

**TOKYO 1955–1970 FOCUSES ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF JAPAN'S CAPITAL INTO A CENTER OF THE AVANT-GARDE**

**Exhibition Brings Together Over 200 Works, Including Notable Loans from Collections in Japan**

***Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde***

November 18, 2012–February 25, 2013

The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Gallery, sixth floor

**Press Preview:** Tuesday, November 13, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

**NEW YORK, October 4, 2012**—MoMA presents *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde*, the first museum exhibition to focus on the city of Tokyo during the remarkable period from the mid-1950s through the 1960s, when the city transformed itself from the capital of a war-torn nation into an international center for arts, culture, and commerce. The exhibition is on view from November 18, 2012, to February 25, 2013. Following past MoMA exhibitions focused on art-making in Japan—including *The New Japanese Painting and Sculpture* (1965) and *New Japanese Photography* (1974)—*Tokyo 1955–1970* draws from MoMA's collection of Japanese works across curatorial departments in addition to over 100 works on loan from important public and private collections in Japan and the United States. Reflecting the numerous multidisciplinary crossings that characterized the postwar Japanese avant-garde centered in Tokyo at the time, the exhibition encompasses many mediums—including painting, sculpture, photography, drawings, graphic design, architecture, video, and documentary film—with over 200 works on view by more than 60 artists and art collectives. The exhibition brings together some of the most iconic works from the period, as well as works recently discovered or reevaluated by new scholarship. *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde* is organized by Doryun Chong, Associate Curator, with Nancy Lim, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is co-organized and supported by The Japan Foundation.

*Tokyo 1955–1970* begins in MoMA's sixth floor lobby by focusing on Metabolism, one of the most significant movements in 20th-century architecture, which emerged at the time of the 1960 World Design Conference in Tokyo, through the initiative of a group of young Japanese architects. The Metabolists, motivated by Tokyo's urgent need for systematic urban infrastructural growth, envisioned flexible, expandable, and technologically advanced megastructures built along linear axes. Included is a photographic reproduction of the first large-scale, unrealized plan to synthesize these ideas, Tange Kenzō's *A Plan for Tokyo 1960*, a three-level megastructure that combined transportation systems, offices, and commercial and residential spaces that projected into and spanned the Tokyo Bay. Metabolist designs that were realized and are represented in the

exhibition include Tange's national gymnasiums for the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and Kurokawa Kishō's 1972 Nakagin Capsule Tower Building.

The first gallery focuses on the mid-1950s, when Tokyo witnessed a strong, socially conscious, even activist tendency in painting, drawing, and printmaking. Many artists used art to represent and document the traumatic aftereffects of the war, the difficult lives of the proletariat, and social injustices. During that decade surrealism, which had thrived in Japan in the 1930s, again exerted a powerful influence and gave rise to the avant-garde aesthetics of these artists, which was often called Reportage Painting. By the mid-1950s, painting had shifted away from earlier social realist style toward a more complex relationship with social concerns and image-making, mutating into bizarre, fantastical, and even abstract forms. This section includes works by Okamoto Tarō, Hamada Chimei, Ikeda Tatsuo, Yayoi Kusama, Yamashita Kikuji, On Kawara, and Ay-O, among others, including Tatsuo's noted painting *Arm (Ude)* (1953), On Kawara's large-scale painting *Stones Thrown* (1956), and Kikuji's surrealist *Totems (Oto otemu)* (1951), an important precursor to the tendency represented in this section.

Jikken Kōbō/Experimental Workshop, Gutai Bijutsu Kyōkai (Gutai art association), and Sogetsu Art Center are the focus of the following sections. Active throughout the 1950s, the collective Jikken Kōbō/Experimental Workshop exemplified the tendency of artists to cross genres, which was an important characteristic of the art world in Tokyo during the postwar years. The group comprised 14 members—visual artists and music composers, a lighting designer, an engineer, and a musicologist—who came together around the influential critic Takiguchi Shūzō. The group was also highly interested in an amalgamation of art and technology, in reflection of the increasingly industrializing and modernizing conditions in postwar Japan. Works on view include Matsumoto Toshio's short film *Bicycle in Dream (Ginrin)* (1955) and Kitadai Shōzō's *Another World (Mishiranu sekai no hanashi)* (1953) with music by Yuasa Jōji, an installation that combines slide projections with music. In 1954, a group of young enterprising artists formed Gutai Bijutsu Kyōkai (Gutai art association) (1954–1972) under the leadership of the older and charismatic artist and mentor Yoshihara Jirō. Although firmly based in the Western Kansai (Osaka-Kobe) region, the collective strategically presented itself in Tokyo by self-organizing group exhibitions and stage performances in its first years of existence. Gutai is best known for its members' early actions, such as Shiraga Kazuo's *Challenging Mud (Doro ni idomu)* (1955), Tanaka Atsuko's *Electric Dress (Denki-fuku)* (1956), and Murakami Saburō's Paper-Breaking (Kami yaburi) performances, created as they developed their signature individual styles. Included in the exhibition are works by these Gutai artists, along with those of their colleague Motonaga Sadamasa.

