

KISA KAWAKAMI PLUS MINUS BOX text by Alvin Boyarsky, Richard Rogers and David Gray Architectural Association

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INTRODUCTION

The 'mid-Atlantic' type is well known: at his happiest one hour out of Heathrow Airport, but happiest still to return to the peace and calm of London - a curious, *laissez-faire* metropolis with a laugh and sometimes notorious expatriate population. But what of that much rarer 'mid-Himalayan' species, with his deep cultural imprint balanced by a hard-won independence?

Kisa Kawakami has been in London since the summer of 1971, enjoying his new-found freedom, participating with calm good sense in the muted social programme of a central London local authority architects' department, and savouring the maverick characters, the continental proximities and, dare I say it, such off-beat metropolitan institutions as the Architectural Association School where he has taught since 1982. Perhaps the all-pervading softness and pragmatism prompted his original nocturnal experiments which resulted in a sensational exhibition at the Architectural Association in the autumn of 1981. For many, the meticulous and elegant paper sculptures, formed by cutting and folding miniaturised gridded fields, refocused attention on the potential and continued relevance of the Modernist avant-garde enterprise. The pleasures of anonymity and restraint, the value of a pure concept, and in particular the imperviousness of the grid to language - its anti-referential character, its hostility to narrative, incident and hierarchy - came as welcome relief in the Post-Modernist atmosphere of hot imagery and pastiche which was characteristic of the early 1980s.

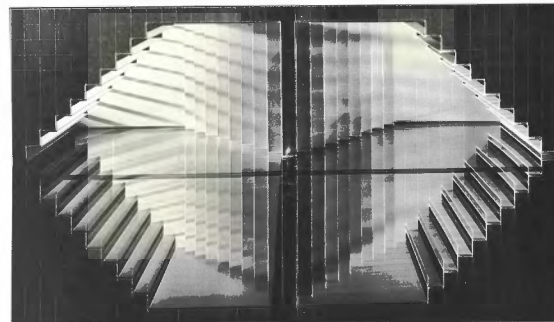
In his more recent work Kisa Kawakami has avoided the trap of endless repetition and, in a language created by cutting, folding, sewing and weaving, set within a resolutely frontal gridded plane, he has achieved a wealth of synonymous forms and continuous surfaces - at once transparent and opaque, reflective and responsive to shifting gradients of light. The work abounds in visual metaphors of nature - geological structures, sun reflected on water, the structure of matter, etc.

Kisa Kawakami, in resolving his expatriate predicament, has unintentionally provided us with a polemical body of work descended from the spiritual, non-objective world of Mondrian and Malevitch and has taken up a place alongside such American contemporary abstractionists as Carl Andre, Sol Lewitt and Peter Eisenman.

It is a great pleasure therefore to introduce this catalogue, as part of the growing list of publications designed to represent the original work shown in Bedford Square and, in this case, also to be seen in Tokyo and Osaka before returning to London.

Alvin Boyarsky

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