "Collapsing Past into Contemporary—The Imaginary Japan of Yamaguchi Akira," in *Yamaguchi Akira: The Big Picture,* 25-27.; Noi, Sawaragi. "Art and Engineering and Patriotism — on Yamaguchi Akira's Art and its Idea," in *The Big Picture*, 20-24.; Asai Toshihiro. "Seeing and Painting," in *Yamaguchi Akira: Stepping Back to Seek the Underneath*, 14-15.; Hashimoto Mari "A Devotee of "Great Vehicle" Art," in *Stepping Back to Seek the Underneath,* 16-17.

[18] "In *History Rise and Fall* (2006), scenes of spring, summer, fall, and winter are drawn into a huge mass that rises to the sky, and this looks as if the movements of the four seasons' flow of time, connected in one space by cloud mists reminiscent of *rakuchū rakugai* (folding-screen paintings of the old city of Kyoto), were three-dimensionalized into one mass in this work." Mami Kataoka, "Voids," 104.

Yamaguchi Akira and *Rakuchū Rakugai*

Rakuchū rakugai is one of the most frequently quoted genres of Japanese premodern painting. For example, *American Guardian* (2008) by Roger Shimomura combines the bird's-eye view vantage point and stylized gold mists of *rakuchū rakugai* motif to present an image that shows the injustice of the constant surveillance of Japanese Americans at the Minidoka internment camp during WWII (figure 12). Still, the artist who garnered the most success through the innovative appropriation of this premodern genre is Yamaguchi Akira. Born in 1969 in Kiryū city, Gunma prefecture, Yamaguchi graduated from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1996 with an MA in Oil Painting. Yamaguchi paints from his imagination and memory. His signature pieces directly quote *rakuchū rakugai* in their use of thick outlines, aerial vantage points, and composition, where he arranges miniature people and objects among recognizable landmarks of a metropolis partially obscured by bands of stylized golden mist. Yamaguchi, however, also updates the traditional genre by introducing techniques associated with Western art. Using techniques such as perspective and shading, he freely juxtaposes motifs with Edo-esque flavor and those with contemporary and popular reference. His works present a humorous critique of Modern capitalist consumerism by colliding the past into an overabundance of modernization.[19]

Yamaguchi Akira's work *Mitate in the House: Rakuchū-Rakugai* will demonstrate his similarities with the genre. *Mitate in the House: Rakuchū-Rakugai* is an ink work that depicts an aerial view peering through golden clouds into a modernized Japanese neighborhood (figure 13). The focal point at the center of the image shows the

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[19] Carpenter, "Collapsing Past," 26.

inner structure of a high-ranking household. However, what was once a private home is also shifting between time and space to represent a site of tourism. It is fascinating to see Edo fashions of *kosode* (小袖, casual garment)*, yukata* (浴衣, casual summer garment)*, hakuchō sugata* (白丁姿, servant's garment), *nōshi sugata* (直衣姿, informal noblemen's garment), and *umanori* (馬乗, horse-riding trousers) mixed with random visitors in contemporary clothes. The tourists walk about the grounds of the private residence taking pictures while the *Edokko* (江戸っ子)—a person born in Edo/Tokyo—go about their daily activities. Some figures interact with each other, but most seem to be unaware their realities are merging. Some of the key similarities to note are the use of golden clouds, aerial vantage point, site of importance—noble residences—and use of ink to outline. In addition, Yamaguchi often paints across multiple canvases with the intention of replicating a folding screen look.

One Hundred Unusual Scenes of Osaka Trams (*Ōsaka shiden hyakuchin-en* 大阪市電百珍園, 2003; hereinafter *Osaka Trams*; figure 14) is just one example of this approach. Yamaguchi replicates a panoramic view of Osaka, noting important sites by their large size in comparison to the overall piece such as Osaka castle, Shitennō-ji Temple, Tsūtenkaku Tower, and Kyōcera Dome (baseball stadium). Yamaguchi distributes these buildings throughout the work as they appear amongst the golden clouds. *Osaka Trams* is fully colored with black outlines painted across three panels using only the materials of pen, ink, and watercolor on paper. In his interview with Michale Mejia, Yamaguchi states, "I wanted to try to find a way into traditional Japanese painting as it was back before Western art reached Japan…In other words, I wanted to re-

do the modernization of Japanese art for myself."[20] In other words, Yamaguchi

appropriates *rakuchū rakugai* in his art to critique Japan's extreme modernization and

lament the loss of connections to the pre-westernized "traditional" Japanese techniques of

painting. John T. Carpenter aptly describes Yamaguchi's works as "Neo-Nihonga,"

stating:

> Perhaps a more appropriate, even if equally vague, category for an artist like
>
> Yamaguchi is "Neo-Nihonga," a term of art-historical convenience that has
>
> become popular lately to categorize contemporary Japanese artists who draw
>
> freely on traditional painting themes, styles, and techniques but in
>
> unconventional, up-to-date ways.[21]

Not only does Yamaguchi skillfully accesses the materials of *nihonga* (日本画,

"Japanese-style paintings," figure 15) such as water-based pigment, but he purposefully

engages with the past adding a contemporary twist—exemplified in his "neo-" *rakuchū*

rakugai motifs—positioning him as comparable to the artists of the Meiji period (1868-

1912). Intriguingly, although the parts and whole relationship in Ikeda Manabu's works

appear similar to Yamaguchi and the traditional *rakuchū rakugai*, I do not think "Neo-

Nihonga" applies to Ikeda. Importantly, Ikeda Manabu is not interested in *sumi* ink, or

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[20] Michael Mejia, "In Pursuit of Japaneseness with Yamaguchi Akira," *Ninebark Press*, 2018,
https://michaelmejiawriter.com/digressions/2018/7/21/in-pursuit-of-japaneseness-with-yamaguchi-akira.
[21] Carpenter applies "Neo-Nihonga" as an alternate term to *yamato-e* 大和絵 (or "Japanese art") revival to
describe Yamaguchi's appropriation of traditional paintings styles. Carpenter, "Collapsing Past," 25. It is
interesting to note that in an interview with Laura Mueller, Tenmyōya Hisashi (天明屋尚, b.1966) uses
"Neo-Nihonga" to describe his works but defines the term differently from Carpenter. Mueller, *Three
Directions*, 36.

any other water-based pigments associated with traditional Japanese painting. Except for *History*, he does not actively incorporate premodern motifs. For this reason, his images are not "Neo-Nihonga" in the way Carpenter describes this term, and this is the first critical difference from Yamaguchi.

Ikeda Manabu and His *Rakuchū Rakugai* mode

The way Ikeda incorporates *rakuchū rakugai* is not immediately recognizable. The most significant difference from Yamaguchi is Ikeda's use of lines. To understand Ikeda's lines, it is important to first examine the similarities of *History* with *rakuchū rakugai* in his use of small motifs. Ikeda Manabu's images often involve a viewing process of appreciating detailed parts within a panoramic whole of an image. However, instead of neatly placing miniature figures and objects within a topography, the panoramic scenes in Ikeda's works—such as *History*—are built up through the stacking of unrelated motifs. The overall image of a castle keep surges upward as a vertical framework filled with a multitude of twisting and overlapping roofs. When one looks closely, several groups of figures are seen storming the castle roofs and battling other figures, for instance, to the right of the golden mudras (Buddhist hand gestures; figure 4b). Two different groups of silhouette figures that appear to be samurai with swords clash in battle, only discernable by the difference in the colored standards they carry on their backs. Another example near the top of the composition shows horsemen riding into battle as they rush across the castle rooftops to meet the intruders (figure 4c). Overall, the castles' structures in the image have been thoroughly beaten and tattered, while a massive tree rises into the sky and contorts the whole structure. Just as in a typical *rakuchū*

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rakugai composition (including that of Yamaguchi), the figures in *History* roam about a built environment. Yet, the overall effect is nothing like one might expect from a *rakuchū rakugai*. It is as if Ikeda has taken *rakuchū rakugai* and compacted it into a growing structure like *Jack and the Beanstalk* that reveals the hidden reality—a war-torn capital—behind the original genre of the paintings. In the Muromachi period (1336-1573), war broke out within the imperial capital of Kyoto, which devolved into the decade-long Ōnin War (1467-77) that destroyed most of the city. *Rakuchū rakugai* originally developed as a type of propaganda to present Kyoto as a peaceful, thriving city masking the reality of destruction and chaos.

Ikeda's monstrous cityscape utilizes the recognizable part-whole relationship of a *rakuchū rakugai*, even including details such as seasonal flowers and annual festivals. However, rather than exhibiting it as the idealized hustle and bustle of a flourishing metropolis, Ikeda's city is almost like a swirling tornado, where Japan's past and present are inseparably intertwined. Amongst the historical structures, the modern world peers through with depictions of stores, speed boats, and industrial factories. Just like the clouds relieving the city in *rakuchū rakugai*, modernity is exposed through the castle-like structures. The four seasons are mixed throughout with hints of summer, fall, winter, and spring. Cherry blossoms and boys day carp flags mark spring, beautiful tree leaves change color to red and orange signifying fall, ice forms on the edges of the castle roof tiles for winter, and finally, the *nebuta matsuri* (ねぶた祭) traveling at the bottom right denotes summer (figures 4d, 4e, 4f, and 4g). All these motifs are characteristics of *rakuchū rakugai,* but they are buried among the chaotic scenes of war traversing the overall image. In addition to samurai, the inclusion of WWII planes flying around the

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overall structure, dropping bombs onto the buildings indicating that Ikeda's theme is referencing wars in general, past and present (figure 4h). In addition, other motifs of natural disaster, like the buildings battered by the strong spiraling winds of tornadoes or hurricanes, weave in and around the image. While some of Ikeda's motifs and the suggestion of temporal movement through changing seasons have similarities to *rakuchū rakugai*, his overall image focuses on his reoccurring theme of humans' coexistence with nature.

Use of Lines in Ikeda and Yamaguchi's Works

In addition to their approaches to motifs, Ikeda and Yamaguchi both value producing their works by their own hands. Kataoka Mami comments:

Distinct from the values of modernism that prize efficiency and mass production, their work [Ikeda's generation of artists], though indeed inefficient, does have an irreplaceable uniqueness and originality…Their acts of creation are apparently not so much aimed at the resulting object as focused on performative body and time in the process of production.[22]

For Ikeda, his incessant lines hand-drawn with a pen and acrylic ink are something commented on frequently by art critics and curators. For instance, Ikeda's gallerist, Mizuma Sueo, describes Ikeda's production process as "handwork," observing:

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[22] Kataoka, "Voids," 104.

…in today's computer age in which people are required to use their hands less

and less, it is a reality that the same kind of phenomenon is occurring in the art

world... Amid this, *Rebirth* (figure 16) has been created through handwork that

has been raised to the level of art.[23]

This evocation of "handwork" specifically ties Ikeda to the idealization of artisans, whose

works of art were hand-made but without compromising the aesthetic quality of their

products. Mizuma's observation can apply to all of Ikeda's works. Ikeda, who does not

employ any assistants, spends days, months, sometimes years drawing the regular short

lines that eventually amount to his monumental images. Kataoka Mami's comment

quoted earlier is an expansion on this idea of handwork, emphasizing Ikeda's

performative body is a reference to his physical movement in creating a single work.

Ikeda's laborious production process involves him moving back-and-forth across the

canvas over an extended amount of time to create his detailed compositions. For Kataoka,

Ikeda's production is unique because of his active drawing that starts in one corner and

moves up and across the panels. He lets his hand and imagination guide the creative

process without conforming to an underdrawing or plan, making his lines qualitatively

different from Yamaguchi's.

In terms of Yamaguchi's production process, he follows what one typically

imagines a painting process to be, involving underdrawing, outlines, and finally filling in

the outlines with color. An example indicative of Yamaguchi's process and the meaning

of lines to his works is *Tokyo Landscapes*, solely inked with a black outline and shading

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[23] Sueo Mizuma, "Ikeda Manabu: Rebirth," in *The Birth of Rebirth* (Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2017), 205.

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(figure 8). It is an unusual piece for Yamaguchi, who typically produces work rich in colors. *Tokyo Landscapes* consists of two large panels of canvas that are framed by bamboo supports. It portrays an aerial view of Tokyo. Iconic contemporary sites such as Tokyo Tower, Sensō-ji temple, and Tokyo Skytree are visible amongst the parting of the clouds (figure 8a). Interestingly, Lara Mikocki from Designboom Magazine explains that *Tokyo Landscapes* was not complete upon its arrival at the 2012 "Bōkyō-TOKIORE (I) MIX" exhibition. Instead, Yamaguchi planned to "come every morning and paint before the gallery opens, so hopefully I'll [Yamaguchi] finish it during the course of the exhibition…"[24] This project granted the exhibition an invaluable opportunity to document Yamaguchi's process, which revealed how the outline in his works serves the critical task of enlivening images.

