
Tada Minami's *Epicycle*

UTSUMI Junya

Tada Minami's two piece *Epicycle* (1968, fig. 1) sculpture was shown at the Artizon Museum for the first time during the *Selections for the Ishibashi Foundation Collection* exhibition held at the Museum's 4th floor gallery from September 9th to November 19th 2023. Tada is known for transparent or mirror finish sculptures she has been creating since the early 1960s, constructed of materials such as acrylic, aluminum, and glass, her spatial lighting sculptures¹ and fixtures and architecturally integrated wall sculptures. She participated in a wide range of activities, including open-air contemporary sculpture exhibitions, common in Japan from the 1960s in Ube and Kobe, and permanent installations in museums, hotels, public spaces, city halls, commercial buildings, and theaters.

Several of Tada's works can be found in the vicinity of the Artizon Museum. Her hanging sculpture *Kei* is installed at the Burex Kyobashi Building,² along with the sculpture *Yo* and the relief *Ultra Time and Space*, all three completed in 2002. Moving on to Ginza, we encounter *Façade Design* (1974) at the Lee Building,³ and at the Imperial Hotel, the illuminated wall *Dawn* (1970) and Lighting Sculpture *Iridescent Clouds* (2008).⁴ The sculpture *Chiaroscuro* (1979) is installed in the outdoor space in front of the entrance of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, at Takebashi. At the New Imperial Palace, though not readily accessible to the public, are *Light Formation* (1968), a chandelier, and garden lamps. Tada's *Epicycle* (1968), displayed at the Artizon Museum, was created in the same year as her major work for the New Imperial Palace. It was acquired by the Ishibashi Foundation on August 1, 1995, under custodianship of the Ishibashi Museum of Art (now, Kurume City Art Museum) until transfer to the Artizon Museum in March 2016, at the time of preparations for the Museum's new building construction. Details of this work's exhibition history will be described below.

We conducted a new condition survey in conjunction with the *Selections for the Ishibashi Foundation Collection* exhibition, and determined that *Epicycle* could benefit from reinforcement and repair. The repair was carried out over four days from July 18–21, 2023. In advance of carrying out restoration, our literature research and investigation of the sculpture's exhibition history confirmed that the work had been shown four times in exhibitions organized by the Ishibashi Museum of Art⁵ and was frequently included in Tada's solo exhibitions at different sites between the 1980s and 2000s. Other than that, there was not much information to be found, except that the work was first exhibited in the year it was created at the *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* exhibition from December 16, 1968 to January 26, 1969 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London and in

March 1969 for an unknown duration at The Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada.

What type of work is *Epicycle* and what place does it occupy in Tada's career as an artist? We will explore such questions while reviewing our structural discoveries during restoration, the exhibition history and, in light of our research of the literature and interviews, the development of other works in the same series.

1968 and Minami Tada's Art

Minami Tada was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 1924. She moved with her family at the age of four to Gyeongsong (now, Seoul) where her father, an engineer in the iron mining industry, was transferred. She has noted that she started drawing at a very early age and, thanks to her father's work, had often been able to observe craftsmen at work. She learned about color from her mother, a graduate of Joshibi University of Art and design. She also recalled cutting and assembling scraps her older sister discarded from children's books of paper cutouts and suggested that could have ignited her interest in sculpture.⁶ Tada was also early on attracted to sunsets, stars and celestial bodies, and objects with shiny or metallic surfaces such as warships and airplanes. She was stimulated visually by these, but also drawn to the scientific background, and wanted to understand the underlying scientific principles. Tada said the basis of her later approach to modeling developed during this period.⁷ She entered the oil painting department of Joshibi University of Art and Design in 1941 and spent several years in Tokyo. As the war situation developed, she managed to graduate early to return to Gyeongsong. Continuing oil painting, she exhibited in the Nika exhibitions, but transitioned in 1957 from painting to three-dimensional works, mainly in bronze and iron from 1958 to around 1962 when she established Minami Tada Associates, still operating in Sugunami, Tokyo. In parallel with three-dimensional works, she extended the scope of her work to production of lighting sculptures for architectural spaces.

With the exception of *Frequency 373004MC* (Taiwan) produced in 2001, Tada's *Frequency* series was created mainly in the 1960s. The sculptures consist of heat molded acrylic sheets formed into slightly distorted hemispherical shapes with mirror finish surfaces fixed with aluminum vaporific coating. Using and giving shape to the then-new materials, Tada's sculptures drew the attention of contemporary artists and critics alike. In 1968, the production of three-dimensional works and lighting architecture-related works (light sculptures) Tada had been

