

Article

Consuming the Tower of Babel and Japanese Public Art Museums—The Exhibition of Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel” and the *Babel-mori* Project

Kei Uno

Tamagawa University Museum of Education, 6-1-1 Tamagawagakuen, Machida, Tokyo 194-8610, Japan;
kei@lab.tamagawa.ac.jp

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Abstract: Two Japanese public art museums, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery and the National Art Museum of Osaka, hosted Project Babel, which included the *Babel-mori* (Heaping plate of food items imitating the Tower of Babel) project. This was part of an advertising campaign for the traveling exhibition “BABEL Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: Bruegel’s ‘The Tower of Babel’ and Great 16th Century Masters” in 2017. However, *Babel-mori* completely misconstrued the meaning of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. I explore the opinions of the curators at the art museums who hosted it and the university students who took my interview on this issue. I will also discuss the treatment of artwork with religious connotations in light of education in Japan. These exhibitions of Christian artwork provide important evidence on the contemporary reception of Christianity in Japan and, more broadly, on Japanese attitudes toward religious minorities.

Keywords: Pieter Bruegel I; the Tower of Babel; *Babel-mori* project; Japanese public art museum; freedom of expression; fundamental law of education; museum and religious artifacts; museum education

1. Introduction

Two Japanese public art museums, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery and the National Art Museum of Osaka, hosted the traveling exhibition titled “BABEL Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: Bruegel’s ‘The Tower of Babel’ and Great 16th Century Masters” in 2017. This exhibition was comprised of artworks that belong to the collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in the Netherlands. The main feature of the exhibition was “The Tower of Babel” by Pieter Bruegel I (c.1525–1530). Masterpieces by Pieter Bruegel I, Jheronimus Bosch (c.1450–1516), and other artists of their age were exhibited. The topics of the artwork on display varied, however, many related to Christianity, including as follows: The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, The Annunciation, Virgin and Child, Adoration of the Magi, The Crucifixion, Christ as the Good Shepherd, The Last Judgement, and The Seven Deadly Sins. They reflected the faith and spirit of the Netherlands in the 16th century. This exhibition was a great success both in Tokyo and Osaka, at least as a business venture. There were 379,527 visitors to the exhibitions¹ in Tokyo and 278,727² in Osaka. In the rankings for the most visited special art exhibitions held in Japan in 2017, the Tokyo exhibit was fifth place and the Osaka exhibit was tenth.³

¹ Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum Annual Report 2017, 15.

² National Art Museum Annual Report 2017, 60.

³ Bijutsu Techo Japanese Contemporary Art Magazine- Available online: <https://bijutsutecho.com/magazine/insight/10195>.

Organizers, including the two art museums and the Asahi Shimbun (The Asahi Newspaper Company), undertook a large advertising campaign titled “The Project Babel” for the exhibition. As part of it, they encouraged restaurants and cafés near the venue to produce special menu items imitating the Tower of Babel. This campaign was called the *Babel-mori* (heaping plate of food items imitating the Tower of Babel) project. Accordingly, Tower of Babel roast beef and pancakes were widely sold at restaurants and cafés during the exhibition. This commercial venture was attractive, but it completely detracted from the meaning of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. However, according to my research, both the curators in charge of this exhibition and the university students at Tamagawa University that I interviewed felt positive about this representation of Biblical material. During the exhibition, no Japanese citizens expressed negative opinions about this campaign to the art museums. All of these responses are valuable resources for understanding Japanese appreciation of Christian artwork. This serves as evidence for understanding how contemporary Japanese citizens respond to artistic expressions of Christianity.

I would also like to present an argument about the dilemma of Japanese public art museums with regard to the treatment of Christian artwork and religious artifacts. While some artists and museum goers prioritize “freedom of expression” over denigrating religious values, the Fundamental Law of Education in Japan stipulates that we should value the attitude of religious knowledge, general knowledge regarding religion, and the position of religion in social life. Considering that the museum is regarded as a place for educating Japanese citizens, museums are required to value religious knowledge and the position of religion in social life to abide by the spirit of the law.

