

Artist in residence

January, February, March, 2007

A working period in Japan

In 2006 I received a handwritten letter from Mr. Hiroshi Sado, Sado Hiroshi in Japanese, well known ceramist in Japan.

He wrote me that he regularly invited ceramists to work in his studio for a three months period.

This time he had the honor to ask me.

I didn't need long to think it over.

18 Years before that I met Hiroshi during a ceramic symposium in Finland, in which he participated together with the Japanese ceramist Takeshi Yasuda. My meeting with these Japanese and their culture, so different and strange for us, roused my interests for everything from Japan.

I was enthusiastic about the invitation and I had positive expectations.

Hiroshi may have had his own intentions, he surely expected a different outcome when he wrote me his letter.

Internet provided some practical information when I didn't get an answer to my questions about the studio where I was to work, about equipment, possibilities and other things. I was looking for a relationship between my ceramic work and Japanese forms, which I found in the terra cotta 'haniwa', ceramic figures placed on Japanese tumuli graves in the beginning of the era.

I enjoyed studying a bit of Japanese till a disaster happened in the circle of my friends. I was so shocked I couldn't concentrate on the Japanese language any more. But the date of my flight was fixed.

I would go to Japan.

Hiroshi let me know I was welcome. In the beginning of 2007 he would have time for me.

He promised sightseeing and: 'We shall get together as two crafts people in collaboration of a West meets East program. You are free to do anything.'

A short time before my departure he communicated I would get initiated into the tea ceremony and I would have to make an attribute for it. It's his dream to win Western world for tea ceremony and find a new market for Japanese ceramics. He also asks me, if I have time, to accompany him to the school where he teaches. At the end of the period there will be an exhibition of my work.

In the little ceramic village where I am staying, time is standing still. Kilns are burning day and night.

I expect to work in the studio I saw on the internet site, but that studio is already occupied by Hsuan-Yu Shih, a 33 years young Taiwanese. I didn't know there would be another ceramist.

In the same way, after his orientation on the internet, Hsuan expected to stay in the bedroom I get to use. So he is working in 'my' studio and I am sleeping in 'his' chip wooden room on the roof, where he helped to hang wall paper and make it draught-proof with plastic folio during the days before my arrival.

It's winter and it is freezing severely. The coldness doesn't stay outside, the burning stove can't keep the cold out. The paper sticks frozen on the thin walls and when the little oil stove burns my front, my food freezes behind my back. The water tap is in the open air and for the squat toilet I have to go more than 50 meters, outside the house, down the stairs, in all weathers.

Hsuan, also called Samuel or Mister Samson, only knows I am a friend of mister Sado and I will stay for a short time. He is the only real artist in residence, contracted by The City. I am a personal guest of Mister Sado, he was told.

The fact that two ceramists are invited at the same time while there isn't enough working place for two, makes me feel unsure. What am I doing here? If my work, and indeed my person, is taken seriously, I need a studio just like Hsuan with enough room and good light where I can concentrate.

From start to finish my working place is an unsure item.

During the first period I find a place in the studio with the kitchen, where some students from Hiroshi come to work. There is no lack of fresh air through the great number of narrow openings around doors and windows.

To converse I have to look up Japanese words in dictionaries. I can't concentrate.

Hiroshi doesn't like my working in his students' studio, where he has to speak English with me and where I address him with his first name during the first few days. His position makes him expect I will do my utmost for him and that I'll try to speak Japanese. He likes me to move into his traditional studio. This in-cold studio with a floor of tread down earth, where the clay is frozen in the morning and the oil stove can't drive out coldness, is a dark fully hoarded room with paper windows without a view. There are a few potter wheels in a row. There are no tables and everything is low.

I don't turn clay. I don't glaze. Light and shadow are important elements for my sculptures. It's not an ideal place to make my ceramics.

Hiroshi also suggests I can work in his school, a quarter of an hour's drive away. There I'll be isolated and dependant on him, far from my room and the little trusty things I have.

