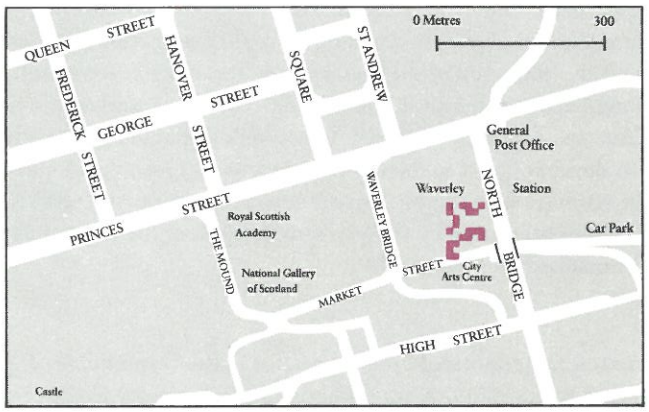
The Fruitmarket Gallery

Director: Mark Francis Exhibitions: Lesley Morrison Administration: Fiona McLeod, *Aileen Brady* Activities: *Moira Innes* Publicity: *Alison Bell* Gallery: Donald Ritchie, *Donald Busby, Linda Taylor, Henrietta Campbell* Bookstall: Cathy Outram, *Donald Busby* Cafe: Sheena Irving, *Anne Smith*
Part-time staff are shown in italics

Admission Free
Open: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5.30. **Closed:** Sundays and Mondays
The gallery cafe, which has a restaurant licence, is open Tuesday-Saturday 10-5.

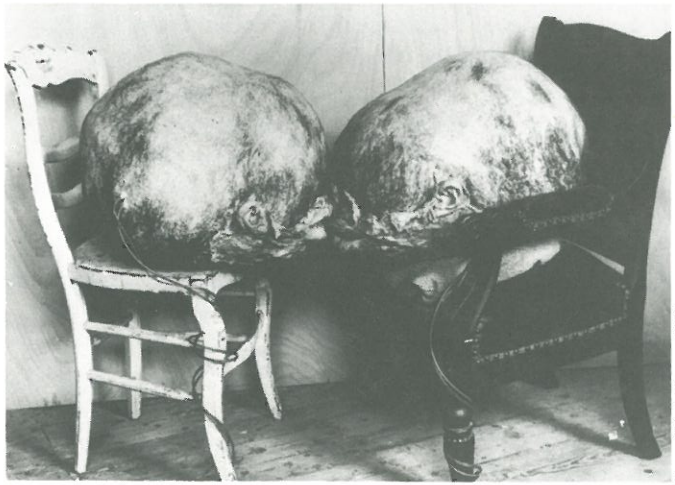
The Fruitmarket Gallery is an educational charity which receives regular financial assistance from the Scottish Arts Council.



The Fruitmarket Gallery, 29 Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DF Tel: 031-225 2383

The Fruitmarket Gallery 22 February - 5 April

Reconstructions:
Avant-Garde Art in Japan
1945-65



Tetsumi Kudo, *L'amour* 1964

Reconstructions: Avant-Garde Art in Japan 1945-65

Lower and Upper Galleries

Classical Japanese painting portrays an image of traditional Japan which is both decorative and exotic. There is, however, another aspect of modern Japanese fine-art which presents a very different picture. This show brings together a selection of avant-garde artists and examines the relationship between their work and Japanese society in the twenty year period of intense economic and social change following the Second World War. Much of this work has never before been shown in Europe.

The earliest section of the exhibition represents the revival of the Japanese avant-garde after a long period of wartime suppression. The monumental and dreamlike world of surrealism was used to explore the feelings which accompanied defeat and occupation. In a work such as Yamashita's *Totems* of 1951 we see landscape inspired by Ernst and Dali combined with the nightmarish images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

From 1945 a programme of westernisation and industrialisation gained momentum and sent shock-waves throughout Japanese society. Artists increasingly gained access to travel and study abroad. This, coupled with times of political unrest made artists susceptible to the western concept of the artist as a leader of progressive thought and anxious to provide social comment. Taro Okamoto personified this new consciousness. He declared to his students "We need to destroy everything with a monstrous energy like Picasso's in order to reconstruct the Japanese art world" and with his words set the tone of radicalism and anti-authoritarianism which characterises much of the work in this exhibition. Reportage paintings such as Iida's *War A&B* of 1955 demonstrate the intense passion Okamoto's students. Younger artists Ishii and Kawara tried to match this intensity with a style that was more specifically Japanese. Later in the work of various Neo-Dada groups social awareness again played a part. These artists developed the form of their work from close reference to Duchamp, Man Ray and early Dadaists but blended its enigmatic character with a highly developed awareness of the newly industrialised Japan. Neo-Dada groups gained in momentum until the mid-sixties when, in the wake of the *1,000 Yen Note* trial, they dissolved feeling that they had exhausted the style's potential.

