TV Art in the Emergence and Development of Newscaster Shows

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Television art denotes a wide range of elements that are indispensable in newscasting, most notably the large and small props used in studio sets, the clothing, titles, and graphics. These elements are hardly a primary object of viewers' interest and attention. But they contribute to screen images that look real, convincing, and credible and convey a feeling of "being there," and by helping to create a sense of distance and familiarity, they underlie the viewers' perception of place and of space as a program unfolds (Mitsubayashi 1978).

A series of video clips gathered for a news program, for example, are by themselves just a fragmented assortment of images whose connectedness is usually not apparent. But when they are shown with a well-written script and/or comments from the newscaster, they can be worked into a unified context and given coherent meaning (Ishida 2003). Before that can happen, however, there is groundwork to be done to insure that the program is received and understood as a news program; TV art refers to the various and sundry elements that make up the bulk of that work. Television art encompasses the type of place—the studio—where the newscaster stands or sits; what the newscaster is wearing; how many people are in the studio at broadcast time; what small props, like telephones or models, are to be used; what computer graphics (CG) are employed, whether subtitles and other text information are used, and so forth. These factors all feed into the overall impression received by viewers.

Research on TV art considers this entire constellation of activities and things in both the contemporary context and in historical perspective, through analysis of accounts by people and organizations in the field and their film resources, charts, graphs, and other relevant data. We believe that this research, because its approach is different from the usual work on TV programs and the broadcasting history, can shed new light not only on the history of the modes of expression and techniques that have been tried on TV, but also on the social, cultural, and historical development of television as a medium.[1]

[1] On the objectives and value of research on television art and the relationship between television art and on-screen presentation, see Hirotani and Yonekura 2009.

ADVENT OF THE NEWSCASTER SHOW

NHK's "News Center Nine" (NC9) and TV Asahi Corporation's "News Station" (NS) are both classic examples of a type of broadcast news program that was developed in the 1970s and 1980s in Japan. Called "caster shows," these primetime programs were centered on one or more anchorpersons or "casters." They established a prototype for TV news shows whose basic style has endured to the present day. Our focus here is the studio sets of those two programs.

Since 1985 NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute has been doing a survey once every five years on "Japanese and Television," and in that survey one of the questions asks respondents to choose from among 18 genres of TV programs and to indicate what programs they watch frequently. In each set of results so far, the top choices have consistently been "News or news shows" (70 percent or more; 73 percent in 2005) and "Weather report" and "Drama" (around 50 percent). The considerable gap between the most frequently watched programs (news at 70 percent or more) and the next two choices (around 50 percent each) has held steady to the present.[2] It is clear that TV news programs are an extremely large presence in the lives of today's Japanese as a source of news and information. Further, the newscasting format that has become synonymous in Japan with TV news is the "caster show," a comparatively long anchor-type program lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour or more, facilitated and led by one or more anchors (newscasters or "casters") who at various times host guest commentators and others and add their own interpretations and commentary. The term *kyasuta* (caster) is a Japanized version of the English "newscaster," referring to the person Americans call the anchor. By now, the anchor-type show is the norm—it is what TV viewers expect when they watch the news.

It was not always so. The current style in news programs was not established until well after the start of TV broadcasting. From the outset of broadcasting in 1953, NHK and NTV (Nippon Television Network) aired news programs, but the standard format was the "pattern" newscast model where an announcer reads from a prepared script relying on "patterns," that is, photos, text, maps, charts, and other still images. There were "movie news" programs that used their own film resources, but neither NHK nor NTV had the facilities to process film themselves, and so they had to outsource the processing. That is why news footage was often aired anywhere from a few days to a week after the events in question had occurred (Terebi Hodo Kenkyukai 1980). It

[2] For details on the same survey, see Shiraishi, Hara, Terui 2005.

Figure 1. NHK "Today's News" studio

was a far cry from the breathless "up-to-the-minute" reporting that characterizes today's TV news (Yokoyama 2001; Ikeda 2009). More to the point of this article, TV news in that era, when people still referred to television as the "electric picture show," was produced using starkly spare studio sets.

Television broadcasting made great strides during the 1960s. It was a time when TV sets were spreading rapidly in Japan; news sources and production networks were expanded and improved, video filming and relay technology was constantly moving ahead, and the broadcasting time-frame lengthened. TV news programs grew in quantity and rose in quality, one outcome being the emergence of "wide" news shows, which gave broad coverage to domestic and international news (Hagiwara and Kawabata 2001). Shows like NHK "Today's News" (NHK 1960–72) (Figure 1) and the first "wide"-style news program from a commercial broadcaster, "JNN Newscope" (TBS 1962–90), are good examples of this type (NHK 2001). Television art, too, grew more diverse and three-dimensional, using the Chromakey system (with a blue or green background screen), "patterns" (explanation boards, also called flip charts), multiple cameras, and so forth.

In the 1970s and onward, one by one new anchor-type news programs like those we are familiar with today made their appearance on Japanese television. The earliest fully developed programs of this kind—caster shows—were NC9 on public television (NHK 1974–88) and NS produced for commercial television (TV Asahi 1985–2004). This person (or persons) not only functions as the emcee, announcer, and program facilitator, but also is responsible for a

certain amount of news content editing and news delivery (Isomura 1983).[3] It quickly became apparent how far the anchor-type news programs were moving from the conventional newscasting format. Keeping the anchor(s) at center stage, they made improvements and innovations in content, style of presentation, and of course in the ways they used TV art. At the beginning, the commercial stations and NHK alike adopted the style and presentation techniques—including the uses of TV art—of the network news programs produced by America's Big Three (NBC, CBS, ABC), which were the most advanced at the time. But it was not long before Japan's newscasters went on to develop their own individual modes of production and presentation.