doing since the early 1960s accelerated in pace. In 1972, she received Shinchosha's 4th Japanese Arts Award Grand Prix. Architect Hayashi Shoji commented in a special issue of the journal *Geijutsu Shincho* commemorating the award, as follows: "She may have dabbled in design but not immersed in it. The stage of 'search and destroy the enemy' or of being like a 'migrant worker' ended when Tada confidently presented her *Laputan* and *Epicycle* sculptures, shattering accepted notions of the duality/opposition of design and fine art."⁸ The *Laputan* sculptures referred to are *Laputan No. 1*, created for Osaka EXPO '70 (whereabouts unknown, fig. 2) and *Laputan No. 2*, (whereabouts unknown, fig. 3), both produced in 1968. The latter won the Special Prize of Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum's 8th Tokyo Biennale (May 10–30, 1968). The series title, *Laputan*, refers to the fictional island and its inhabitants presented in Johnathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; the 1986 Ghibli film *LAPUTA: Castle in the Sky* is also a reference to Swift. The meaning may be "fanciful" or "dreamy." What Tada had in mind is not certain but, seeing the spherical shape of the two works, and considering the late 1950s background of the space race between the US and the USSR and the first Moon landing in 1969, it is possible that Tada may have been thinking more positively of a reference to the universe.

Architect Hayashi Shoji mentioned *Epicycle*, the subject of this paper and also produced in 1968, along with *Laputan*. There are two other works in the series, *Epicycle No. 2* (1970) and *Epicycle No. 3* (1980). The series name "Epicycle" has to do with ideas of planetary orbits and the motion of celestial bodies in ancient Greek astronomy. It indicates the path of a small circle, or planet, the center point of which moves around the circumference of a larger one. (fig. 4). The earth is positioned at the center or a point slightly off the center, since the movement of the sun seen from the ground changes throughout the year. Each planet follows the orbit of the secondary circle. The figure, or curve, traced by the orbit of the secondary circle around what it rotates is called an "epitrochoid." In short, it is a regularly moving circle that revolves around a fixed circumference. The common element in the three sculptures of the *Epicycle* series is a circular form and a certain relationship with the viewer that is subject to change. For Hayashi, both the *Epicycle* series and the *Laputan* series represent a turning point for Tada where she forms her childhood interest in celestial bodies into art. Her works after this continue to include terms such as "space" or "outer space," etc. and "poles," suggesting a celestial scale. In 1968, in addition to the three-dimensional works exhibited indoors, she began her work for the New Imperial Palace and also participated in the Kobe City Suma Rikyu Park Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition (that she would continue through the 7th iteration in 1980). 1968 also marked the beginning of a dramatic increase in the number of Tada's outdoor works.

1968 Japanese Contemporary Art Scene

Looking back on the situation of contemporary art in Japan in 1968, the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition that engendered the Anti-Art and Neo-Dadaism in Japan ended in 1963 and the *Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art* exhibition, though not a replacement, began that same year, and was held annually at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto until 1970. Each

year, the introductory text noted a shift beginning in the 1960s, with types of expression and materials departing from the traditional frameworks of painting and sculpture. In order to present current art scene trends, the Museum dispensed with fixed categories for contemporary art.⁹ Art journal *Bijutsu Techo* at this time published a special feature with critics Nakahara Yusuke, Tono Yoshiaki, and artist Yamaguchi Katsuhiro discussed 'Environment Art,' 'Light Art,' 'Kinetic Art,' 'Computer Art,' and 'Happenings' in opposition to artworks described by certain 'isms.' Until then, Japanese art had followed Europe and the United States, but in these new fields, Japanese artists were crossing the oceans and producing contemporary art simultaneously with American and European counterparts. Many exhibitions, in preparation for Expo '70 Osaka, presented artists together with architects, engineers, and musicians. Environmental Art and Light Art formed another major trend, linked to new materials and technology apart from conventional art criticism. For example, exhibitions such as *From Space to Environment* at the Matsuya Ginza Department store (8F gallery, November 11–16, 1966), the *4th Nagaoka Contemporary Art Museum Award Exhibition* (1967, Nagaoka Museum of Contemporary Art), *Contemporary Space '68: Lights and Environment* (Kobe Sogo Department Store, 1968), 8th Tokyo Biennale (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1968), Glass Formation Exhibition *Trans-flection in Space* (1969, Nippon Sheet Glass Co. Ltd., Osaka), *Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition* (National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, August 15, 1958 – September 22, 1968), *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* (ICA London, December 15, 1968 – January 26, 1969 and Vancouver Art Gallery, 1969) drew attention, with exhibiting artists such as Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, Tanaka Shintaro, Yoshida Minoru, Miyawaki Aiko, Ito Takamichi, and Yoshimura Masunobu. Tada Minami exhibited at five of these seven exhibitions. While other artists created works that included fluorescent lights and luminous materials, Tada only created *Epicycle* that used lights and luminescent materials as materials and emits by itself rather than reflects light. In 1969, one year after creating *Epicycle*, she expressed her thoughts on "lighting" as follows:

We have become accustomed to the word "lighting" but are sometimes faced with an illusion of what it really is. Our meaning of lighting has to do with the control of light, not the act of illuminating. Light is an architectural component; we think of it as a non-physical material that permits realization of a spatial environment. The environment created by light has no boundaries to be broken. Light changes and characterizes space. As a material, light includes natural and artificial light, as well as time that takes change in both natural and artificial light into account. In terms of lighting design, lighting fixtures and chandeliers are simply mediums of light design.¹⁰

Tada's sculptures have no need for a light source not just because she simultaneously created lighting fixtures. Rather than 'luminescence' itself, or 'illumination,' what is important for Tada in the handling and modeling of light as a material is control of artificial and natural light and changes brought about by time. To clarify this, it is useful to make a comparison with Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, an artist who exhibited along with

Tada in almost all of the above-mentioned exhibitions and who has left behind a number of essays. A conversation between Yamaguchi and art critic Okada Takahiro on the relation of new materials to new forms was published in *Bijutsu Techo* in June 1968. Yamaguchi mentioned that the introduction of iron as a material fundamentally changed the way sculpture existed in space, different from sculptures made of bronze or marble that required carving and trimming to create a sense of volume, whereas iron involved welding, connecting. The transparent plastic materials that began to appear in the 1960s had revolutionary potential. The following rather long passage where Yamaguchi describes his thoughts on how materials, including light, affect sculpture, is of interest:

In describing production methods, form seems to take precedence in importance over material that is seen to have a subordinate role. However, when the artist expresses his personal image in aiming for something universal, the materials themselves have expressive effects – such as the polished surface of steel or the transparency of plastic. This particular quality is inseparable from the artist's image.¹¹

Sculptures have traditionally been viewed with external light reflecting on their surface. In the case of plastic, however, we can see transmitted light passing through the sculptures. The material itself carries the light. That is new.¹²

Plastics, particularly transparent materials such as acrylic, transmit light very well. The same is true for glass, of course. Transparency is an element of plastic as a material. Light can pass through, and if the surface is flat and polished, it will reflect light. From the perspective of light, these are the two elements. For Tada Minami, like Naum Gabo, it is the material that carries the light, rather than the lighting apparatus. Tada uses plastic as the most suitable material for controlling light. Gabo also used plastic in figurative ways as most suitable for expressing the dynamic temporal and spatial aspects of light. Sculptors have always been conscious of creating forms. They tried to carve a shape out of a block of stone or wood. The use of plastic is a very different concept from that.¹³

Yamaguchi's recognition of the function of the material as a "transporter of light" seems to substantially go along with Tada's but, from the mid-60s onward, unlike Tada, his works include a source of transmitted light. Why? The difference can be seen in the "Capturing Light" section of the *Weavers of Worlds: a Century of Flux in Japanese Modern/Contemporary Art* exhibition, held from March 29, 2019 to June 15, 2019 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. In this exhibition, the two artists were selected and introduced in the same space as artists who "capture the light" and who were typical of the time. Reference was made to the 1966 *From Space to Environment* exhibition:

Tada Minami (1924–2014), had become interested in light as an oil painter in the 1950s, and had exhibited a painting entitled *Transformer Substation* in the "Nika Art Exhibition." Both Yamaguchi and Tada endeavored to capture light itself, in an exceedingly simple composition. Their sculptures, which gained momentum from the mid 1960s, employed

not one but rather multiple components that wrapped around the environment. Instead of viewing them from stationary position, viewers moved about observing them from all angles.¹⁴

While recognizing similarities in the two artists' works, as seen in the 2019 exhibition, we call attention to the differences, starting with the texts by poet Ooka Makoto who followed Tada's work from early on:

The danger in the notion of light as art is perhaps the temptation to *show light*. In showing light, there is a tendency to limit to a human-scale measurement. Rather than *seeing light*, we *see through* light or we *feel* light....Tada Minami seems to have an innate sense for avoiding that kind of trap. Many of her sculptures, such as her *Frequency* series where high quality vaporized aluminum is applied on an acrylic sphere, creating a mirror surface, as well as lighting sculptures that are themselves sources of light, neither reflect nor emit light or give the impression of *trying to display* light.¹⁵ (emphasis in original)

Whether or not an artist recognizes that light captured and made visible by human hands is in fact but a glimpse into the vast invisible world of light will determine the quality of the artist's work, its specific form and function. If successful, the light formed by human hands does not need in itself to be large-scale. What is essential is the light of the world, not of the human eye. The key is not to present light but rather to absorb the vast sphere of invisible light in the surroundings and to let people sense the enormous presence of light.¹⁶

While Yamaguchi and Tada share the idea of plastic as a "carrier of light," Tada rarely created sculptures that included a light source. This seems to be because her approach toward light was that it not only enables visual perception but that it must also give a sense of the "invisible world of light." It is also true that light that is too strong renders certain materials and forms invisible. For Tada, "light" has a material as well as ontological effect on the body. She described her experience of this:

Walking down the street one night, I was enveloped in a thick fog. I could hardly see and I felt trapped and entirely alone. It became difficult for me to balance, so I stopped walking for a while and enjoyed this mysterious space. Walking in the dark, humans go in circles, not straight lines. Even a faint light, however, can act as a guide allowing one to walk in a straight line again. I heard that the greatest problem astronauts experience during spaceflight is loneliness. The absence of light is the greatest human fear. Everything, all space and objects, is realized through light.¹⁷

Lighting sculptures may have had no alternative to using transparent materials, but sculptures that rely primarily on reflected light introduced movement, rejecting a fixed perspective or viewpoint, and incorporated the external environment. In a note on the *Frequency* series, Ooka writes, "The essence of the work lies in the swift changes of images on its surface. It has the property of being able to escape the fixed

limitations of a work of art. It is a hemispherical object made of acrylic and aluminum but it is the sum total of fleeting images dancing on it, and in that respect it escapes the fixed limitations of a work of art. [...] There is a natural play of scientific products, and also a flirtation with nature.”¹⁸ Critic Hijikata Teiichi, then Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura also evaluates the operation of reflected light in Tada’s works, “The mirror surfaces are not flat; they are calculated to be slightly uneven to freely refract and reflect the surrounding environment. When the environment shifts, the reflection also shifts. The transaction is always clever and never frivolous.”¹⁹ The two esteemed critics praise the uneven mirror surfaces of the *Frequency* series highly. One wonders if they would view Tada’s *Epicycle* series, with the smoothest and most gentle curves of all of Tada’s works, in the same way.

History of *Epicycle*

Before presenting an analysis of *Epicycle*, we will briefly review its exhibition history. In 1995, the Bridgestone Corporation submitted a “Relief Donation” request to the Ishibashi Foundation. It stated, “We purchased the work in 1970 for display in our head office showroom. As we are, however, not equipped to store and manage it, we have decided, in the interest of the artist and the work itself, that it would be best to donate it and have it in the possession of the Ishibashi Foundation.” The work had already been “entrusted” to the care of the Ishibashi Foundation before this request, and the ledger shows that on June 9, 1989 it was “accepted” by the Ishibashi Foundation. The Ishibashi Museum of Art managed the work and donated it in 1995 to become part of the Foundation’s collection. In other words, Bridgestone Corporation (Bridgestone Tire Co., Ltd. at the time) purchased the work in 1970 and deposited it with the Ishibashi Foundation in 1989. The Ishibashi Museum of Art managed the work after that, and accepted the donation in 1995, when it became part of the Foundation’s collection. This chronology resolves discrepancies in notation of *Epicycle* in previous Tada Minami’s exhibition catalogues.²⁰

Display at the Bridgestone Showroom

Bridgestone Corporation may have made the subject of their letter “Relief Donation” because of records of display at the Bridgestone Showroom in the early 1970s²¹ (fig. 5). The photo was provided by the Minami Tada Associates during the research for this report represents new information for the Ishibashi Foundation. Further, this is a rather new (or neglected) record that was only first listed in the chronology of a Hakone Open-Air Museum of Art solo exhibition catalog from 2009, supervised by Minami Tada Associates. The reason the record of display at the Bridgestone Showroom broadly lists “early 1970s” is that the photograph was stored as a slide in a file labeled “1974” and, according to the donation request, the work was purchased for display in the Showroom. There is, therefore, no doubt that the photo must have been taken after 1970. In addition, the fact that *Frequency FL-10-6874* (1968, 247 × 273cm (× 2), stainless steel, mirror glass, owned by Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Art)²² was displayed with *Epicycle* also offers a hint regarding the Bridgestone Showroom exhibition period. The work was created

for the 1968 *Japan Sheet Glass Sculpture exhibition* (Osaka).²³ It was exhibited in the *Contemporary Sculpture Symposium Exhibition — Sculpture in the Environment* exhibition (October 1 – October 17, 1974) at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Art, after which it was acquired and positioned at the building. It is therefore assumed that the installation seen in Fig. 5 dates from sometime between 1970 and the end of September 1974. The “BS” logo (known as the ‘keystone’ logo) above the words ‘Bridgestone Showroom’ on the doorway at the right side of the photo remains a questionable element for confirmation of 1974. Bridgestone Tire changed the “BS” font to sans serif in June 1973 when the company remodeled the building exterior. To distinguish, we can observe whether the top and bottom corners of the “S” are straight or slanted. If the logo is serif font – i.e. pre-change, then the photo would date from prior to June 1973.²⁴ Also, the tires installed at both ends of the window (and on the right side of the Showroom entrance) appear to have an outside diameter of approximately 3 meters (comparing to the sculpture). If the tire is the “40.00-57 60PR R-LUG X,” the world’s largest tire at the time (3.6m OD, 1.1m width, 3.3t weight), this tire, first manufactured in July 1971, would only have been exhibited after July 1971. It would have been natural to display this large tire in the window of Bridgestone headquarters. It was displayed in front of the Ginza Sony Building as “Gulliver’s Tire,” along with a giant balloon doll that stood four stories high.²⁵ Bridgestone Tire produced large tires, and in November 1971 started a project to commercialize aluminum wheels, hardly sold in Japan at the time. Test sales of the wheels, named “ZONA” began in November 1972 in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya, and nationwide in May 1974.²⁶ While it is difficult to specify the exact date of the display, Bridgestone started producing tires one size larger than *Epicycle* and *Frequency FL-10-6874* and also to produce aluminum wheels around the same time Tada’s work was being installed – and Tada’s sculpture looked exactly like a giant wheel.