In addition to their quality of lines, Ikeda and Yamaguchi are also different in their approaches to colors. A good example to consider the role of colors in Yamaguchi's works is *Osaka Trams* (figure 14)*. In this work, Yamaguchi expands significantly in the number of water-based pigments he employs, but the color palette for this piece is still overall similar to those used in traditional *rakuchū rakugai*. Importantly, except for the final step of applying colors, *Tokyo Landscape* and *Osaka Trams* are produced in an identical way, both involving an initial underdrawing, followed by delineation of motifs using outlines in black ink. What this means is, when all the colors are removed from *Osaka Trams*, as his work appears in *Tokyo Landscapes*, viewers will still have an image with recognizable motifs to look at because of the outlines.

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[24] Lara Mikocki, "Akira Yamaguchi Explores the Idea of Time," *Design Boom Magazine*, 2012, https://www.designboom.com/art/akira-yamaguchi-explores-the-idea-of-time/.

However, in the case of Ikeda's *History* (and any of his other large-scale works), if color is removed, the canvas would be blank because Ikeda does not use outlines in his works. Not only does Ikeda not use outlines to secure the contours of his motifs, he does not even fill in the space inside the invisible boundary of a motif using color in a conventional way. All of Ikeda's motifs are drawn through a congruence of mechanically drawn short color lines. In his works, all colors are lines, and no line has any function beyond "filling in" the canvas surface.

Ikeda's use of a thin round nib pen creates one-millimeter-thick lines that, when drawn tightly together, create a similar effect as pointillist illusionism but with lines instead of dots (figure 1). He uses different colors for each individual line drawn, and together they create an illusion of a cohesive whole. The density of Ikeda's lines may even create the illusion of an outline. For instance, one's eyes may trick the brain into perceiving an illusory outline around the "silhouetted" figures, but these "outlines" are just individual lines skillfully positioned around the undrawn surface of the paper (see Chapter 4 for further discussion). As the audience continues to move even closer to the piece, the lines begin to spread further apart, and the white spaces between each line become more prominent. Thus, unlike Yamaguchi's works, removing colors or lines from Ikeda's pieces will literally mean "no drawing."

Conclusion

Through this comparison with Yamaguchi Akira, I have underscored the unique part-whole relationship in Ikeda Manabu's compositions and the characteristics of his production process, particularly the use of line. Instead of replicating the traditional composition of *rakuchū rakugai,* Ikeda converges these motifs into a single plane of

existence. Ikeda still includes the famous sites and seasonal motifs. However, what he creates is a puzzle-like atmosphere that blends time and space and culminates in a monumental structure or landscape instead of positioning figures and objects within a topography, as we have seen in Yamaguchi and the original *rakuchū rakugai* paintings. This chapter also underscored the difference between Ikeda and Yamaguchi in terms of their approaches to line. Yamaguchi replicates the traditional production method of *rakuchū rakugai* paintings by starting with an underdrawing, outlined in ink, and filling it with color, while Ikeda produces his work by the accumulation of individually colored lines. When Ikeda's work is finished, the individual lines come together to create a single image, but if the viewer gets close enough to work itself, those lines separate, exposing the negative space between them. Unlike Yamaguchi's works, where a black outline will remain if color is taken away, if color is removed from Ikeda's image, there will be nothing left but the raw surface of the paper. Differently put, in Ikeda's works, the paper support plays an active part in the illusionary effect he pursues. As it will become clear in the following chapters, the way in which Ikeda take advantage of the paper support is more akin to the strategies one might find in modern comics than painting. This centrality of the paper medium in Ikeda's works is, in fact, the key to understanding how Ikeda manipulates the movement of time and space in his works and how he establishes the undrawn "silhouetted" figures as active participants in his vision.

CHAPTER III: *NON-FRAMES* AND *BLEEDS*:

TIMELESSNESS IN IKEDA MANABU'S *BUDDHA*

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, Ikeda Manabu draws in the medium of acrylic ink on paper to create uniquely detailed works that are formed by hundreds of miniature and unrelated motifs stemming from his everyday experience, memories, and impressions of recent world events. Ikeda produces no underdrawings for his larger works; he simply begins drawing at one corner of his blank paper canvas guided by his stream of consciousness. His works often present a complex depiction of what Eisner describes as "unlimited time and space," projecting a sense of timelessness. Ikeda achieves this by creating movement through the past, present, and future amongst his clustering of motifs. Scholars like Akiyama Sayako and Kataoka Mami describe the slow movement of time as mental wandering through the picture plane that allows one to become part of the image. According to Akiyama Sayako:

> Ikeda describes this creative style of his as "like slow walking." Walking as
> opposed to driving a car or riding in a train involves immersing oneself in the
> landscape, as it were, and could also be said to be an action that entails constantly

affirming the existence of oneself and others through mutual interaction with the surrounding environment.[25]

This process is unique to Ikeda because he takes in the world around him and stores that visual imagery in his mind like a filing cabinet. Although Ikeda's production spans many years, his mind is continuously engaged in the creative process. The idea of "slow walking" is important because not only does it take time (2-3 years) for Ikeda to complete one piece, but his process also involves wandering through his own memory to create complex images. When the viewers experience Ikeda's art, they must also "slowly walk" through his visual memory letting their eyes wander the overall image until the individual motifs are isolated and identified.

In this chapter, I will examine the movement of time and space in Ikeda's *Buddha* (figure 2). In *Buddha*, motifs from disparate time periods and cultural traditions surround a colossal statue carved on a cliffside. On the left side of the Buddha's shoulder, an iconic motif is easily recognized as being a Mayan temple from Mexico, possibly Chichén Itzá (figures 2a and 17). Several undrawn figures are depicted climbing up and down the temple steps while strange mechanical devices are hoisted up the facade. This work is amongst the earliest instances in which Ikeda introduced his signature silhouetted figures.

In Chapter 2, I discussed how Ikeda creates his images by an accumulation of lines while at the same time fully utilizing the whiteness of the paper to let his motifs emerge through the unstable interplay between positive and negative surfaces. The movement of time and space constructed through the juxtaposition of motifs and the

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[25] Akiyama, "Ikeda Manabu and the Universe," 155.

effective engagement with the paper as an indispensable part of the image-making

process, such as what we can observe in Ikeda's works, is rigorously explored in the field

of Comics Studies. Will Eisner (1917-2005) was an American cartoonist and a great

contributor to the field of comic studies. He wrote several award-winning books, with his

most significant being *Comics and Sequential Art* and *Graphic Storytelling and Visual*

Narrative, which explain in detail the formal techniques involved in comic book

creation.[26] Scott McCloud (b. 1960) is also an American cartoonist and well-known

theorist of comics. He became a prominent scholar in comics studies with his book

Understanding Comics which expands on Eisner's term "sequential art" and takes apart

the form and content of comics.[27] Both Eisner and McCloud's work are considered the

starting point of academic comic studies in North America.

      Eisner and McCloud discuss the techniques utilized in comic book creation.

Eisner introduces his concept of *non-frames* to describe the effects of what he calls

"unlimited" time and space that is achieved by eliminating panel borders on a single

page. When several scenes are combined on a single page without any panel outlines

(*non-frames*) to separate them, Eisner describes this as the "super-panel" that groups

together a vast (or "unlimited") span of times and spaces. McCloud, on the other hand,

coins the term *bleeds* to describe a single panel that creates a sense of timelessness by

expanding off the page ("bleeding" out) into negative space, which indicates the passing

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[26] Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (Will Eisner Studios; W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), and *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative: Principles and Practices from The Legendary Cartoonist* (New York: Will Eisner Studios; W.W. Norton and Company, 2008).

[27] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). In addition to McCloud's, *Understanding Comics* he also published several other books such as *Reinventing Comics* and *Making Comics*. *Reinventing Comics* takes the reader through the themes depicted in comic strips and *Making Comics* teaches one how create their own comic book. McCloud, *Reinventing Comics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000) and *Making* Comics (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006).

of time with an unspecified duration. In this chapter, I will apply the concept of *non-frames* proposed by Will Eisner and Scott McCloud's idea of *bleeds* to reveal the mechanism by which time and space are manipulated in Ikeda's *Buddha,* which becomes a major component in all his future works.

Buddha and Panel Formats

Eisner states, "critical to the success of a visual narrative is the ability to convey time."[28] Each panel needs to blend smoothly, and the timing of each scene must provide the illusion that there is a sequence of events. However, in certain situations within comics, motifs appear in sequence but without the conventional panel border to delineate the spaces around each scene. Eisner described this as *non-frames*. He argues, "The non-frame speaks to unlimited space...A frame shape (or the absence of one) gives it the ability to become more than just a proscenium through which a comic's actions is seen: it can become a part of the story itself."[29] Scattered throughout Ikeda's image, several motifs create a sense of unlimited space not bound by one specific time, shifting between the past and present.

At the center of the composition sits a colossal Buddha who acts as the intermediary between the left and right sides of the image. On the left is a juxtaposition of modernity and deterioration, while the right is an interplay of living civilization with modern exploration. Starting with the Buddha's upper body, his face has slightly open eyes presenting a gentle and meditative appearance with the *urna*—symbolizing a connection to the divine world—carved onto the forehead. His face is round and plump,

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[28] Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 28.
[29] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 44-45.

while the brow, nose, and lips are sharply defined. The Buddha has curls for hair;

however, most of the head extends off the paper, so his

uṣṇīṣa (cranial protuberance) is not visible. Overall, the Buddha statue is clothed in

draped robes that are reminiscent of Heian-period statues of Amida Buddha, in which the

carved clothing hung over both shoulders, exposing the chest and part of the stomach

(figure 18).

      This central motif shows a different process of degeneration between its left and

right sides. The statue seems to be missing some clay or plaster on his right cheeks and

chin, exposing the stacked bricks underneath. His left hand is raised, presenting the

gesture of teaching, and remains fully intact on the right side of the image, while his right

arm is broken on the bicep, exposing a hollow interior. The rest of his forearm seems to

have been built over by a hiking path, as tiny figures with backpacks traverse the trail

(figure 2b). The Buddha's right hand is crushed under this new foundation of brick and

reaches down into the bottom left corner of the image. The fingers on this right hand have

damage or decay, with much of the clay gone and the overall structure broken. This also

applies to his entire right leg, which is now buried beneath these new paths leaving the

statue's lower abdomen partially exposed. This open section has zig-zagging staircases

that disappear into the belly of the Buddha (figure 2c). On the right side of the image, the

statue's left leg remains mostly one piece, apart from his foot partially disappearing in the

rubble. The condition of the Buddha expresses the passing of time as the audience

witnesses the statue slowly breaking down from lack of care. When we take the statue

together with the surrounding smaller motifs, we realize that it exists in a limbo of

unlimited space between past and present.

Eisner uses the word "frame" to represent two different meanings. The first, as the individual containment of "thoughts, ideas, and actions" through the passing of time across panels.[30] The second, more physically the border (i.e., the black outline) that gives the panel its shape (figure 19). As such, Eisner's "frame" can be understood as what is typically referred to as the *closed panel* in Comics Studies. *Non-frames* thus means to break the conventions of the two kinds of containment and instead blend motifs across multiple times and spaces:

> The intent of the frame here is not so much to provide a stage as to heighten the reader's involvement with the narrative, much like a play in which actors interact with the audience, rather than merely performing in front of it [on a stage].[31]

In *non-frame*, the visual sequences on the comic book page have no border or outline, creating a parallel narrative not only across the page but even within a single motif. For instance, Eisner uses an example of a snowy city scene on a super panel to create a narrative of a seemingly anonymous man in a trench coat traversing several scenes on this one page (figure 20). The scattered newspapers catch the reader's eye, which gives clues about this man's identity. At the very bottom of the page, a newspaper reads, "Macreadys separate–wealthy tycoon is filing for divorce, social set stunned," accompanied by a portrait resembling the anonymous man. Therefore, the reader is led to believe through this clue that the man in the trench coat is Mr. Macready. Several other newspapers are spread throughout the page and appear to set the time with headlines such

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[30] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 39.
[31] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 45.

as "Milgate vows U.S. will lead in space probe–believes there is life on another planet. U.S. will be the first to make contact. Warns other nations will not tolerate interference." And "Milgate wins election big." Macready is presented as a miserable man sitting on a bench in the snow while another man dances past him, holding a radio. The man is presumably gleeful because Milgate won the election. According to Eisner, "This last page I [Will Eisner] designed to be swallowed whole. That is, I hoped the reader would see and feel the entire page as a panel, then, steeped in the mood or message, read the newspapers, which give action and depth."[32] This super panel has several *non-frame* motifs combined into one page, but as Eisner states, it still creates a parallel narrative.