THE ISOMURA ERA OF NEWS CENTER NINE

"News Center Nine" had a 14-year run (1974–88) that can be divided into three periods corresponding with the tenure of one or more of its anchorpersons:

- Isomura Hisanori era (1974–76)
- Katsube Ryoju/Suetsune Hisashi, and Obama Korehito era (1977–81)
- Kimura Taro/Miyazaki Midori era (1982–88)

This article takes up the first and last of the three periods.

Limelight on the Persona of the Anchor

How did NC9 come across as a news program? There are various discussions about this (see, for example, Ueda 1978; Yahiro 1978), but, in a word, most agree that it embodied an effort to create a news program better suited to and better able to exploit the special capabilities of the medium of television. In so doing it departed from the conventional practices of covering the same content and adhering to the same positions and presentation modes of the leading daily newspapers (NC9 Seisaku Gurupu 1977). The concepts behind NC9 can be summarized in the following four items (NC9 Junbi Iinkai 1973):

1. Stop presenting news in a predetermined order: political, economic, then social matters. (Break away from newspaper reporting conventions);
2. Replace the announcer reading verbatim from a script with an anchor who talks "with" the viewers. (Break away from primary reliance on newscript);

[3] The word caster (anchor in the U.S.) has become so linguistically embedded in Japan that it is increasingly used to refer to news readers as well as to commentators, hosts, and emcees of varied current affairs talk shows.

Figure 2. NC9 first anchor Isomura Hisanori

3. As much as possible, deliver news from the field. (On-the-spot-news, direct from people at the site);
4. Optimal use of film with photogravure images and recorded on-site voices and sounds; present with maximum visual and sound appeal.

NC9 sought to realize these concepts in concrete and visual form, and to achieve that they turned to an assortment of TV art techniques applied in the studio.

To begin with, NC9 could count on the popularity of Isomura Hisanori (Figure 2), whose distinctive gentle wit and urbane speaking style, epitomized by his trademark turn of phrase (that later became the title of a book by Isomura), "Chotto kiza desu ga. . . ." [Maybe I'm being a bit pretentious . . .], was immensely appealing to viewers. And so the set was calculated to make Isomura visually conspicuous as the central figure of the program. For example, the voice microphone that presenters had been using in standard news programs was normally a stand mike placed on the presenter's desk, but in the NC9 studio the anchor used a lapel mike. This adjustment came about at the insistence of Isomura himself, who argued, "If I use a stand mike, I will look like I'm just reading off the news from a prepared script, and as long as we do that we'll never shake off NHK's stuffy image."[4]

The anchor desk, also, was made slightly lower than the standard height. That was done so that Isomura, left elbow resting on the desk, could be filmed from an angle rather than facing the camera straight on. In trying out this style, Isomura had in mind the example of Walter Cronkite, America's best-known anchorman who hosted CBS's "Evening News," a man with tremendous appeal, often said to be "the most trusted man in America." As it turned out, apparently because the viewer response was "not all that good," early on Isomura changed back to the direct style, facing the camera front and center. But in any case, his tenure on NC9 distinguished him as a new kind of anchor. Compared with previous NHK news presenters, he deported himself with greater freedom in a more relaxed, casual way, and the studio set was designed to bring out just those traits of Isomura's personality.

Three-dimensional Space and Presentation

NC9 was the first TV news program that gave full coverage to weather and sports. It furnished pods in the studio that were anchored by sports and weather experts. To accommodate these segments of the program, in a studio that was wider and had greater depth than the older newscasting studios, modules for weather and sports were installed,[5] allowing for a multi-focus presentation that included interaction between Isomura and each of the other anchors (Figure 3).

Even the telephone placed beside Isomura served as a small TV art prop. Isomura was known as an experienced international journalist proficient in foreign languages, and he actually used this telephone to conduct interviews with people in the field and receive updates from on-the-spot reporters. The telephone itself, therefore, had the semiotic value of conveying to viewers the message that the NC9 studio where Isomura was seated was directly connected—the place from where they could hear and see real-time news "as it happens"—at home and abroad.

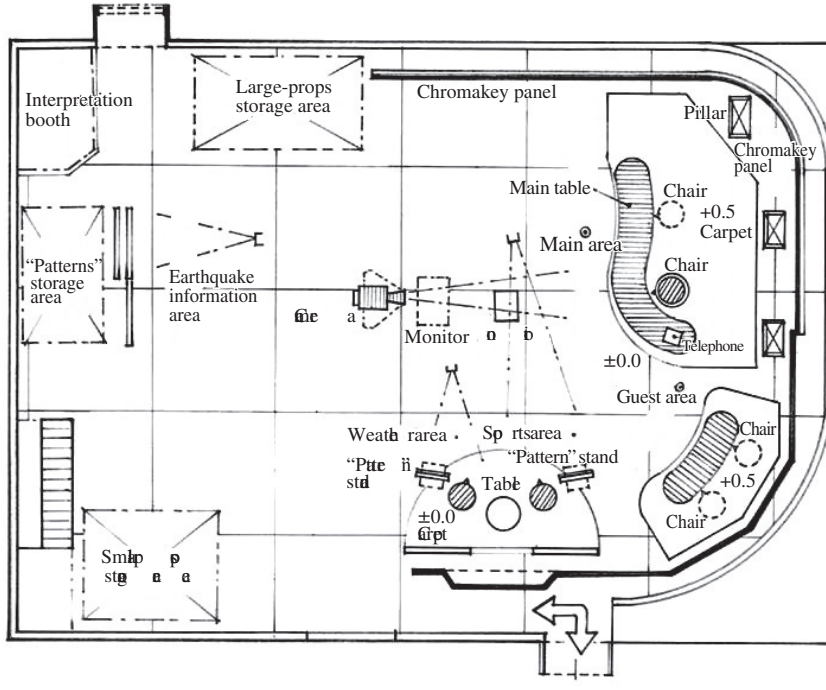
THE KIMURA-MIYAZAKI ERA OF NC9

After Isomura retired as NC9's anchor in 1977, the program continued along the same course, for the most part sticking to its founding concepts as a television-oriented news program foregrounding the personality of the anchor and optimizing the effects of image and sound. The final years of NC9 were the era of anchors Kimura Taro and Miyazaki Midori, the latter a graduate student at Keio University.