Monday morning after my arrival we are presented to the mayor and the press. The interpreter of The City office assists. All attention is for Hsuan and his work. I am only asked for my age and married state. My portfolio and information are consequently neglected. I feel strange, as if I'm Hiroshi's trophy.

In the afternoon he shows me his school. The oversized ceramic classroom with a great view on the surroundings, makes clear ceramic is a very serious thing in Japan. There are more big kilns but only one oil stove and that stove is cold when we arrive. The next hour 8 pupils with red hands and distorted faces shape big pieces of ice cold clay. From clay slaps they make cups in a way I never saw before. In the classroom, behind sloppy curtains, is a bed where Hiroshi spends the nights when he fires the kilns. 'Alone,' he says. After that word he produces the sentence: 'Perhaps I will sleep with you.' These words change my stay. From that moment I like to keep a distance. I try to speak with Hiroshi about the difference between to like and to love. He only reacts: 'No! No! Don't understand!'

Thanks to the interpreter who translated our correspondence and mediated the first contact, Hiroshi doesn't ask me again to accompany him to his school as he had planned every day. My aversion grows. I didn't come to Japan for that!

I am very relieved that I don't have to make my work in that school.

From the first day I arrived Hiroshi is very busy. He doesn't have time. He doesn't give information and doesn't show me the way. He changes his mind all the time. Many things are unclear. My uncertainty is growing.

What does Hiroshi expect from the 'cooperation' with me? Did he mean I should help him when he asked me to work in his studio? Does he mean I have to select and take his row of frozen clay inside and prepare it? Every day his students are kneading and preparing his clay till their wounded hands are bandaged and after that they are absent for a few days. Do I have to take over his lessons and teach his groups? Do I have to cook for Hsuan and him or sleep with him? Do I have to accompany him during the long lonely evenings and nights if he is waiting by the kilns when I, always feeling cold, need time to sit alone by my little oil stove to be on my own after a long working day among other people?

Hiroshi doesn't understand this need. Japanese can't exist without others.

Speaking with Hsuan about the reason why I am invited, he explains that before my arrival Sado san said to him I wouldn't have to do anything, he only wished I would accompany him everywhere. 'Just for show!'

I am sorry for the Master but I miss that quality.

After one week Hiroshi's students arrange a nice welcome party for Hsuan and me. Then the interpreter tells that Sado san is rather tired of speaking English. I ask myself: 'Are there other reasons?' Hsuan and I are independent people with our own ideas, going our own way. Hiroshi likes to control everything. It costs him much energy.

I have big problems to understand Hiroshi's Japanese-English. His English is abominable. From my pronunciation he means the same. From 'l' he makes 'r', 'f' becomes 'h'. It's difficult to recognize words. Sentences are short, sometimes only one word, just like: 'Pren?' 'What's 'pren?'' After ten minutes confusion Hiroshi says: 'What your pran?' We are looking in dictionaries for hours. It's no laughing matter.

A few days after the welcome party Hiroshi learns me something: The Japanese language I learned from my books is wrong. And I behave too freely. If I meet people I am not allowed to look at them, I have to look away. I am allowed to say 'Hello' and nothing more. Everybody understands that word. After this lesson Hiroshi stops speaking English with me. On every word I say or ask he reacts: 'Japanese please!' and then he answers in Japanese. But I don't speak Japanese. I don't understand this. I repeatedly tell Hiroshi how sorry I am we can't speak easily and that we misunderstand each other. If I try to speak with him, he only says: 'Tomorrow. Tired', or 'Tomorrow. Busy', or: 'Tomorrow. Work.' Many times I hear his: 'No good'. In this way distance between us is growing.

Apart from Hsuan nobody speaks English. He speaks it very well. He learned it himself. He can't write it because he doesn't know our alphabet. Much better than Hiroshi I understand other people, even if they don't speak English at all. The only reason is that they are open and willing to understand. Because they are women!

