

TANAKA Atsuko – Electric Dress and Painting

TANAKA Atsuko (1932-2005) explored the relationship between materials and the body in ways different from artists who directly used their bodies in art, such as SHIRAGA Kazuo, who worked with his hands and feet; MURAKAMI Saburo, who worked by tearing paper with his whole body; and SHIMAMOTO Shozo, who worked by throwing bottles at a screen. Tanaka exhibited her work *Electric Dress* (Figure 4) at the 2nd GUTAI art exhibition held at Obara Kaikan, Tokyo. She hung stick light bulbs and bulbs color-coded with synthetic resin enamel paint on the dress, and the work was completed by wearing it. At that time, light bulbs were new materials emerging in the postwar consumer society, and she incorporated these non-artistic industrial materials into her artwork. The act of risking electrocution by wearing the dress, decorated with blinking industrial lights, forced viewers to imagine the blood flow in her body and left a strong physical impression. After *Electric Dress*, she recreated three elements of the dress-- structures that change colors and forms, the bodies that support them, and electric energy--on a flat surface. The paintings, made with vivid industrial paint colors, use circles to represent blinking colorful light bulbs and tangled lines to depict complicated electrical wiring, providing energy to the viewers and having a powerful impact on their bodily consciousness. We can say that the interaction between the artist and materials is not completed solely by the artist but is shared through the bodily experience of each viewer who sees the works.