

Space by Arcs and Diagonals, or Gravity

by Hiroyuki Nakanishi

Chief Curator of the National Museum of Art, Osaka

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This essay makes consistent reference to 'Jiro Takamatsu: All Drawings': a catalogue raisonné of the artists' works on paper available through Daiwa Press.*

Earlier this year I curated Jiro Takamatsu's retrospective exhibition 'Jiro Takamatsu: Trajectory of Works' (April 7– July 5, 2015) at the National Museum of Art, Osaka. Stephen Friedman visited Japan and this exhibition. I heard that this experience became the opportunity to realize an exhibition in London featuring Jiro Takamatsu's 'Compound' series and 'Space in Two Dimensions' series, based on Chapter 6 of the exhibition entitled '1974-1976 Compound and Space in Two Dimensions.' Here I would like to clarify several important matters regarding Takamatsu's works of that time.

*

It is Jiro Takamatsu himself who named his series of artworks, 'Shadow,' 'Perspective,' 'Oneness' and so on. The mid-1970s has often been considered the era of the 'Compound' series. It is true that his solo exhibitions such as 'Oneness' (1971), 'Compound' (1976), and 'Space in Two Dimensions' (1978) were organized by the Tokyo Gallery, the main venue for Takamatsu to show his works. However, in parallel with the works exhibited at the gallery, Takamatsu had created drawings and book designs in the course of his daily studio practice which do not necessarily match his exhibition history. In fact during the years 1974-76, along with the 'Compound' series, he created the 'Space in Two Dimensions' series. To be precise, and following the actual chronology of his production, the series 'Space in Two Dimensions' started in 1970 and continued beyond Takamatsu's large-scale solo exhibition in 1978. As for the 'Compound' series, these works were produced from 1972 until the end of the 1970s. Here I would like to consider the main points of the early 'Space in Two Dimensions' series as it evolved from its origins through to the solo exhibition in 1978, which has not yet been discussed. As for the 'Compound' series, I will provide an account of the existing theories and give some supplementary explanations, but a more detailed consideration will have to wait for a later occasion.

*

The works in the series 'Space in Two Dimensions,' created from 1970 to around 1978, can be classified and understood as follows:

1 Works based on the fundamental form of a circle or a quarter of a donut-shape (1970-71)

In the drawings, the following three works can be characterized in this way:

Raisonné #1720¹

Raisonné #1265

Raisonné #1266.

As book designs, there are some examples, such as:

Table of contents of the magazine Fujinkouron [Woman's Public Opinion] (December 1970)

Cover of Taeko Tomioka's book Oka ni mukatte hito ha narabu [People line up towards the hill] (November 1971)

Cover of Tenpo Design [Store Design] (February 1971)

Cover of Tenpo Design [Store Design] (July 1971)

1. The Raisonné # refers to the work number published in 'Jiro Takamatsu All Drawings' (February 14, 2009, published by Daiwa Press).

Cover of Tenpo Design [Store Design] (October 1971)
Cover of Tenpo Design [Store Design] (December 1971)

These consist of a process of drawing the quarter-circles by placing the compass's needle on the corner of a square, and colouring the resulting surface. The defined field on the paper created by the arc suggests an expanse, which Takamatsu captured as 'space', therefore he named it 'Space in Two Dimensions'; or so I infer, and I believe this is right.

There are also notes by the artist, such as 'I remember that this is the first work of the same series' in Raisonné #1720, and 'such as space in two dimensions' in the Raisonné #1265 and #1266. It seems that these jottings were not made immediately after he produced these works, but the fact remains that Takamatsu himself characterized them as 'Space in Two Dimensions.'

In addition, these artworks have a shape that recalls LP discs, but it is not known whether there is a causal relationship between this recurring shape and the illustrations and related drawings later known as 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs).'

2 Illustration for 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' (1973-74)

Accompanying an article by the art critic Yusuke Nakahara, Jiro Takamatsu contributed illustrations from the 'Space in Two Dimensions', which first appeared in the magazine 'Sogetsu No.88' published in June 1973. In May 1974, with several illustrations replaced, it was published in a limited edition as 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)'. Ten kinds of illustrations were featured including the cover; in addition, ten of the original and possibly rejected drawings have survived (Raisonné #1910-1919).

2.1 Out of these ten drawings, the images for the front and back covers are drawings of small quarter-circular arcs made by centering the four corners of the vertical rectangle (these are not duplicates of the drawings, but rather prints). It is possible to conclude that these are based on the same idea as the works 1) listed above.