[4] Interview with Isomura Hisanori, March 9, 2009.

[5] Layout drawn based on TV image by Kobari Akira, executive art designer for NHK Art, Inc.

Figure 3. NC9 set layout, Isomura era



The "Working Studio": An Outcome of TV Art

The hallmark of TV art in the last period of NC9 was the creation of a new set layout that transformed the broadcasting studio into a "working studio" (CT-510 studio) 432 square meters in area.[6] The working studio idea was intended to transform the entire studio into one huge newsroom where the audience could see news being edited, produced, and delivered. CNN and other news channels in the United States at the time already had this kind of studio, but in Japan, NC9 was the first to try it.

The NC9 working studio was equipped with 21 monitors showing footage coming in from sources at home and all over the world. It had a news footage editing bay and a space where staff could get together to confer and work. There were, in addition, desk computers, fax, telex, copy machines—all manner of machines set up to receive, display, print, and reproduce reports

[6] Broadcasting from Studio 510 started in 1983, when NC9 was going into its tenth year, in Kimura and Miyazaki's second year.

Figure 4. NC9 studio, Kimura-Miyazaki era

transmitted from domestic and international wire services and syndicates. Right on their TV screens the audience could see the staff going about the actual work of producing and editing the news, even in the middle of a real broadcast (Figure 4). It is not so unusual today for a TV station to operate in a studio where the background is active working space, but when the trend was just beginning many viewers were bothered. Some complained that the atmosphere was "unsettling, like you've spilled everything out of a toybox and there are things all over the place," or, "Having all those people milling about behind the anchor is disconcerting" (Kimura 1985).

Inarguably, the idea of the working studio was aimed at conveying functionality, the objective being to show the process from information gathering and film editing to broadcasting as a seamless, continuous whole, and to make it as efficient and speedy as possible. Around the time when changes were being planned for the studio, NC9's managing directors drew up a proposal, which reads,

- The time is quickly approaching when news programs must be able to get the news out fast, complete with visual and audio information, as soon as events happen, while keeping well up to par in content and planning. If we are to succeed in this, we have to rethink the studio and other things.

- In other words, the studio must be conceived as a place where film images and sound are processed. When the program is aired, we'll be transmitting live "from the field."
- Therefore, the old-style "artificial" studio set will no longer suffice. We need to make it into a room where real work goes on, all the processes of gathering, editing, transmitting, relaying information, and make that the background against which the anchor presents the news (Kimura 1985).

That proposal documents a shift in thinking about set design toward a more functionalist concept of incorporating the processes that go into producing news "at the source" right within the studio. In the past the studio was thought of and was designed as an efficient multipurpose resource, like a camera or an editing machine, something that was flexible and could be refitted or moved or adapted to whatever purpose it was needed for, whether the program was a drama or a talk show, or news, or whatever. By the last phase of NC9, however, when Kimura and Miyazaki became the anchors, thinking had evolved into an idea of the studio as the starting point from which news was produced and delivered. In accordance with that idea, the studio set was redesigned, refitted, and refurbished to achieve the new functional objectives, the fruit of which was the so-called working studio.

However, if the primary objective had been merely to integrate the functions of a news production workplace within the bounds of one studio, there was no need to position the working areas right behind the anchor, in view of the cameras. A studio of a certain size would have allowed ample room to place the working areas out of camera range. Placing the working space in back behind the anchor desk, where it would be caught on camera, was a deliberate decision intended to pose the anchor(s) against a background of the nuts-and-bolts activities of news production. Behind that decision, naturally, was the vision of the people in charge of TV art.[7]

In short, NC9 aimed to create an atmosphere of virtual reality, of "being there," by projecting the sensation that the latest domestic and international news was being edited, produced, and broadcast from the source. TV art was central to that endeavor. In the early years, building on, multiplying, and extending such elements as Isomura's telephone, and cutting now and then to one of the control rooms in mid-broadcast, NC9 used TV art to give concrete shape to the set as a whole, and that is what produced the working studio.

"You Can See the World at 9"

In NC9's last phase, the program was billed as the place where "you can see

[7] Interview with Kawakami Jun, former director of NC9, May 15, 2009.

Figure 5. World map on NC9 studio wall

the world at 9," thus pointing to one of the objectives of those years: to expand coverage of international news. This decision came out of technological and other developments that opened up new possibilities at the time, including video transmission using satellite relay, and greatly expanded NHK global news gathering networks.[8] Having fixed upon the strategy of giving greater prominence to world news, NC9 chose as anchors two well-qualified people: Kimura Taro, who had long experience as a foreign correspondent, a good command of English, and expertise in foreign affairs; and international affairs specialist Miyazaki Midori, who was then doing graduate studies.

