WALKER ART CENTER TO PREMIERE THE LATE JAPANESE ARTIST TETSUMI KUDO’S FIRST U.S. SOLO MUSEUM EXHIBITION

GARDEN OF METAMORPHOSIS REVEALS THE ARTIST’S RADICALLY TRANSCULTURAL AND COSMOPOLITAN VISION

Minneapolis, September 19, 2008—Tetsumi Kudo’s room-size work titled Philosophy of Impotence, a culmination of his early radical performances and installations, stunned the Tokyo art world in 1962 and came to be known as one of the most iconic works in postwar Japanese art history. Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis, the late artist’s first solo museum exhibition in the United States, premieres at the Walker Art Center October 18–January 11. Curated by Walker visual arts curator Doryun Chong, in close collaboration with Hiroko Kudo, the artist’s widow and executor of the estate, the retrospective exhibition features more than 100 works of diverse media—objects, sculpture, installation, drawing, and painting—covering the entire trajectory of Kudo’s productive career, from 1956 through 1986. A study room within the installation will include a timeline of the artist’s life and work, historical documentation, posters, and ephemera, as well as studies for some of his larger-scale works. Many works are borrowed from important museums in Japan and Europe, as well as from private collections. The Walker is publishing a comprehensive catalogue to accompany the exhibition, the first full-length study of the artist’s work in a Western language.

Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis introduces the artist to American audiences while expanding our understanding of possible alternative narratives of 20th-century art. Kudo bridged many disparate artistic tendencies in the latter half of the 20th century—French Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, Pop art, among others—without specifically belonging to or identifying with any of them.

While his art and vision were consistently and uniquely transcultural, international, and cosmopolitan, he remained, in his private thinking and
public persona, an eternal outsider. Ultimately, what Kudo hoped to
discover and develop was a universal humanist language of creativity and
regeneration in a post-nuclear world, a hope that resonates, perhaps even
more critically in this new century, almost 20 years after his death.

Born into an artistic family, Tetsumi Kudo (1935–1990) was raised first in
Aomori, located in the northern end of Honshu, the main island of Japan,
and then in Okayama, in its western end. He belonged to the generation
that came of age in the late 1950s, when Japan had emerged from the
rubble of World War II and the subsequent American occupation
(1945–1952) and was beginning to enjoy rapid economic growth and
relative political stability. At the same time, the forced postwar
demilitarization and refashioning of society in a pacifist guise left many
youths politically disenchanted and intellectually confused. Although
Kudo received a traditional education at the Tokyo National University of
Fine Arts and Music, he began, even before his graduation in 1958, to
react to the restless social climate. For the above-mentioned Philosophy of
Impotence he filled an entire gallery in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art
Museum with objects that resembled either phalluses or chrysalises and
symbolized the “pathetic despair of human efforts.” Shortly after the
exhibition, Kudo headed to Paris and made it his base for the next quarter
century. Ever a provocateur, he quickly developed a practice that
challenged and critiqued the Western dualistic way of viewing humanity in
opposition to nature or technology.

Kudo’s previously abstract work grew figurative, and his lurid, even morbid
and grotesque objects began incorporating sculptural fragments of the
human body—face, hands, brain, penis, skin—inside bird cages, fish tanks,
and wooden boxes. Often, he mixed in found everyday objects. Calling
these works Your Portrait, the artist declared, “I wanted to tell Europeans
that humanism and love and sex are virtually on the same dimension as
such mundane commodities as instant soup or cigarettes.” Kudo’s
diagnosis of the ills and contradictions of the uncontrollable consumerism
and technologization of postwar society gradually evolved into another
idiosyncratic, artistic vision of symbiosis between humans and nature,
which they have irreversibly polluted, and between humans and the
technology that infiltrates and dominates their lives. Believing that all of us
are undergoing the process of “metamorphosis,” he argued that
“pollution” is not simply destructive, but rather, through “cultivation,”
could give rise to new hybrid forms of existence and turn the landscape of
humankind and civilization into a “new ecology.” In the last decade of his
life, Kudo sharply shifted the orientation of his art, turning away from
belligerent confrontation to a more self-reflective stance toward his own
identity, origin, and culture. His work grew less visceral and more abstract
and contemplative.