A similar effect can be seen in *Buddha*, for instance, in the depiction of the Moai statues from Easter Island located on the far-right side of the image above the rock-cut house (figures 2d and 21). These statues are the embodiment of an ancient civilization that, in today's context, is far more familiar as icons of popular tourist sites. This motif is positioned among a trio of stone elephants and a grouping of simple drain mills (well known in the Netherlands). Ikeda includes this motif in a non-sequitur way devoid of any cultural or historical grounding, position it and all the other motifs around it in a limbo of undefined time and space (i.e., unlimited space). In Ikeda's works, the placement of this and other motifs are always personal. This could mean that in his conscious or subconscious memory, the Moai may be framed in a particular sequence of "thoughts, ideas, or actions." However, viewers closely inspecting *Buddha* are never fully led into Ikeda's private memory world. They may delight in finding a familiar motif but will have to remain uncertain of its context.

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[32] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 81.

Conventional framing devices in comics, such as the "closed panel" (the enclosures separating units of motifs laid out in sequence) and the "single panel" (a panel that takes up a large portion of a comic book page), are comparable to the boundaries of a theatrical stage that distinguishes the world of fiction from reality for the audience. Eisner explains, "functioning as a stage, the panel controls the viewpoint of the reader; the panel's outline becomes the perimeter of the reader's vision and establishes the perspective from which the site of the action is viewed."[33] When panels are placed close together on a comic page, the reader understands that only a short span of time has passed. A comic artist could manipulate the lapse of time by adjusting the spaces between panels or even removing the panels altogether.

Intriguingly one can observe a similar kind of manipulation happening in Ikeda's canvas which acts as a perimeter in directing the audience's gaze. In *Buddha*, the viewers may first spot the largest motif of the seated statue from afar, as it penetrates vertically across the center of the composition, looming over all the other miniature buildings, sculptures, natural and manmade structures, animals, and figures. As the viewers move closer, their eyes begin to wander across the surface, moving from one detail to the next, but not necessarily randomly.

An example of this is represented by Ikeda's juxtaposition of present and past. At first glance, Ikeda's overall image reminds one of the famous Chinese cave temples such as the Yungang and Longmen Grottos (figures 22 and 23). As often is the case with these cave temples, they are carved from cliff surfaces like the surrounding area of the colossal Buddha in Ikeda's image, which shows other motifs in relief within what appear to be

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[33] Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 90.

smaller niches. In a playful manner, instead of Buddhist icons, Ikeda positions a pair of toads to the Buddha's right side, also clothed in monastic robes, facing in toward the large Buddha (figure 2e). The viewers' imagination of ancient ruins is again interrupted by the silhouetted figures parachuting and hang gliding, forcing us back to the present time (figure 2f). Ikeda seems determined to remind us at every turn that what was once an ancient city is preserved (or suspended) in time and space as a tourist site and site of recreation.

Technically, *Buddha* is a two-panel drawing in the sense that it is literally a composite of two paper canvases. The two canvases are not necessarily meant to be seen as separate "panels," but collectively. The outer border of the horizontal rectangle serves as what Eisner terms the "super-panel" or "a containment without perimeter" and gives the illusion of a framed image without necessarily needing a physical frame.[34] When we get close to the image and observe the smaller motifs, they are clustered as loose units with hypothetical *closed panels,* just as one might notice in a theatrical group on a stage, where one's focus shifts from one cluster of actors to the next separated and connected through the space between them.[35] The *super-panel* can provide the general focal point (i.e., location of the fictional space) through the physical confines of the page—or in this case, the canvases. The *closed* or *single panels,* when visible, guide the reader or viewer's gaze through a narrative sequence. However, when the panels are invisible, they become *non-frames*, which allows the viewer's eyes to wander, providing certain freedom to engage with the different aspects of the composition. This is exactly the effect achieved by the miniature motifs in Ikeda's works.

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[34] Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 82.
[35] Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling,* 41.

Interestingly, the past and present are conflated in different ways between the right and left halves of *Buddha*. For instance, on the opposite side of the central Buddha across from the seated toad statues (on the left panel), we find a partial view of two additional statues of possibly Buddhist attendants with their heads turned toward the Buddha (figure 2g). Their bodies seem to be destroyed by the staircase that has been built over much of the statue. This massive staircase replaces a large portion of the rock-cut cliff on the left side, also cutting into the right arm of the Buddha. A group of silhouetted backpackers appears as they hike up the staircases that lead to the statues' faces (figure 2b). The type of temporal juxtaposition one finds on the left side of *Buddha* is different from the right side. On the right side, the structures seem to coexist with the colossal Buddha, suggestive of an idyllic ancient way of living where civilization respected nature and the ancestral memories, whereas the left side presents a more aggressive intervention into the past with signs of industrial progression, which signal the damage of modernity.

Ikeda uses color effectively to accentuate the slow passing of time. In the right panel, he uses several earthy colors, such as browns, tans, and greens, to present a vibrant civilization. The overall atmosphere on the right side of the Buddha is lively and bright. Meanwhile, the left panel starts at the top with tans and greens, but as our eyes descend, the color scheme transitions into greyish hues and becomes increasingly monochromatic, giving a sense of deterioration and ruin. In short, the *non-frames* effect is present across *Buddha*, in familiar individual motifs that embody both the memory of great civilizations through history and their present utility as sites of entertainment, and in Ikeda's underlining theme of civilization versus (or and) nature that is also present in the broad insinuation of time passing from right to left and top to bottom. Importantly, throughout

this piece, Ikeda seems to differentiate living inhabitants and tourists through his silhouettes (backpackers, hikers, and paragliders). This juxtaposition of inhabitants and visitors as undrawn figures is what binds the past and present within his image for the reality of the viewers.

Ikeda's Undrawn Figure as *Bleeds*

In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud introduces a concept that overlaps with Eisner's *non-frames*, which he calls "bleeds." According to McCloud, *bleeds* is a technique where an image is not contained within a *closed panel* but instead extends off the edge of the comic book page (figure 24). He explains that when a panel bleeds off the page, it creates a sense of timelessness within the image.[36] It is important to understand that McCloud's use of timelessness can refer to more than one aspect in comics, but here in his focus on *bleeds*, he is referring to the images extending beyond the page. At first glance, Scott McCloud's definition of *bleeds* may appear like Eisner's *non-frames* because time is no longer contained by the *closed panel* (i.e., *bleeds* is a non-contained panel). However, *bleeds* refers to a single panel on a comic book page filled with multiple other panels, whereas *non-frames* is juxtaposing many motifs without containment and combines them in a single page (*super-panel*). I believe a comparable effect to McCloud's idea of the *bleeds* can be found in Ikeda's silhouetted figures instead of his drawn-in motifs. The backpackers I mentioned above are perfect examples of

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[36] "When 'bleeds' are used—i.e., when the panel runs off the page—this effect is compounded. Time is no longer contained by the familiar icon of the closed panel, but instead hemorrhages and escapes into timeless space. Such images can set the mood or a sense of place for whole scenes through their lingering timeless presence." McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 103.

Ikeda's iconic undrawn silhouettes. They are formed by an accumulation of individual lines that surround the blank raw surface of the canvas paper. Their shapes are created without an underdrawing or outline and purely exist through the viewer's eyes by the interplay of negative and positive space. As discussed in Chapter 2, each of the lines surrounding the undrawn space is produced through individual color lines, and that gives form to the white space of the paper. The silhouettes are not stiff abstract forms but recognizable figures of humans, animals, and objects. They are portrayed as engaged in activities but are nevertheless suspended forever in mid-motion.

McCloud astutely observes that letting the space of a comics' narrative "bleed" out beyond the edges of the page by eliminating the enclosing panel is what creates the sense of stillness and timelessness. I believe this idea can be applied to the lack of outline in Ikeda's silhouetted figures. The fact that Ikeda does not clearly divide the picture plane using outlines or paint—that is, cover the surface of the paper with pigment—but simply draws lines to give the illusion of a contour or colored surface means the blank and raw paper is always present as bleed-able spatial expanse. Because the silhouetted figures are the undrawn surface of the paper themselves, without an outline, the boundary between the blank space of a figure and the paper visible between the lines that fill in the surrounding area becomes porous. Just like a comic page without a panel to contain its space, Ikeda's silhouetted figures are essentially *bleeding* out into the surrounding spaces between the drawn lines, contributing to the quality of timelessness.

When we step back and observe *Buddha* once again from afar, letting the miniature details fall away, then we could argue that its entire composition is also utilizing a kind of *bleed* effect. Although this piece is technically in two individual

"panels," when hung in a gallery or museum, the canvases are matched up seamlessly as a single image. In addition, although the gallery or museum may hang the piece behind large plexiglass for protection, Ikeda prefers that it be presented without any additional framing. This lack of "frame" or "border" (in comics terminology) means that the pictorial space within *Buddha* can escape beyond the edges of the canvases, contributing to the work's sense of stillness and timelessness. Thematically, this sense of timelessness works particularly effectively for *Buddha* because it suggests the central colossal statue's transcendent presence through past, present, and future, which is collapsed ("non-framed") into one space amongst the surrounding motifs.

Conclusion

Within *Buddha,* time spans from living civilization to a tourist site of the ancient past. *Buddha* depicts a clear distinction of shifting time from the right side of the image to the left. The statue of the Buddha acts as the center point where both timelines meet. To the right, the image illustrates the past and a thriving civilization that still inhabits the mountainside, while on the left, the present is depicted as an ancient site decaying and changing structurally to accommodate tourism. The concept of *non-frames* guides the audience in decoding Ikeda's work and understanding that this single image has a sequence of events and a narrative (alluding to Ikeda's larger message of environmental consciousness). Ikeda's smaller motifs aid in establishing the *unlimited* time and space in his visual narrative. Within *Buddha,* Ikeda scatters motifs from multiple cultural sites around the world and different time periods, such as the Mayan temples in Mexico and the Moai statues from Easter Island. Each of these motifs prompts the viewer to question

where and when the suggestive vignettes in *Buddha* are taking place. The most recognizable motifs were initially part of a living society but now serve a new function as a site for tourism. Ikeda guides the viewers to realize there is a shift between these two existences of each motif, and they experience the sequences transitioning across the singular unbound space of the image.

CHAPTER IV: IKEDA MANABU'S *REGENERATION* THROUGH THE LENS OF COMIC NARRATIVE TOOLS AND *CLOSURE*

Introduction

Regeneration depicts a WWII Japanese naval warship covered in underwater sea life (figure 3). The general composition is comprised of fifty percent drawn lines and fifty percent raw undrawn paper. The bow of the ship sits dead center on the canvas panels, with the hull of the vessel filling up the bottom portion of the composition, leaving negative space near the edges of the paper. In the upper half of the image—from the bow of the ship to the top of the composition—Ikeda has illustrated the bridge of the ship, the mainmast, and radar antennas. The upper portion of the composition is much roomier and provides more negative space around the ship. When looking at *Regeneration* in a gallery space, viewers would most likely immediately recognize the overall image from a distance. Then as they walk closer to the drawing, they will start to notice and read the smaller motifs that constitute the overall image. The interplay between the macro singular whole and the detailed micro parts is what is most frequently commented on in Ikeda's large works.

Thus far, I have been focusing on Ikeda's use of lines (or more specifically, colored lines) and the manipulation of time and space through his clustering of motifs. Among his motifs, one that is most noticed by the critiques but not yet fully explored is the set of so-called "silhouetted figures," which represent people and animals. These

figures are produced as negative space utilizing the white of the paper support. They are distinctly different from the other small drawn-in details in Ikeda's works because his small motifs are often very personal. However, negative figures are faceless and frameless shapes of a thing or an activity that allow the audience to project themselves and their knowledge onto them. Laura Mueller observes that these figures act as a point of entry for the viewer to associate with the image.[37] This invitation to project oneself makes Ikeda's otherwise very personal vision into a space for interaction and communication between the artist and his hypothetical audience.