The studio set was given a makeover in ways big and small to visualize the stronger international focus. For example, an enormous world map was installed on the studio wall behind the two anchors (Figure 5), and clocks were put up showing standard time in key cities around the globe. Making the world map visible in the background beyond Kimura and Miyazaki was intended to project an image of the NC9 studio as a space focused on the handling of international news, but more, this design was supposed to encourage

[8] NHK secured a regular link by satellite relay with the U.S. East Coast beginning in April 1983 and with Europe (based in Paris) beginning April 1984 (Kimura 1985).

the anchors and reporters in charge of specific issues to place themselves in front of the map and point to it as they related what was going on in the world.[9]

Another new element was a very large monitor screen set up facing the viewers slightly behind and to the right of the anchors that let NC9 show images displayed via satellite relay, for example (see Figure 4). Displaying the NC9 logo, the monitor screen was used for the most part to let viewers see the anchors talking with NC9 correspondents in the field, and to present satellite-relayed comments by and interviews with VIPs in other countries. The monitor was big enough that the people who were shown on it appeared to be about the same size as the anchors in the studio.

State-of-the-art Technology and TV Art

Whatever the program genre, TV art changed and developed interactively with ongoing technological changes. It was affected by and also had an impact on the leading technology in every area of broadcasting, from cameras and camerawork to production and delivery. TV art developed especially rapidly during NC9's Kimura-Miyazaki era, however, spurred by a virtual avalanche of new technology coming thicker and faster than ever.

The title that was used for NC9 beginning in 1982, for instance, was the first CG title that NHK ever used. Abroad as well as in Japan, it caused a sensation. The title was a 3-D computer graphics animation produced by the American Clay-2 vector supercomputer system, applying what was then the cutting-edge ray-tracing technology, which was especially effective for 3-D image generation. It was done by tracing the path of light through pixels in an image plane, making it possible to reproduce virtual objects with reflected light and shadow.

Weather reporting, too, was improved in this final phase of NC9. Having had its own independent work area since the start of the program, the weather report was upgraded in the last phase to offer detailed, "complete" weather reporting with forecasts for the entire week and reports on weather conditions in other parts of the world—features that were not common at the time. In charge of the new NC9 weather report was Kurashima Atsushi, who had just retired from a position at the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) (Figure 6). Kurashima was very knowledgeable, experienced, and erudite, and television viewers were completely won over by the new weather reporting suite, which was designed to highlight his many talents. One of its novel features was a screen that displayed in graphically comprehensible images weather data from

[9] Interview with Toyoshima Masahiko, who was a designer at the time, May 18, 2009.

Figure 6. NC9 weather anchor Kurashima Atsushi

automatic observation equipment developed by JMA's weather data transmission system. Built to gather weather data and confirm forecasts, it was called the Automated Meteorological Data Acquisition System (AMEDAS). NC9 created software that could take the text-based AMEDAS data and turn them into visual information for TV broadcasting, the data being "weather-mapped" onto a map of Japan. This technique was used for the first time in broadcasting by NC9.

But analogue weather sets were used for everyday weather forecast charts. That was because NC9 wanted to retain a "human touch," which could easily be lost if the digital displays and effects of new devices were too overwhelming. Because of concerns about that aspect of the weather report, a huge board was erected in the weather suite and every evening the studio art staff made by hand a weather chart, which was placed in the background when Kurashima gave the weather report.

All in all, TV art was very effective during the last phase of NC9. While actively incorporating the latest technology, it presented the entire studio as functional space imbued with an international outlook, and it kept the anchors at center stage, highlighting their personalities and individual strengths.

NEWS STATION: A MORE "AUTHENTIC" STUDIO

As time went on, news programs saw more and more of the kinds of innovations NC9 had brought to the studio space and to the way TV art was used. The pace accelerated in the mid-1980s when a rapid series of major events inside and outside Japan caused the ratings for TV news programs to soar. As the audiences swelled, commercial broadcasters realized that "news sells," sparking what people in broadcasting like to call the era of the "news wars" (NHK 2001). One of the programs of those years that proved to be particularly brilliant at bringing out the potential of television newscasting was "News Station" (Sakamoto 1994).

Challenges for the "News Sells" Era

The inauguration of "News Station" (which ran October 7, 1985–March 26, 2004) was timed to coincide with the move by TV Asahi Corporation, its producer, to new quarters in the ARK Hills complex in Roppongi in Tokyo, and there the program was launched. The show's main anchor was Kume Hiroshi, a former TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System) announcer with a large, devoted audience following. At the beginning NS ratings hovered in the single digits, but that changed when the space shuttle Challenger exploded after liftoff on January 28, 1986, and then a month later, on February 25, the Marcos regime in the Philippines collapsed. These momentous events riveted public attention and caused NS's ratings to jump to two digits, where they eventually began to stabilize. At times they recorded 20 percent or higher, indicating that NS was growing up and was poised to become a leading commercial news program in both reputation and quality of its product.

Beginning with the appearance of NC9, broadcasters fought tooth and nail for the upper hand in producing news shows that most effectively exploited the visual possibilities in the television medium. A TV Asahi report in July 1985 included this observation: "The conventional news programs are simply an audio-visual version of printed text, which nobody can say makes best use of the special features of television . . . television is capable of so much more variety of expression than print media. The current state of affairs effectively means that a fully-realized, bona fide news program has yet to be produced" (Kase 1987).

In the opinion of Oda Kyuemon, then vice-director of TV Asahi's news bureau, the NHK and TBS newscasts seemed to say "OK, we're going to let you see the news program we made," giving the feeling that if the audience was there, it didn't matter very much. Oda, the advertising company Dentsu, and the program production company Office Two-One got together to create

Figure 7. NS first-generation studio set

some guiding principles for a new kind of news program (NHK 2001; Oda 2001). They formulated a few basic concepts:

- Bring clarity to the news so that even a junior high school student could understand it;
- Give a human face to newscasting;
- Present news that audiences want to know about rather than news decided by someone at the top;
- Make the program stimulating enough to stand up against NHK;
- Fully exploit the visual and audio capacities of television to give living, three-dimensional realism to the program.

