

is a creature that is (supposedly) a cat, and who is normally only fed cat food (processed meat) eats raw meat for the first time it is overcome with spiritual ecstasy. This reflects the equation flesh (body) = spirit, and as if to press it to the point of no return brilliantly turns the ‘artificial intelligence-like’ recognition of things on its head. The boisterous laughter of natural intelligence as it conjures up these ‘outside’ ideas can be heard as we are left to question are the people (or things?) that come and go in this scene meat or grass, human or animal or plant, or flesh (body) or mind?

Act 2. The story of how the work ‘place’ where Cat gets a job as an adult actually turns out to be a ‘place’ for filming porn videos. In *Simulacra and Simulation* sociologist Jean Baudrillard writes about American consumerism, “Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America that is Disneyland”. If we apply this idea to this work, porn exists to hide the fact that all of the ‘real’ world is porn.

Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan writes in *Écrits* “Human desire is the desire of the Other”. As an author who is famously obscure, ambiguous and self-effacing, this sentence is certainly not straightforward. However, if we were to unpick it, we could read it as follows: the desires that I think I have are not in fact my own desires but rather the desire of the Other. In other words, the countless ‘I’ desires latent in society, which we mistakenly believe to be our own desires, are in fact unconsciously controlled, regulated and simply repeat and trace the desires of the Other. ‘I’ desire a real-life partner and engage in sexual intercourse. However, this desire is not actually ‘my’ desire (although I mistake it for my own ‘real’ desire) but the repetition and tracing of the desires of the Other that are repeated in porn videos like a kind of automated stamp. ‘My’ desires are therefore the desires of porn videos.

Act 3. The Meat Person (whose meat is actually equal to grass) grows round like an apple and becomes a planet floating in space. Cat and her friends on earth move to the planet, which is for some reason named Planet Apple. They continue to divide and multiply infinitely, turning into a mirror ball spinning at an increasingly rapid speed and threatening to completely cover the universe. Now *KITTY* lives in every corner

of the world, on every surface and in every crevice, watching everything with her pitch-black eyes.

Is this world, a planet where *KITTY* is a parasite feeding off everything everywhere, really a Millennial Kingdom of ‘pink globalisation’ where the pure cells of the simulacra of *kawaii* multiply infinitely? Or is it Armageddon? The essential catastrophe that will strike humanity when the “thin membrane” of *kawaii* breaks, as argued by critic Yomota Inuhiko in “*Kawaii*” *ron [The Theory of Kawaii]*: “The one thing that is certain is that catastrophe has been avoided so far solely because the thin membrane of the concept that is *kawaii* has kept us from facing reality. The twilight of *kawaii* is fast approaching. However, as if ignoring its own demise, *kawaii* boasts even more authority in our imaginations, radiating a dazzling power like a myth of contemporary society.”

KITTY as a modern version of *Yaoyorozu no Kami* (Eight Million Gods in Shinto). Would that bring good fortune and happiness or disaster to humanity? Or would it spin good and bad in to a dizzying circle, throwing us into a final judgement where artificial intelligence and natural intelligence stab at each other. We ‘experience’ this in this theater.

Incidentally, the script *KITTY* begins with a scene in which Cat appears on stage and bites into an apple that subsequently flies upwards. There’s also the apple pie, Cat’s favorite dish that Mama diligently makes for Cat. And finally, the planet that Cat and her friends move to: Planet Apple. Why so much apple? Come to think of it, wasn’t the apple the fruit that Adam and Eve took a bite from in the Garden of Eden? The apple, the fruit that brought desire and imputed original sin to humanity.



This is an English translation of the text on pages P4 and P7-9 of the Japanese brochure.

ROHM Theatre Kyoto Repertory Premiere

Satoko Ichihara / Q *KITTY*

2025.2.17(Mon)- 24(Mon • Holiday)

ROHM Theatre Kyoto North Hall

Translation Kei Saito(Ichihara’s text) , Juliet Reiko Knapp(Kumakura’s text)

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Director's Note

Satoko Ichihara/Q

(Text and Direction)

At the start of making this work, I traveled to Korea to conduct research on prostitution. I met various people taking actions from different standpoints with different views and listened to them. Needless to say, there is no single standpoint, view or activity with perfection. There are strong conflicts among them. They are taking actions for the ones who, from their standpoint, need to be saved. Each of these actions is a relief for some but not for others. The same may be said about my work. I don't faithfully portray what I researched, but I cannot help thinking that essential elements are hiding in things that accidentally came into my sight in the course of research: "characters" that spread around the world existing only as commodities, and those "red lights" that light up "meat" at butchers and "women" at sex shops. Starting from those things, I expanded my imagination, shuffled them and created this piece. As I was writing the play, I thought of an idea to have several actors playing the main character "cat", and the faces of three women came to my mind: Sooyeon, Yurie and Birdy.