2.2 Two square drawings which were inserted before and after the main article of the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' are the images made by drawing two arcs from the corner of the square, and drawing the line (a diagonal line) which connects the intersection of the lines. Although the arc is an expression of the line that started in 1), the combination of the arc and the newly appeared diagonal line is one of the major methods for the ten kinds of expressions included in the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)', whose possibilities were continuously explored until Takamatsu's solo exhibition in 1978. Furthermore, in this square, you can see gridlines (three lines each, both vertical and horizontal; and there is a trace of what has been erased with an eraser), which function as the mark for the origin and the end of a line. As a result, the impression of an arbitrary placement of the line on the paper is avoided.

2.3 Regarding the ten types of images, apart from those discussed above, the following two types need to be noted.

The image established from two types of traces; the traces of grid and the traces of the arcs' intersection.

Raisonné #1916 (1973, Takamatsu No.633)²

The image based on the left half of the Raisonné #1916 was inserted on the first page of the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' chapter 3.

Expression of freehand wavy lines, by using the marks of regular intervals on a straight line.

There are two examples as follows:

The line appearing in the upper part of the work, which will be discussed in 3.1.

The last drawing in the main article of the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)'

The latter of these two types is reminiscent of the 'Wave' series and the 'Slack' series of the late 1960s, and both became the basis for the fundamental method of the 'Space in Two Dimensions' series until the early 1980s.

Thus, Takamatsu's illustrations in the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' continued his works of 1970-71 and at the same time they became the genesis for his later works.

3 Drawing, Painting, Book design (1975-78)

The period after the publication of 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' until the October 1978 exhibition was a time when a large number of works combining arcs and diagonal lines were first produced. Takamatsu continually made drawings and completed a number of paintings, and his solo exhibition was held. This technique was also used for book designs.

On the basis of the way he drew the lines, they can be classified as follows:

3.1 Drawing the quarter of an arc from one corner of the vertical rectangle, by using the short sides of it as a radius, and drawing the diagonal of the rectangle only to the inside of the circle. The works using this method can be regarded as the primary image of the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)', and the original also exists. Namely, Raisonné #1913 (1973, Takamatsu No.618).

Beyond this, only two similar works exist:

Raisonné #1275 (1975, Takamatsu No.645)

Raisonné #1848 (1976, Takamatsu No.712)

3.2 Drawing the quarter arc by making the short side of the rectangular a radius is the same as 3-1), but the diagonal from the center of the circle was drawn only outside of it. The works made by this method can be considered as rejected drawings of 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)', namely: Raisonné #1915 (1973, Takamatsu #623)

This is the first example of these works, and if we include similar cases, these would be:

Raisonné #1267 (circa 1974)

Raisonné #1273 (1975, Takamatsu No.629)

Raisonné #1274 (1975, Takamatsu No.639)

Raisonné #1852 (1975, Takamatsu No.640)

Raisonné #1277 (1975, Takamatsu No.660)

Raisonné #1725 (1976, Takamatsu No.669)

Raisonné #1733 (1976, Takamatsu No.671)

Raisonné #1856 (1976, Takamatsu No.673)

Raisonné #1284 (1976, Takamatsu No.674)

Raisonné #1860 (1976, Takamatsu No.695)

Raisonné #1882 (1977, Takamatsu No.772)

Raisonné #1869 (1977, Takamatsu No.776)

Raisonné #1777 (1977, Takamatsu No.785)

Raisonné #1410 (1977-78)

At that time in these drawings, Takamatsu did not draw all of the lines, such as the arc and the diagonal, so that not all of them are clearly readable from beginning to end. He sometimes drew the line in a way that there were only some parts visible between the starting point and the endpoint. Or, after drawing an entire line he erased parts of it, or even the whole of it. This is not meant to indicate a section surrounded by the line, but rather represents the search for the ideal method for achieving an area which is not fully divided; I believe this inference to be right. In addition, regarding 3-1) and 3-2), only the positions, which were the remainders of the diagonals of the rectangle, are different.

3.3 Drawing the quarter-circular arc by making the shorter side of the rectangle the radius, then drawing the diagonal of the rectangle from the center of the circle as in 3.1 and 3.2; in addition, drawing the arc by making the longer side of the rectangle the radius, then drawing a line connecting the intersection point of the arc and the longer side of the rectangle, and the center of the circle.

Together with 3.1, the works using this method are the main images in the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)'. The original does not exist. The images using the method of 3-3), through which many drawings were created, were also used for book covers several times, and were likewise exhibited in Takamatsu's 1978 solo exhibition.