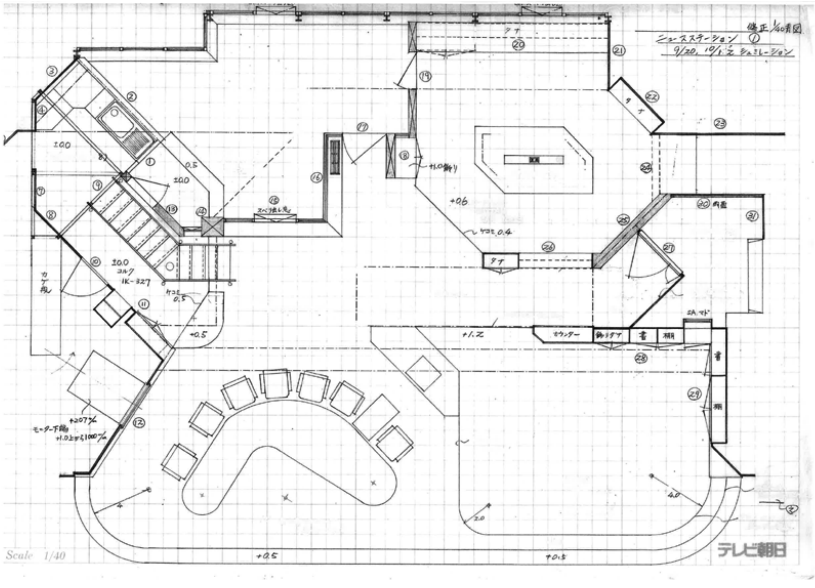
With those founding ideas, "News Station" was born.

Aiming for Greater Authenticity

The ideas were solid—to produce a program that could compete with NHK, to make it easy to understand, to humanize the presentation. But how to realize those goals in the concrete milieu of a broadcasting studio?

Consider the first generation of the set (Figure 7) and layout (Figure 8). To eyes accustomed to the kind of newscasting that had dominated until then, the studio space must have looked a bit odd, at least different. It was fashioned in the style of a living room, reminiscent of that used for the set of ABC's "Good

Figure 8. Layout of NS first-generation set



Morning America." The art staff had developed the idea of transplanting that image to Kume Hiroshi's imaginary office in the newly remodeled venue on the top floor of an ARK Hills building and having his "office" double as a living room.

Kume relates that, "What the staff and I wanted above all in the 'News Station' set was that it should look authentic" (Japan Television Artist Network 2002). It is said that Kume asked the art staff to make sure that "the door to the set doesn't look like a set door when it is opened." He also insisted that since he himself would be moving about and objects in the set also would be moved here and there, the entire studio must have a stout wooden floor. As for the set designers, "With news, we're talking about real things going on," they observed. "We don't want a dressed-up set. It seems to us that making the set into the real thing is best suited" to conveying real news. And so they went about giving reality to the studio "not so much by creating a stage set, but by creating what would look like a real room."[10]

Using real metal, glass, wood, and so forth, they remodeled an area that came across as being a room at the corner of a building, "nothing at all like a

[10] Interviews with Yamauchi Yuji and Miyazaki Hiroshi, both designers at the time, December 19, 2008 and September 3, 2009.

TV set." Among the techniques for effects, rain was made to appear outside the windows on rainy days, and drawing "far-away" things smaller in size made them appear to be far in the distance. The lights of buildings "outside" were made to flicker, as in an urban nightscape. Later on when visitors came to see the studio, often they were dumbfounded to find that the set was located in an underground floor—the best possible testimony to the success of NS in building a convincingly realistic set.

A More Humanized News Program

What made it possible to create a set design that seemed so very out of character for a news program, so un-newslike? To begin with, there were the designers.

The two people in charge of NS studio art had no previous experience in news or current affairs. Yamauchi Yuji and Miyazaki Hiroshi (see Figures 9 and 10) were both drama specialists, and they brought to the news program techniques they had learned and used in designing drama sets—like creating a sense of distance in objects or the illusion of naturally flickering lights—routine stage effects in drama sets. They targeted a level of art design that would challenge even NHK, the unsurpassed king of newscasting at the time, by achieving results that "NHK does not, will not, and can not" equal.[11] From his experience in designing drama sets, Yamauchi basically believed that as soon as it is televised, no set ever looks really natural. He is said to have argued that the one thing that could be presented as absolutely real was the anchor's desk, and for that reason it deserved primary attention in the set.

The main anchor's desk, therefore, the central object in the studio, became the hallmark of the way NS wanted to present the news. A half-circle shape seemed best suited to panel discussion-type talks among several people, and, as they thought about how to reconfigure a round table, they decided on a boomerang shape. That shape for the desk was more conducive not only to one-way delivery of news, but also to receiving viewers' responses and then going on to the next news reports (Kawauchi 1992). The concern for quality was intense: "When the focus is on the anchor, the background becomes blurry," and so the set designers urged focusing on what was in the foreground. Bypassing a prop maker, they ordered the desk from a specialist furniture maker.[12] That desk, incidentally, provided the first opportunity for the audi-

[11] Miyazaki said that when he saw the NC9 set he thought, "If they want us to put together something like that, I won't do it."

[12] According to Yamauchi, it was a special order, and it cost somewhere between five and six million yen (at the 1985 exchange rate, ¥5,000,000 would have been around $21,000).

Figure 9. NS set designer Yamauchi Yuji (currently at TV Asahi Best Co. Ltd.)