It was when I presented a piece called *Me and Sailor Moon's Subway Ride* in Korea in 2018 that I first met them. Artists from three countries, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong, gathered and created this piece. During the course of this creation, we talked each other about ourselves all day from morning to night, until we were exhausted. Sooyeon Sung, Yurie Nagayama and Birdy Wong Ching Yan who are performing in *KITTY* were also part of that team then. We grew up in the same era in the countries in East Asia that are influencing each other in various ways, and we are female artists of the same generation; I have felt very close to them, almost as if they are part of me. At the beginning, it just felt like my instinct, but as soon as the rehearsal started, I have become assured that "Cat" was them. I feel joy to be able to take their hands again and create together.

In addition, by collaborating with Shie Minamino, the costume designer, and Masamitsu Araki, the sound designer, I am able to conduct experiments that are new to me. In the play, the main character "Cat" gets on a subway without knowing where it is going. As we are rehearsing, I am also feeling as if I am on a subway, not knowing where I am heading to.

Lastly, I would like to thank you all for coming to see the performance today. I would be happy if you enjoy it.

Notes on the Script *KITTY*

Takaaki Kumakura

(Dramaturg)

Please note this text contains specific details and spoilers about the work. ROHM Theatre Kyoto

Since her early works, Satoko Ichihara / Q has turned contemporary audiences' ideas of 'accepted social norms' on their head. In particular, she has exploded or subtly infiltrated things 'outside' such as femininity, animality, and even life itself, in response to the sometimes blatant, other times cunning and obscene, patriarchal logic and structures that pervade contemporary society and the theatre world.

I have been calling Ichihara's innate ability to summon the 'outside' 'natural intelligence'. This is a term coined by life scientist (and more recently artist) Pegio-Yukio Gunji. According to Gunji's book, also titled *Natural Intelligence*, 'artificial intelligence' is a kind of intelligence that is automatic and machine-like in the way it follows the rules of existing contexts and structures that govern our recognition and judgement of things. This is opposed to 'natural intelligence' which is a kind of intelligence that is indifferent to these contexts and structures and therefore allow it to make a gibe or poke fun at them. It is an intelligence that can summon the 'outside' and stuns our 'common sense' cognition and judgment of things.

Through recent works such as *The Bacchae-Holstein Milk Cows*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Yoroboshi: The Weakling*, Ichihara's 'natural intelligence' has adapted and transformed the existing theatrical forms of Greek tragedy, opera and Bunraku respectively, while like a sharpened dagger too quick for the naked eye, slashed and sliced through the 'artificial intelligence' logic of animal/human, west/east, male/female, human/puppet, more radically, scandalously, sensitively and expertly than ever. After watching these performances,

we as the audience are so skillfully lacerated and wounded all over that we barely recognize how we've been cut up, and can only return home in a kind of stupor.

Then there is Ichihara's new work *KITTY*. In front of me is a script consisting of three acts. In the first act once again the contexts and structures of 'artificial intelligence', this time of carnivore/herbivore and human/animal/plant, are the target of ridicule.

According to Carol Adams' feminist-vegetarian theory in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, meat-eating and patriarchal values are deeply connected in contemporary Western culture. As if to represent this, at a dinner table of a family of three, made up of a monogamous couple named Mama and Papa and their only child Cat, Mama becomes increasingly covered in blood while preparing the meat that Papa then eats. One day Papa is tricked into eating soy meat that he thinks is meat (here meat almost equals grass), and in order to console the furious Papa, Mama and child (Cat) prepare and serve the 'artistic' dish 'Meat Person' comprised of all kinds of different meats piled high. The Meat Person that suddenly appears and for some reason begins to dance is a herbivore (despite being made of meat themselves), because they are made from the meat of livestock that are originally herbivores. This meat = grass equation which short-circuits 'artificial intelligence' bears a close resemblance to the Monster in *Frankenstein*, which is also made with dead flesh and, like its author Mary Shelley (who is said to have been a vegetarian), a herbivore. What's more, when Cat's pet, which