Fluorescent Chrysanthemum — first presentation of *Epicycle*

The updated exhibition history summarized in Table 1 (pp.34–35) shows that the two *Epicycle* components were not always exhibited together as a pair. Specialist in Japanese media art Ma Jung Yeon describes the exhibition structure of the *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* exhibition, the first showing of *Epicycle*, in her essay “On *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* (1968–1969): Representation of Arts in Postwar Japan.”²⁷ According to Ma, this important exhibition was lauded in journal articles and by art critic Haryu Ichiro, and attracted international attention for an approach and style that departed from conventional practices of confining Japanese contemporary art to a Japonism framework. This installation structure, however, did not apply to the exhibition’s iteration at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In London, however, the installation featured a display designed by Sugiura Kohei with two white-cube rooms and two black-box rooms. Miniatures of the three-dimensional works were displayed at the venue entrance. In the black-box room, the third room, many three-dimensional works with fluorescent and neon lights were displayed together. This kind of display in a dark room was not unprecedented. Rooms with lighted works were darkened

for the *From Space to Environment* exhibition (Nov 11–16, 1966, Ginza Matsuya Department Store, 8F Gallery), the *Contemporary Space '68: Lights and Environment* (1968, Sogo Department Store, Kobe),²⁸ and the *Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art* exhibition (National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, August 16–September 22, 1968).²⁹ *Epicycle*, with six fluorescent lights, was also exhibited in the dark space of the *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* exhibit and Tada, who visited the site, commented as follows:

The three-dimensional works were grouped together in a closed room at the back that was all black. Unfortunately, the light and space of each work was different, so it was difficult to view them in a consistent way in such conditions. [...] In an exhibition of works using light, the illusion of space is deepened further by the surroundings. The environment created by the designer of the display allows the viewers to correspond with each work. For future exhibitions that include works of light, the creation of the space will play a role as important as the works. This exhibition made me re-think the importance of display and creating an environment that allows the works and viewers to interact. Another possibility is that works retreat as individual works and instead become part of a group. I thought of a new direction of creating works as part of organized, large-scale exhibitions.³⁰

A view of the exhibition that appears in the same article shows that only one of the *Epicycle* pair seems to have been on display here (fig. 6). Tada evidently was not against exhibiting the work without the two pieces together in a space with floor lights. When we photographed the work this year, we used a dark setting but captured only one aspect and expression of the work (fig. 7). The photo shoot of the sculpture in the dark also revealed that rather than emitting light, the fluorescent light was only creating an epicycle and a sub-circle, without any intention to emit light or illuminate anything. Although the surrounding environment may not be visible in the dark, a dynamic relationship between the sculpture, the surroundings, and the viewer is accomplished when the 'epicycle' emerges, incorporating this 'dark' environment.

Thinking that the work was originally intended to be viewed in a dark space reverses the premise of placement in a bright space as "correct." We can then alternatively consider what kind of work *Epicycle* would be in the opposite condition of a bright environment. Nakahara Yusuke commented on the "reflections" created by the mirrored surface as follows, expanding the use of the word "illusion" beyond the description of traditional paintings (tableaux):

The surface in fact reflects light and the surroundings. The distorted image is a physical phenomenon but transforms the work into an open, rather than closed, three-dimensional object rather than flat surface. Through these images, the work connects to its surroundings. It is also notable that this type of work, while being an actual presence, exhibits the character of an illusion or an expanded image. In this way, the actual entity and its image fuse.³¹

Rather than being distorted or static, the images captured on

the surface of *Epicycle* are multi-layered, creating a staggered sense of depth. When the sculpture is seen in a brightly lit space, the circle created by its intrinsic luminescence weakens while reflections of the outside world become more robust. The slightest movement of the viewer results in a distortion of the shapes of the reflected objects. As Nakahara points out, the shapes dissolve but maintain a connection with the original objects. As noted above, Tada's method of intermingling reflected and spontaneous light has been praised by Ooka Makoto, Nakahara Yusuke, and Hijikata Teiichi. Though it emits light, this sculpture is not attempting to express light. Instead, it eschews preconceived notions and is visually groundbreaking. *Epicycle* may be a somewhat unfamiliar word but it suggests physical and imaginative expansion. *Laputin No 2*, also produced in 1968, shares the poetic sense of looking up to the heavens for forms that emerge from mathematic calculation or legend — in other words, not on information based on observation alone.