In this piece, first, I explain this traveling exhibition and interpretations of Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel”, which was put on display by a curator at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery and a university professor in art history who academically supervised this exhibition. Second, I discuss the *Babel-mori* project. Finally, I argue for how the treatment of artwork with Christian connotations by Japanese public art museums is relevant to the Fundamental Law of Education.

2. The Exhibition and Interpretations of Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel”

The traveling exhibition titled “BABEL Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: Bruegel’s ‘The Tower of Babel’ and Great 16th Century Masters” was displayed in 2017 at The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, from April 18 to July 2, and at The National Art Museum of Osaka, from July 18 to October 15.⁴ It comprised of eight sections as follows: 1. *Sculpture*; 2. *In the Service of Faith*; 3. *In Holland: Cornelis Engebrechtsz, Lucas van Leyden and Jacob Cornelisz van Oostanen*; 4. *New Paths*; 5. *Jheronimus Bosch*; 6. *In Bosch’s Manner*; 7. *Bruegel’s Prints*; and 8. *Pieter Bruegel I*. The first section displayed sculptures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints from the Netherlands in the sixteenth century. The second section exhibited sacred artworks, including the Annunciation, the Virgin and Child, the Crucifixion, and St. Catherine from the Netherlands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Artwork with Christian connotations such as “the Good Shepherd” by Cornelis Engebrechtsz (1460/1462–1527) and “Virgin and Child with Angel Musicians” by Jacob Cornelisz van Oostanen (1460/1465–1533) were exhibited in the third section. The fourth section, “New Paths” presented that some artists in this age painted pots, flowers, fruits, and scenes of daily life in their artwork. For instance, the painter of the “Virgin and Child in a Village” (anonymous) drew books, a water jug, and a basin at the back of it. The fifth and sixth sections displayed the artwork of Jheronimus Bosch. Prints by Pieter Bruegel I were displayed in the seventh section. These included both topics with a Christian connotation and figures of people from his own time. These works included “The Temptation of St. Anthony,” the series of “The Seven Deadly Sins,” “The Last Judgement,” “The Descent of Christ into Limbo,” “The Fair at Hoboken,” and “The Peasant

⁴ The Tokyo exhibit was organized by The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, the Asahi Shimbun (The Asahi Newspaper Company), Tokyo Broadcasting System Television Inc., and Asahi Satellite Broadcasting Limited. The Osaka exhibit was organized by The National Museum of Art, Osaka, the Asahi Shimbun (The Asahi Newspaper Company), Asahi Broadcasting Corporation, and Asahi Satellite Broadcasting Limited.

Wedding Dance.” The last section, the climax of this exhibition, displayed Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel,” owned by Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. A reproduction, which was enlarged 300%, and a three-dimensional computer rendering of this masterpiece were also displayed in the same section. These were also reproduced at the Tokyo University of the Arts Center of Innovation.

The formal exhibition catalogue was published by the exhibition’s organizers. Scripts explaining each artwork on display were submitted by the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. The Chief Curator at The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, Hitoshi Yamamura, who was responsible for this exhibition in the Tokyo venue, contributed a column titled “Anxiety, Humour and Humanism, the Contemporary Significance of The Tower of Babel.” Tatsuo Takahashi, a Professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, who academically supervised this exhibition, wrote an article “A Macro-Micro Fusion, The Originality and Artistic Significance of Bruegel’s Babel Towers” for the catalogue. Yamamura explains in his column that the tower of Babel was built at the initiative of the King Nimrod, who feared natural disasters as the condemnation of God.⁵ This interpretation of the Tower of Babel does not fit either the Biblical context or Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel” on display because the Bible does not mention King Nimrod’s initiative in building the tower and he does not appear in the picture. However, in his column, he suggests that the responsibility for building the tower was King Nimrod’s alone and that the people were not willingly engaged in this project.