2. Takamatsu wrote the serial numbers on the front or the back of his works such as paintings and drawings. Principally the number increases by time base, but only some works have these numbers, and it significantly lacks continuity, and it is peculiar. In this article, these numbers were described such as Takamatsu No. 633.

Below is a chronological summary:

Chapter title page of Gendaishi Techo [Modern Poetry Notebook] (October 1975)
Raisonné #1921 (1975, Takamatsu No.625): original drawing for the chapter title page of Gendaishi Techo [Modern Poetry Notebook](October 1975)
Raisonné #1279 (1975, Takamatsu No.626)
Raisonné #1724 (1975, Takamatsu No.628)
Raisonné #1726 (1976, Takamatsu No.654)
Raisonné #1855 (1976, Takamatsu No.663)
Raisonné #1291 (1976, Takamatsu No.665)
Raisonné #1844 (1976, Takamatsu No.707)
Raisonné #1847 (1976, Takamatsu No.711)
Cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (January 1977)
Raisonné #1861 (1976, Takamatsu No.719): study for the cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (January 1977)
Raisonné #1311 (1976): original image of the cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (January 1977)
Raisonné #1880 (1977, Takamatsu No.770)
Raisonné #1871 (1977, Takamatsu No.780)
Raisonné #1776 (1977, Takamatsu No.784)
Raisonné #1885 (1977, Takamatsu No.788)
Raisonné #1742 (1977)
Raisonné #1303 (1977)
Raisonné #1331 (1977)
Raisonné #1346 (circa 1977)
Cover of Kikan Geijyutu [Arts Quarterly] (Summer 1978) : original does not exist
'Space in Two Dimensions' (1978, acrylic and pencil on canvas, Takamatsu No.843)
Raisonné #1357 (circa 1978)
Raisonné #1372 (circa 1978)
Raisonné #1377 (circa 1978)
Raisonné #1378 (circa 1978)
Raisonné #1381 (circa 1978)
Cover of Aida Yuji's book Leader no Jyouken [Conditions of the Leader] (September 1979)
Raisonné #1944 (1979)
Raisonné #1945 (1979)
Raisonné #1229 (1970's)

- 3.4** An arc making the longer side of the rectangle its radius is drawn, as is the line which connects the intersecting point of the arc, the longer side of the rectangular, and the center of the circle. The works based on this method do not exist in the ten kinds of images in the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs).' Although they certainly do not exist, these are the images that erase 3-1) and 3-2) from 3-3); and if you erase two lines (arcs) from the colored drawing made by colored pencils that accompanied the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs),' which was published in a limited edition of 365 in May 1974, it will result in an identical image. The original picture is Raisonné #1917 (1974, Takamatsu No.617). The existing drawings using the method of 3-4) were only made after 1976, and these were included in his 1978 solo exhibition.

Below is a chronological summary:

Raisonné #1858 (1976, Takamatsu No.688)
Raisonné #1846 (1976, Takamatsu No.710)
Raisonné #1877 (1977, Takamatsu No.762)
Raisonné #1879 (1977, Takamatsu No.769)
Raisonné #1713 (1977, Takamatsu No.775)
Raisonné #1336 (circa 1977)
Raisonné #1409 (circa 1977-78)
Cover of Kikan Geijyutu [Arts Quarterly] (Fall 1978)

'Space in Two Dimensions' (1978, acrylic on canvas, Takamatsu No.842)
Raisonné #1371 (circa 1978)
and more.

The image of 3.4 is formed by the method of deduction. In comparison with the other works, the number of drawings is smaller, and one can conclude that their production possibly peaked in a later period, during 1977.

- 3.5** During the period 1975-78, in addition to the techniques used in combination with arcs and diagonals such as those referred to above, Takamatsu developed two methods: the method employing two kind of traces, such as the traces of a grid and the traces of intersecting arcs, and also the method of making freehand wavy lines by utilizing marks in regular intervals along a straight line, which were included in the 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs).'

The former technique, using the traces of a grid and the traces of intersecting arcs, was employed for the cover and the cardboard case of Michel Foucault's book Naissance de la prison. Surveiller et punir [Discipline and Punish] Japanese Edition (September 1976). The associated drawings are as follows:

Raisonné #1931 (1976, Takamatsu No.884): original for the cover
Raisonné #1928 (1976): study for the cover
Raisonné #1929 (1976): study for the case
Raisonné #1930 (1976): study for the case

In addition, the same method is used in the following drawings:

Raisonné #1862 (1977, Takamatsu No.809)
Raisonné #1745 (1977, Takamatsu No.810)
Raisonné #1309 (1977)
Raisonné #1320 (1977)
and so on.