But how does this communication work? In addition to the physical performance of the back-and-forth movement required of the viewers to absorb both the macro and micro aspects of Ikeda's world, the silhouetted figures demand the audience be more actively engaged in seeing, in a process akin to what Scott McCloud calls "closure." This chapter, using *Regeneration* as a case study, argues the strategies at work that facilitate interactive viewing in Ikeda's large pieces. *Regeneration* is appropriate for this investigation because this is the work where Ikeda first fully conceptualized the undrawn figures, which became the signature motifs for his subsequent works.

Defining *Closure*

Closure is one of the anchoring concepts Scott McCloud introduces early in his seminal work, *Understanding Comics*. He argues that the time and space expressed on paper using comic panels are mere fractured moments that only come alive and move as a

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[37] Mueller, "Traditions Altered," 66.

sequence in the readers' imagination through the process of *closure*.[38] McCloud makes

clear that *closure* is a natural function of our brains:

> In our daily lives we often commit closure, mentally completing that which is
>
> incomplete based on past experience…In recognizing and relating to other people,
>
> we all depend heavily on our learned ability of closure.[39]

McCloud goes on to use the example of Mickey Mouse made of two dimes and a

quarter (figure 25). When we see two small circles that look like Mickey's ears placed on

top of a larger circle, "the mere shape or outline is enough to trigger closure."[40] Instantly,

the brain recognizes the shape as Mickey Mouse from past experiences of Disney. The

same proving of one's memory and experiences also happens automatically when one is

viewing a work of art in identifying a motif (*Regeneration* portraying a ship) or when the

same viewer cancels out the white spaces between individually drawn lines in Ikeda's

works to formulate a coherent image.

At its core, visual communication, including comics, channels what one might

consider common experiences or norms among the target audience by relying on

stereotypes or distilling a concept into an icon. In comics, however, McCloud

demonstrates that this process of *closure* is taken full advantage of to create and convey a

sophisticated narrative that involves extremely complex characters and plots through

highly innovative temporal movement and spatial expanse.

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[38] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66-67.
[39] McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 63.
[40] McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 64.

According to Scott McCloud, *closure* happens instantaneously without the viewer realizing it has occurred. Although McCloud does not clearly distinguish in his argument, he demonstrates through his examples that there are two different types of *closure*: one that concerns the perception of images and narrative, and another that concerns interpretation. *Closure* as perception is about parsing together the whole from just a part by tapping into one's experience and deduction. As McCloud depicts through his visual example, when walking down an aisle at the supermarket, such as the soda and chips section, one will see rows of cans or 2-liter bottles on the shelves with only half or 3/4 of a cylinder visible (figure 26).[41] Our minds can make a connection to past experience with soda bottles to correctly perceive that the 3/4 of a cylinder is just one part of a full cylinder. This perception, according to McCloud is a kind of *closure*. Evoking this type of *closure* in comics context often requires an artist to remove variables by simplifying one's drawing to what Will Eisner terms "icons" or tapping into certain "stereotypes" shared among the community of target audience.[42] The aim of this communication is an accurate conveyance of information, so if successful, there should not be any room for imagination or interpretation on the readers' part.

The latter type of *closure* (for interpretation), on the other hand, concerns the more imaginative aspect of visual communication. Scott McCloud explains it using an axe murder scene (figure 27). In this example, the first panel to the left shows an axe being raised with a man yelling "Now You Die!!" directed at another man running away saying "No! No!" The second panel on the right is a city night scene with the letters

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[41] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 63.
[42] Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 12-13.

"EEYA!" written across the sky.[43] Those familiar with the narrative tropes of comics may intuitively assume that they know what happened between the two panels and that they understood what the artist meant to convey. However, Scott McCloud muses, "I may have drawn an axe being raised in this example, but I'm not the one who let it drop or decided how hard the blow, or who screamed, or why."[44] All those choices were the reader's own decisions, and they were essentially made complicit in this murder narrative. In other words, in the *closure* for interpretation, individual readers are allowed leeway to interpret an image or narrative and draw their own meaning.

McCloud argues that the way in which comics achieve the two kinds of *closure* on its pages is by marshaling comic panels and, more importantly, the space between panels: the "gutter."[45] McCloud's concept of the *gutter* is innovative because it sheds light on the critical function of an aspect of comics that no other scholar noticed. Until McCloud, the white space between comic panels was invisible. The term *gutter* still retains the sense of negative as opposed to the positive space within comic panels or the images and texts a viewer-reader is supposed to notice. However, McCloud convincingly demonstrates that this negative space is where the human imagination transforms two disparate images within independent comic panels into one idea. The *gutter* embodies the invisible but very real presence of time and space. The *gutter* emerges out of the blank surface of the paper support when all the visual and textual information is placed on it. In this sense, the "negative" space of the *gutter* extends underneath the adjacent comic panels to spatially connect the images and texts contained within.

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[43] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66.
[44] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 68.
[45] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66-67.

To be sure, Ikeda Manabu does not draw in a comic book style or make any mention specifically to comic books or manga artists as his source of inspiration. Nevertheless, because Ikeda does not paint but instead draws, the blank surface of his paper support functions like the *gutter*. The tool of the *gutter* commonly used to create visual narratives in comics, as well as the process of seeing these two kinds of *closure*, works effectively to analyze why and how Ikeda's silhouetted figures can serve as effective "points of entry." The viewers' engagement transforms the negative space into positive figures, enlivening them as the most active elements in an otherwise strangely quiet and timeless image.

Closure as Perception in *Regeneration*

Like the Buddha, the massive Japanese World War II naval ship in *Regeneration* appears at the center of two paper canvases. Ikeda took three years to complete this 63 square-inch work (162 cm square), drawing just 10 square centimeters per day, hunched over the canvases five or more hours daily so that the tip of his pen remained vertical to the paper to prevent any dripping and ensure clean, thick lines. Moving downward from the bow of the ship aligned exactly at the seam of the two canvases, the hull of the vessel fills up the bottom portion of the composition, leaving negative space near the edges of the paper. A significant portion of the upper half of the composition around the bridge, mainmast, and radar antennas is left undrawn. Just like many of his other works, the underlining theme of *Regeneration* is mankind's coexistence with nature. The sunken ship appears to endure the passing of time amidst depictions of coral reefs and sea creatures, slowly "regenerating" as part of the thriving marine ecosystem. When we

examine closely, however, the remnants of civilization can be spotted in seemingly unrelated details around the ship, such as the elephant-like statue, the capybara-like creature, subway entrance, carp flags, a truck, and most hauntingly, the transparent spirit-like figures (figure 3a). These rounded and formless beings are essentially the only exception to the rule in Ikeda's works that come with a white outline. Because they are drawn to appear transparent, these "spirits" are blended as part of the ship from afar. They seem to be carrying on their daily business—walking up and down the stairs or driving a truck—as if they are still living or working on the ship in a temporal limbo, a memory. The juxtaposition between the decaying ship, the thriving marine life, and ghostly figures superimposes overlapping times moving at different speeds onto a single pictorial space.

Compositionally the negative space is being used in two different ways: the white backdrop exposing large sections of the raw paper and the silhouetted figures delineate by his signature mechanical lines. Some of the silhouetted figures are integrated into the underwater scene as scuba divers, bubbles, and sea creatures that circulate in and out of the ship's wreckage. However, when we look closely, we realize that Ikeda also includes silhouettes of fishermen casting lines off the ship's anchor. Ikeda draws nothing to indicate water explicitly. The presence of underwater (diving with fishes) and above-ground (fishing) activities makes the vast blank backdrop oscillate between representing ocean and sky, creating a disorienting, surreal illusion.

Laura Mueller comments that the silhouettes in Ikeda's works remind her of the figures one finds in East Asian landscape images. For instance, in *ukiyo-e* landscape prints of the Edo period, Mueller argues, similar white anonymous figures appear in the

distant backgrounds that draw the viewers into the pictorial space, just as Ikeda's (figure 28).[46] Mueller's analogy is intriguing, but Ikeda's silhouetted figures are qualitatively different from the *ukiyo-e* counterpart, which are essentially drastically simplified and non-distinct but outlined human forms. Ikeda's silhouetted figures are (as mentioned earlier) not delineated with outlines, but they are nevertheless much more defined in shape, making the activities they are performing clearly identifiable.

On the other hand, Mueller's other observation mentioned earlier concerning how Ikeda's silhouettes act as a point of entry into the image is astute. It is true that the striking white of these figures is one aspect of his work that catches the audience's attention and invites them to approach closer. However, Mueller stops short of analyzing exactly how these negative spaces interact with the rest of the composition and with the viewers as positive figures. The way in which the painting orchestrates the viewer's engagement with these figures can be unpacked through the two processes of *closure*. Let us begin with *closure* as perception.

In *Regeneration*—as with all his other works—Ikeda presents the silhouetted figures with precision. If the silhouette is of a sea creature, in many cases, one could tell the species. For example, the triangular shape is a stingray, the long squiggly worm shape is an eel, and the bent neck and long-snouted head is a seahorse (figures 3b and 3c). When they are human figures, the activities they are engaged in are generally and immediately apparent. For example, the groups of figures scuba diving and skin diving are distinguished by their bubbles, flippers, oxygen tanks, scuba masks, and headlamps (figures 3d and 3e).

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[46] Mueller, "Traditions Altered," 66.

Associating a blank space with a shape is a type of *closure*. To evoke in others the image of exactly the same object in a blank space is a particular kind of communication that relies on iconification and stereotypes. In *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, Will Eisner defines "stereotypes" as simplified images of people and objects that can also hold their own visual significance as symbols.[47] He argues when a symbolic object that is associated with an occupation (i.e., oxygen tank, flippers, or scuba mask) is utilized properly, it can modify the figures within the visual narrative to enhance their meaning within the storytelling. To Eisner, clothing is one such symbolic additive that can immediately define a figure's occupation or character. A man-shaped silhouette that stands with his fist on his hips and stares into the distance is not a superhero until you add an object such as a cape. The silhouette of the cape enhances the figure, making it easy to recognize the shape as a heroic person.

The "icon" in McCloud is a related concept that he describes as "amplification through simplification."[48] In comics, artists do not typically represent humans, animals, and objects in a photorealistic way. Artists, instead, will take that realistic form and transform it into a simplified replica. According to McCloud, "When we abstract an image through cartooning [simplification], we're not so much eliminating details as we are focusing on specific details."[49] The simplification of a form then amplifies its meaning based on the viewer's memory or experience to reconstruct its original appearance in real life. This is what Eisner is referring to when he states that stereotypes can be transformed into an "icon." In Eisner, *stereotype* and *icon* are closely related

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[47] "In film, there is plenty of time to develop a character within an occupation. In comics, there is little time or space. The image or caricature must settle the matter instantly." Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 12.
[48] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 30-31.
[49] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 30-31.

concepts. He explains that *stereotypes* draw from "commonly accepted physical characteristics associated with an occupation."[50] Then, these sets of simplified characteristics become the identifying factors that make up an icon.[51] Regarding how he goes about invoking a *stereotype*, Eisner states:

> The art of creating a stereotypical image for the purpose of storytelling requires a familiarity with the audience and a recognition that each society has its own ingrained set of accepted stereotypes… to communicate well, the storyteller must be conversant with what is universally valid.[52]

Returning to *Regeneration*, the silhouetted figures are iconized to the bare minimum outer form of *stereotypes*. According to Ikeda:

> By using figures in white, I think it creates a visual balance between the complex world and humankind. The second reason is that I avoid depicting specific characters. I think it is easier for viewers to become emotionally connected to the humans and animals when drawn with minimal information.[53]

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[50] It is important to note that the term stereotype is often associated with negative stereotyping of cultures, but that is not the comics goal. It is to create a standardized form based on occupation or activities to make simplified tools for visual communication. As Eisner describes in more detail using a doctor as his example, "…it is useful to adopt a compound of characteristics that the reader will accept. Usually, this image is drawn from both social experience and what the reader thinks a doctor ought to look like." Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling*, 12.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Eisner, *Graphic* Storytelling, 13.

[53] Mueller, "Interview with Ikeda Manabu," 44–49.