On the other hand, Takahashi details a different story in his article. He explains that both King Nimrod and his people were willingly involved in this project. He writes that King Nimrod was not mentioned in Genesis but that Flavius Josephus described King Nimrod in his work *Antiquities of the Jews*. Citing some passages from it, Takahashi says that King Nimrod agitated the people to rebel against God and they followed him.⁶ In the discussion on Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel,” he says the following: “In the Rotterdam *Tower of Babel*, Bruegel moves further away from tower artists’ conventional practice of visualizing human arrogance, divine retribution, or both. The absence of Nimrod and his lieutenants forestalls perception of the project as the pipedream of a single, crazed tyrant. We perceived the scene, instead, as a demographic vista, a grassroots undertaking by a vast multitude of willing participants.”⁷ Though Takahashi describes the Biblical interpretation of the Tower of Babel as implying human arrogance and divine retribution, he stresses Bruegel’s description of the positive and energetic shape of human community in his article. He writes, “In seeking insights into Bruegel’s spirituality in the Vienna and Rotterdam *The Tower of Babel* paintings, we need to begin with an honest acknowledgement: neither painting presents the construction of the tower overtly as a debacle of human arrogance, and neither offers so much as a hint of impending divine retribution The overall message, at least at the visual level, is a positive one about human potential.”⁸

As we see above, the interpretations of the tower of Babel by Yamamura and Takahashi do not adhere to their Biblical and Christian origins. From the position of a curator at an art museum and a professor of art history, they were inclined to prioritize explaining the originality of Bruegel’s masterpiece rather than narrating the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. Yamamura did not suggest a relationship between their liberal interpretations of Bruegel’s the Tower of Babel and the *Babel-mori* project. However, we need to take heed of the liberal approach to interpreting this masterpiece that the two intellectuals involved in this exhibition took.

⁵ (Yamamura 2017, p. 190).

⁶ (Takahashi 2017, pp. 203–4).

⁷ (Takahashi 2017, p. 207).

⁸ (Takahashi 2017, p. 208).

3. The Opinions of Art Museum Curators about the *Babel-mori* Project

I have sent email questionnaires to curators from the two art museums involved asking about their involvement in the *Babel-mori* project and their current assessments of the project.⁹ My questions were as follows:

- (1) How were you involved in the *Babel-mori* project?
- (2) Have you heard any negative or reluctant voices from museum staff involving the *Babel-mori* project? For instance, that it can debase some adherents of a particular religion, such as Christianity?
- (3) At present, do you feel positively about hosting *Project Babel* including the *Babel-mori* project?
- (4) What do you think of public art museums heavily supported by tax payers' money engaging in the *Babel-mori* project that can be taken as denigrating a particular religion such as Christianity?

The two curators' responses to my questions were very similar. As to my first question, both Hitoshi Yamamura and Masahiro Yasugi, the Senior Researcher at The National Art Museum of Osaka, who was responsible for the exhibition in Osaka venue, said that they did not directly engage in the project because the Asahi Shimbun, one of the organizers of this exhibition, was in charge of advertising. Yamamura said "We are engaged in advertising campaigns for promoting the exhibition. Asahi Shimbun, one of organizers, devised the project as part of the advertising campaigns. This project was developed by commercial facilities near the museum. We acknowledged the project and media printed it." Yasugi said "*Babel-mori* project was organized by commercial facilities near the Museum. This was part of an advertising campaign mainly devised by the Asahi Shimbun. We (The National Art Museum of Osaka) did not directly engage in the project, though we acknowledged the project." Their comments indicate that they would like to be distanced from their involvement in *Babel-mori* project. On the other hand, the response of a staff member at the Asahi Shimbun, who was involved in this exhibition, at the Tokyo venue was subtly different. He said, "As one of the advertising campaigns, the *Babel-mori* project was co-organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, the Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo Broadcasting System Television, Inc., and Asahi Satellite Broadcasting Limited. They organized this project; however, the Asahi Shimbun was mainly engaged in the advertising campaign."¹⁰ This staff member admitted that the Asahi Shimbun played a major part in organizing the *Babel-mori* project but he also indicated that all organizers, including the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, should be equally responsible for it.

Regarding my second question, respondents said that nobody visiting their museums was concerned about the *Babel-mori* project. As to my third question, asking about their images of the *Babel-mori* project, they said, "the Project Babel, including the *Babel-mori* project was not intended to denigrate Christianity or the Tower of Babel." As to my last question, they said that they had not received any negative comments about the *Babel-mori* project from anyone. Reviewing their responses, I found that they were not very negative about their involvement in the *Babel-mori* project, though they were apt to evade responsibility for their involvement in the project. The more critical point in their comments is that they thought that the *Babel-mori* project did not denigrate Christianity. Not only the curators but Japanese citizens, including visitors to the exhibition, did not care about the relevance of the *Babel-mori* project. Although "Project Babel," including the "*Babel-mori* project," was a large advertising campaign, no Japanese citizen voiced concerns about the project in regard to their faith or religious values.