A good contact is growing between me and Megumi, a student, and Kyoko, Hiroshi's sister.

We make jokes and we can laugh. Hiroshi can't laugh.

There are more people I like very much. Without these positive feelings it would have been impossible for me to stay the seven weeks I stayed.

I am very happy with Hsuan's presence and Hsuan with mine. We lean on each other. We check the observations we have. Without each other we could lose reality. Our situation is hallucinating. Hsuan understands the Japanese language much better than I do. He translates and informs me about practical things. Hiroshi doesn't. We have to find out everything.

Japanese festivals pass without knowing. We hear about them when Sado's students ask 'how it was?'

Contrary to Hiroshi, Hsuan is very gentle. He is helpful and complaisant in a nice way. He is a wise friend.

Hsuan and I make long days, 7 days a week, from 9 o'clock in the morning till about 12 o'clock at night. I like to retire and go to my room around 10 o'clock. I don't really feel welcome when Hiroshi and Hsuan are sitting and drinking together some hours in the evening near the burning kilns. I feel uneasy if they become real men when Hiroshi starts to make vulgar remarks which I don't understand. Some time after 10 he releases me by saying: 'Go. Sleep!'

There is a big difference in culture. In Japan men and women use their own terms. They have their own sounds and speak their own language. Women are not equal to men. Humility is expected from women. Obedience is highly appreciated. In the tea ceremony, a real men's matter, a woman's subservient ability becomes a stylized form. Without ceremony no civilization. Tea ceremony is just like religion.. As a native of the East Hsuan sometimes can explain things but also for him a lot is unclear. At first he also thinks the language is the main problem but in the end he is convinced: 'Sado san, our Master, is the problem.'

I have to change my working place many times. After two weeks I am still banished to Hiroshi's dark studio without a view. I can't work there. I produce but I am not inspired. In spite of that I spend two weeks there. After that I feel so depressed that I want to give up. I can only think of how to escape. I want to return to the Netherlands.

My body is stressed. I am always feeling cold. I am sitting for days because all working places are too low to work standing up. Our situation is growing more and more complex. My displeasure is complete. I call my displeasure 'home sickness'. I needn't explain this.

Although Hiroshi doesn't like it, Hsuan sees to it that I can use his studio during the time his work is firing in the kiln and cooling down. In his light studio I pluck up courage again.

During the fifth week of my stay I have a very productive time and I make my 'fly-aways'. Hsuan notices how hard my birds are trying to get loose, 'but they can't!' he laughs. Without doubt it has to do with myself and with the lack of birds as they are caught and eaten here. 'Very delicious,' Hiroshi knows.

Now in Hsuan's studio I am on my way and I like to work. In this period I make appointments for my final exhibition.

From now on I have to work very hard without a break till the exhibition to make as many ceramics as possible. For that I have to stay home to work. This means I'll miss the start and the end of the group exhibition of Sado's students in Gifu, where Hsuan and I are invited to participate with a few pieces of ceramic. We would like to do so, but Mr. Sado makes it clear he doesn't appreciate my participation. For me it's unclear if the appointment also means I can't be present at Hsuan's presentation at the 'Modern Museum of Ceramic Art' and at his farewell party because Hsuan will leave more than two weeks before me.

The same evening I make the appointment, I inform Hiroshi I will not stay the whole 3 months' period. I like to go home immediately after my exhibition at the end of March. It's impossible for me to stay after Hsuan's departure, alone in a world which I don't understand and where I can't communicate, alone with Hiroshi from whose whims I'll be totally dependant.

Hiroshi looks very disappointed. That evening I haven't a good feeling when I go to my room.

Next day Hsuan tells me Hiroshi unexpectedly quarreled with him. Hsuan was very surprised about that.

All the time he helped him and he was a solidary companion for Sado.

From that evening Hiroshi Sado is an angry man.