Ikeda expects the viewers to instantly associate an oxygen tank, flippers, and wet suit with scuba divers based on what he assumes to be the memory and experience he shares with his target audience. Just as he assumes that the activity involving a large brim hat, baggy attire, and a pole with a line and hook connecting to it cannot be anything other than fishing. Naturally, Ikeda was correct in his assumption. His silhouetted figures are framed so meticulously that they leave no room for miscommunication. One can be reasonably certain that the process of *closure* will work in each viewer's mind to correctly associate the negative spaces with positive figures he intended. However, this seemingly obvious point is still worth making because viewers properly perceiving the silhouetted figures as he intended is the prerequisite to the surreal underwater-out-of-water effect, which I spoke to earlier, that is evoked in the viewers' minds through *closure* as "interpretation."

Closure as Interpretation in *Regeneration*

Scott McCloud described the *gutter* as the "limbo for human imagination."[54] Expanding on McCloud's definition of the *gutter*, David Carrier observes how the comic page can be more than just a background. He argues the *gutter* does not just act as a background to an artwork; it can also interact with the image becoming part of it.[55] What Carrier means is that on a comic book page, the space between the panels, that is, the raw paper, is simultaneously the negative interpretive space (i.e., the *gutter*) and the backdrop to the narrative within the closed panels as part of the comics' visual communication. The

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[54] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66.
[55] David Carrier, *The Aesthetics of Comics* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 51.

dual purpose of the raw paper essentially is, one as the *gutter* and the other as the background and becomes part of the image through *closure*.

However, Ikeda's work is not a comic book that contains panels, so to identify the *gutter* in *Regeneration*, let us first visualize it in layers. Ikeda essentially produces his images in just two layers, the raw paper and drawn lines. Viewers connect these two layers by performing *closure* as interpretation. Just as one does in a comic book page, the raw paper in Ikeda's piece acts as the background and the space for human imagination. For example, the silhouetted figures discussed in the previous section also leave room for the viewers to use their own imagination or embark on the process of *closure,* not as perception but interpretation. In an interview with Laura Mueller, Ikeda mentions that although the overall image in his large piece may appear as if human civilization has succumbed to nature, his silhouetted figures present positivity by showing people active and having fun.[56] Although the viewer might perceive the activities of silhouetted figures in the manner Ikeda intended, the emotional tone of their actions (do they like it? Are they having fun? How much fun are they having? What do they think of the imaginary world around them?) is left to the viewer's imagination.

Laura Mueller's interview with the artist reveals that *closure* for interpretation could also occur inadvertently in a way Ikeda did not intend, for instance, in Ikeda's more recent work *Foretoken* (*Yochō* 予兆**,** 2008), which depicts a giant tsunami destroying a town (figure 29). Mueller introduces how Ikeda discovered an association between the composition of this work as he finished it with one of Katsushika Hokusai's (葛飾北斎, 1760-1849) most iconic works, "Under the Wave off Kanagawa" (*Kanagawa oki nami*

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[56] Mueller, "Interview with Ikeda Manabu," 49.

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ura 神奈川沖浪裏), popularly known as "The Great Wave" (figure 30). Ikeda states,

"Originally I created a work of only three panels, but it felt too constricted when I completed it. So, I added a blank panel to the left of the composition, and then I realized the work was reminiscent of Hokusai's design."[57] Here, Ikeda was essentially the very first audience of his own creation. Because Ikeda did not set out to create an homage to Hokusai's precedent, the *closure* in this instance is not that of perception but interpretation.

In *Regeneration*, the most creative interaction of the *gutter* with the image is possibly the vast backdrop of undrawn space above the battleship. The viewers perceive that the battleship is drawn underwater not because Ikeda explicitly presents the ocean wave but through the process of *closure* based on the shared "common sense" that marine creatures need ocean water to stay alive or scuba divers dive underwater. An informed audience may also associate the state of the battleship with photographs or documentary footage of a sunken ship taken over by marine life. In other words, the audience supplements the "ocean" into the blank background of Ikeda's ship. However, what must be underscored is that the nature of this ocean is, in fact, left to each viewer's imagination. How deep is this ocean? How cold is the water? How clear? How strong is the current? The fact that one of the divers appears with a flashlight on his head indicates that the surrounding area is dark (figure 3e). But how dark? Ikeda provides no information for the viewers to *perceive* the answers.

Furthermore, Ikeda even disrupts and unsettles the audience's coherent imagination by tapping into another *stereotype*, namely the adult and child at the bottom

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[57] Mueller, "Interview with Ikeda Manabu," 45.

foreground of the composition. Unlike other silhouetted figures who are suspended airily

higher up in the composition, these two figures are presented firmly anchored at the

bottom of the canvas. They appear to be standing on the anchor of the ship, which

provides an additional gravitas to their presence. The shared *stereotype* informs us that

these figures cannot be fishing underwater. The fact that they appear at the bottom of the

composition logically must mean that the entire ship is above the sea. If so, then the blank

paper surface behind the battleship must be the sky. In short, the easily identifiable

silhouetted figures transform the raw background of the paper into a giant *gutter* and an

occasion for *closure* as interpretation while simultaneously challenging our sense of

reality by subverting *stereotypes*.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 discussed how Ikeda's figures are perceived or interpreted through

closure through his creative manipulation of stereotypes and iconization. What acts as the

primary medium of Ikeda's visual communication is the blank undrawn surface of the

paper support. The negative space in *Regeneration* served as the *gutter* providing space

for Ikeda to engage in a dialogue with the audience, and the audience to actively interact

back with and through his work. As the viewers physically moved back and forth in front

of his work, their minds are also (consciously or instinctually) moving back and forth

between the two types of *closure*, perceiving through the clues the artist provided, while

reaching out to his mind by attempting to interpret the meanings behind those clues.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This research argued that the negative spaces in Ikeda Manabu's works function in a comparable way to what Scott McCloud calls the *gutter*, relying on shared memories and experiences (Eisner's *stereotype* and *icons*) to inject positive form into undrawn figures through *closure*. In many respects, the unique vision of Ikeda's works culminates in the simplicity of his production process: short colored lines on white paper.

Through a simple and mechanical procedure, Ikeda is able to create within his works a sense of timelessness but full of activities and motion. Just as the success of comics hinges on an artist's ability to entice active participation from its readers to both perceive and interpret through *closure*, the complexity of Ikeda's art marks his sophistication as an artist-designer in his absolute control over his medium. Unknowingly, his audience is engaged in a very comics-like communication of visual narrative.

After the devastating Great Northeast Japan Earthquake in 2011, many artists changed their artistic styles. Ikeda was no exception. In his most recent paintings, Ikeda has begun using underdrawing and watercolor, giving some of his works a softer appearance. He is not only softly outlining his figures; he is replacing his pen with a brush and lines for surfaces. Furthermore, beginning in 2014 with his two works *Untitled* and *Blue Spruce*, and more recently in 2020, Ikeda has started to produce smaller works in intaglio (primarily etching). Even in these newer works, Ikeda continues to include his signature silhouetted figures. Ikeda's works already touched on the theme of civilization and nature even before the earthquake. However, the change in production process to what one might characterize as a more conventional mode of painting seems to have the

effect of removing the viewers' attention away from Ikeda's acrobatic skill as a draftsman, and instead fore fronts his message of environmentalism even further.

In his newer works, these changes in tools and media could have a more significant implication for his overall effect and the relationship he establishes between his audience and his works than other artists who were working with more conventional modes of painterly expression from the start. An intriguing future avenue of research will be to employ other concepts in Comics Studies (concerning techniques of surface treatment such as screen tone, mat surfaces, and color, for instance) to investigate how his newer works differ from his well-known style he has built until now.

APPENDIX: FIGURES

Figure 1

This is an image of Ikeda Manabu working on his most recent work *Rebirth.* The pen depicted the image is the round nib pen he uses to create his lines. Arnold, Amber. **Round Nib Pen**. Worland, Gayle. "Line by Line, a Masterwork Takes Shape." *Capital Newspapers, Madison.Com*, 2013. https://madison.com/entertainment/arts_and_theatre/line-by-line-a-masterwork-takes-shape/article_d817e640-0052-518f-9a58-a36c648348f6.html.

Figure 2

Ikeda Manabu (池田学, b.1973). **Buddha (ブッダ)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2000.

Pen, acrylic ink on paper, mounted on board. 130.3 x 162.1 cm. Private Collection. Ikeda,

Manabu. *The Pen: Ikeda Manabu*, 120-121. Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2017.

Figure 2a

Ikeda Manabu. Mayan temple example with silhouetted figures climbing the facade, on the left side next to the Buddha's shoulder. **Detail from Buddha**.
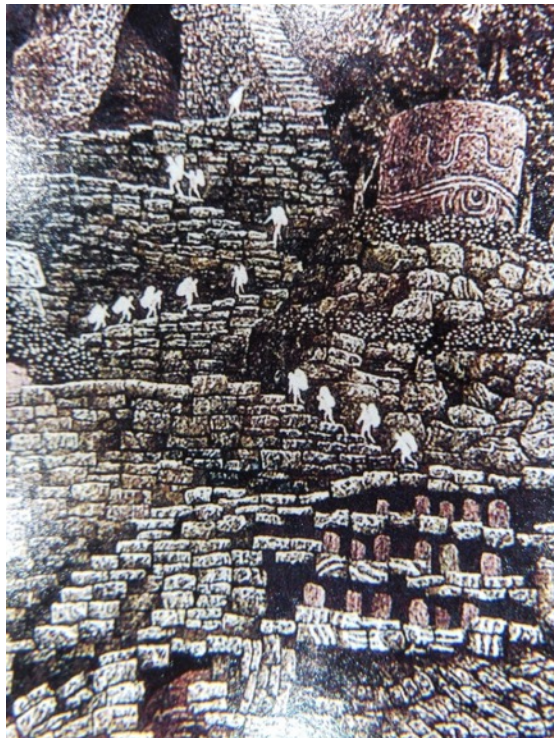

Figure 2b

Ikeda Manabu. Hiking example with backpacker silhouetted figures climbing long staircase on the left side of the colossal Buddha by his forearm. **Detail from Buddha**.

Figure 2c

Ikeda Manabu. Pathways are leading into the belly of the colossal Buddha statue, near the bottom of the image seen between five stone pillars next to the Buddha's leg. **Detail from Buddha**.

Figure 2d

Ikeda Manabu. Moai statue example on the right side of the Buddha just to the right of the waterfall and elephant bathing himself in the lower half of the image. **Detail from Buddha**.
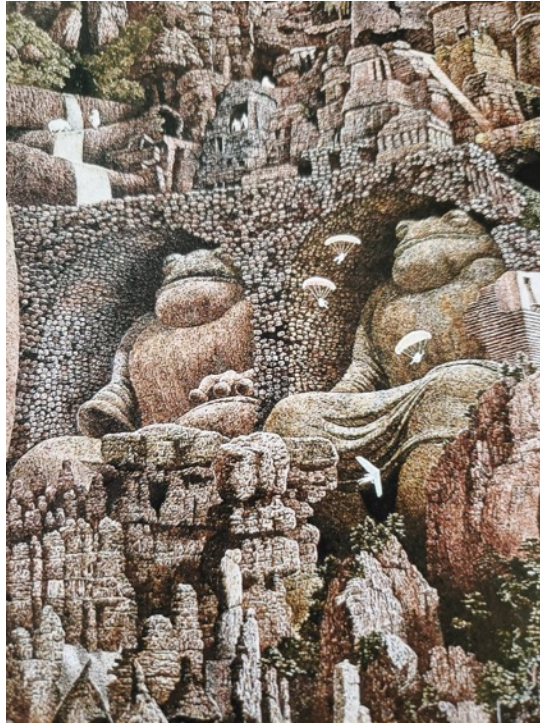
Figure 2e

Ikeda Manabu. Toad statue example with silhouetted paragliders and parachuting figures, near the right side of the Buddha's elbow. **Detail from Buddha**.
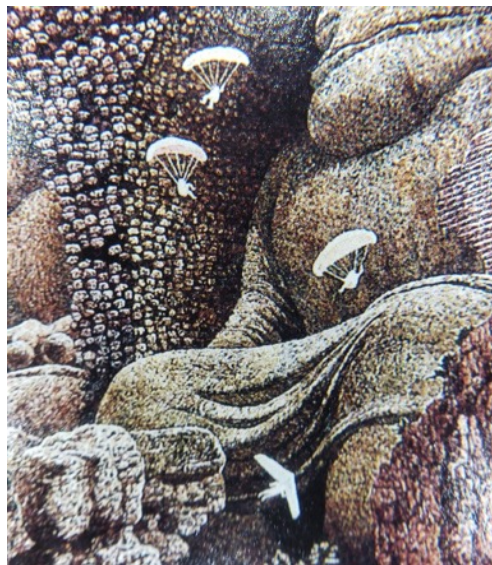

Figure 2f

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of parachuting and paragliding silhouetted figures. **Detail from Buddha**.