The absence of protest to this project was in contrast to the strong opposition by some Japanese citizens to the injunction, by the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery, against the Japanese artist Katsuhisa

⁹ I received email responses from Hitoshi Yamamura at The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery on 3 September 2018 and Masahiro Yasugi on 5 September. I cordially appreciate their cooperation in my research.

¹⁰ I received an email response from Takeshi Abe at the Asahi Shimbun on 1 December 2017. I cordially appreciate his cooperation in my research.

Nakagaki. Nakagaki was to exhibit his sculpture titled, “Portrait of the Period-Endangered species idiot, JAPONICA” in 2014. His piece was to be displayed at a group exhibition of Japanese contemporary sculptors renting some space from the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery. It took the shape of the *Kofun* (ancient burial mound) to the surface of which was attached a paper about the significance of observing Article Nine of the Constitution of Japan, the folly of visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, and protesting the Abe administration as right wing. The U.S. flag was spread on the floor as part of his sculpture. Following its rule to refuse facilities to any individuals or organizations that support or condemn a particular political party or religion, the museum requested for Nakagaki to remove the paper if he wanted to display his work. Though he obeyed the injunction, strong opposition campaigns against the injunction took place throughout Japan. Some Japanese citizens conducted a campaign to collect signatures protesting it. A movie was produced questioning “freedom of expression” during this conflict. Several articles and columns denouncing the injunction by Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery were released in print and online. They enthusiastically justified displaying Nakagaki’s artwork without any restrictions in light of observing the “freedom of expression” stipulated in the Constitution of Japan. The difference in how Nakagaki and the *Babel-mori* project were received by the Japanese public indicated their strong interest in freedom of expression guaranteed by Constitution of Japan but their indifferent attitude in their respect to the Sacred.

4. The Opinions of University Students about the *Babel-mori* Project

I have asked Tamagawa university students, who heard my lecture on the *Babel-mori* project in 2018, about their opinions of the project. I have collected questionnaires from forty-two students who cooperated with my research. My questions are as follows:

- (1) Are you for or against the *Babel-mori* project?
- (2) Do you think that the *Babel mori* project denigrates Christianity or displeases Christians?

As to my first question, thirty students were for, ten students were against, and two students gave no answer. Sample comments of students who supported the project are as follows: “The *Babel-mori* project can be an effective method to induce young people who have little knowledge of the arts to come to the exhibition. They are able to learn about the Tower of Babel by enjoying *Babel-mori* plates” (Senior, in the Department of Education); “This project is nothing but an advertising campaign” (Senior, in the Department of Education); “This project is fine in Japan because the ratio of Japanese Christians is small” (Junior, in the Department of Agriculture); “The *Babel-mori* project is effective in furthering the collaboration between the museum and other facilities in the neighborhood.” (Sophomore, Department of Agriculture); and “The *Babel-mori* project was organized only for attracting visitors and providing them with photogenic items for uploading onto Instagram. That is why I support the project! I believe art should be appreciated free from religious bias.” (Senior, in the Department of Education).

Sample negative comments on the project are as follows: “We should be sensitive in organizing advertising projects utilizing religious materials. We must imagine that some people can be disgusted by the *Babel-mori* project” (Senior, in the Department of Education); “The *Babel-mori* project serves only to provide materials for visitors. It does not relate to the exhibition itself. That is why it does not function as an advertising exhibition in the real sense of the word” (Senior, in The Department of Education); “Various adherents of religions visit the museum. Public museums should be concerned with how they feel about projects such as *Babel-mori*”. (Sophomore, in the Department of Agriculture; “People are coming to the exhibition not to appreciate artwork but to upload *Babel-mori* plates on Instagram.” (Sophomore, in the Department of Performing Arts); and “It appears that the *Babel-mori* project denigrates God” (Senior, in the Department of Arts).

