

The Expatriate Scene in Japan

Alternative publishing thrives in Tokyo

by Richard Evanoff

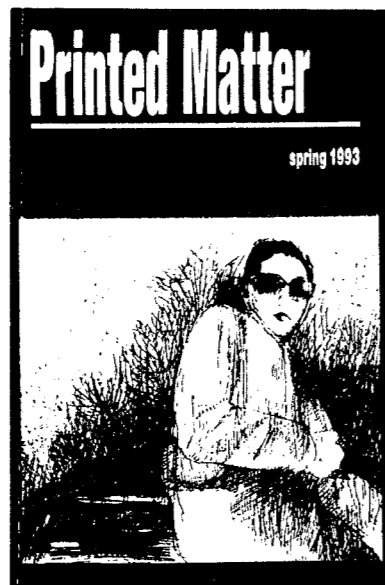
If the principle that art follows money were true, Tokyo should be the literary capital of the world right now. Foreign-born poets, writers, musicians, and artists who live here still harbor fantasies of making Tokyo of the '90s into something resembling the Paris of the '20s. And given the fact that expats who have lived here as long as I have (14 years) still can't figure out the subway system, I think we have every right to equally call ourselves the lost generation.

Japan has about 100,000 English-speaking foreigners, four English-language dailies, an uncountable number of mainstream city magazines catering to the yuppie/tourist/professional crowd, as well as a thriving alternative publishing scene that provides a bit of relief for those of us who have 2-4 hour commutes on the trains every working day and aren't here for the money. Herewith is a mini-guide to expat alternative publishing in Japan for people who want the inside scoop on what's really going on here.

Kyoto Journal

(John Einarsen, editor; contact: 35 Minamigoshomachi, Okazaki, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606, Japan)

Kyoto Journal is published more or less quarterly, 100 pages average. It has the honed look of the mainstream but the contents are pure alternative—an exotic mix of grass roots politics, culture, and art that will shatter most Americans' Zen stereotypes of Japan. Recent theme issues have focussed on eros Japan-style and indigenous people (assimilation policies have virtually wiped out Japan's indigenous Ainu culture). Subscriptions are ¥3,000 or \$30/4 issues.

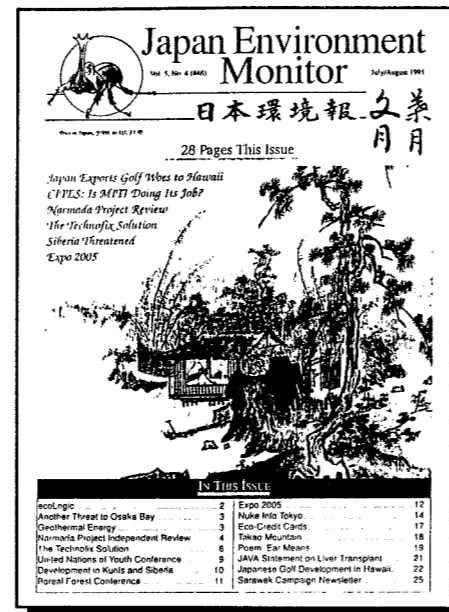


Printed Matter

(Collective editorship; contact: Matthew Zuckerman, 3-31-207 Ikebukuro Honcho, Toshima-ku, Tokyo 170 Japan)

Printed Matter is published quarterly. It's the longest-running English-language litmag in Japan (more than 15 years) but one that's constantly reinventing itself. Past issues have

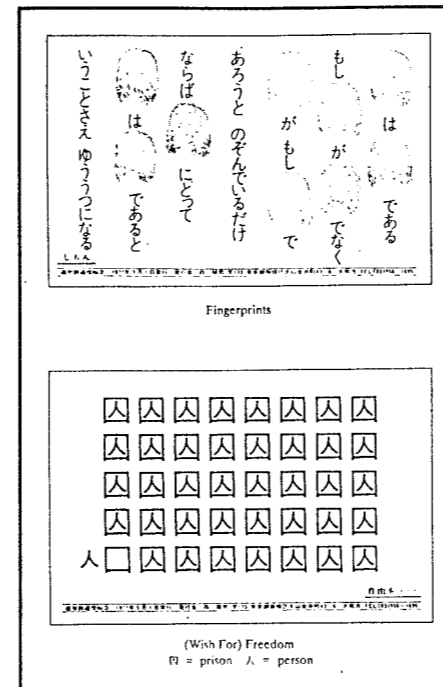
included such familiar poets as Gary Snyder and Kazuko Shiraishi (as well-known in Japan as Snyder is in Turtle Island) in addition to struggling but talented expat writers. Subscriptions are ¥3,000 or \$25/year.