Figure 2g

Ikeda Manabu. Hidden statues of the left side of the colossal Buddha under the archways and just above the backpackers. **Detail from Buddha**.

Figure 3

Ikeda Manabu. **Regeneration (*Saisei* 再生)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2001. Pen, acrylic ink on paper, mounted on board. 162 x 162 cm. Hamamatsu Municipal Museum of Art. Ikeda, *The Pen*, 108-109.
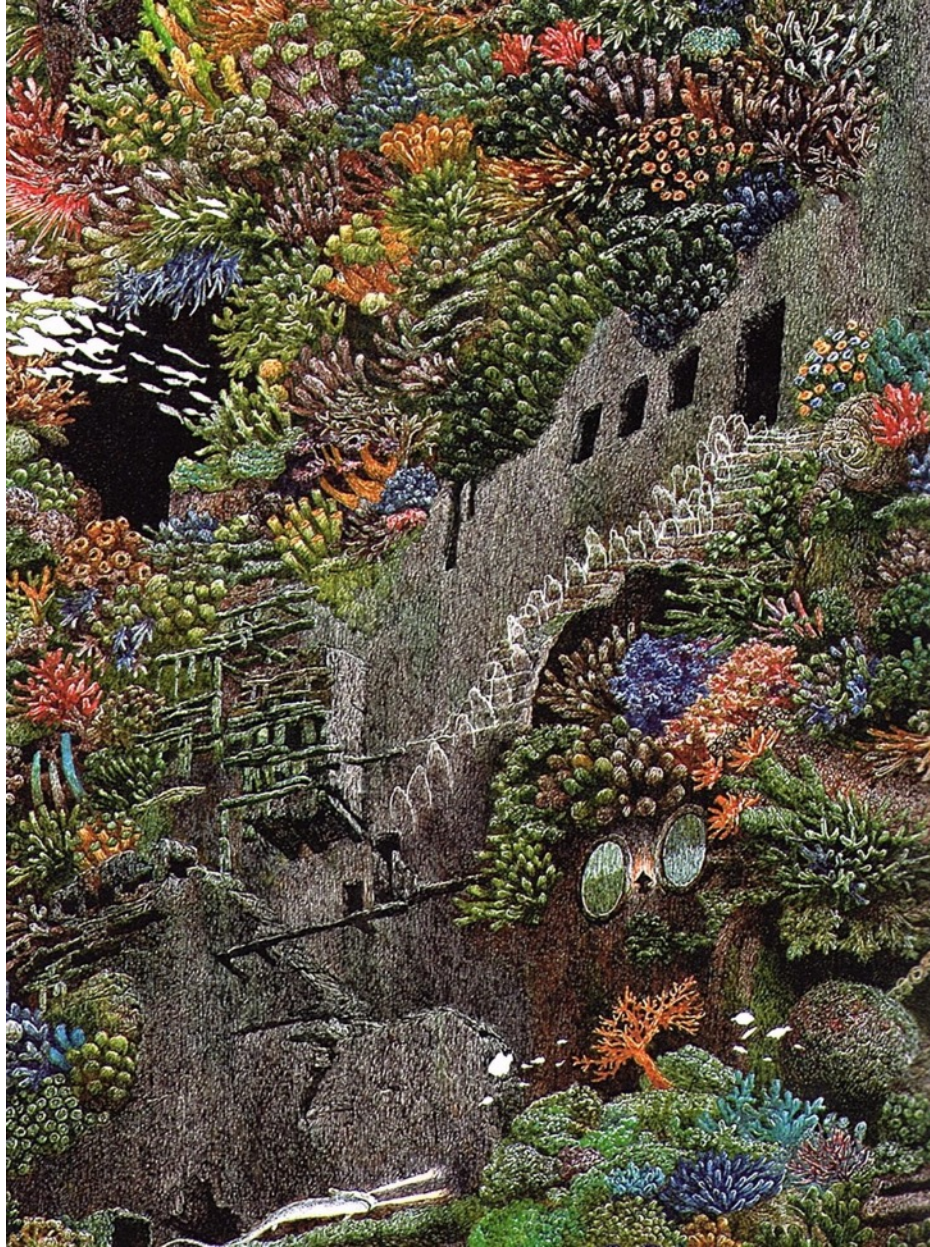
Figure 3a

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of the translucent figures, located to the left of the Hawsehole—
the hole on the bow of the ship where the anchor is released from— these figures are seen
ascending a staircase into the hull of the ship. **Detail from Regeneration**.

Figure 3b

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of marine silhouettes this one is in the shape of a stingray. Located to the left of composition near the transparent beings from figure 19a. **Detail from Regeneration.**

Figure 3c

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of marine silhouettes, on the left their shape is of an eel while on the right the form resembles a seahorse. Located around the Hawsehole on the right side of the ship. **Detail from Regeneration.**

Figure 3d

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of scuba-diver with flipper, scuba tank, and bubbles, inside the upper-right cannon looking at the fish swimming. **Detail from Regeneration.**

Figure 3e

Ikeda Manabu. Close-up of scuba-diver with a headlamp, inside the Hawsehole looking at the coral reef growing on the ship. **Detail from Regeneration**.

Figure 4

Ikeda Manabu. **History of Rise and Fall (*Kōbōshi* 興亡史).** Heisei period (1989-2019),
2006. Two-panel drawing; pen, acrylic ink on paper, mounted on board. 200 x 200cm
(6.5 x 6.5 ft). Takahashi collection. Ikeda, *The Pen*, 66-67.

Figure 4a

Ikeda Manabu. Ikeda's silhouette figure from Uchiro's condition report illustrating that his lines are drawn around the raw surface of the paper. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.
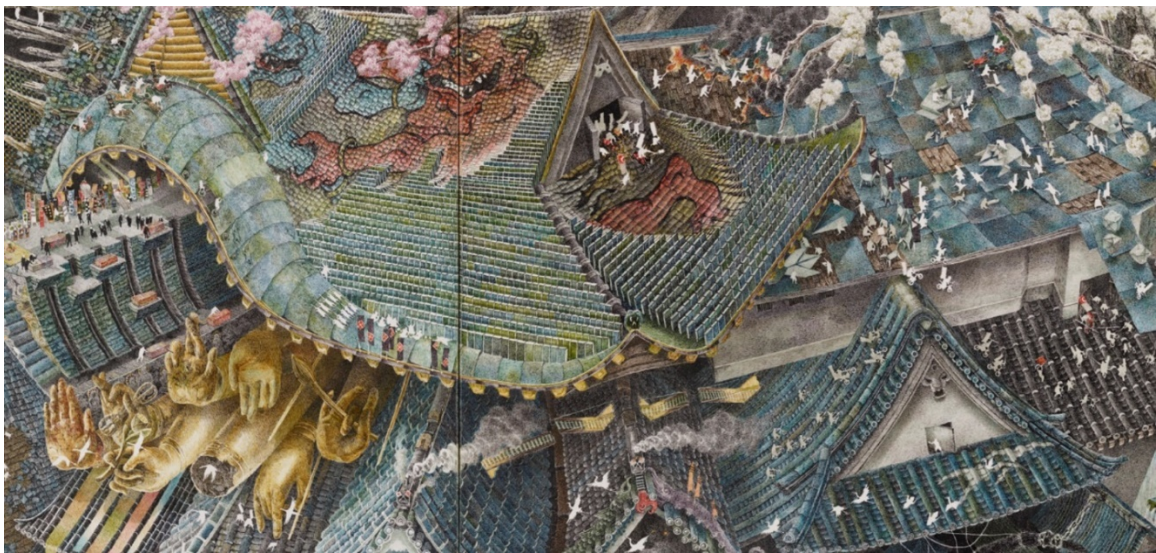

Figure 4b

Ikeda Manabu. Golden hand mudras in the center of the composition. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 4c

Ikeda Manabu. Riders rushing down the rooftop to meet the invaders, near the top of the composition in the center. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 4d

Ikeda Manabu. Spring *rakuchū rakugai* motifs of cherry blossoms upper-right and boy day carp flags in the lower-right part of the image. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 4e

Ikeda Manabu. Fall *rakuchū rakugai* motif, changing of the leaves in the lower-right part of the structure. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.
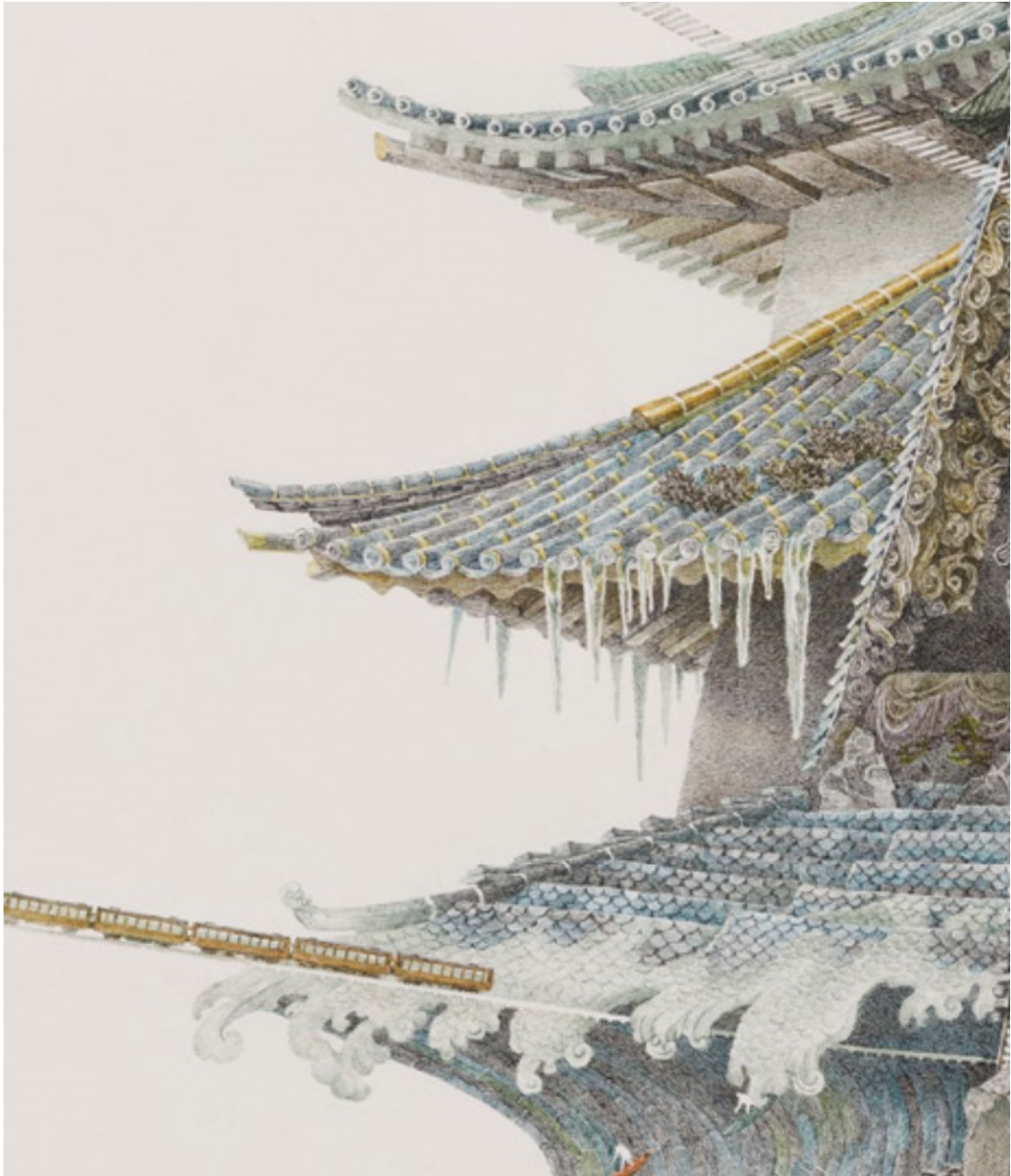
Figure 4f

Ikeda Manabu. Winter *rakuchū rakugai* motif, ice forming on the castle rooftops in the upper-left part of the image. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 4g

Ikeda Manabu. Summer *rakuchū rakugai* motif, *nebuta matsuri* (ねぶた祭) festival located in the lower-right part of the structure. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 4h

Ikeda Manabu. WWII airplanes dropping objects onto the structure below. **Detail from History of Rise and Fall**.