Next, I review student’s comments on my second question, “Do you think that the *Babel-mori* project denigrates Christianity or displeases Christians?” Fifteen students replied “yes,” twenty-six students replied “no”, and one student provided no answer. Student said, “Christians believe in God. I suppose they must be disgusted if they know about the *Babel-mori* project which makes fun of the

Tower of Babel. The story of the Tower of Babel is an admonition to us from God.” (Sophomore, in the Department of Performing Arts); “Christians put importance on the Tower of Babel. They would think that this project has denigrated Christianity because the project makes fun of it only to attract visitors and to entertain young people.” (Sophomore, in the Department of Performing Arts); “As I am not Christian, I suppose Christians were disgusted at consuming the Tower of Babel.” (Sophomore, in the Department of Performing Arts); and “As I am not Christian, honestly I don’t know how they feel about the *Babel-mori* project. However, if some project made fun of my parents, brothers and people I respect, I would conclude that they dishonored me” (Senior, in the Department of Agriculture).

The comments of students who thought the project did not denigrate Christianity were as follows: “The *Babel-mori* project does not make a fool of anybody. This is a commercial advertisement” (Senior, in the Department of Education); “It is just artwork” (Senior in the Department of Education); “I am not so interested in Christianity. Therefore, I suppose I have no problem with this project” (Senior, in the Department of Engineering); and “I feel it is distasteful but it does not denigrate Christianity” (Junior at the Department of Agriculture). Among the various comments of this type, two are particularly noteworthy. A female student in the Department of Education said, “As a Christian, I am not displeased about the project.” Her comment indicates that she was not shocked or dismayed to witness *Babel-mori* plates, though she was Christian. Another comment was a male student in the Department of Agriculture. He said, “Christ would not be angry at the *Babel-mori* project.” It is uncertain whether he is a Christian, however, he thought that Christ was so broad-minded and indulgent that he would not care about *Babel-mori* plates.

Their comments are very intriguing for exploring the reception of Christianity by contemporary Japanese citizens. Kevin Hanlon’s research is helpful in understanding their responses. By collecting questionnaires from Catholics in Japan, he suggests that Japanese Catholics are more apt to imagine the Ultimate Order to be one that always leads to benevolence and care. He says, in his work *Popular Catholicism in Japan*, that only a small number of Japanese Catholics referred to God as Judge. Japanese people do point to an Ultimate Transcendence, but do not picture it as ultimately judgmental.¹¹ This image of Christ is also witnessed in works by the Japanese Catholic novelist, Shūsaku Endō (1923–1996). He portrays Jesus as a person who accepted everyone unconditionally. In his works, such as *A Life of Jesus*, he does not include descriptions of Jesus as judging humanity. Considering this backdrop, it is reasonable to assume that there were no voices against the *Babel-mori* plates coming from the position of the “awe and respect due God”, even among many Japanese Christians.

5. The Relevance of the Treatment of Artworks with a Christian Connotation at Japanese Art Museums

In this section, I would like to discuss the relevance of the treatment of art works with a Christian connotation in relation to Japanese education. First of all, freedom of expression is guaranteed to all Japanese citizens by Article 21 of the Constitution of Japan. Accordingly, it is allowable, and even desirable, for artists, curators, and professors to exhibit their works as they wish and to present their interpretations at art museums. However, assuming the educational function of art museums, they should be mindful of the value of religious knowledge and the position of religion in social life, following to the intent of the Fundamental Law of Education.

In Japan, museums, including art museums, are regarded as places for educating Japanese citizens (places for *shakai kyoiku*, or “social education.”). In accord with this, they are also recommended to engage in school education as well. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, the ministry that oversees Japanese educational affairs, has encouraged Japanese schools to collaborate with museums to form “high-quality” educational programs. In Japan, educational institutions should follow the intent of the Fundamental Law of Education, which is informally known

¹¹ (Hanlon 2004, p. 7).

as the “Constitution on Education.” This law mentions religion in Article 15. It stipulates, “The attitude of religious knowledge, general knowledge regarding religion, and the position of religion in social life shall be valued in education.” In applying this article to art museums, curators and educators are instructed to take heed to respect the religious connotations of artworks. Following those concerns, art museums are required not only to respect “freedom of expression” but also value “religious knowledge and the position of religion in social life.” However, in the case of “BABEL Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: Bruegel’s ‘The Tower of Babel’ and Great 16th Century Masters,” curators did not abide by the second mandate when they allowed the “*Babel-mori* project” to proceed. Heaping plates of food items imitating the Tower of Babel were anything but fitting to Christian faiths.