Perhaps there is no connection but that evening when Hsuan's work was in the kiln cooling down from a lower second fire, his work got a too high temperature. It was bent and broken.

Next days after a glazing fire I could not find my three bowls which I needed for the Gifu exhibition I was invited for. After a few days Hiroshi put them in front of me, saying: 'Broke.' My bowls were broken by a too quick temperature rise but I didn't see other broken works from students. My participation is impossible now.

After this Hiroshi 'forgot' to burn the white flowers which Hsuan uses in his works as his mark.

Hsuan is creative and knows how to solve everything but this makes me think.

During the days Hsuan's work is in the kiln, he has nothing to do. For the first time he is without stress.

After his 50-days' non stop working period he likes to take a little break in the afternoon to go to Nagoya.

But Sado san forbids him to go. Hsuan can't agree and protests, in English of course.

Sado san: 'I don't speak English, I am Japanese.' Hsuan reacts: 'And I don't understand Japanese, I am Chinese.' In this battle of words Sado says: 'Need translator.' Hsuan calls Mieko, interpreter from The City office to ask her mediation. After the long talk Sado had with her, which we couldn't understand, she answers: 'Hsuan can't go.' Reason: 'Sado san is too busy!'

Hsuan and I can't believe our ears. We don't understand.

That afternoon we are waiting for Sado's return from his school but he doesn't come back that day. Next days he doesn't show up and after that he doesn't speak with us. He doesn't look at us and passes by as if we don't exist.

Our situation is already stressful and uneasy for a long time but now the conflict is open and we can react. That gives air. Without further ado Sado cancels Hsuan's appointments because he has to stay home to work.

I feel solidary with Hsuan and I understand: his position is also mine. It brings Hsuan and me close together.

From that moment my free choice to work isn't free any more. Hsuan is speaking about 'The City Jail'.

We try to understand and ask the others: 'Is this Japanese style or is this Sado's style?'

They all answer: 'This is the style of our 'master mister Sado san sensei'.'

In the meantime more journalists came to interview Hsuan.

This time a journalist likes to interview us both after a talk she had with Sado san. She asks many questions we don't like to answer because our situation is too complex. We are hoping for a positive turn.

She is fishing for problems. At last I explain: 'The problem is that there are three masters.' That's not enough for her. When she doesn't stop asking, I ask her why she likes to know? She answers: 'Because it looks like Sado san has more power than the mayor and The City office together.'

We have a big problem. We need a translator/mediator but it seems impossible to meet Mieko from The City office as Hsuan hoped for. After an appointment he made with her, she is absent but she let us know 'We can always come if there are problems or if we like to drink a cup of coffee.'

Perhaps this is better. We don't know which unwished consequences it can have if we involve others in our problems. We are unsure about the effect one word can have in this Japanese world with customs we don't know and which we don't understand.

Is there someone willing to help us? Can someone help us? And: Is somebody allowed to help us? We hope we can solve our problems ourselves.

I am not motivated to force myself to work or to stay longer.

With these negative feelings I can't work at all. I start thinking about canceling my exhibition. I give myself a few days to make up my mind. In one week I have to give Sado the text and photographs for the invitation card for my exhibition.

During the sixth week of my stay our situation becomes even more ridiculous.

Stamping his feet Sado forbids me to go into Hsuan's studio: 'No! Antoin! No!'

I hear myself saying: 'You are crazy. I am not a dog.'

This is the end.

I decide to cancel my exhibition and write a simple text for Sado san to speak about:

'I will cancel my exhibition. I feel uneasy. I can't work under these circumstances. Our problems are: language, different cultures, not understanding, different expectations, different needs and interests, disappointment, we can't exchange ideas. We can't solve these problems. This gives stress and blockades. It makes me feel homesick. I like to go home. I hope you understand. I came as a friend and I hope I can go as a friend.'