Figure 5

Yamamoto Ryuki (山本 竜基, b. 1976). **Chaos**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2012-2014.

Painting acrylic on canvas. 400.3 x 302.3 cm. Mizuma Art Gallery. Accessed 3 June

2021. https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/62997/Ryuki-Yamamoto-Chaos.

Figure 6

Miyazaki Yujiro (宮崎勇次郎, b. 1977). **Water Dragon**. Heisei period (1989-2019),

2011. Acrylic on canvas. 90.0 x 223.4 cm. Mizuma Art Gallery. Accessed 3 June 2021.

https://mizuma-art.co.jp/en/exhibitions/1301_look-east-japanese-contemporary-art/.

Figure 7

Amano Yoshitaka (天野喜孝 b. 1952). **DEVALOKA 1**. Heisei period (1989-2019),

2012. Automotive paint and acrylic on aluminum panel. 200 x 300 x 10 cm. Mizuma Art

Gallery. Accessed 3 June 2021. https://www.plotter.in.th/?p=6229.

Figure 8

Yamaguchi Akira (山口晃, b. 1969). **Tokyo Landscapes (*Tōkyō sansui-ga* 東京山水画)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2012. A pair of four-panel folding screens, sumi ink on canvas.162 x 342 cm. Work created with the support of Fondation d'entreprise Hermès. Nacása and Partners. Courtesy of Fondation d'entreprise Hermès. Courtesy Mizuma Art Gallery. https://www.hermes.com/jp/ja/story/maison-ginza/forum/120211/.
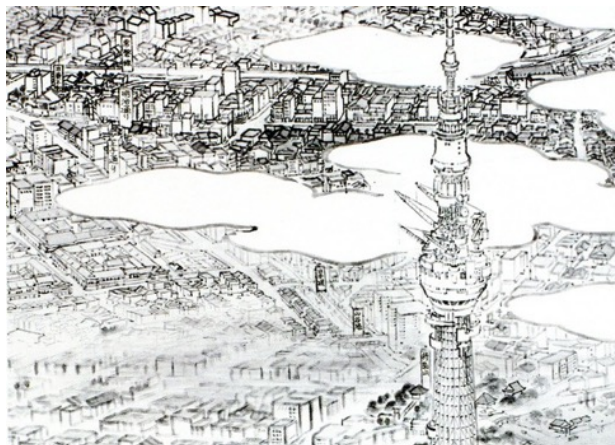

Figure 8a

Yamaguchi Akira. Yamaguchi's black outline and a close-up of the famous Tokyo Skytree. **Detail from Tokyo Landscapes**.

Figure 9

Aoshima Chiho (青島千穂, b. 1974). **Graveheads**, Installation of Print in Seattle Art Museum "*Rebirth of the World*." Heisei period (1989-2019), 2005. Archival pigment print. Number '3' from the edition of 6. sheet /flush-mount 37 x 375in (94 x 589.3cm). Accessed May 24, 2021. https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/26490/lot/135/.

Figure 10

Aida Makoto (会田誠, b. 1965). **Ash Color Mountains**. Heisei period (1989-2019),
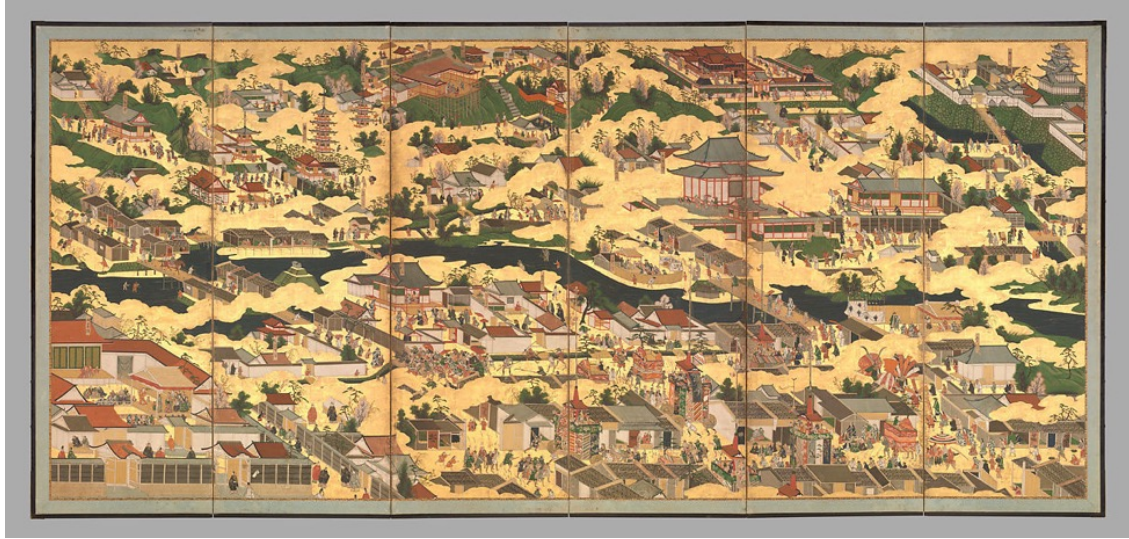2009-2011. canvas, acrylic. 300 x 700 cm. Taguchi Art Collection, Watanabe Atsushi.
https://taguchiartcollection.jp/en/works/tac115/.

Figure 11

Scenes in and around the Capital (*rakuchū rakugai-zu* 洛中洛外図屏風), Edo period (1615-1868), 17th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper. Overall (each): 66 15/16 in. x 12 ft. 3/16 in. (170 x 366.2 cm). Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation. Museum of Modern Art: 2015.300.106.1, .2.

Figure 12

Roger Shimomura (American, b. 1939). **American Guardian**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2008. Color lithograph. 27 x 38 7/8 in. Eugenie Mayer Bolz Endowment Fund purchase. Chazen Museum of Art: 2018.26i.

Figure 13

Yamaguchi Akira. **Mitate in the House: *Rakuchū Rakugaizu (*teinai mitate rakuchū-rakugai* 邸内見立洛中洛外図)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2007. Oil, watercolor, *sumi* ink on canvas. 80 x 130 cm. Private Collection. Yamaguchi, Akira. *Yamaguchi Akira: The Big Picture,* 11-12. Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2012.
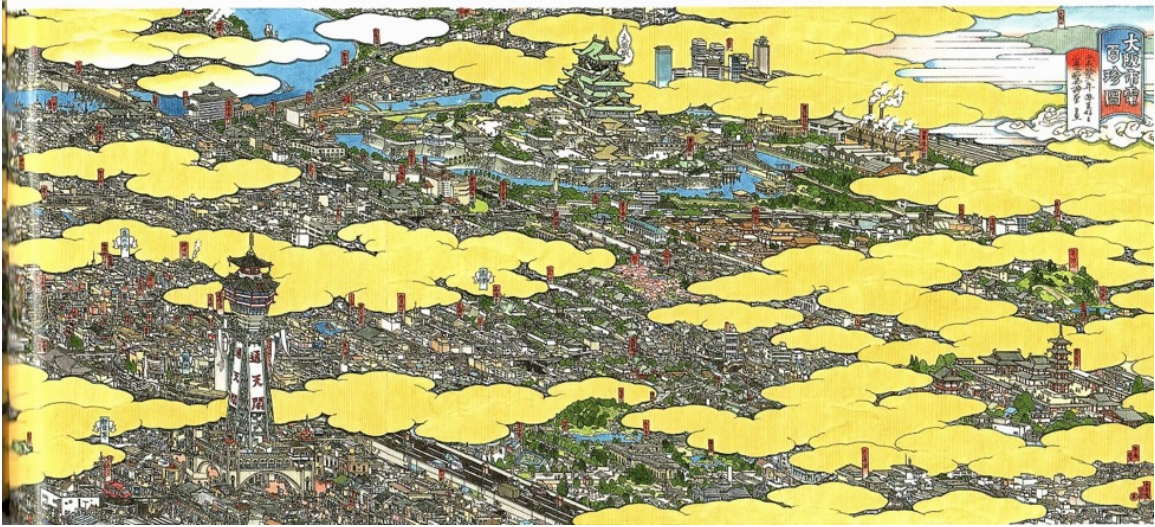
Figure 14

Yamaguchi Akira. **One Hundred Unusual Scenes of Osaka Trams (*Ōsaka shiden hyakuchin-en* 大阪市電百珍園)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2003. Pencil, watercolor on paper. 25 x 112.5 cm. Osaka Municipal Transportation. Fujiki, Rika, and Mami Hirose, eds. *The Art of Akira Yamaguchi* (*Yamaguchi Akira sakuhin-shū,* 山口晃作品集). Translated by Jun Yamazaki, Susan Schmidt, and Stephen Snyder, 58-59. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2004.

Figure 15

Shimomura Kanzan (下村寒山, 1873-1930). **Autumn Among Trees (*Konoma no aki* 木
の間の秋)**. Meiji period (1868-1912), 1907. Pair of two panel folding screens, ink, color
on paper. 169.5 x 169.6 cm. The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo: J00006.

Figure 16

Ikeda Manabu. **Rebirth (*Tanjō* 誕生)**. Heisei period (1989-2019), 2013-2016. pen, acrylic ink, and transparent watercolor on paper mounted on board. 300 x 400 cm. Collection of Saga Prefectural Art Museum. Digital Archive: Toppan Printing. Ikeda, *The Pen*, 10-11.

Figure 17

Schwen, Daniel. **El Castillo (pyramid of Kukulcán) in Chichén Itzá**. Yucatán, Mexico.

18 August 2009. Wikimedia Commons. Accessed 5 May 2021.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chichen_Itza_3.jpg#file.

Figure 18

Jōchō (定朝, d. 1057). *Amida Nyorai* **(阿弥陀如来)**, Heian period (794-1185), 1053. Wood sculpture covered with gold leaf on a polychrome with lotus pedestal, 2.94 meters tall. Located in Phoenix Hall (Hōōdō) of the Byōdō-in Temple, Uji, Japan. Accessed 18 May 2021. https://www.byodoin.or.jp/
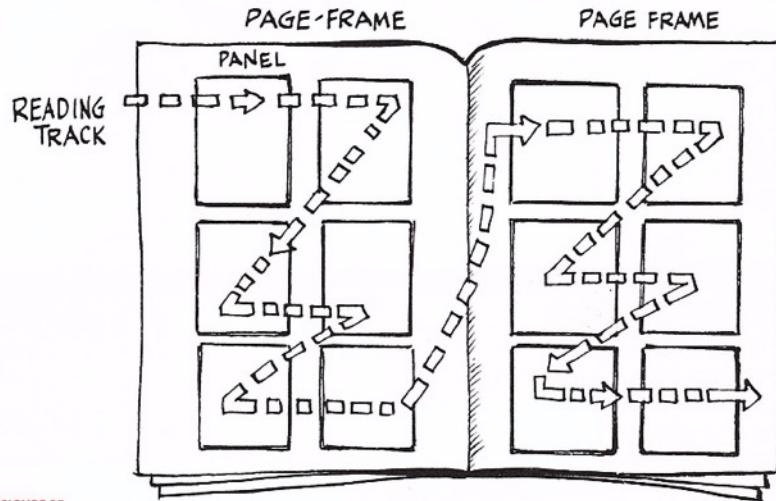
FIGURE 25

often glance at the last panel first. Nevertheless, the reader finally must return to the conventional pattern.

CREATING THE PANEL

In the main, the creation of the frame begins with the selection of the elements necessary to the narration, the choice of a perspective from which the reader is allowed to see them, and the determination of the portion of each symbol or element to be included in the frame. Each panel is thus executed with respect to design and composition, as well as its narrative consequence. Much of this is done with the emotion or intuitiveness embodied in the artist's "style." The understanding of the reader's visual literacy, however, is an intellectual matter. A very simple example of this

is shown in the "panelization" of a single figure (see FIGURE 26).

When the full figure is shown (A), no sophistication is required of the reader. The entire image is complete and intact. In panel (B) the reader is expected to understand that the figure shown has legs in proper proportion to the torso and that they are in a compatible position. In the close-up (C), the reader must supply the rest of the picture in conformity with what the physiology of the head suggests.

In a given series of panels wherein the frame encompasses only the head, a "visual dialogue" occurs between the reader and the artist which requires certain assumptions growing out of a common level of experience (see FIGURE 27).