Development of the *Epicycle* Series

Unlike other works with mirror finish vaporific coating fixed aluminum surfaces, *Epicycle* sculptures contain a source of light and capture the surrounding environment. Moreover, the emitted light spreads out into a circle on the ground. The circle expands and contracts, as does the reflected scenery, but we are always aware of its presence. Just as the circular orbit the work title suggests, there is a certain relationship that exists in the movement. At about the same time, Tada also produced works that had electric mechanisms but did not emit light. *Phase Space* (1969), for example, has the appearance of *Epicycle* but with everything removed except the acrylic center. In a total of four works, three are in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Kanagawa, and one is in the Minami Tada Associates collection. The work is designed to tilt as it moves, and takes in and gives the environment movement while evoking a sense of slowly passing time. *Phase Space 6941* (1969, Minami Tada Associates collection) has a similar structure, and the three-piece *Phase Space 6943* (1969, collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura) is equipped with motors, but movement seems rotational. The reflected image changes as it tilts forward or rises from the wall (in a gentle 5 to 10 degree movement). The light around the edges creates an effect of rotation and the slow movement brings a sense of mystery reminding us of the movement of the natural world, with the shadows of trees shifting along with the swaying wind and movement of sunlight. The installation at Minami Tada Associates in particular allows outside light in, giving a feeling of being even more connected to the outside world.

Epicycle No. 2 was unveiled at Osaka Expo '70 (1970) (fig. 8). Because the work is non-extant, it is only possible to judge from photographs, but it appears that this work consisted of five pieces, with large slightly uneven mirror objects similar to *Epicycle* pointing to the sky, and placed in a line on top of water. The radius of the central convex of each of the five pieces differs, and the ratio of the outer circumference to the convex circumference seems to be the same as in *Epicycle*. The cover is transparent because the display is outdoors, but the capsule-like shape connects with a cosmic image. This researcher was unable to locate references from the time, so it is not possible to

know how the work was received. However, two years later, and the third Kobe City Suma Rikyu Park Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition, it was presented in a similar floating format. There is no record of any subsequent exhibition catalogs and the current situation of the work is unclear. However, a work titled *Epicycle No. 2* (fig. 9) shown at the Seibu Museum of Art's inaugural exhibition *View of Japanese Contemporary Art* in 1975, also only known through photograph, has a stainless steel and iron base that seems to be the same as *Epicycle No. 3*, as well as the transparent semi-circular acrylic top. *Epicycle No. 3*, currently stored and managed by the Minami Tada Associates, has a rectangular base (fig. 10). The *Tada Minami: Light Labyrinth* (Shoto Museum of Art, Shibuya, Tokyo) catalog lists the year of production, both on the illustration page and in the exhibition list, as 1975. Furthermore, although the exhibition history lists the *View of Japanese Contemporary Art* exhibition, the chronology does not indicate that *Epicycle No. 2* was shown at the 1975 exhibition. The 2009 Minami Tada exhibition catalog unifies the production year as 1980. This may have been due to a typing error on the title of the work, or it may be that the artist thought of *Epicycle No. 2* in versions for display indoors or on the ground, and for floating on water. In any case, *Epicycle No. 3* does not emit light and instead creates a circular shape by incorporating the surroundings into the center of the transparent acrylic, though only a semi-circle. The main difference, compared to the previous two works in the series, is that it is transparent with transparent acrylic. The opposite side of the work is visible, the light above is incorporated, and the images reflected alter as the viewpoint of the viewer at the same speed. This raises awareness of the coexistence of the world as it is and the way we perceive it. *Epicycle No. 3* has been shown in solo exhibitions in recent years. It was first exhibited with its current pedestal at the *1st Exhibition of Contemporary Women Artists* (1980) and later at the *90th Anniversary Exhibition of the Joshibi University of Art and Design Museum* (1990), the *Tada Minami – Labyrinth of Light – exhibition* (1991-92), the Hakone Open-Air Museum's *40th Anniversary Commemorative Exhibition: Tada Minami Gatherer of Light* (2009) that toured to the Yuehu Museum of Art, Shanghai. It has continued to be exhibited as an important example of Tada's work.

