

JAPAN ART REVOLUTION

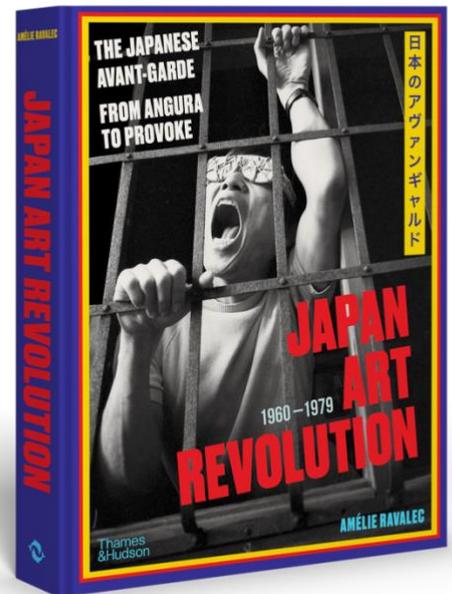
The Japanese Avant-Garde, from Angura to Provoke

AMÉLIE RAVALEC

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Amidst the profound social change and political turmoil of post-war Japan, a bold generation of avant-garde artists and photographers emerged in the 1960s, forever transforming the global art landscape.



1960s Japan was a time of profound social change, political unrest and student protests. The turbulent times of the post-war era inspired an artistic explosion in Japan, with the emergence of a revolutionary scene of avant-garde artists who pioneered many disciplines: experimental and erotic photography, 'Angura' theatre and underground street performances, apocalyptic Butoh dance, surreal illustrations and seminal graphic design. Japan Art Revolution is the first comprehensive overview of the post-war Japanese avant-garde artistic explosion to be published in English, combining first-hand accounts, critical analysis and creative insight on one of the most radical cultural movements of the 20th century.

Taking design cues from Japanese luminaries Yokoo Tadanori and Awazu Kiyoshi, Japan Art Revolution features over 600 captivating artworks, encompassing photographs, film stills, theatre posters and illustrations by visionary artists including Moriyama Daido, Hosoe Eikō, Araki Nobuyoshi, Ishiuchi Miyako, Tanaami Keiichi, Yokoo Tadanori, Hijikata Tatsumi, Ohno Kazuo, Terayama Shuji, Tenjo Sajiki, Kawada Kikuji, Neo-Dada Organizers, Hi-Red Center, Awazu Kiyoshi, Hanaga Mitsutoshi, Nakahira Takuma and Tanabe Santaro.

Drawing on extensive interviews with these iconic artists, this comprehensive publication offers readers a nuanced understanding of the thriving world of Japanese avant-garde art, complemented by insightful texts from esteemed experts, curators, academics and archivists.

***Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers*, a brand-new documentary directed by Amélie Ravalec will be premiering in theatres all over the world from April 2025. www.japanavantgarde.com**

Amélie Ravalec is a London-based Parisian film director, producer and colourist. She directed her first documentary, *Paris/Berlin: 20 Years of Underground Techno* (2012) at the age of sixteen. She went on to direct films on avant-garde, underground and experimental art and music – *Japanese Avant-Garde Pioneers* (2025), *Japan Visions* (2026), *Art & Mind* (2019), *Industrial Soundtrack for the Urban Decay* (2015). Her films have been shown at cinemas, festivals, museums and cultural institutions across fifty countries, and acquired by TV networks including ARTE, Sky Arts UK and ORF Austria. Her first work of narrative fiction, *Sumarsólstöður* (2025), expands her exploration of underground and avant-garde culture in a new cinematic form, and won ten awards at international festivals.

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In the flattened cultural landscape of post-war Japan, where high art and popular entertainment collided to form a new avant-garde, posters gained currency as an innovative medium for the dissemination of ideas and information. With their intense colours and irreverent, often surreal iconography, the posters were designed to make an immediate impression on Tokyo's busy streets. They testify to an atmosphere of radical enthusiasm and creative liberty at this moment of political instability.

The boundaries between art, graphic design and illustration were relatively fluid in Japan at this time, and icons of the counterculture such as Yokoo Tadanori and Aquirax Uno rose to prominence with posters that explored the shared ground between these art forms.

The posters were designed to spread the word about underground performances and events that proliferated across Tokyo during the 1960s and '70s.

The angura scene, which encompassed experimental theatre, dance and film, attracted many artists who went on to participate in different aspects of production, including the creation of posters.

Yokoo Tadanori is perhaps the most widely recognized poster artist of his generation, and his Pop vision inspired long-term collaborations with some of the era's most famous artists, both in Japan and internationally.

Yokoo's early screen print posters combined media samples with the influence of traditional ukiyo-e woodblock prints, translated into Pop art's bold palette with an emphasis on graphic humour and explicit content.

LUCY FLEMING-BROWN

92 YOKOO TADANORI

横尾忠則 93

SAEKI TOSHIO

1945-2019

佐伯俊男

280 SAEKI TOSHIO

佐伯俊男 281

Image from Saeki Toshio, *Fukuro nocturnes* (2022).

Opposite (above, left and right): Images from Saeki Toshio, *Alive* (around 1970).

Opposite (below): Image from Saeki Toshio, *Fukuro nocturnes* (2022).

Overleaf: Satoshi Sakawa, Saeki Toshio, date and materials unknown.

'The possession of Ero is the fate of human beings. On the other side of Ero, a hint of death can be seen through. When I make my drawings, I have no hesitation or doubts to haul into this theme.'