Although Kudo’s work has been featured in benchmark historical
exhibitions, such as Japon des avant-gardes 1910–1970 (Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, 1986) and Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the
Sky (Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1994), the artist has never been the
subject of a one-person exhibition outside Europe and Japan. The only comprehensive retrospective of his work, organized by the National Museum of Art, Osaka, took place in 1994.

_Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis_ aims not only to introduce this important artist to new audiences, but to contribute to the ongoing revision of the narrative of postwar international art.

**Exhibition Catalogue**

The 304-page catalogue, with 101 color plates and 111 black-and-white illustrations, features an overview essay by exhibition curator Doryun Chong, a richly illustrated chronology of Kudo’s life and career by the artist’s widow, Hiroko Kudo, and a reflection by artist Mike Kelley. The book also features reprints of important historical texts, including a 1974 critical essay by Yusuke Nakahara and several of the artist’s statements, manifestos, and interviews, many of them translated into English for the first time. Also included are the artist’s biography and exhibition history as well as a comprehensive bibliography and title index.


**Exhibition Curator**

Doryun Chong is associate curator of visual arts at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. During his tenure he has organized exhibitions such as _Brave New Worlds_ (2007), _Catherine Sullivan: Triangle of Need_ (2007), and _OPEN–ENDED (the art of engagement)_ (2006). He was also a co-curator of the Busan Biennale (2006) in South Korea.

_Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis_ is organized by the Walker Art Center. The exhibition is made possible by generous support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and the Japan Foundation.

**Tour Schedule**

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota
October 18, 2008—January 11, 2009

Other venues to be announced.
RELATED EVENTS

**Mack Lecture**

**Saturday, November 15**

**Mack Lecture: Samuel R. Delany, 2 pm**
Free tickets available at the Bazinet Garden Lobby desk from 1 pm

*Cinema*

“Delany gives us to understand that all worlds, including our own, are alien, and terrifying, and wondrous.” —Michael Cunningham

Spend an afternoon in another world with esteemed author Samuel R. Delany, who visits the Walker in conjunction with Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis. Just as Kudo proposed a “new ecology” of humanity and technology, so has Delany’s groundbreaking science fiction—including award-winning titles such as *Babel-17*, *Dhalgren*, and *The Einstein Intersection*—offered captivating glimpses of hypothetical and shifting realities. In addition to science fiction and fantasy, Delany has written highly acclaimed volumes of autobiography, literary criticism, and eroticism. His latest book is the novel *Dark Reflections*, a devastating “portrait of the artist” for the 21st century.

Copresented by Rain Taxi Review of Books.

This program made possible by generous support from Aaron and Carol Mack.

**Target Free Thursday Nights**

**Thursday, October 23**

**Curator Talk: Doryun Chong on Tetsumi Kudo, 7 pm**
Meet in the Bazinet Garden Lobby

Japanese artist Tetsumi Kudo came of age in the 1950s as Japan was dealing with the trauma of postwar military occupation and the postatomic age. Join exhibition curator Doryun Chong for a discussion on Kudo’s ideas about a “new ecology” that critiqued the West’s dualistic way of pitting humanity against nature and technology.
Thursday, November 6

**Sound Bites: Tetsumi Kudo: Garden of Metamorphosis, 6:30 and 7 pm**
Meet in the Bazinet Garden Lobby

Step inside the mind of artist Tetsumi Kudo with a Walker tour guide who will offer an overview of the first solo U.S. museum exhibition of the Japanese artist’s work.

Thursday, November 13

**Film Screening: The Sun’s Burial (Taiyo no hakaba), 7:30 pm**
(See description below.)
A pre-screening tour of the exhibition takes place at 6:30 pm; RSVP required when purchasing film ticket. Limited to 25 participants.

