

Chocolate in a Blue-Tent Village

Letters to Kikuchi from the Park

Written and Illustrated
by Misako Ichimura

Artist Misako Ichimura,
Living in a blue-tent village* in a city park !

Blue-tent villages and homeless people in big cities have negative images,
but Ichimura has found beauty and richness in the lives of the people there.

She started the "Tea Party for Women" .**

The lovely women living in this park "were like suns whose movement
followed the spirit of each moment."

And she came to know a pop-punk woman, Kikuchi.

It made her happy to see someone who could be so free.

*She went about wearing sunglasses with British flag lenses, and she had a totally new style all her own, at once sexy, feminine, mannish and in the latest kogoyaru*** fashion. And her hair was caramel-coloured - it looked like there was a cat on her head. (p. 16)*

In the form of a collection of letters to Kikuchi, who is not in the park now,
Ichimura shows us with vivid words and illustrations the world of Kikuchi,
the everydayness that seems to skip along, the stories of women.

Misako Ichimura's tender paintings and buoyant writing carries us over
the wall to another world. To a nice little place, that is only here but
could as well be anywhere.

Ichimura has the power to give real shapes to her dreams and feelings.
And the art she creates is a soft leafy soil, full of nourishment and moist
richness, where seeds of all kinds take root.

Tetsuo Ogawa (homeless)

Full of fairy tales for dealing with reality !

Groovy woman, I want to be your neighbor !

Bubu de la Madeleine (artist)

Misako Ichimura

Born in 1971 in Amagasaki, currently lives in a park in Tokyo.

Graduate of Kyoto Seika University and Tokyo National University
of Fine Arts and Music Graduate School.

Recognized for unique art creations such as *Tabi-tabi Seikatsu*,
Ohanashi Kaiga, and *Tocoton Side*.

In 2002, stayed in a squat in Amsterdam and created work.
Started living in the park in October 2003 and began holding
"Painting Session" and "Tea Party for Women events."

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A story of homeless women in Tokyo.

Tokyo is estimated to have approximately 5,000 homeless people,
of which as much as ten percent are women.

* Homeless people in Japan often use cheap, sturdy blue tarps
for their shelters.

** "Tea Party for Women"

While living in the park, Misako Ichimura has had to deal with
some uncomfortable situations. Wondering what others were
going through, she went around the park and asked the
women living here and there, and then she started having a tea
party once a month on top of the main hill.

This turned into a way of creating community, and also made
the existence of women more visible in the social structure of
the tent village.

More and more, women's laughter could be heard, and they
learned to support each other when dealing with violence and
such. This was also something Ichimura had needed herself to
continue living in the park.

*** *Kogoyaru* (or *kogal*), literally "little girl", is a subculture
popular among teenage girls and young women.