

A Brief Report of Research Conducted during the Fellowship

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Title of Research:

Technology, Tactility and Aestheticism in The Age of Modernism

Research Institution:

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Advisor:

Prof. Nancy Blake

Research Period:

From April 1st to September 22nd, 2011 (175 days)

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I had applied for a fellowship in order to finish my Ph.D dissertation, take the oral exam, and submit it to the Program of Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois. In this highly interdisciplinary project, I examined the discourse of touch in the age of Modernism with particular focus on D. H. Lawrence, Alfred Stieglitz, Walter Benjamin, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Crossing over works of literature, art, and philosophy in the early twentieth century, I argued that the sense of touch had a singular importance in the age of Modernism as an antithetical discourse to technological innovations. I decided to spend most of the fellowship period brushing up my thesis under the tutelage of my committee members including the chair of my dissertation, Prof. Nancy Blake.

At the time the fellowship period started, I had already written most of my dissertation. After revising the last chapter of my work in April and May, I spent rest of the time correcting grammatical errors and looking for incongruence in my arguments. I regularly met with my committee members and talked about things to do over the next few weeks. The library system at Illinois made my research easy and efficient; it never failed to find books and articles that I hoped to read. I also greatly owed the successful completion of my dissertation to friends at the university, who gave me various suggestions about my work. The quiet town of Champaign was an ideal place to read and write. Time passed quickly while I was busy organizing my research into a book length study.

The final defense took place on August 19th. I presented a summary of my dissertation using Powerpoint for three committees and for my dissertation director for thirty minutes, then had an hour-long session of questions and answers. Their questions were intellectually engaging, often revealing problems of my dissertation, of which I myself was quite unaware. After the completion of my defense, I did a format review and submitted my dissertation in its final form to the university on September 21st, just two days before my departure to Japan.

The next major project in the coming few years is to turn this dissertation into a book both in Japanese and in English. In order to achieve this, I will conduct further research on the issues that the dissertation could not fully discuss. In particular, I would like to reevaluate the importance of Stieglitz Circle. Critics such as Paul Rosenfeld and Waldo Frank in the Circle are worth reconsideration. I will examine its international importance by using the comparative method I acquired through my graduate study at Illinois.