

Japan

Yin and Yang Dreams



Yin and Yang—Balance

- Good and Bad
- Light and Dark
- Male and Female
- Positive and Negative



The one cannot exist without the other. Together they work in harmony.

Auspicious Dreams

Hatsuyume (初夢) is the first dream in the new year, which is January 1st since people stay up all night on New Year's Eve. It is considered to be particularly good luck to dream of **Mount Fuji**, a **hawk**, and an **eggplant**.



Theories

One theory suggests that this combination is lucky because Mount Fuji is Japan's highest mountain, the hawk is a clever and strong bird, and the word for eggplant (茄子 *nasu* or *nasubi*) suggests achieving something great (成す *nasu*). Another theory suggests that Mount Fuji, falconry, and early eggplants were favorites of the *shogun*.

Another explanation is that these are all “tall” or “high” things in Suruga—in the case of eggplants, meaning the high price of fine local specimens. Others have suggested that wordplay is involved with “Fuji” representing continued health into old age because it sounds like *fushi*, meaning “immortality.” Similarly, “hawk” is *taka*, which as a homophone for the word meaning “lofty” represents advancement in the world, and “eggplant,” or *nasu*, is a homophone for the word “accomplish.”

Dream Insurance

An associated custom is the placing of a *takarabune* picture under the pillow as a kind of insurance against inauspicious first dreams. The *takarabune* is the “treasure ship” on which the Seven Gods of Fortune are often depicted; having this image under your head as you slept was traditionally thought to boost your chances of having a good dream. If your dream was inauspicious, on the other hand, you could wash away the effects by simply throwing the picture into the river.

As added protection, the sail on the ship often included the word Baku.

初夢 (二四)

ちかきよの
とやの
わづら
ふなやめ

ふみ
ふね
おとの
よき
うさ



勝利八幡神社



Baku—The Nightmare Eater

Baku (貺 or 貺) are Japanese supernatural beings that are said to devour nightmares. According to legend, **they were created by the spare pieces that were left over when the gods finished creating all other animals.** They have a long history in Japanese folklore and art, and more recently have appeared in manga and anime.

In a 1791 Japanese wood-block illustration, a dream-destroying *baku* is depicted with an elephant's head, tusks, and trunk, with horns and tiger's claws. Other sources claim that the baku has a bear's body, an elephant's nose, a tiger's feet, an oxen tail, and rhinoceros eyes.



Striking a Balance

Legend has it that a person who wakes up from a bad dream can call out to *baku*. A child having a nightmare in Japan will wake up and repeat three times, "Baku-san, come eat my dream." The *baku* will come into the child's room and devour the bad dream, allowing the child to go back to sleep peacefully. **However, calling to the *baku* must be done sparingly, because if he remains hungry after eating one's nightmare, he may also devour their hopes and desires as well, leaving them to live an empty life.**



Notan

Perhaps no other form of Japanese art captures the essence of Yin and Yang better than Notan. Notan is a design element used for creating composition in art. The word Notan means dark versus light harmony. Traditionally, notan is made by cutting a black square of paper and pasting it on a white background. As with the baku, all the leftover pieces of paper are part of the design, in this case, creating mirror images. The goal is a balance of positive and negative space.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt_HZv0tNZk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_VfGleKOaA