I give this text to Sado but he hasn't time to talk about it. He doesn't touch the letter. When he hears the word 'friend' he cries, with a warding off gesture: 'No! No understand! Need translator!' He goes.

I finish my work, clean my place for the last time and wait for the translator.

Next day I like to know what the plans are for the weekend when Hsuan has his presentation. I like to be present at that presentation and at Hsuan's farewell party. On account of the problematical situation Hsuan asked me to stay till after his exhibition. Hsuan is bound by a contract and dependant on it. He isn't free to do or to say, but in his slide show during his presentation he will try to give some insight on 'What's going on.'

I need exact dates to fix my flight before Hsuan departs for Taiwan. Apart from Hsuan there is no reason for a longer stay. Hsuan can't answer and advises me to ask Sado san when his students are present. Then Sado san will have to answer. Sado san answers in Japanese.

That does it for me.

Bracing myself I pronounce slowly and clearly in English, word for word:

'We can not communicate. I am very sorry for that. We are from two different cultures. I do not understand Japanese culture. In my culture I am a free person. Here I feel unfree just like in prison. I can not accept that. I feel very uneasy. It makes me feel homesick. I feel very depressed. I am not able to work creative with these feelings under these circumstances. I like to go home. I came as a friend and I like to go as a friend.'

On hearing the word 'friend' he reacts as if he is hit again: 'No! No understand! Don't speak English.'

I reply: 'That's a problem you have to solve.' Sado: 'Need translator!' I: 'That's what you also said a few days ago. I will not wait any longer. I like to go home.'

Sado takes two big dictionaries to try to communicate with me but somebody asks for him and after that he goes. Then it is weekend.

That Sunday Hsuan and I have a very nice day. Suddenly it's nice and warm weather after weeks of winter coldness. In the afternoon I am sitting on the roof, just wearing a shirt. The low sun projects my shadow with flapping wings on the bamboo wood near the house. 'Look! There I go!'

We visit a tea ceremony with music. Sado san brings us by car but reduces the planned time from 4 hours to 1,5 hour.

We enjoy ourselves very much. For the first time we can relax. With the people we meet we make an appointment for a music performance that evening. They take us by car. Unseen we slip away.

Round 9.30 in the evening the tea ceremony teacher is called by Sado san. We have to be home to work!
We are taken home.
It is Sunday evening! It's difficult for us to accept, but it can't take away our nice day.

During the music evening Hsuan has made an appointment with Miyuki, one of the young girls we met. She is studying English. On Monday evening they meet to have dinner together but during the dinner Miyuki is phoned by her tea ceremony teacher who is very angry because her students took us to the music evening where she played an instrument. Miyuki is very intimidated. The evening has gone down the drain. From this moment our story becomes even more unbelievable and unacceptable for me. Hsuan is very angry. He also likes to cancel his exhibition but next day we both decide 'to smile', hoping we can clear up the situation. We like to make a happy ending for all the people we met who have been so kind for us. But we need an interpreter. Very urgently!

The same day I go to Sado san to ask for an interpreter. First he isn't willing. Then he phones to The City office, but Mieke, the interpreter, isn't there. Sado commands me: 'Sit!', to wait in his studio because he also has to wait. But he is working and I can't do anything there. I force myself to stay but after one senseless hour I leave.
Next day I go back and I ask for the interpreter again. She didn't call back. After a new telephone call Sado san explains she has a holiday but next day, on Wednesday, she will take Hsuan to the ceramic museum to make appointments for his exhibition. We can go together and speak with her in the car. So we do.

On our way to the museum we speak with Mieke about our communication problems and my departure. Hsuan asks for an official voucher proving that he finished his contract work and that he is free to go. I give her the letter I tried to speak about with Sado before. I also wrote another text with more details, when the little letter shouldn't have the wished result. We ask her to try to make a happy ending for all. Mieke promises to talk to Sado san next day.
She understands very well what we are talking about. She seems seriously anxious about our situation. She points out she can't do much for us even if she is willing.
Just like the others she says: 'This isn't Japanese culture. This is Sado's culture'.