Thursday, November 20

**Film Screening: A Town of Love and Hope (Ai to kibo no machi), 7:30 pm**
with
**Diary of a Yunbogi Boy (Yunbogi no nikki)**
(See description below.)

Thursday, December 11

**Gallery Talk: Electronic Kudo, 7 pm**
Meet in the Bazinet Garden Lobby.

In his 1972 manifesto, artist Tetsumi Kudo proclaims a theory for a “new ecology” wherein he critiques the antagonistic relationship of man vs. machine and offers a vision for a combined existence of the two. To contextualize these ideas, Dr. Andrew Opitz from the Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature Department at the University of Minnesota will lead a talk on the basic theories of cybernetics—which greatly influenced and inspired Kudo—and developments in the ecology movement of the late 20th century using the artist’s work and writing as reference.
Film Series

In the Realm of Oshima: The Films of Japanese Master Nagisa Oshima
November 5–23

Nagisa Oshima is one of Japan’s master filmmakers—and arguably one of its most controversial. His work is filled with convention-breaking, from his aesthetic (he adheres to a palette excluding the color green) to the subjects he tackles (the overt sexuality of his celebrated In the Realm of the Senses and male affection in the world of the samurai in Taboo). While Oshima mines universal themes of youth, passion, sexuality, and death, his characters generally inhabit worlds that defy authority—petty criminals, anti-occupation protestors, empire-resistors. His innovative cinematic approach to such subjects has governed his long career. This touring retrospective presents a rare opportunity to reflect upon films from this infamous and acclaimed Japanese auteur, most shown on new 35mm prints. Copresented with the Consortium for the Study of the Asias, University of Minnesota.

All films are directed by Nagisa Oshima and presented in Japanese with English subtitles. Unless otherwise noted, films are screened in the Cinema and tickets are $8 ($6 Walker members and U of M students). Cinephile’s special: Receive 5 tickets for the price of 3 for $24 ($18).

Wednesday, November 5
Taboo (Gohatto), 7:30 pm
The series opens with Oshima’s most recent film. Set within a Shogunate militia in Kyoto, 1865, this stylized drama follows samurai warriors, known for their ruthless violence, as an androgynously handsome youth joins the elite squad, setting off an internal battle for his affections. Takeshi “Beat” Kitano and Ryuhei Matsuda return to work on what might stand as Oshima’s final film. 1999, 35mm, 100 minutes.

Friday, November 7
Cruel Story of Youth (Seishun zankoku monogatari), 7:30 pm
Introduction and post-screening discussion led by Mark Anderson, Assistant Professor, Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Minnesota
This dispassionate tale finds a pair of middle-class Tokyo teenagers tangled up in a racket to extort money from older men who try to pick up young girls. Their aimlessness and narcissism prove an indictment of young people losing sight of collective activism, as Oshima uses old newsreel footage to compare the self-indulgences of the teens to the disillusion of slightly older student activists. This was Oshima’s first major box-office hit in Japan. 1960, new 35mm print, 96 minutes.

Saturday, November 8
Violence at Noon (Hakuchu no torima), 2 pm
Addressing the collapse of idealism in postwar Japan, Oshima constructs a crime film among the former residents of a commune. Based on a true
story from the 1950s, the director's brilliant cinematography and spirited editing capture a serial rapist and murderer haunted by his past while tormenting those in the present. 1966, new 35mm print, 99 minutes.

**Japanese Summer: Double Suicide (Muri shinju: Nihon no natsu), 7:30 pm**
Two seemingly different characters share a deadly attraction in Oshima's gloriously colorful Cinemascope crime thriller. The central character, Otoko, suffers a paranoid delusion that someone is out to kill him, but loses focus when he falls into a torrid relationship. The distractions of love-making, television, toys, and pop culture suck the life from the couple. 1967, new 35mm print, 98 minutes.