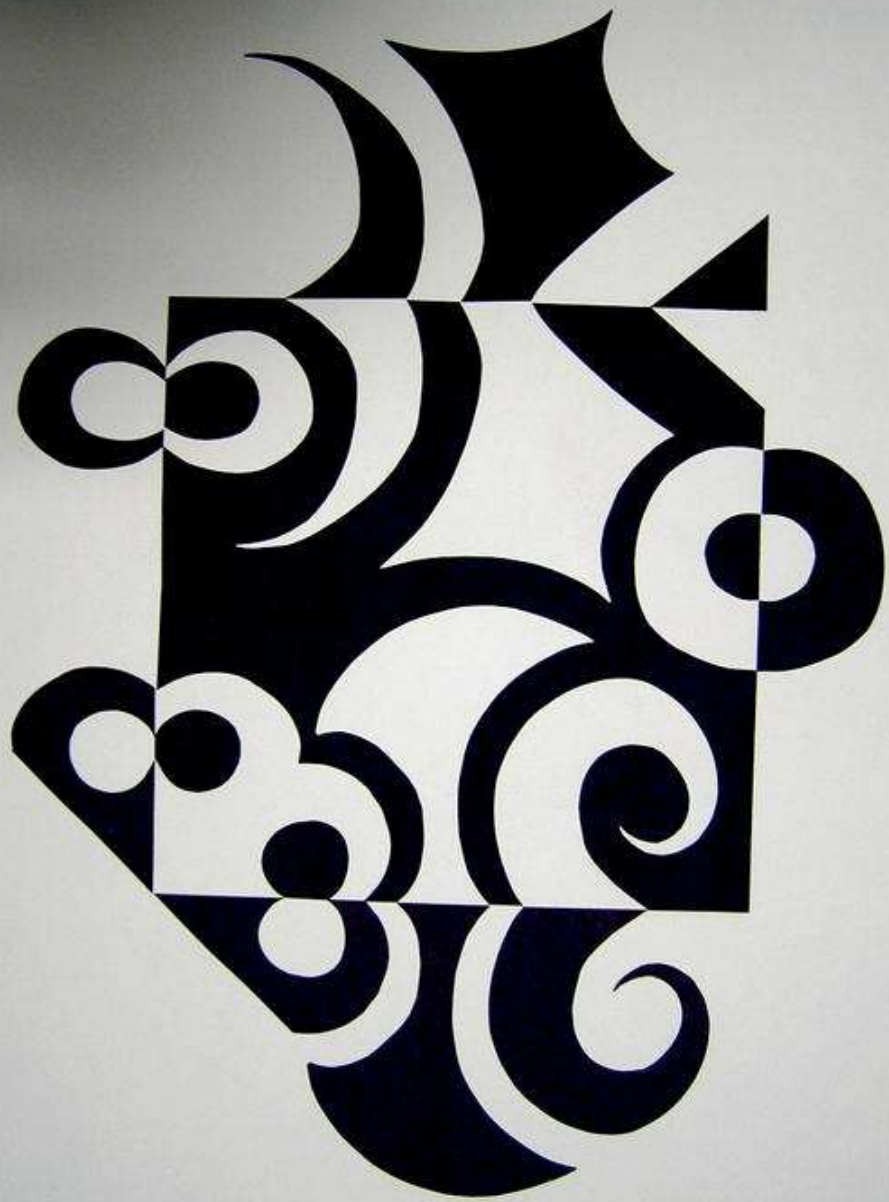
















Karla Eiro
2015



Kiyoshi Yamashita--Torn Paper Dreams

(1922–1971)



Kiyoshi Yamashita was a famous travelling artist in Japan. He was the subject of a motion picture in 1959 and a long running television series (1980-1997).

When Yamashita was three years old, he became very ill and as a result suffered some neurological damage. Bullied as a child because he was slow and spoke with a speech impediment he acted out and wounded a classmate with a knife. As a result of this incident his parents thought it would be better if Yamashita had a specialized environment for his education. They enrolled him in Yawata Gakuen (a school for the mentally disabled) and it was there that his artistic abilities flowered.

When Kiyoshi Yamashita turned eighteen in 1940, he ran away in order to avoid being examined for recruitment into the army. This begins the period of his wanderings which captivated the Japanese popular imagination. When he was 21, he was forced to submit to the army exam but was found to be unacceptable for service. He resumed his itinerant lifestyle returning now and again to his school or family home where he would create his famous pictures, which were composed entirely of pasted bits of torn of colored paper.