Each of the three *Epicycle* sculptures differs in format. *Epicycle No. 2* floats on water (possibly fixed or unfixed). *Epicycle No. 3* has an independent pedestal and is displayed on the floor indoors. *Epicycle*, however, is displayed hung on a wall by a hook at the end of a long, thin iron plate that spans the plywood at the back of the work. A power cord coming out from the bottom supplies electricity to six fluorescent lights inside. For Tada, who also designed lighting suspended from the ceiling, the hook was not suitable for a sculpture. This may have been a work that bridged the gap between sculpture and lighting sculpture. As mentioned above, from the time this work was completed in 1968, Tada began to produce works apart from the *Frequency* series. She had increasing opportunity to present outdoor works and to work with lighting sculptures and may have been experimenting with the connection between lighting and sculpture. The *Epicycle* series represents an important concept for Tada. It creates a dynamic connection, with a mathematical aesthetic, between the viewer and the surrounding environment, akin to the relationship between celestial bodies

and is the beginning of an experiment, in conjunction with the period of 1969, that reveals the relationship between form and theme in Tada Minami's work.

Conclusion

Our research allowed us to clarify the exhibition history of *Epicycle*. The compilation of photographs of past exhibitions and references to the work revealed the importance of the year it was produced, 1968, in Tada's activities and oeuvre. The first public showing of *Epicycle* in *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum*, an exhibition important in the history of Japanese contemporary art, especially in terms of being a presentation on par with Western art, was also the first time it was installed in darkness. We also discovered that *Epicycle* had clearly been exhibited in the Bridgestone Showroom. Future research topics include determining the whereabouts of *Epicycle No. 2* and detailed comparisons of all the works in the series, with other Tada works and lighting sculptures, and with works of artists active in the same period. Expanding further, we would include a review of the diversification of Japanese contemporary art in the 1960s, of light art, kinetic art, environmental art, urban sculpture, the relationship between the city and sculpture, between nature and the city, and so on. Although our study focused on basic information related to this work, we believe it touches on some possibilities for the Artizon Museum to expand its nascent research, acquisition, and exhibition of postwar and contemporary Japanese art by having such works (somewhat coincidentally) in its collection. For myself, I have been deeply affected by *Epicycle* and it has somehow captivated my thoughts. In other words, *Epicycle* is constantly on my mind and I hope to continue this investigation.

(Curator, Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation)
(Translated by Cheryl Silverman, CAS Associate, Inc.)