The groups drew encouragement from regular showings of western avant-garde art in Japan and from the opportunities to show their own work in similar exhibitions.

Kikuji Yamashita, *Totems* 1951 *(detail)*

These exhibitions engendered a second strand of Japanese art which concentrated its energies increasingly upon aesthetic problems and formal innovations. Artists more and more aspired to become part of the international art scene. Few succeeded with the exception of the *Gutai* group. Its activities were centred around abstract painting and performance. Their leader Yoshihara encouraged his followers to make "Creations of your own which do not look like anybody else's work". This notion was in direct contrast to the usual tendencies of Japanese art and led artists to have more in common with the western art world than the world nearer home.

The exhibition, originated by the Museum of Modern Art Oxford has been selected and organised by Kazu Kaido.

Catalogue

A fully illustrated and annotated 96-page catalogue has been published in conjunction with the exhibition. It includes texts by Kazu Kaido, Professor Ichiro Hariu, Genpei Akasegawa and an extensive chronology of the period. It is priced £6.00 at the exhibition (£8.95 plus post and packing by mail order).

Events

Admission to all events is *free*.

Friday 21 February at 11 am
Kazu Kaido will talk about the exhibition to students.

Saturday 22 February at 12 noon
Kazu Kaido, art historian and lecturer on post-war Japanese art will give an introduction to the exhibition.

Saturday 1 March at 12 noon
Nigel Coates, architect and member of NATØ (see forthcoming exhibitions) will give a lecture on urban landsdcape and new attitudes to architecture in Japan entitled *Tokyo Rising: Signs, Meanings and Architecture.*

Saturday 8 and 22 March at 2 pm
On each of these dates there will be a short introductory tour of the exhibition for members of the public.

Saturday 29 March at 12 noon
Caroline Evans, co-author with Minna Thornton of a forthcoming book on feminism and fashion, will give a slide lecture on new Japanese fashion and its impact on the West entitled *Body Packaging: the Japanese Revolution in Fashion.*

Saturday 5 April at 12 noon
Professor Masaru Sekine of Waseda University, Japan and visiting professor at University College, Dublin will give a lecture entitled *Japanese Theatre: Past and Present,* which will investigate the influences of traditional and Western drama on recent Japanese theatre.

Friday 7 March at 6 pm
Donald Judd, the American sculptor, will give a special lecture, developing ideas in his recently published essay, *Not about Masterpieces but why there are so few of them.*

Teachers interested in sending school groups to the gallery please contact Moira Innes on 031-225 2383 to arrange a suitable time.

Acknowledgements
This exhibition, organised by the Museum of Modern Art Oxford with the Japan Foundation and the Yomiuri Newspaper Group, has also been sponsored by the Interfaculty Committee for Japanese Studies of Oxford University, Japan Air Lines, the Japan Association of Art Museums, The Kajima Foundation for the Arts, Kao Company Limited, Sabre International Textiles Limited, Toppan Printing Company Limited (Japan), the Visiting Arts Unit of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Yamato Transport Company Limited.

The events programme is sponsored by the Japan Foundation. It has been compiled with the assistance of the Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Stirling.

A series of public lectures on Japanese Art of the 19th and 20th centuries has been organised by the University of Edinburgh throughout February. For details contact the Department of Fine Art. Telephone 031-667 1011 ext 2447.

Forthcoming exhibitions

19 April-17 May

Lawrence Weiner
An installation specially designed for the gallery by the American conceptual artist (b. 1940) organised in collaboration with the Pier Arts Centre in Orkney.

NATØ's Gamma City
Visionary and anarchic architectural plans, drawings, constructions and interior design by the London-based group called NATØ (Narrative Architecture Today).