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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Postwar Japanese art from the 1950s:

Hideko Fukushima, Hitoshi Nomura, Kiyoji Otsuji, Shuzo Takiguchi and Katsuhiko Yamaguchi

July 7 – August 28, 2015

Taka Ishii Gallery New York is pleased to present its summer exhibition showcasing works by seminal artists from the first decades of the postwar era in Japan.

The exhibition provides a curated overview of highly representative sculpture, painting, works on paper and photography by the formative artists, Hideko Fukushima, Hitoshi Nomura, Kiyoji Otsuji, Shuzo Takiguchi and Katsuhiko Yamaguchi, indicative of their own styles, as well as the dominant aesthetics of the groups they belonged to, during these initial three, and artistically influential, decades in Japan.

The 1950s were significant as a time of highly experimental and newborn artistic movements in Japan. Artists began to investigate various and uncharted means of expression in a society drastically changed after the trauma of World War II. In the end of 1951, fourteen young individuals with diverse backgrounds, and working in various mediums, gathered together under the influence of Shuzo Takiguchi, the noted critic and poet, and began the artist collaborative group, Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop, active from 1951 - 1957) in Tokyo. While in Osaka, several years later, Gutai Bijyutsu Kyokai (Gutai Art Association, active from 1954 – 1972), an artist group began with fifteen artists, centered around the visionary core member, and painter, Jiro Yoshihara.

During the 1960s, as Japan underwent a period of profound economic growth, the definition of art expanded with new materials, radical subject matter and happenings. In the society, and primarily among the students and artists, there began an open challenge to the newly evolving social system, postwar Americanization and its military presence. Artists responded by documenting their society and selecting subject matter that had hitherto fore been utterly alien in artistic practice; using the land, ephemeral happenings, radical art practices and photography as an expressive medium. 1968 was a moment of intense conflict and rebellion, and social revolt took to the streets, as did the artists.

This provocative spirit and artistic investigation evolved into more cool and conceptual practices, becoming seminal with the 10th Tokyo Biennale in 1970, the first international art event, which combined contemporary artists such as Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra and the Japanese, Jiro Takamatsu, Hitoshi Nomura, On Kawara and Tatsuo Kawaguchi, all showing works which shared an affinity for the minimal, the experimental and the conceptual that showed the relationships man and material, the same as the biennale's subtitle, "Between man and matter".

The gallery's summer exhibition is meant to encapsulate the fervent artistic production of this highly significant period in Japan.

EXHIBITED ARTISTS

Hideko Fukushima (1927- 1997) was a painter and founding member of Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop). She is well known for her unique paintings of pressed circles and lines from the mid 1950s. As a member of Jikken Kōbō, she made stage costumes and installation as well as served as an artist's model for the other members. Fukushima participated in several international exhibitions beginning from 1955, including "Premio Lissone" in Italy in 1955 and the Biennale de Paris in 1961, introduced by Michel Tapié. Her works have been included in exhibitions such as "Art in the 1950s" (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, 1981), "Shuzo Takiguchi and Art in Post War Japan" (The Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, 1982), "Art in Tokyo" No.2: 1946-1956 (Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo, 1990) as well as "MOT Collection Special feature: Hideko Fukushima / Chronicle 1964- OFF MUSEUM" a featured exhibition (Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2012).

Hitoshi Nomura (b. 1945) studied sculpture at Kyoto City University in 1969 and uses photography as a means to express and visualize his interest in time in the context of nature. His artworks are based on phenomena that the artist selects and visualizes through various mediums of expression, including photography, sculpture and media art. On view is his seminal work, "Time on a Curved Line", 1970, recreated by the artist in 1986 as a smaller version of his oversized well known work which is in the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and currently exhibited in "For a New World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography, 1968-1979" at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Kiyoji Otsuji (1923-2001) studied at the Tokyo Professional School of Photography in 1942 and began his career in the field of commercial photography, creating studio work and photographs for publications. He was an important photographer of the postwar

generation in Japan as well as a member of Jikken Kōbō. Otsuji's work was prominently featured in the high profile experimental page called APN (Asahi Picture News), which was in the weekly Asahi Graph newspaper from the years 1953 to 1954. The project is notable as it was a collaboration between artists, namely the sculptors Katsuhiro Yamaguchi, Yoshishige Saito and the photographer Shozo Kitadai, and ushered in a new era of creative visuals to the spheres of commercial photography and magazine publications. Otsuji's photographic work is distinctive because of its sculptural and avant-garde qualities, which are tied to his strong spirit of experimentation. His importance is also due to his teaching; from 1960, he taught at Kuwasawa Design School, Tokyo Zokei University, University of Tsukuba and Kyushu Sangyo University, among other places, as well as his excellent texts on photography—he wrote both criticism and theory—which have widely influenced later generations. His students include important postwar and contemporary photographers such as Yutaka Takanashi, Shinzo Shimao, Shigeo Gocho and Naoya Hatakeyama.

Shuzo Takiguchi (1903-1973) was a poet, painter, art critic, and one of the most prominent surrealists in Japan and he translated Andre Breton's "Surrealism and Painting" into Japanese. Takiguchi played a key role by introducing a younger generation of artists through his organizing of exhibitions for the Takemiya Gallery in Tokyo and the Yomiuri Independent exhibitions in the post war era. He was in contact with artists such as Marcel Duchamp, and André Breton and, as such, had a great influence on individuals including the members of Jikken Kōbō, a group he was responsible in naming. From 1960 Takiguchi began to make artwork again. His main works were decalcomanias, a decorative technique using gouache spread thinly on a sheet of paper then pressed onto another surface, and drawings by automatism, following the tenets of Surrealism.

Katsuhiro Yamaguchi (b. 1928) was a member of the art collective Jikken Kōbō. He is particularly well-known for his engagement with technology; from a very early stage, he recognized its potential for artistic expression not so much as a demonstration of technological functions, but rather as a way of engaging his audience. On exhibition is "Vitrine", 1958 and "Jet No.2", 1965, both works that show Yamaguchi's command of mixed media. The artist's notable "Vitrine" series, made with refractive glass in front of an abstract painting, incorporate surfaces shift according to the viewer's position. The series present both Yamaguchi's interests and his experimental mind and brings forth the experience of our visual perception with a changing environment. As such the work became a part of the pioneering works of Op art in the late of 1960s. "Vitrine, 1958 was included in "Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in the winter of 2012. In "Jet" Yamaguchi's coherent interest how an artwork can affect to a space and environment where it is exhibited and intentionally it is not seen as just an object. The "Jet" series creates a place where viewers can regard both the artwork and exhibited space as a new environment.

For further information, please contact: Exhibition & Press: Takayuki Fujii
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email: info@takaishiigalleryny.com Tue-Sat | 1:00-18:00 Closed on Sun, Mon and National holidays
Gallery summer hours: Mon-Fri | 1:00-18:00 Closed on Sat, Sun and National holidays from July 3 until September 5, 2015



Katsuhiro Yamaguchi
"Vitrine", 1958
Wood and painted glass
69.7 × 186.3 × 26.2 cm (27 × 73 × 10 inches)



Hideko Fukushima
"Following A Horizontal Course", 1986
Acrylic on canvas
97.0 × 194.0 × 3.2cm (38 3/16 × 76 3/8 × 1 17/64 inches)