The Museum of Modern Ceramic Art we visit, is an imposing new multifunctional earthquake free building in beautifully shaped surroundings. After weeks without culture or beauty my eyes are popping out. I awake. I had forgotten this world exists.

After Hsuan made his appointments, Mieke takes us to a big separate building on a little hill, close by the museum.
There we get a surprise when we enter a modern well equipped ceramic work studio, with enough place, a lot of light, well heated. In that enormous space Sado san walks among his students we know from the welcoming party and who also worked in our studios.
This is completely beside our reality. Hsuan and I don't waste one word on it, as if we didn't see.
At home our story goes on.

When we are back at our studio I look for the information about ceramics in the Netherlands, which I brought along. Hsuan is interested but Sado didn't look at it. He put it on a pile on which he had put more the last few weeks.
In this mess I find an invitation for an exhibition in Nagoya. During the weeks we were working in The City, a group of well known international ceramists had a work symposium in Nagoya. The result had been exhibited one week before. That was a big chance! Not far away, about 40 km! But we are too late. We didn't know about it. Sado didn't tell us. I think he doesn't know the names and he isn't able to recognize the importance of other ceramists and their work. Sado is only interested in his own dealings.

Even more motivated I start to prepare and orientate myself for my flight back. I try out how to juggle my luggage in the suitcase and I make a telephone call to the Air Company. I have to change my flight. From the unintelligible Japanese-English by telephone, I understand I can have a plane on Sunday or Monday. It's impossible for me to fix a date but it's clear to me that there will be enough room on both days.

After her talk with Sado on Thursday afternoon, Mieko calls to tell me 'I can't go home because Sado san spoke about a contract on which I should be bound.' I am surprised in a very unpleasant way. From the Netherlands my husband faxes the correspondence in which is written I am Sado's personal guest, 'free to do anything.'

Coming days Mieko hasn't time any more but she can arrange another interpreter for Sunday. I tell her honestly I have the possibility to fly on Sunday or Monday. I persevere and inform her about my intention to go home as soon as possible because the situation depresses me too much. She takes it seriously. She sighs and makes an appointment for the next day. On Friday she will come immediately after work.

Friday morning I am packing. I bring the superfluous weight to the post office. Kyoko visits me in my room. She knows I am packing for my departure. Last evening I gave her everything I will not take with me. Still she looks surprised. With dictionaries we have a nice talk. After some time she asks me seriously 'if I will help Sado san'.

'No,' is my answer, 'I am sorry. It's too late now.'

Softly she says: 'Kanashi.' 'That's a pity.'

At about 3 o'clock she comes again. This time she lures me away from my room by saying 'The bye-bye party for Hsuan will be in the museum this afternoon.' Hsuan is there to install his exhibition for the presentation this weekend. When I am waiting by the car, Kyoko comes out from Sado's studio and walks into my direction, saying there isn't a farewell party at all. She suggests to drink a cup of coffee and talk together. But I am not willing.

She tries to keep me from my room. In her manner, speaking with her hands, with Japanese words and the little English words she knows, she makes clear I'll not go home that Sunday. 'Nai,' she says, 'Sado nai.'

She only repeats: 'Nai, nai, nai! Sado san hanase (speaks) Antoinette stay.'

Crossing her hands she makes the Japanese sign 'No!' 'No, no, no!'

Standing on the outdoor stairs my legs start to tremble. My heart beats heavily. I feel miserable. I have to go. Now! 'Ima!' That's what I say to her.

Some minutes later we are crying when saying farewell. Then I send her away.

All the time I was conscious of how dependant I am from the good will and help from Sado san or someone else to take me and my heavy luggage to Nagoya Airport. Hsuan informed me about a direct bus connection from The City to the airport. I looked for that and thought it out. I prepared myself for every scenario.