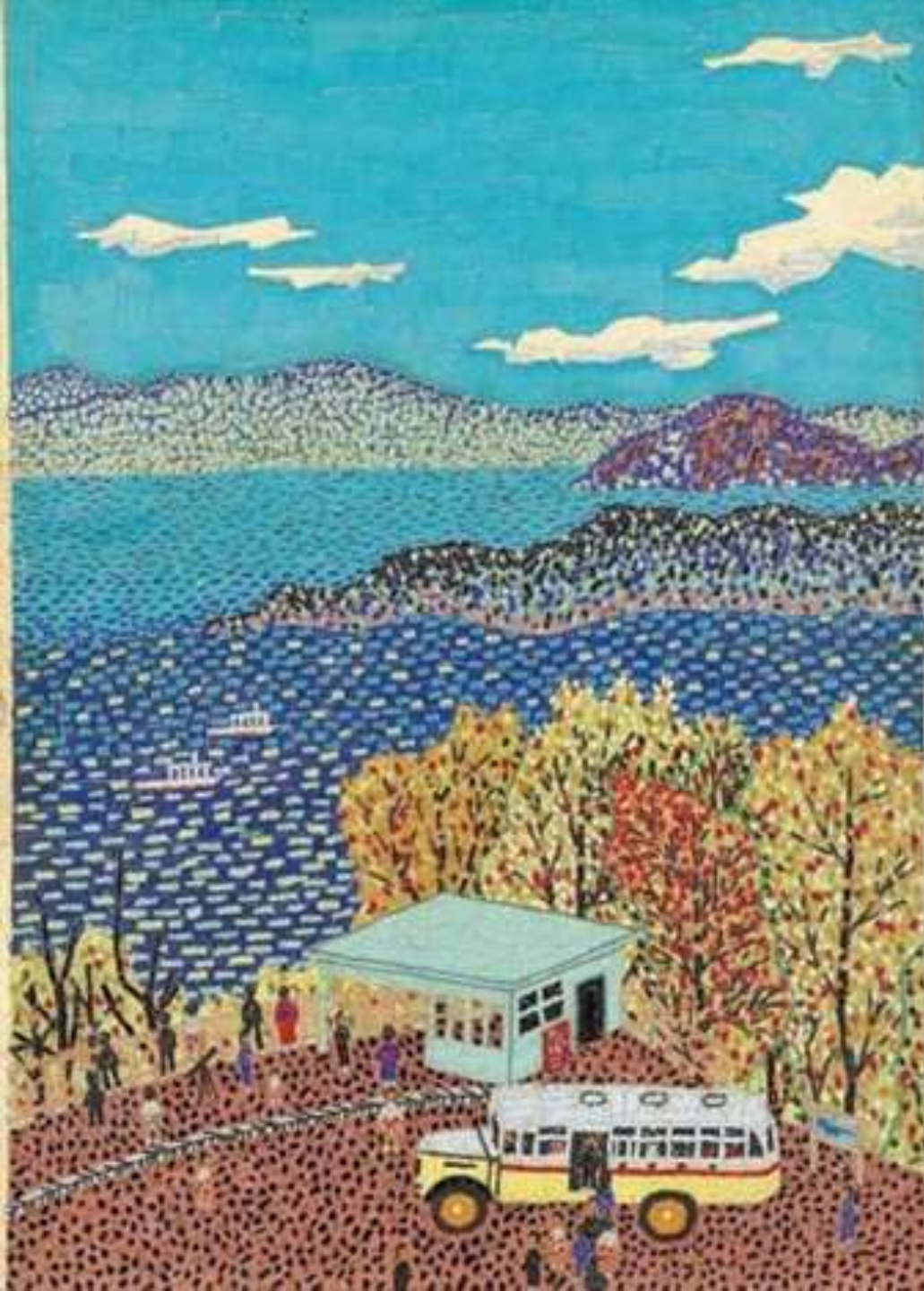
He was said to have an eidetic memory. He died of a cerebral aneurism at age 49.