Japan Environment Monitor

(Rick Davis/Maggie Suzuki, co-editors; contact: 3512-1-C105 Osato-cho, Kofu-shi, Yamanashi-ken 400, Japan)

Japan Environment Monitor is published 10 times a year, 20-24 pages. It includes hard-hitting documentation of the fact that modern Japanese culture does not, contrary to popular image, live in "harmony with nature." Every major environmental issue in Japan gets coverage, from airport construction that will destroy the Shiraho coral reef in Okinawa to the damming of the Nagargawa, Japan's last free-flowing river. Subscriptions are ¥5,000 or \$35/year.



Excerpt from *Unfolding* by Mori Ikuo, *Pescia* #1, Word Press, 1992.

Word Press

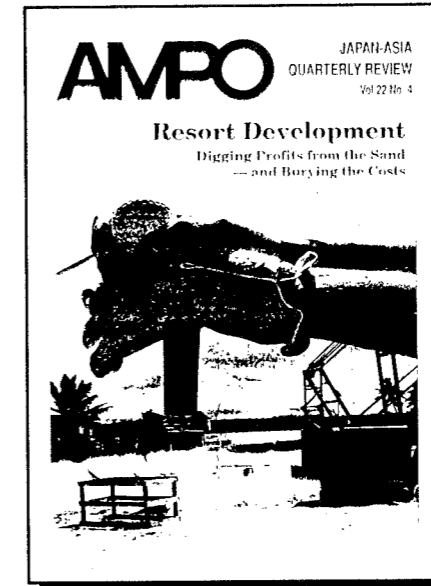
(Sherry Reniker/Karl Young, editors; contact: Amenity 2-B, Noborito 318, Tama-ku, Kawasaki 214, Japan)

Word Press is a hands-across-the-water alternative press that publishes broadsides and absolutely unique visual poetry by Japanese and Western writers in ancient bookforms such as screenfolds, scrolls, lienzos, and pescias. Price ¥500 or \$5/publication.

Ampo

(Collective editorship; published by: Pacific Asia Resource Center, P.O. Box 5250, Tokyo Int'l, Japan)

Ampo is published quarterly, 68 pages. While many Japanese are proud to the point of nationalistic arrogance that Japan has the



second-largest per capita GNP in the world after Switzerland (sorry to disappoint those Americans who still think the U.S. is on top), a group of Japanese scholars and activists is bent on showing the other side: among the embarrassing topics covered are Japan's economic assistance to third world debt, coercive development projects overseas (including golf course construction in Hawaii), and cozy and mutually profitable relations between construction companies and politicians at home. Subscriptions are ¥4,000 or \$24/year.

The Plaza

(Shinji Nishida, publisher; contact: U-Kan Inc., Yoyogi 2-32-1, Shibuya-ku Tokyo 151, Japan)

The Plaza is published quarterly, 48 pages. It's a bilingual magazine providing space for cross-multi-cultural literary encounters. Poets as culturally deviant as Antler, Makiko Nakamura, and Mahdy Y. Khaiyat have been known to gather in the same issue. Single

copies are ¥555; subscriptions are ¥1,500 or about \$16/year.

International Feminists of Japan Newsletter

(Noriko Hashimoto, coordinator; contact: 2-13-15 Midorigaoka, Ohi-machi, Iruma-gun Saitama 354, Japan)

The International Feminists of Japan Newsletter is published monthly, 8-12 pages. It features articles on current feminist issues of relevance to women of all nationalities in Japan, and also information on women's grass roots organizations, book reviews, films, art exhibits, feminist cartoons, and artwork. Subscriptions/memberships: ¥5,000/year.

Blue Jacket

(Yusuke Keida, editor; contact: c/o Yuichi Seki, 1-5-54 Sugue-cho, Sanjo-shi, Niigata-ken 955, Japan)

Blue Jacket is published irregularly, 150 pages average. This is a respected bilingual point of contact in Japan for Neo-Beat writing, with original poetry both in English and Japanese translations. No subscriptions. Single copies are ¥1,000 or \$10.

Abiko Quarterly

(Anna Liva Plurabelle, managing editor/publisher; contact: 8-1-8 Namiki, Abiko, Chiba-ken 270-11, Japan)

Abiko Quarterly is published quarterly, 274 pages. It's a grabbag of diverse writing in English and Japanese, cutouts and clippings, just this side of literary sanity—fun, unpredictable, sometimes uneven but getting better and better. Subscriptions are ¥4,000 or \$40/year.

Compiled by Richard Evanoff, with thanks to Morgan Gibson.