A few days before Hsuan spoke with Sado san about the situation and my wish to go home. Sado answered: 'If she likes to go home so necessary, it's her case. She has to find out how to go to the Airport and do it herself.'

This depressed Hsuan. Maybe his situation also develops in the same way.

We are totally dependant on the mercy of Sado's whims, his willing and his not willing. He doesn't like to solve problems. It's not in his interest. The problems give him power and bind us to him.

We are good enough to work day and night but we have no rights. Not for Sado san and not for The City.

I still have a long time to wait in the hope for Sado's help and a happy end. I can't expect his help if he is convinced I shall not go home for the simple reason he isn't willing to let me go.

Hsuan and I couldn't check what Sado told The City office. We are afraid nobody in Sado's world is allowed or able to help us if Sado forbids it. Everybody worships him. In the very far surroundings all doors open for him. In this world Sado san is the Master! His word is law.

Sado Hiroshi seems a mighty man in this feudal Japanese world where his position is consolidated and accepted by everyone. Under the surface of the visible world another world is hidden with laws we don't know. Here we have to help ourselves.

Hsuan, who was present at Mieko's conversation with Sado san, came yesterday evening to tell me a happy ending isn't possible for me. In Sado's eyes I am only asking. I cost him money and energy. The money I invested and my devotion don't count for him. All the time I don't work, I use his room, the closet, water and energy. It makes him more angry and our problems even bigger.

I had better go.

Intent on escape, I decide to go immediately. NOW is the moment!
Containing myself to the utmost I pack the last things just like I trained before. I leave my ceramics behind.
I write my last words to Hsuan who can't read English, and a last letter for Mieko who has to translate the text I am leaving for Mister Sado. We will not meet again.
Revengefully I add the words that marked the start of the problems. 'Perhaps I will sleep with you.'
Sado will manage.
In the empty room on the cold oil stove I leave a dispraised ceramic sparrow 'made in China'.
I close the door, carry my importable luggage down the many steps and roll everything across the gravel to the street. On account of the paper windows behind which Sado is working, my departure is invisible for the Master.

I am lucky. The bus which leaves every two hours, arrives a few minutes later.
In The City I take a taxi to the bus stop from which the direct bus for the International Nagoya Airport leaves. It's the last bus that day. The last possibility for my flight.
On the bus, high above the road through the Japanese landscape, I feel as light as a feather.
A few hours later I find a heated room in a hotel at the airport and I take a warm bath.
I call Hsuan to put him at ease. Coming home everybody was upset. They found my room empty.
Kyoko can't stop crying. She is inconsolable.

I can fix my flight the next day.

In Sado's presence I was losing energy by keeping myself in control.
By doing what I have to do, I regain my energy.
During one day I enjoy a kind and helpful Japan that also exists.
Hiroshi's Japan was another Japan where I didn't see more than the dusty ground where Sado Hiroshi lives to work and where we moved between sleeping room, studio and toilet.

On Sunday, 11 March 2007, I flew back.

Hsuan had his own story similar to mine. He was almost at the end of his time. He finished his work and exhibited his big sculptures in one of the three most important Ceramic Musea of this part of the world: the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art in Gifu. I wasted an opportunity.
Hsuan had his own reasons to go or to stay. These reasons changed day by day, independent from me, my staying or departure.
I hoped for him he could end his working period in a positive way. I could not.
Hsuan ended his period with the frustration of not being free to say or to act till the last moment.
Samuel Hsuan-yu Shih was a good solidary friend for me and for mister Sado. Till the end!
In 2008 he married miss Miyuki, his Japanese beauty. In 2009 they got their son, Ken.
Hsuans side is: [http:// www.UNIT-9.com](http://www.UNIT-9.com)

Thanks to Hsuan, Kyoko, Megumi and the others.
Antoinette van Brussel

To avoid recognition, the name Sado Hiroshi is fictive.
I named the village where I stayed The City.

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