On Table and Society:
Notes on the Social Aesthetics of Table

Shingo FUJISAKA

ABSTRACT

In this research note, I focus on the ‘table’ as a socio-aesthetic concept or image. A guiding hypothesis here is that it is possible to study and explore our common social world through our touch and feel of the ‘table.’

As we say, in Japanese, “teeburu ni tsuku (sit together around the table),” the table is much more than a useful physical object. It represents a common public space around which people sit together and discuss matters of common concern. In and around the table, individuals from multifarious backgrounds interact and transact with each other. Therefore, the touch and feel of the table is much more than a physical sensation of an object. It envelops the feel and atmosphere of social intercourses going on in and round the table. Moreover, the table is something of which everyone can make an image in his/her own way. The table can be conceived as an excellent tool for us to share our images of public social spaces where we interact and co-exist with others.

An important forerunner of social thinkers who paid much attention to the table as a socio-aesthetic concept or image is Hannah Arendt. I examine Arendt’s ideas on the table in relation to her theory of the public world. In doing so, I try to explore the possibility of ‘doing social aesthetics’ through the concept and imagery of the table in our everyday life.

Key Words: table, public world, social aesthetics, Hannah Arendt