**Wednesday, November 12**
**Boy (Shonen), 7:30 pm**
Based on a true story from 1966, Boy was considered a shocking assault on the traditional set of Japanese family values by which parents dote on their children. Trained by his parents to throw himself in front of moving cars, a boy fakes injury while his parents press the driver for cash. Their scheme works and the boy considers this to be normal, not realizing his parents' exploitative practices. 1969, new 35mm print, 105 minutes.

**Thursday, November 13**
**The Sun's Burial (Taiyo no hakaba), 7:30 pm** Free
Oshima presents a gritty view of Japan's underworld with a broad swipe at the image of Japan as the "land of the rising sun." Two gangs—a young, ragtag crew and an organized older band of yakuza—vie to control the black market, prostitution, and other dirty dealings in an Osaka slum. 1960, new 35mm print, 87 minutes.

A pre-screening tour of the exhibition takes place at 6:30 pm; RSVP required when purchasing film ticket. Limited to 25 participants.

**Friday, November 14**
**Night and Fog in Japan (Nihon no yoru to kiri), 7:30 pm**
Using the wedding of two leftists as a metaphor, Oshima shows the idealism and betrayal of two generations of protesters. Reflecting the failed ambition of Oshima's generation and the demonstrations of 1960, political squabbling taints the wedding celebration amid arguments over commitment to the movement and the sell-out of many in the older generation. The studio pulled the film from distribution after only a few days in release, to the fury of the director, who then started his own production company. 1960, new 35mm print, 107 minutes.

**Saturday, November 15**
**Pleasures of the Flesh (Etsuraku), 7:30 pm**
Mixing the search for erotic pleasure with the violent world of the yakuza, Oshima creates a morality play on the downfall of a man. Entrusted to hide a fortune embezzled by an imprisoned official, a man blows the money on prostitutes and soon finds himself in hot water with the mob. 1965, new 35mm print, 104 minutes.
Sunday, November 16
*Death by Hanging (Koshikei)*, 2 pm
Introduction and post-screening discussion led by Christopher Scott, Assistant Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures, Macalester College
Based on the real incident of a Korean youth found guilty of raping a Japanese schoolgirl, Oshima exposes prejudice against Koreans within the criminal justice system. The blatant racism shown in the investigation shows how due process is ill-served, especially when the defendant is facing death for his alleged crime. 1968, new 35mm print, 117 minutes.

Wednesday, November 19
*The Catch (Shiku)*, 7:30 pm
Introduction and post-screening discussion led by Michael Molasky, Associate Professor, Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Minnesota
One of Oshima’s two film adaptations set during WWII, *The Catch* shows how perceived differences between the Japanese and others perpetuated conflict. In this case, an African American pilot who was shot down is kept in the basement of a storehouse by a group of cruel children who found him. His face becomes a major source of interest among villagers who have had little contact with Westerners. 1961, new 35mm print, 105 minutes.

Thursday, November 20
*A Town of Love and Hope (Ai to kibo no machi)*, 7:30 pm  Free
Introduction and post-screening discussion led by Noboru Tomonari, Associate Professor Japanese, Asian Languages and Literatures, Carleton College
One of Oshima’s earliest films examines the class struggle in Japan. A poor enterprising teen sells homing pigeons to unsuspecting customers as pets—only to have the birds return so he can sell them again—until his rich girlfriend gets wise to his scam. 1959, 35mm, 62 minutes.

with
*Diary of a Yunbogi Boy (Yunbogi no niki)*
Told through a series of still photos shot by the director (similar in style to Chris Marker’s *La Jetée*), the film combines the writings of a Korean boy abandoned by his family in Japan to show the struggles of the ethnic minority in Japan. 1965, 16mm, 30 minutes.