Then, this form of expression based on strict rules, changed to one that employed a variety of lines, including the freehand wavy lines, which is the method of the latter technique. Take, for example, the following three works:

Cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (August 1977)
Raisonné #1926 (1977): original image of the cover of 'Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (August 1977)
Raisonné #1710 (1977)
Raisonné #1884 (1977)

In these works it seems as if a compass was used, and this weakens the sense of regular intervals in the line, such as what a grid would provide. Thereafter the works, which should be listed on this extension, show a stronger influence of this tendency. Moreover, this development is also deeply related to the 'Space in Two Dimensions' works following the solo exhibition in 1978, and this is something I would like to write about on another occasion.

- 3.6** Apart from the works listed above, the following should be listed:
Cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (October 1976)
Cover of Kenchiku Bunka [Architectural Culture] (November 1977)
Cover of Kikan Geijyutu [Arts Quarterly] (Winter 1978)
Chapter title page of Kikan Geijyutu [Arts Quarterly] (Winter 1978)
Chapter title page of Kikan Geijyutu [Arts Quarterly] (Summer 1978)
and more.

All of these works use a method that employs both arcs and diagonals, and moreover, the way of drawing the line is different from that of 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4. The common characteristic of these works is that there are generally not many associated drawings, and there is one which has only about three sheets. Nevertheless, there are also certainly some which were used for book designs, or took the form of paintings exhibited in the solo exhibition in 1978. In addition, the number of lines is four or more, and not less than three, which is not the case in the original forms of 3.1 and 3.2, nor the minimum one such as 3.4. I believe that it is right to conclude that these works belong to the group formed under the aegis of 3.3.

*

Regarding the 'Compound' series, I would like to introduce the interpretation of Yusuke Nakahara, the author of 'Record Ban Ucyuu Ron (Cosmology of LP Discs)' and also a sympathetic supporter of Jiro Takamatsu. According to Nakahara, 'Compound' is the first series in which Jiro Takamatsu uses many types of material, and the works address the relationship between the forms and textures of various materials. Moreover, on the basis of 'Compound,' we can see an interest in the relationship between matter and power (the earth's gravity or terrestrial gravitation), and this may be the principle underlying their composition.³

What we need to pay attention to, and what must be verified here, is whether the relationship between matter and force (gravity or terrestrial gravitation) is the true principle of the 'Compound' series. Consider, for example, the following three book designs:

Cover of Kikan Geijyutsu [Arts Quarterly] (Winter 1975)

Cover of Kikan Geijyutsu [Arts Quarterly] (Summer 1975)

Cover of Kikan Geijyutsu [Arts Quarterly] (Spring 1976)

If you look at these, you can understand that gravity functions as an invisible principle, without any difficulty. However, at the time of writing, how well did Nakahara see and know the Takamatsu's 'Compound' drawings? At that time, the drawings Raisonné had not yet been published, so it is highly likely that it was difficult to do scholarly work that could be done today. Anyhow, it may be necessary to accumulate reliable judgments with no easy answer.

*

To conclude, I must touch upon an unavoidable problem. It concerns the relationship between the 'Space in Two Dimensions' series and the 'Compound' series, which were continuously produced at the same time. We can determine that the problem is the same as that of 'Gravity,' so there needs to be a comprehensive judgment made through sufficient investigation. What is possible and meaningful now must be to introduce specific cases about the relationship between the two series.

First, in the drawing (Raisonné #1279) of the 'Space in Two Dimensions' series which is included in 3-3), there is a note, which says 'Complex Space in Two Dimensions.' Also, in this drawing, graph paper and tape were pasted. Moreover, there is a clearly readable line which was drawn from the starting point to the end point.

Another work to consider is the cover of the magazine *Graphication* (August 1975). This drawing for the book cover contains a cord, which suspends a piece of iron as a weight on the left side, and the trace of the weight, which swung almost like the pendulum of the wall clock, is marked in pencil on the paper, which functions as a support. This line seems like a 'Compound,' almost like an arc drawn by the compass. Furthermore, there are three similar drawings. These are:

Raisonné #966 (1975)

Raisonné #967 (1975)

Raisonné #968 (1975)

It is undoubtedly possible to draw a lot of meanings from these examples. However, both for each work and for these series as a whole, I believe we need more information in order to overcome what may be merely inferences, and so to issue reliable words.

Translated by Shinya Watanabe

3. I referred to the following publication: Yusuke Nakahara, 'Jiro Takamatsu and What You Cannot See' (Jiro Takamatsu – Focusing the three-dimensional works in the 1970s', 2000, Chiba City Museum of Art)