Figure 19

This image is a reference to the typical comic book format. Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, 42. New York: Will Eisner Studios; W.W. Norton and Company, 2008.
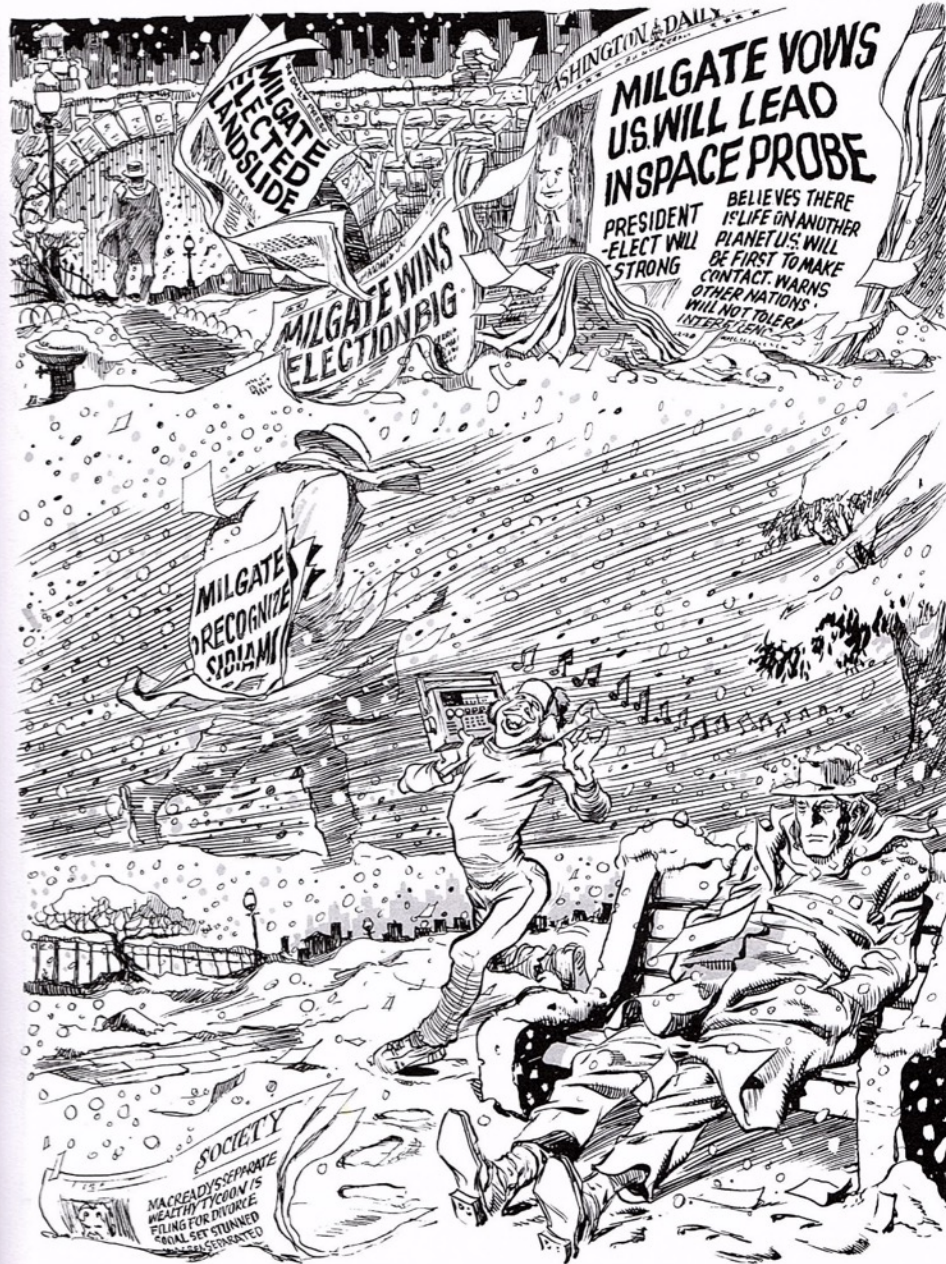
FIGURE 68: This last page I designed to be swallowed whole. That is, I hoped the reader would see and feel the entire page as a panel, then, steeped in the mood or message, read the newspapers, which give the action depth.

Figure 20

Example of *non-frames* within a *super panel*. Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art,* 81.

Figure 21

Hoa Hakananai'a ('lost or stolen friend'). Moai (ancestor figure). Cira 1200 C.E.. 242 x 96 x 47 cm. basalt (missing paint, coral eye sockets, and stone eyes). Likely made in Rano Kao, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), found in the ceremonial center Orongo. British Museum: Oc1869,1005.1.

Figure 22

Białek, Marcin. **Yungang Grottoes, Datong, China**. 23 July 2010. Wikimedia

Commons. Accessed 19 May 2021.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yungang11_2010.JPG.

Figure 23

Sanjay P. K. **Longmen Grottoes**. Tang Dynasty, 673–75 C.E. The Vairocana Buddha, monks and bodhisattvas of Fengxian cave, the largest Buddha statue at the Longmen Grottoes. Luoyang, Henan province, China. 25 September 2011. Kahn Academy (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0). Accessed 19 May 2021. https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/south-east-se-asia/china-art/a/longmen-caves-luoyang.

Figure 24

Example of a *bleed* (3rd panel in upper half of the page) within a comic book page. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art,* 103. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.
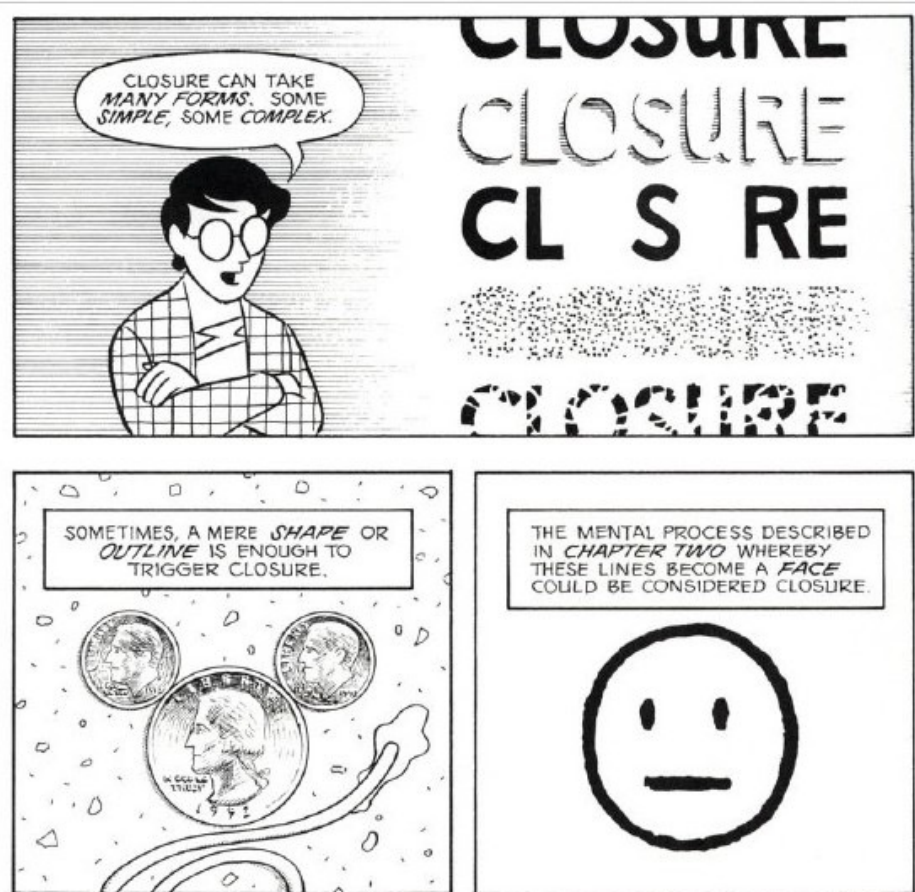
Figure 25

Mickey Mouse example: showing how three circular shapes, put together, with two small and one large can trigger closure. From personal experience with Disney this shape is iconic to Mickey Mouse. McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 64.

Figure 26

Coke bottle example: showing how on a shelf we only see half the bottle, but we know from experience that the bottle is round and our ability to connect to the two is closure. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 63.

Figure 27

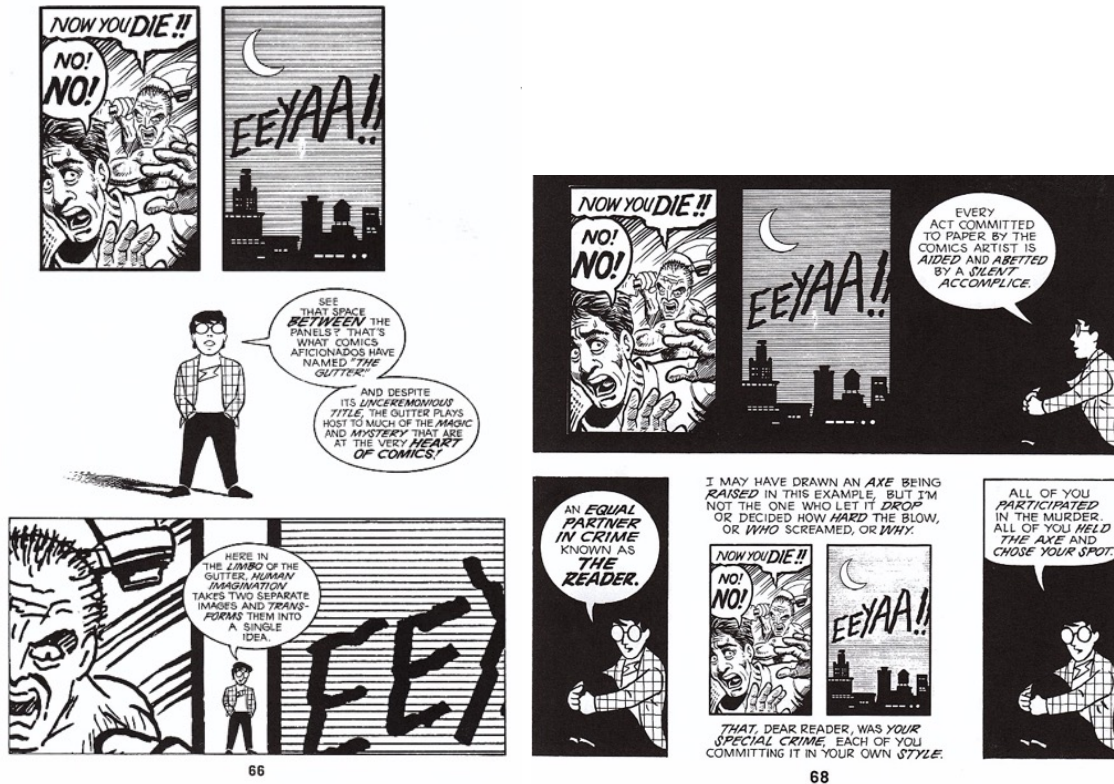Axe murder example: McCloud showing how in comic narrative tropes we intuitively assume that they know what happened between the two panels [the man saying "EEYA!!" was attack or killed by the man with the axe]. Closure is the viewer connecting these two scenes together and the gutter is where the viewer decides if the axe dropped, how hard the blow was, and why the man screamed. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 66-68.

Figure 28

Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川広重, 1797-1858). **In the Mountains of Izu Province from the series Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji (*Izu nosanchū* 伊豆の山中)**. Edo period (1615-1868), 1858. *Ukiyo-e* woodblock print in vertical ôban format, ink and color on paper. 13 3/8 x 8 1/2 in. (34 x 21.59 cm). The Joan Elizabeth Tanney Bequest. Los Angeles County Museum of Art: M.2006.136.359.

Figure 29

Ikeda Manabu. **Foretoken (*Yochō* 予兆)**, Heisei period (1989-2019), 2008. Pen, acrylic ink on paper, mounted on board. 190 x 340 cm. Collection of Kagura Salon. Manabu, *The Pen*, 30-31.

Figure 30

Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎, 1760–1849). **Under the Wave off Kanagawa (*Kanagawa oki nami ura* 神奈川沖浪裏), also known as The Great Wave, from the series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (*Fugaku sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景)**. Edo period (1615-1868), 1830-32. *Ukiyo-e* Woodblock print; ink and color on paper. 10 1/8 x 14 15/16 in. (25.7 x 37.9 cm). H. O. Havemeyer Collection. Museum of Modern Art: JP1847.

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