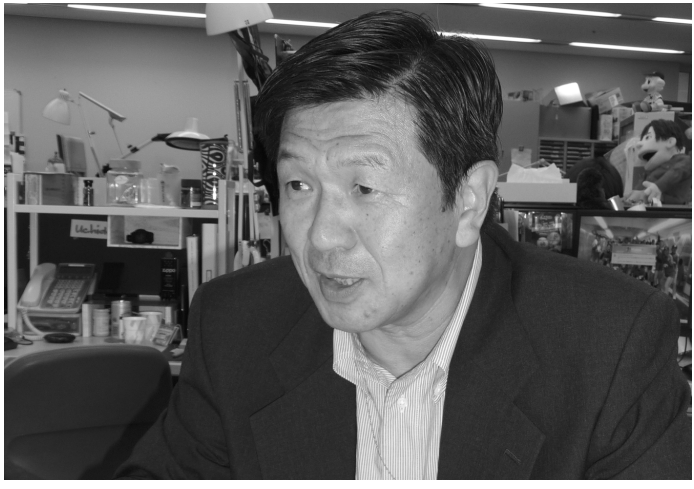
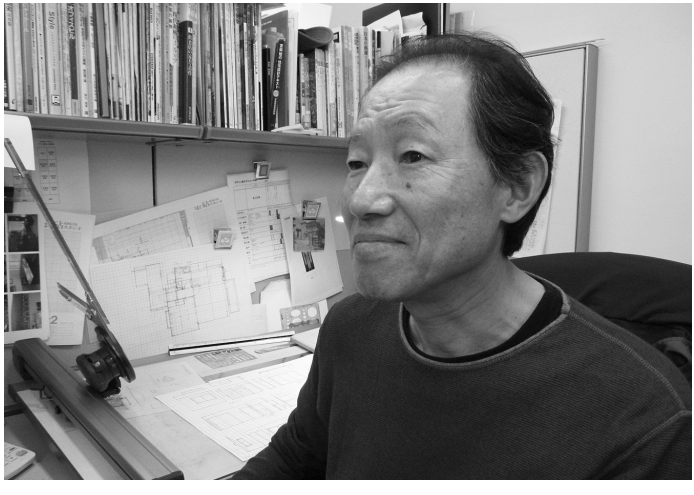


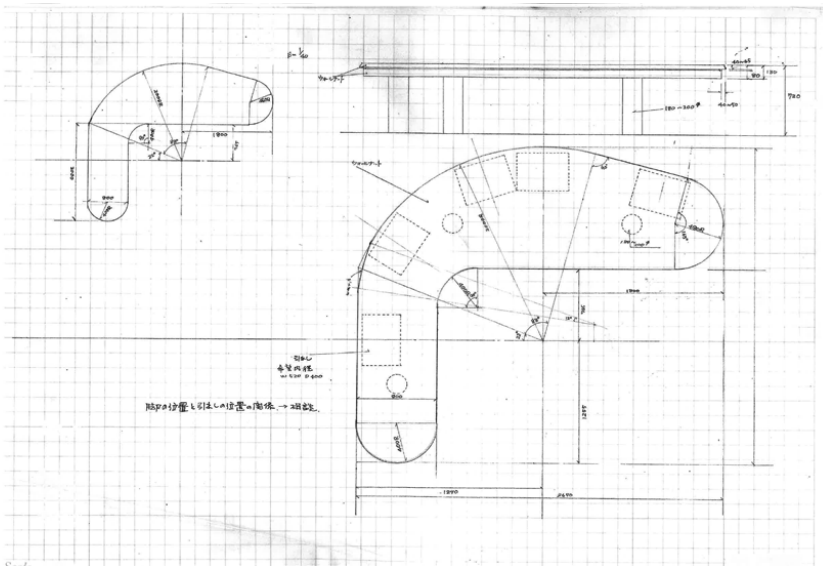
Figure 10. NS set designer Miyazaki Hiroshi (currently at TV Asahi Create Co. Ltd.)



ence of a TV news program to see the anchor's and other persons' legs underneath (Figure 11).

Precisely to heighten the impression of authenticity or naturalness, certain common items were purposely left out. One was a cough box or cough switch,

Figure 11. NS set layout with boomerang-shaped anchor desk



a device that lets an announcer turn the mike on or off whenever necessary. Another was the monitor that the anchor used to check what was being broadcast. In yet another first, it was decided not to conceal the anchor's script behind a nameplate or something else on the desk but let it be visible to the audience.

NS at that time also did away with the teleprompter. "Think about the prompter[13] right over the camera . . . even if the anchor is positioned so that he/she looks straight into the lens, because of the prompter his/her eyes keep moving up and down just a little. It's unnatural. To me, it seems much more natural to look down from time to time at a script, and then say, 'And now let's take a look at. . . .' That's why we decided to get rid of the teleprompter" (Kume 1995).

NS used a variety of people to help stage the program, including staff from other sections as well as the news section. They also engaged the production company Office Two-One Inc. Together, they worked on bringing a "human

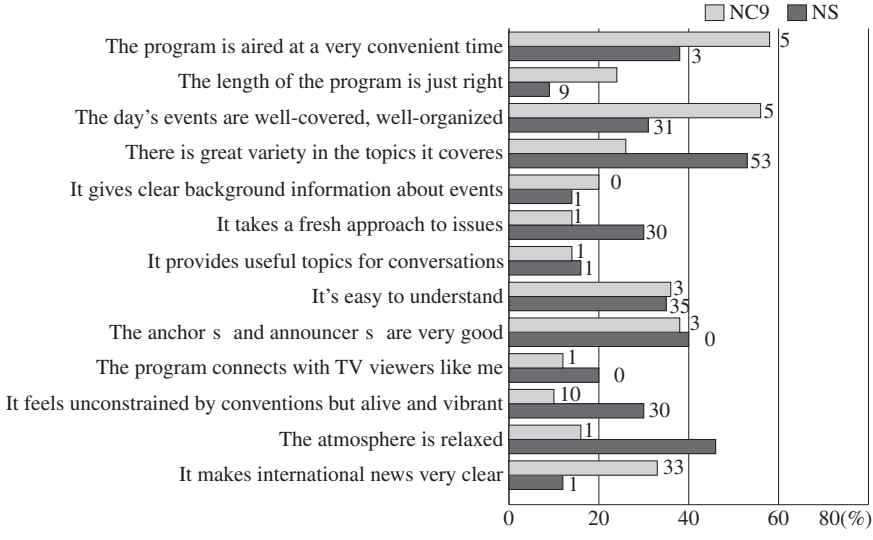
[13] Teleprompter or telescript. A device by which a camera positioned over the desk and pointed downward records the script on the desk and sends the image to a monitor close to the lens of the camera the anchor faces. The anchor, looking at the camera, can read the relayed script without appearing to be reading.

