



**For immediate release**

**EXHIBITION OPENS**

**Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s**

**March 1—May 18, 2008 / Kress Gallery**

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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**PROMOTIONAL IMAGES AVAILABLE**

**Lawrence, KS**—Beginning Saturday, March 1 and continuing through May 18, the Spencer Museum of Art presents *Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s*, an exhibition featuring nearly 50 paintings and works on paper by Japanese artists who, coming from one of the world's most tradition-bound cultures, boldly tested and often trampled the conventional boundaries of artistic expression.

*Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s* was organized by The Gibson Gallery (Collection), SUNY Potsdam, New York. The Spencer Museum of Art venue of *Resounding Spirit Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s* is funded in part through the generous support of the O'Connor Company-Piller Foundation.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Spencer is offering a wide array of public programming, beginning at 5:30 PM Thursday, March 6 with a performance by KU art students in expanded media in collaboration with So Yeon Park, KU assistant professor of art. The students have created a series of original performance pieces that build on the groundbreaking work of 1960s Japanese *Gutai* artists. The following day, Friday, March 7, the museum will hold a 9:30 AM Town & Gown Forum, "Japan and International Modernism: 1950-1970." Co-sponsored with KU's Hall Center for the Humanities and moderated by Kris Ercums, SMA Curator of Asian Art, the morning-long event will feature gallery presentations by KU faculty members Maki Kaneko, art history, William Tsutsui, History, and David

Cateforis, art history. A complete list of associated programming is included at the bottom of this release.

*Resounding Spirit* traces the pioneering use of abstract art by Japanese artists from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, a period characterized by innovation and a growing awareness of international currents in the art world. Abstract painting—one of the most significant artistic movements of the 20th century—was a worldwide phenomenon. Following the end of the U.S. occupation of Japan in 1952, Japanese artists once again became avid participants in avant-garde movements around the world, oftentimes creating uniquely Japanese manifestations. Groups of young artists such as *Gutai* (Japanese for “embodiment”) not only flouted previously held notions of art, but transgressed conventional ideas of practice. For instance, the *Gutai* artist Shiraga Kazuo completely abandoned the brush, producing painting using only his bare hands and feet. Ideas closely associated with abstract expressionism practiced by New York artists like de Kooning and Pollock inspired a rethinking of traditional calligraphy which engendered the gestural, illegible paintings known as “abstracted calligraphy.”

This exhibition features more than 50 paintings and works on paper by Japanese artists, including internationally respected members of *Gutai*; New-York based artists such as Kenzo Okada, known for his subdued tones and drifting forms; and representative artwork from other well-known international movements such as *Art informel*, Fluxus, Op, and Pop art.

To complement the exhibition, the Spencer will install in its Asia Gallery a variety of postwar Japanese prints and ceramics, and the Central Court will feature Western art selections from the controversial 1960s, all drawn from the Spencer’s collection.

To complement the *Resounding Spirit* exhibition, the Spencer has organized two exhibitions drawn from its own collection. *Make a Mark: Art of the 1960s*, installed in the Central Court, features American and European artists from the same period as *Resounding Spirit*. A companion exhibition, *Japan Re-Imagined/Post-war Art*, installed in the Asia Gallery, employs a variety of post-war Japanese prints and ceramics to examine how Japanese artists after World War II re-thought their nation’s history, tradition, and society as both a means of self-critique and cultural regeneration. Separate media releases describe the companion exhibitions in greater detail.

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## **ASSOCIATED PROGRAMMING**

### **Thursday, March 6**

Expanded Media Performance: The experimental *Gutai* group, founded in 1954 by Japanese abstract painter Yoshihara Jiro, used performance as a means to explore the powerful relationships between material and action in the creative process. A series of provocative original performances, created by

KU students in expanded media in collaboration with So Yeon Park, KU assistant professor of art, build on Gutai's groundbreaking work to create new works about contemporary issues. / 5:30 PM / Central Court

**Friday, March 7**

Town & Gown Forum: *Japan and International Modernism: 1950-1970* / 9:30 AM / Central Court & Galleries / Co-sponsored with KU's Hall Center for the Humanities / Join KU faculty members Maki Kaneko, art history, William Tsutsui, history, and David Cateforis, art history, for a series of gallery presentations about the exhibitions / SMA Curator of Asian Art Kris Ercums, moderator

**Saturday, March 8**

Children's Art Appreciation Class: "Shaping Color" / Learn how artists used colors and shapes in the 1960s and make a colorful relief frieze. / 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM / Central Court & Galleries / \$ / Instructor: Erin Hollis / To enroll, contact the SMA education department, 785.864.0137 or [smakids@ku.edu](mailto:smakids@ku.edu)