Notes

1. Tada used the term 光造形 (lighting sculptures) instead of 照明デザイン (lighting design) to describe her work.
2. Burex Kyobashi Building, 2-7-14 Kyobashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo.
3. Lee Building, 7-3-9 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo.
4. Imperial Hotel, 1-1-1 Uchisaiwaicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo.
5. The number was confirmed in reference to the list of exhibitions published in the Annual Report: Bridgestone Museum of Art and Ishibashi Museum of Art, Ishibashi Foundation dating from 1989–2016 in the holdings of the Ishibashi Foundation Bridgestone Corporation. The Ishibashi Museum of Art had *Epicycle* on permanent display, but this was not included in the count because our research was limited to the Bridgestone Museum exhibition lists.
6. *Ohtsuka Ohmi Report*, "Sculptor Tada Minami, Part 2: Interview with Tada Minami," 2013. (in Japanese) https://www.ohmi.co.jp/report/index.php?c=topics2_view&pk=1466482831 accessed 8/21/23.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Hayashi Shoji, "Tada Minami to kenchiku to" [Tada Minami and architecture], *Geijutsu Shincho*, No. 208, April 1972, p. 21.
9. For details, see *Re: Starting line 1963–1970/2023 Sympathetic Relations between the Museum and Artists as Seen in the Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art Exhibition*, National Museum of Modern Art, exh. cat. 2023, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.
10. Tada Minami, "Works/Tada Minami From the Darkness," [tada minami 'sakuhin/tada minami kurayami kara'] *Kindai Kenchiku* (modern architecture), June, 1969, p. 131.
11. "New Materials and Forms, dialogue between Okada Takahiko and Yamaguchi Katsuhiko" [atarashii sozai to zokei (taidan) Okada Takahiko and Yamaguchi Katsuhiko], *Bijutsu Techo*, June 1968, p. 68.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
14. *Weavers of Worlds: a Century of Flux in Japanese Modern/Contemporary Art*, Exh. cat., 2019, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Bijutsu Shuppan-sha, p. 315.
15. Ooka Makoto, "tada minami wo meguru muttsu no danshō" [Tada Minami Six Fragments], *Space Design*, No. 81, June, 1971, p. 23.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
17. *Op. cit.*, Tada Minami "Works/Tada Minami Out of the Darkness," p. 131.
18. *Op. cit.*, Six Fragments, p. 26–27.
19. Hijikata Teiichi, *kaisetsu tada minami – atarashii sozai to no taiketsu to hikari no soshiki-ka* [commentary: Tada Minami – confronting new materials and the structuring of light], *Geijutsu Shincho*, April 1972, p. 19.
20. The catalog for the May 12 – 23, 1989 *Minami Tada Exhibition*, for example, states that the work is "owned by the Bridgestone Museum of Art." However, the correct owner was the Bridgestone Corporation.
21. Our interview with Iwamoto Yachiyo and Honma Mitsuki, both of whom had worked closely with the artist since the 1970s, at the Tada Minami Research Institute (5-1-5 Miyamae, Suginami-ku, Tokyo), as well as with Space Research, that opened at the same location in 2018, where works from the early 1960s to the 1990s could be viewed. We were provided with photos of two *Epicycle* works on display at the Bridgestone Corporation showroom. With the help of Nishijima Taiji, current Managing Director of the Ishibashi Foundation, we asked Bridgestone Corporation to investigate if there were any display records from that time.
22. The showroom caption reads *Frequency FL-10-682*, 1968, but the large size would have made it difficult to copy or reproduce (*Frequency FL-10-6874* was made in cooperation with Nippon Sheet Glass because it was created by processing a large sheet of glass.) Since no corresponding work has been found in previous catalogs or other records, it is presumed to be *Frequency FL-10-6874*.
23. Herein after referred to as *Glass Formation Exhibition Trans-flection in Space*. A photo of the glass section of *Frequency FL-10-6874*, excluding the stainless steel section, was published with a text by Tono Yoshiaki, Director of the exhibition (Yamaguchi Katsuhiko, Co-Director). *Interia* (Japan Interior Design, No. 117. December, 1968, pp. 46–49.
24. According to "Corporate Information" https://www.bridgestone.co.jp/corporate/history/story/05_05.html (accessed August 22, 2023), the display of logos possibly began in the 1960s. According to the Bridgestone Blog, October 27, 2020, <https://www.bridgestone.co.jp/blog/2020102701.html> (accessed August 22, 2023), the Bridgestone logo and brand message "changed with the times."
25. *Bridgestone 75 Year History*, Bridgestone Corporation, 2008, pp. 134–135.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–140.
27. Ma Jung Yeon, "On Fluorescent Chrysanthemum (1968–1969): Representation of Arts in Postwar Japan (1968–1969)," *Meiji University International Japanese Studies*, 2018, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 117–131. Published March 27, 2020 online: https://meiji.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=repository_action_common_download&item_id=7060&item_no=1&attribute_id=17&file_no=1
28. There are several photos of the exhibition: Inui, Yoshiaki, "Contemporary Space '68: Lights and Environment," *Bijutsu Techo*, No. 301, August 1968, Bijutsu Shuppansha, pp. 19–29, 107–109.
29. For the "60th Anniversary *Re: Starting line 1963–1970/2023 Sympathetic Relations between the Museum and Artists as Seen in the Trends in Contemporary Japanese Art series* (April 28, 2023 – July 2, 2023, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto), the display was set up in a dark space, similar to the original 1963 exhibition room.
30. Tada Minami, "disupurei ato no yuku-e" [the future of display art], *Interia*, No. 121, April. 1969, p.46.
31. TNakahara's text appears above *Frequency 37306505* in a photo probably taken in Tada's studio. Nakahara Yusuke, "hanei" (reflection), *Bijutsu Techo*, special edition, Bijutsu Shuppansha, pp. 2–3.

List of illustrations (pp. 28–39)

- fig. 1—TADA Minami, *Epicycle*, 1968, acrylic and aluminum, 140×140×15.5 cm
- fig. 2—TADA Minami, *Laputan No. 1*, 1968, aluminum and stainless steel, 150×150×150 cm
- fig. 3—TADA Minami, *Laputan No. 2*, 1968, aluminum, 150×150×150 cm
- fig. 4—The basic elements of Ptolemaic astronomy, showing a planet on an epicycle (smaller dashed circle), a deferent (larger dashed circle), the eccentric (x) and equant (-): from Wikipedia "Deferent and epicycle" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deferent_and_epicycle) [accessed: Aug 31, 2023]
- fig. 5—Installation view at the Bridgestone Showroom, courtesy of Minami Tada Associates
- fig. 6—*Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* exhibition photos. *Epicycle* can be seen in the bottom right photo. Reproduced in "Display Design for the *Fluorescent Chrysanthemum* Exhibition" *Japan Interior Design*, No. 121, April 1969, p. 48.
- fig. 7—*Epicycle* photographed from the same angle as Figure 1, but with dimmed lighting. TADA Minami, *Epicycle*, 1968, acrylic and aluminum, 140×140×15.5 cm
- fig. 8—TADA Minami, *Epicycle No. 2*, 1970, installation view, reprinted from *Bijutsu-techo*, No. 330, Special Issue, July 1970, p. 130.
- fig. 9—Reprinted from *Japan Interior Design*, December 1975, p. 90.
- fig. 10—Front right, TADA Minami, *Epicycle No. 3* installation, *Minami Tada* exhibition, Yuehu Museum of Art, Shanghai, 2010.