Figure 12. NS guest reception area

face" to the news program, adopting the techniques for staging drama and variety shows. One example of their work appeared in a special aired at the end of 1985. In that program, NS took up the crash of a Japan Airlines jumbo jet the previous summer that killed 520 people. The production chief, who was a talented drama director, hit upon the idea of displaying in the studio 520 pairs of shoes, lined up in rows. The visual impact of all those shoes brought home in a very personal way the magnitude of the terrible loss of life that summer of 1985. The show became the talk of the town (Hayakawa 1995; Oda 2001).

Guests on the show were brought to a reception area on the right of the desk (from the audience view), which was fixed up to look warm and inviting, a "human" space (see Figure 12). At the end of the show's first broadcast, Kume and the news commentator Kobayashi Kazuyoshi moved over to this "night-cap corner" where they were seen to relax, looking quite at home (an added touch was a glass of water that Kume sipped from time to time). There was also a "staff room" visible behind the anchor's seat. Sometimes the camera even showed staff people bringing in scripts. That space eventually was turned into a lounge for guests.

Figure 13. Survey responses to NC9 and NS



Based on results of "Television and News" survey conducted by NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute in March 1987.

Make It Easy to Understand

In March 1987 the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute did a survey on "television news" posing identical questions regarding NC9 and NS (Figure 13). Toward NS, respondents had positive impressions of the content and atmosphere: "There is great variety in the topics it covers"; "The atmosphere is relaxed"; "It takes a fresh approach to issues"; and, "It feels unconstrained by conventions but alive and vibrant." NC9, in contrast, was rated highly for good programming and solid organization. "The program is aired at a very convenient time"; "The day's events are well-covered, well-organized"; and, "It makes international news very clear." The differences in the way audiences saw the two programs stand out sharply[14] (Krauss 2006). To the new kind of anchor news program begun with NC9, NS added elements that were unquestionably popular with viewers: a more "relaxed" feeling, a sense of easy intimacy, and an atmosphere that seemed freer, less constrained.

In a separate poll carried out by Tamiya Takeshi of Kansai University, "Survey on University Students' Views of TV News," those students who said that they frequently watched NS gave two main reasons. First, "It's interesting

[14] For details on that survey, see Fujiwara and Mitsuya 1987.

to watch," citing its entertainment value; and second, noting its straightforward clarity, they said that NS "uses panel charts and scale models to make things clearer, and it explains special terms and tells how events developed, and so it's easy to understand" (Tamiya 1997).

The NS staff recognized that just reading out the news—even when it was coming from NC9—"is nothing but a dry recitation of events from somewhere on the other side of the television tubes. . . . That kind of news is not geared to what the audience side wants" (Shima 1994). What NS was attempting was to turn news "delivered one-way from high to low" into reporting "conveyed on level ground" where the flow could be two-way (Hayakawa 1987). To do that, the vector direction in TV news reporting between presenter and viewer needed to be reversed, to shift the emphasis from "the news we want to tell you" to "the news you are interested in knowing." They agreed that in a newscast, "If it feels like the program just keeps pushing on regardless of whether anyone tuned in understands it or not, watching it is hard work" (Takamura Hiroshi of Office Two-One).[15] Giving shape to these thoughts, NS introduced various aids like scale models, maps, graphs, and other objects and devices to produce a program that "even a junior high school student can understand."

A good example of the use of such aids was NS's October 8, 1987 broadcast reporting on the Liberal Democratic Party's election of a party president, which turned out to be just the sort of program that even a 14-year-old could understand (Fukunaga 2005). That day a set of building blocks was provided in the studio, and columns were built with their height adjusted to show the proportionate sizes of the several political factions. They used dolls from time to time to bring concepts alive and to give concrete form to information (Figure 14). This idea was inspired by the NS staff's search for ways to use for television purposes the wonderfully expressive facial caricatures made by the illustrator Yamafuji Shoji (Kawauchi 1992).

NS also adopted a practice common in newscasting today—showing at the start of the program a chart listing in chronological order all the news items for that day. That idea came out of the observation that a concrete object to help illustrate and explain, something to refer to, changes the way the news is presented. The chart helps the audience understand the news reports, and it sends a message from the anchor or presenter telling the audience, "Look! You and I are seeing these things together, at the same level." This was a time when the technology of television was exploding and TV computer graphics was coming into vogue. To show that something was being done not by a

[15] "Terebi no genba" [In the Workshop of TV Programming], *Yomiuri shimbun*, evening edition, Tokyo, April 30, 1988.

Figure 14. Doll models of LDP faction leaders

machine but by hand was considered important: the presenter would physically touch the chart, and with each touch the listed news items were lit up, one by one, by electric bulbs set inside the chart panel.