**Monday, March 10**

KU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: *Japan and International Modernism: 1950-1970* / 2 PM / Central Court & Galleries / Join KU faculty member Yoonmi Nam, art, and SMA Curators Susan Earle and Kris Ercums for a series of gallery presentations about the exhibitions / Amanda Martin-Hamon, moderator / Sponsored by KU Continuing Education. Enrollment required. Please contact University of Kansas Continuing Education, 785-864-KUCE(5823) [www.kuce.org](http://www.kuce.org) or [kuce@ku.edu](mailto:kuce@ku.edu)

**Thursday, March 27**

Lecture: Reiko Tomii on "A Peripheral Vision: 'International Contemporaneity' in the Japanese Art Discourse, Circa 1970" / 5:30 PM / SMA Room 211 / Murphy Lecture Fund / Tomii is an independent scholar/co-founder, PoNJA-GenKon

**Thursday, April 3**

Film: *Woman in the Dunes* / 6 PM / SMA Auditorium / Introduction by Professor Michael Baskett, Theater & Film / One of the sixties' great international art-house sensations, *Woman in the Dunes* was for many the grand unveiling of the surreal, idiosyncratic worldview of Hiroshi Teshigahara. (1964, 147 minutes)

**Saturday, April 5**

Children's Art Appreciation Class: "Painting with Letters" / Learn about Japanese artists from the 1960s and create a painting by abstracting letters. / 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM / Central Court & Galleries / \$ /

Instructor: Erin Hollis / To enroll, contact the SMA education department, 785.864.0137 or [smakids@ku.edu](mailto:smakids@ku.edu)

**Thursday, April 17**

Art Talk: SMA Curator Kris Ercums on *Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s* / 5:30 PM / Kress Gallery

**Thursday, April 17**

Film: *Kwaidan* / 6 PM / SMA Auditorium / Introduction by Professor Michael Baskett, Theater & Film / Winner of the Special Jury Prize at Cannes, *Kwaidan* features four nightmarish tales in which terror thrives and demons lurk. Adapted from traditional Japanese ghost stories, this lavish, widescreen production drew extensively on Kobayashi's own training as a student of painting and fine arts. (1965, 161 minutes)

**Thursday, April 24**

Senior Session: "*Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s*" / 10-11 AM / Kress Gallery

**Saturday, April 26**

Children's Art Appreciation Class: "Japanese Ceramics" / Learn about Japanese ceramics and create a clay work of your very own. / 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM / Central Court & Galleries / \$ / Instructor: Scott Barber / To enroll, contact the SMA education department, 785.864.0137 or [smakids@ku.edu](mailto:smakids@ku.edu)

**Thursday, May 1**

Gallery Conversation: Shuyun Ho, Asian Art Intern / A discussion of abstract calligraphy works in *Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s* / 12:15 PM / Kress Gallery

**Thursday, May 1**

Student Night: "Sixties Night @ the Spencer" / 6-8 PM / Central Court & Galleries / Sponsored by the SMA Student Advisory Board

**Saturday, May 3**

Arts Festival: In conjunction with *Resounding Spirit: Japanese Contemporary Art of the 1960s* / Co-sponsored by the Spencer's Student Advisory Board and Student Union Activities / 1-5 PM / Central Court, Galleries & Front Lawn / Explore innovative painting methods—paint with your feet, throw paint-filled balloons, or contribute to a painting installation—as part of activities designed to re-enact

some of the avant-garde artistic practices developed by Japanese artists in the 1960s. Check the SMA website for the schedule of activities: [www.spencerart.ku.edu](http://www.spencerart.ku.edu)

#### Thursday, May 8

Film: *Branded to Kill* / 7 PM / SMA Auditorium / Introduction by Professor Michael Baskett, theater & film / In this cinematic masterpiece Seijan Suzuki transcends the B-movie genre. *Branded to Kill* follows the strange day-to-day existence of an expert hit-man who carries out his orders with steely determination and impassive cool. All hell breaks loose, however, when a butterfly alighting on his rifle scope results in a botched job, and a death sentence for the screw-up. (1967, 91 minutes)

#### Saturday, May 10

Children's Art Appreciation Class: "Splat!" / Learn about abstract art from the 1960s and create your own splatter painting. / 10:30 AM & 1:30 PM / Central Court & Galleries / \$ / Instructor: Scott Barber / To enroll, contact the SMA education department, 785.864.0137 or [smakids@ku.edu](mailto:smakids@ku.edu)

## Spencer Museum of Art

The University of Kansas

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Also find the Spencer...

- On the Web: [www.spencerart.ku.edu](http://www.spencerart.ku.edu)
- E-mail: [spencerart@ku.edu](mailto:spencerart@ku.edu)

### Gallery hours

Tues., Wed., Fri., & Saturday 10 AM—5 PM

Thurs. 10 AM—9 PM

Sun. Noon—5 PM

Closed Monday

Museum Shop closes 30 minutes before the galleries close.

- Free parking in Lot 91 after 5 PM on weekdays and all day weekends, excepting home football games.
- Parking garage adjacent to Kansas Union is \$1 per hour weekdays, free on Saturdays and Sundays (but unavailable on home football games).