In existence from 1958 to 1972, the Sogetsu Art Center was an extraordinary hub of experimental arts in Tokyo, presenting an ongoing series of experimental cinema, jazz, and classical avant-garde music. From 1961 to 1964, in particular, the center functioned as an unparalleled nucleus of interdisciplinary experiments and international exchanges. Figures such as

Ichiyanagi Toshi, Yoko Ono, and Nam June Paik, and visiting luminaries of the American avant-garde such as John Cage, David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Rauschenberg, all performed at the center, connecting Tokyo with the international art world, especially New York. On view are graphic scores, instruction art, and printed matter by Ono, Ichiyanagi, and artists who would soon become important members of Fluxus, such as Shiomi Mieko and Kubota Shigeko.

The next sections look at the Yomiuri Indépendant exhibition and burgeoning performance art. Since the prewar era in Japan, there had been an established tradition of newspaper companies organizing and sponsoring art exhibitions. In the postwar years, the most important was the Yomiuri Indépendant exhibition (1949–63), an annual, non-juried salon that became a significant venue for the emerging generation of artists and the critical fulcrum of the avant-garde. In its final years, the radical air around the exhibition—with artists creating provocative, bodily sculptures or installations often made out of detritus—grew to such an extent that the work of the young exhibiting artists was widely called “Anti-Art.” Works on view from the Yomiuri Indépendant exhibition include pieces by Arakawa Shūsaku, Kojima Nobuaki, Kudō Tetsumi, Kikuhata Mokuma, and Miki Tomio, such as Kojima’s Untitled resin sculptures of figures wrapped in red-and-white fabric, and Kudō’s monumental 1961-62 installation, *Philosophy of Impotence*, which features hundreds of oblong objects made from discarded industrial materials, which the artist characterized as “phallus/chrysalis.”

Many of the artists who participated in the Yomiuri Indépendant also formed artist collectives that often organized guerrilla-style actions. Active from 1963 to 1964, one collective, Hi Red Center, consisted of three main members (Takamatsu Jirō, Akasegawa Genpei, and Nakanishi Natsuyuki) along with other associates. Using a red exclamation mark as their logo, Hi Red Center sought to bring art out of institutional or commercial spaces and into the “space of everyday activities.” In the process, their work not only rejected the decorum and hierarchies dictated by the mainstream art establishment, but also satirized the state’s efforts to regulate the proliferation of information, people, and objects in Tokyo. Some of the better-known actions by the group include *Shelter Plan*, an invitation-only event at Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel staged in January 1964. For this work, guests, including Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, were subjected to meticulous and bizarre physical examinations for the purpose of creating custom-fitted, single-person nuclear fallout shelters. This section of the exhibition also features a documentary on another important artist collective, Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension). This section also looks at the Model 1,000-Yen-Note Incident (Mokei sen-en-satsu jiken) (1964–70). In the early 1960s, Akasegawa Genpei (who emerged in the late 1950s as part of the new generation of artists and a member of Hi Red Center) created a series of works based on the Japanese 1,000-yen note. Akasegawa made an enlarged photorealistic reproduction of the note and ordered one-sided copies from printers. Using uncut sheets of the reproduced notes, he also covered wood panels and wrapped everyday and household objects. In early 1964, Akasegawa was visited by police detectives and investigated for

copying the bills, and his wrapped objects and panel works were confiscated as evidence. Akasegawa was subsequently subjected to a protracted prosecution and trial through the rest of the decade, and his ordeal became a rallying point for many involved in the arts and culture in Tokyo. Included in the exhibition is a selection of Akasegawa's "Anti-Art" objects, which became marshaled by the police as evidence of his allegedly illegal activity and had to be defended by the art community as "art works."