Later on, apart from the minor changes that went on all the time, the main set of NS was remodeled every five years. The innovations sometimes followed popular trends and were sometimes quite futuristic, but they always attracted plenty of attention. The keynote of the second five years was excessively lavish décor, and for the third, it centered on "What comes after the flowery abundance of the Bubble era?" During that third period, some of the old wooden beams from farmhouses in the rural areas of Takayama and Toyama were used as part of the studio set. When it came time for its fourth incarnation, the studio was transformed into the image of a red brick storehouse, which happened to be a popular motif at that time. During the final five years, a look of "iron" was sought in remodeling the studio so as to conjure the image of the hull of a freighter moored at the Yokohama docks (Japan Television Artist Network 2002).

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN NC9 AND NS

Up to this point we have considered two leading TV anchor-type news programs of the 1970s and 1980s in Japan, NC9 and NS, examining how they started and some of the ways they developed. We have paid special attention to the role of TV art (studio sets) in turning abstract concepts into concrete, visual images. Finally, let us expand our perspective to think about the meaning and significance of the studio sets of both programs in the larger history of TV news broadcasting.

There were superficial differences between the TV art of NC9 and NS, but there was also much in common. First, the studio sets in both represented the attempt to find concrete ways to produce a news program that realized the potentials of the medium, a "made-for-TV" newscast. NC9 in its first phase, Japan's first genuine anchor-type news show, endeavored to produce a living, realistic, multi-dimensional program incorporating creative and abundant uses of sound, film footage, live relays and also featuring program specials. In addition it built studio spaces dedicated to sports and weather reports and analysis. The studio set at that time was designed as a place/space that made all those functions possible. The underlying format and the fundamental ideas endured, and they were passed on through NC9's last phase and to NS as well. In a very real sense today's TV news programs are produced on the heritage of those ideas, which continue to be influential, with some variations, even today.

Second, continuity between NC9 and NS was also evident in the idea of bringing "authenticity" to the news studio. Of course there were differences in preferences, images, and perceptions among the managers and others in charge, but behind the shift to more natural, less artificial staging of news presentations, NC9 and NS shared the same basic goals and assumptions. For example, the working studio idea in NC9's last phase and NS's "personal office" idea came out of different conceptions, but both were intended to make the set feel more genuine, more natural. Both, furthermore, each in its own ways, tried to engage the audience by projecting a sense of "being there." Achieved with great realism, the results were, for one of them, a functional, technologically cutting-edge space for newscasting, and for the other, a sophisticated and stylish downtown metropolitan office space. News program studio sets nowadays seem little concerned with naturalness or realism. There appears to be instead an overblown predilection for abstract and decorative set design. Interesting as it is, that topic must wait for analysis at another time.

Third, the sets of both NC9 and NS were designed to facilitate "straight talk" from the anchor and to bring alive and spotlight the anchor's individual

persona. The style and personality of the anchors in the two programs differed in many ways, but they all diverged from the announcers of the past. Instead of just reading faithfully from a fully-prepared script, they became individual people who talked *with* the audience, not *at* the audience. Central to this new image was the main anchor desk, whose design was geared to making the anchor into a friendly, intimate presence.

In his study of British broadcasting, media historian Paddy Scannell found a turning point in the history of BBC news programs when the newscasters changed their style of speaking from the standard public speaking models (lectures, sermons, addresses, speeches) to a more direct, personal, familiar and conversational style (Scannell 1996). NC9 and NS in Japan emerged at a different time, but we can see in their history a similar turning point. To the audience, that turning point was marked by the arrival of evening news programs that brought to them every night "someone [the anchor(s)] very familiar to me" who would talk about the events of Japan and the world. Marshall McLuhan's perception that "the medium is the message" came from the insight that the way media affect us is not so much through the content as by the particular form and characteristics of the medium itself. It is interesting to think of a news program studio set as a place/space that, *as a medium*, gives visual and material form to an anchor-type news show, and in so doing, becomes part of the "message" in McLuhan's sense of the term (McLuhan 1964).

It is on that point that we can find discontinuity between NC9 and NS. In the relationship with the viewers, both programs endeavored to build a certain familiarity or intimacy with the audience, but the quality of the intimacy they achieved was different. The senior manager of the news center during NC9's first phase (and later, second anchorman), Katsube Ryoju, noted in an essay that many viewer communications to the studio commented on how the three anchors talked about the news "in a way that made me feel like a member of a family seated together in the living room" (Katsube 1974). This and other evidence definitely shows one side of NC9. Nevertheless, the set space of NC9 (particularly in its last, "working room" phase) never truly shed the stiff, "official" aura of highly professional, veteran journalists (anchors) remaining somewhat at a distance as they looked out on the audience to mediate the news.

NS created something different in its studio space. That much was evident from the basic concept itself of a set design for a "personal office" for the anchor. The idea led to the creation of a relaxed atmosphere, an invitation to the viewer to come in for a personal talk, even while the "office" remained a place to handle reporting and deal with public affairs. In other words, the rela-

tionship with the audience was different; from the viewer's perspective, the NC9 anchor talked casually in the direction of the viewers who remained in their own space (their living room), whereas the NS set allowed the anchor to give the impression of sharing his own private space with them and asking them to enjoy it with him.

The changes in the character of TV news space occasioned by the studio sets of NS need to be studied in conjunction with two overlapping issues: One, a subject of ongoing research for some time now, is the influence of and the merits/demerits of the "softening" and popularization of TV news. The other is the relation between an apparently striking rise in political cynicism among Japanese since the 1990s, and "News Station" (Taniguchi 2002; Ito 2006; Krauss 2006). Central to that work, when it is undertaken, will be an equally thorough analysis of the studio sets (TV art) of the major TV news and information-related programs that have appeared since the advent of NC9 and NS.

(*Translated by Patricia Murray*)

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