Friday, November 21
*In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no corrida)*, 7:30 pm
Still haunting film history after 30 years, this film remains one the forefront of cinematic portrayals of love, sex, pain, and death. Frequently referenced for breaking new ground, it is also the most notorious of Oshima’s works. Oshima shot the film in Japan but sent the footage to France for processing and editing to escape censorship. The audience is the voyeur to the narrative of on-screen sex and violence. 1976, new 35mm print, 105 minutes. Viewer discretion is advised.
Saturday, November 22

The Ceremony (Gishiki), 2 pm

Oshima’s damning film on the traditions and sanctity of the Japanese family encompasses many generations over several decades. As the Kazuomi family gathers for various ceremonies—weddings, funerals, anniversaries—the emptiness of their claustrophobic gatherings and commitment to keeping up appearances is exposed. The strict patriarch of the family insists on order and obedience at all costs, causing subsequent generations to crack under the pressure. 1971, new 35mm print, 123 minutes.

A pre-screening tour of the exhibition takes place at 1 pm; RSVP required when purchasing film ticket. Limited to 25 participants.

Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence (Furyo), 7:30 pm

Set in a Japanese prison camp in 1942 and based on the novel The Sower and The Seed by Laurens Van der Post, the film investigates a confrontation of enemies when a British military officer (David Bowie) is transferred to the camp and clashes psychologically, culturally, and physically with the camp’s commander (Ryuichi Sakamoto), who becomes infatuated with him. The unforgettable sound track was composed by lead actor Sakamoto. 1983, new 35mm print, in English and Japanese with English subtitles, 124 minutes.

Sunday, November 23

Diary of a Shinjuku Thief (Shinjuku dorobo nikki), 2 pm

One of Oshima’s most provocative films is set amidst the backdrop of the 1968 Zengakuren demonstrations against American bases in Japan, paralleling the May riots in Paris. Japanese radicals explore a somewhat distorted dream of liberation through the dynamics of politics, sexuality, and the new-found exuberance of youth culture. A woman posing as a bookstore assistant catches a thief in the act, then takes him on a bizarre, dizzying escape. 1968, new 35mm print, 96 minutes.

The Nagisa Oshima retrospective and its North American tour was organized by James Quandt for Cinematheque Ontario, Toronto. The following individuals and organizations made the retrospective possible: Nagisa Oshima, Tokyo; Marie Suzuki, The Japan Foundation, Tokyo; Masayo Okada, Yuka Sukano, Atsuko Fukuda, Kawakita Memorial Film Institute, Tokyo; Eiko Oshima, Oshima Productions, Tokyo; Peter Becker, Kim Hendrickson, Fumiko Takagi, Sarah Finklea, Janus Films, New York.
For Parents

Parent Discussion: Talking to Kids about Tough Art
Tuesday, November 11, 6–7:30 pm
Free, registration required; call 612.375.7600

In this informal discussion, parents will exchange ideas and feedback with other parents on the challenges and opportunities that come with looking at contemporary art with kids. After touring the exhibition, join Family Programs staff to talk openly about encountering mature subject matter in the galleries with kids in tow. Limited childcare is available for children ages 5–10. To register or to receive more information, call 612.375.7600.

Gallery Tours

All tours free with gallery admission.

Thursday, November 6, 2 pm
Sunday, November 9, 2 pm
Friday, November 28, 2 pm
Friday, December 19, 2 pm
Sunday, December 21, 2 pm
Saturday, January 10, 2 pm
Sunday, January 11, 2 pm

Gallery Admission

$10 adults; $8 seniors (65+); $6 students/teens (with ID)
Free to Walker members and children ages 12 and under.
Free with a paid ticket to a same-day Walker event.
Free to all every Thursday evening (5–9 pm) and on the first Saturday of each month (10 am–5 pm).

Walker Art Center programming is made possible by its Premier Partners: Best Buy, General Mills, Target, and Star Tribune.

The Walker Art Center is located at 1750 Hennepin Avenue—where Hennepin meets Lyndale—one block off Highways I-94 and I-394, in Minneapolis.

For public information, call 612.375.7600, or visit walkerart.org.