The exhibition next focuses on Japanese Pop art and sculpture in the 1960s. Painters such as Tateishi Kōichi (Tiger Tateishi) and Nakamura Hiroshi—formerly a social-realist painter devoted to representing hardships of commoners during the postwar years—began to engage a wholly different set of subjects such as popular culture, subcultural fetishes, mythologies, and imaginary worlds. Along with Ushio Shinohara, who was greatly attracted to American art, they led what may be defined as Japanese Pop art. Works on view include Tateishi's painting *Samurai, the Watcher (Kōya no yōjinbō)* (1965) and Shinohara's sculpture *Coca-Cola Plan* (1964). By the end of the 1960s, sculptural practice also changed, shifting away from the corporeality that had been prominent in many avant-garde works presented in the final years of the Yomiuri Indépendant exhibition. Artists turned with increasing frequency to issues of optics and perception, and spatiality and materiality. In the final years of the decade, a new generation of artists emerged, deeply engaged with the relational phenomena of matter in space by combining organic and industrial materials. Soon known as Mono-ha (School of Things), the loose, informal group included Sekine Nobuo, Narita Katsuhiko, and Lee Ufan, the group's strongest theoretical voice, all of whom are represented in the exhibition.

The final gallery focuses on photography and graphic design. Photography was an extremely fertile field in Japan during this time period, and some of the most important artists in the field developed their work around two cooperatives, Vivo and Provoke. Modeled after the successful Magnum Photos collective, Vivo was formed in 1959 by six photographers, including Hosoe Eikō, Kawada Kikuji, and Tōmatsu Shōmei. Though the photographers' individual styles and contents differed greatly, their shared belief in photography as an art form introduced to Japan a new understanding of the medium and its roles. In 1968, marking a stylistic departure, a small group of young photographers—including Moriyama Daidō—formed Provoke, with the aim of seeking a new photographic language that could adequately respond to the chaotic social and cultural changes exploding through urban Tokyo in the late 1960s. Works by these artists are drawn from MoMA's extensive collection of Japanese photography.

Graphic design, another traditionally strong discipline in Japan, experienced a breakthrough in the 1960s. A new generation of graphic designers, including Sugiura Kohei, Awazu Kiyoshi, and Yokoo Tadanori, were motivated to rebel against modernist aesthetics and its harmonious compositions. Drawing liberally and creatively from mass culture as well as folk cultural iconography, they experimented with techniques of collage, montage, and superimposition, reflecting the hybridity of their visual languages. In addition to these designers,

painters such as Nakamura Hiroshi and Tateishi Kōichi (Tiger Tateishi) produced a large number of illustrations and graphic designs, further contributing to creating a vigorously boundary-crossing cultural landscape, where the high and the low intermingled fluidly.

In conjunction with the exhibition, MoMA will present a performance program that will bring together four contemporary artists and artist groups, based in Japan and New York—Contact Gonzo, Eiko and Koma, Ei Arakawa, and Trajal Harrell—to engage with the legacy of postwar Japanese artistic practices, especially with prominent cross-media and intermedia tendencies. Details on the series will be announced at a later date.

**Please note:** In accordance with Japanese practice, Japanese names are written surname first. Exceptions are made for Japanese-born individuals who reside permanently abroad, are well-known in the West, or have adopted the Western order of surname last (such as On Kawara, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Ushio Shinohara, and Yayoi Kusama).

**SPONSORSHIP:**

The exhibition is made possible by UNIQLO.

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**FILM EXHIBITION:**

***Art Theater Guild and Japanese Underground Cinema, 1960-1984***

December 6, 2012–February 10, 2013

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

In conjunction with *Tokyo 1955–1970*, MoMA presents the most comprehensive U.S. retrospective ever devoted to the Art Theater Guild, the independent film company that radically transformed Japanese cinema by producing and distributing avant-garde and experimental works from the 1960s until the early 1980s. Free from the strictures and conventions of the mainstream Japanese studio system, the underground cinema of the Art Theater Guild was characterized by its provocative depictions of sex, violence, politics, and social upheaval. ***Art Theater Guild and Japanese Underground Cinema, 1960-1984***, December 6, 2012, to February 10, 2013, features such filmmakers as Teshigahara Hiroshi, Shindo Kaneto, Imamura Shōhei, Oshima Nagisa, Matsumoto Toshio, and Wakamatsu Koji, as well as the underground films of the period by Donald Richie, Masao Adachi, Takakiko Imimura, and others. Two of the leading filmmakers of the Art Theater Guild, Obayashi Nobuhiko and Hani Susumu, will make rare New York appearances to introduce their work. The retrospective is organized by Go Hirasawa (Meiji-Gakuin University), Roland Domenig (University of Vienna), and Joshua Siegel, Associate Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art. Curatorial assistance provided by Julian Ross (University of Leeds). *Art Theater Guild and Japanese Underground Cinema, 1960–1984* is co-organized by The Museum of Modern Art and The Japan Foundation.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

*Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant-Garde* explores the extraordinary convergence of artists and other creators in Japan's capital city during the radically transformative postwar period. Examining works in a range of mediums, this is the first publication in English to focus in depth on the full scope of creativity and experimentation in Tokyo during this vibrant period. A survey essay by

Doryun Chong investigates Tokyo's sociopolitical context and the massive urban changes that set the stage for the city's emergence as a vital node in the international network of avant-garde art. Essays by scholars Michio Hayashi and Miryam Sas and curator Mika Yoshitake discuss critical concepts and tendencies in arts and culture at this time, such as "graphism," which manifested itself across various mediums; the development of new sculptural languages; and the intermedia tendency that engendered provocative crosspollination among artistic genres. 9"w x 10.5"h; 228 pages; 265 illustrations. Hardcover, \$55. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available in November at the MoMA Stores and online at MoMAstore.org. Available to the trade through ARTBOOK | D.A.P. in the United States and Canada, and through Thames & Hudson outside the United States and Canada.

Published in conjunction with the *Tokyo 1955–1970* exhibition catalogue, *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents* offers a panoramic look at more than four decades of Japanese art, both as it unfolded and from the perspective of the present day. Co-edited by Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Kenji Kajiya, and Fumihiko Sumitomo, this anthology brings together artist's manifestos, critical writings, and other key primary documents from the postwar period (many of them translated into English for the first time) that discuss a range of artistic mediums—including photography, film, performance, architecture, and design—as well as their various points of convergence. Interspersed throughout the volume are newly commissioned texts by contemporary Japan- and U.S.-based scholars that contextualize and supplement the primary materials. The collection is organized chronologically and thematically to highlight individual works, artists' groups, movements, and publications. This volume is part of MoMA Primary Documents, an ongoing publication series by the International Program of The Museum of Modern Art that makes crucial art historical writings from regions outside the United States available in English. 6.5"w x 9.75"h; 464 pages; 100 illustrations. Paperback, \$40. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available in January 2013 at the MoMA Stores and online at MoMAstore.org. Available to the trade worldwide through Duke University Press.

#### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS:**

##### **Tokyo: Experiments in Music and Performance**

January 10, 2013, 6:00 p.m., Celeste Bartos Theater (T3)

Presenting experimental music from Tokyo in the 1960s, this program features live performances by Tone Yasunao. An experimental musician and sound artist, Tone has played a critical role in the experimental music and art scenes of Tokyo and New York since the 1960s. Performances of his graphic score pieces will combine film, sound, improvised music, and radical Fluxus-based actions.

##### **Art in Tokyo, 1950s and 1960s: Conversations and Films**

January 11, 12:30-5:30 p.m., Celeste Bartos Theater (T3)

This half-day symposium explores the art scene and artistic production in Tokyo in the 1950s and 60s through a series of film screenings and discussions with directors, curators, critics, and artists. Films include *ANPO: Art X War* (Linda Hoaglund, 2010); *Some Young People* (Nagano Chiaki, 1964); and *Japan: The New Art* (Michael Blackwood, 1970). The symposium concludes with a roundtable discussion, "What was so avant-garde about Tokyo from 1955 to 1970?"

Tickets: \$12 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$5 full-time students with current I.D.

##### **Book Launch: *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945-1989: Primary Documents***

January 11, 2013, 7:00pm; Wine reception 5:30-7:00pm; Celeste Bartos Theater (T3)

In celebration of the launch of MoMA's International Program's new publication, *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945-1989: Primary Documents*, a panel discussion will be held with the

book's co-editors, MoMA curators, and three Japanese artists and architects representing three generations. Discussions will be moderated by Doryun Chong.  
Tickets: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$5 full-time students with current I.D.

**WEBSITE:**

The exhibition is accompanied by a website featuring images of selected works from the exhibition along with accompanying text, documentary photographs, artist biographies, archival materials, translations of primary sources, and original video interviews conducted by Doryun Chong and featuring select artists from the exhibition. The site launches on November 18, 2012.  
MoMA.org/Tokyo.

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**For downloadable high-resolution images, register at MoMA.org/press.**

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**Public Information:**

**The Museum of Modern Art**, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, [\(212\) 708-9400](tel:2127089400), MoMA.org.

**Hours:** Wednesday through Monday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Closed Tuesday.

**Museum Admission:** \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). **MoMA.org:** No service charge for tickets ordered on MoMA.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs).

**Film and After Hours Program Admission:** \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.

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