Kiyoshi's Dream





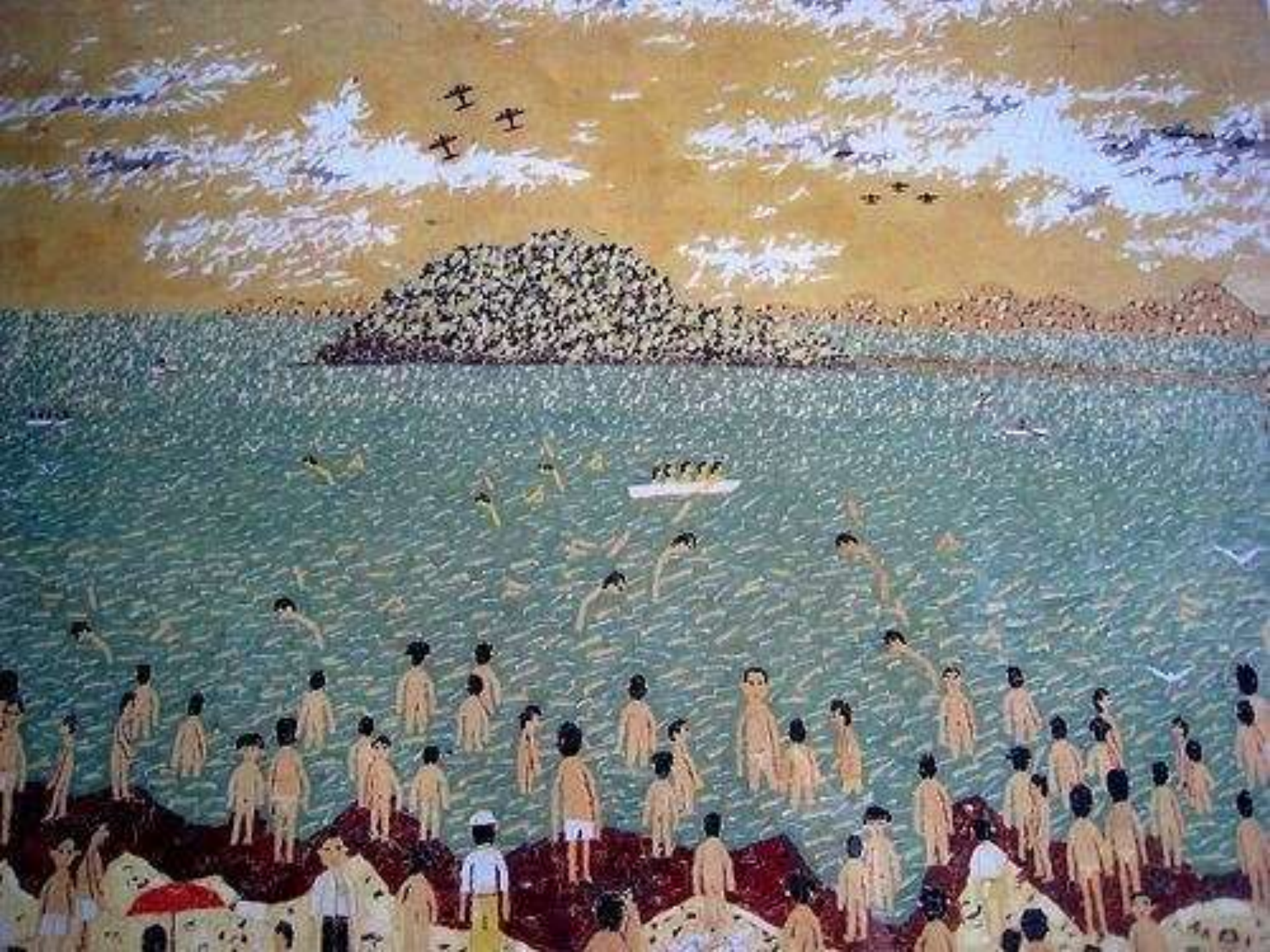




山下清

















おとなの「旅」の道案内

太陽の地図帖 013

昭和の日本列島を
下駄履き姿で、
放浪した
天才画家がいた。
彼の眼が見つけた、
懐かしい日本の風景を
探して――。

太陽

山下清の 放浪地図

昭和の日本をぶらりぶらり

監修 山下浩

子
小沢信男
都築響一
池内紀
西加奈子

平凡社



Assignment suggestions

- The Baku was made from leftover parts of other animals. Go through your junk drawer and create a still life or assemblage of some of its contents.
- Create a Notan based on a dream (good and/or bad).
- Create a torn-paper collage.