Although I understand the exhibition and the marketing are discussed separately, I think one supposed reason why Japanese curators and staff at the two public art museums condoned “*Babel-mori* project” was their preference for constructivist theory.

This theory is often used for organizing exhibitions and educational programs at art museums. Constructivism is based on relativism. Constructivist thinkers claim that conclusions reached by the learner are not validated by whether or not they conform to some external standard of truth, but whether they “make sense” within the constructed reality of the learner.¹² In a constructivist approach, the meaning of the objects is treated not as being inherent in them but as created when observers interact with them, generating and assigning meanings to them. A teacher will try to stimulate curiosity and imagination, provoke thought, and connect the viewers’ prior experience with the object.¹³

George E Hein, who advocated for “The Constructivist Museum” in his work *Learning in the Museum*, said “Embracing constructivism requires two self-conscious acts on the part of museum staff. One is to acknowledge that exhibition-making is not displaying truth, but interpretation . . . The other is to pursue aggressively the study of how visitors make meaning in the museum.”¹⁴ Accordingly, while educational methods relying on constructivist thinkers encourage the creativity and critical thinking ability of learners, severe problems can result if curators and educators at art museums prioritize this theory too much, devaluing the original context of objects. From this viewpoint, the Christian connotation of sacred objects can be made negligible. Curators and museum educators who value the constructivist approach highly can hesitate to inform their learners firmly that “Jesus is the son of God” in their explanations of masterpieces on “the Nativity” and “the Crucifixion.” This implies that interpretations of museum objects, even if they are religious objects, are diverse and changeable according to the criteria of each viewer and the surroundings they were born and brought up in. Adele Z. Silver at the Cleveland Museum of Art commented, “Museums are inventions of men, not inevitable, eternal, ideal, nor divine. They exist for things we put in them, and they change as each generation chooses how to see and use those things.”¹⁵ As a result, if curators and educators at art museums employ constructivist theories in their exhibitions and educational activities on religious objects, they are not only preventing learners from receiving appropriate knowledge on religion, but can violate the intent of Article 15 of the Fundamental Law of Education. In addition, artworks with religious connotations, such as Bruegel’s “The Tower of Babel”, provide rich sources for moral education, which is part of school curricula in Japan. Paintings about stories of the Bible and the saints provide general knowledge on Christianity for students in primary and secondary schools.

6. Conclusions

I have discussed how Christian works are treated in Japan, where the percentage of Christians is less than one percent of the whole population, to examine the involvement of Japanese public art museums in the *Babel-mori* project, which was an advertising campaign for Bruegel’s “The Tower of

¹² (Hein 1998, p. 34).

¹³ (Kai-Kee 2011, p. 46).

¹⁴ (Hein 1998, p. 177).

¹⁵ (Newsom and Silver 1978, p. 13).

Babel.” Although the theme of this masterpiece was derived from a story in Genesis, this project was completely detached from its Biblical and Christian contexts. From this, I propose that Japanese art exhibitions with Christian artwork have not always reflected the faith of Christianity and Christians as intended by artists. The number of visitors to exhibitions of Christian artwork cannot be taken as evidence for the prevailing faith of Christianity in Japan or even as respect for the Christian faith.

In reviewing comments of curators and university students on the *Babel-mori* project, an absence of the awe and respect due God was observed. Even students who were negative about the *Babel-mori* project were not reflective on their faith and their awareness of their relation to God and themselves. The main reason for opposing the project was their sympathies with Christians. I have also found that even a Christian student accepted the *Babel-mori* project.

However, this does not remit the responsibility of curators and staff at art museums for their involvement in the *Babel-mori* project. Apart from the faith of Japanese citizens, curators should take heed of Article 15 of the Fundamental Law of Education. It stipulates that religious knowledge and the position of religion in social life be valued in places of education.

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