

DOMINIQUE LÉVY

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DOMINIQUE LÉVY TO PRESENT BODY AND MATTER

FIRST EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO LEGENDARY JAPANESE ARTIST KAZUO SHIRAGA IN JUXTAPOSITION WITH CERAMICS MASTER SATORU HOSHINO

Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino

January 29 – April 4, 2015

Dominique Lévy

909 Madison Avenue

New York City

New York, NY. Beginning January 29, 2015, Dominique Lévy Gallery will present *Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino*. This exhibition places a group of 23 important abstract paintings made over the course of the fifty-year career of legendary Gutai artist **Kazuo Shiraga**, in dialogue with a series of nine works from the 1990s by **Satoru Hoshino**, a prominent member of the avant-garde postwar Japanese ceramics group *Sodeisha*, the



“Crawling through Mud Association,” founded by Kazuo Yagi (1918-1979) in Kyoto. *Body and Matter* invites new insights into Shiraga’s extraordinary oeuvre through juxtaposition with the art of another Japanese master of a parallel universe: clay. Although they were near contemporaries in Japan, Shiraga (1924-2008) and



Hoshino (b. 1945) never met. The exhibition at Dominique Lévy marks the first time their work will be shown in juxtaposition, tracing the thread of the *informe*—the “formless”—in the radical and poetic work of two great postwar Japanese figures who exploited different mediums and created fresh art-historical dialogue through their innovative approaches to matter and individuation.



Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino is curated by **Koichi Kawasaki**, former director of Ashiya City Museum of Art and History in Japan. On view through April 4, the exhibition coincides with *Between Action and the Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga*, also co-curated by Koichi Kawasaki with Gabriel Ritter, at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) in Dallas, Texas. Also devoted to advancing exploration into the contributions of Shiraga, Kawasaki's DMA show is the first to pair his art side-by-side with that of fellow Gutai artist Motonaga.

Body and Matter will be accompanied by a fully illustrated hardbound book, released on February 12, 2015 and offering leading research and scholarship on the work of Shiraga via several newly commissioned essays by Koichi Kawasaki, **John Rajchman**, **Ming Tiampo**, and **Reiko Tomii**; personal accounts by Hoshino and Shiraga; philosophical and poetic texts relevant to the exhibition's theme; and extensive archival material.

Dominique Lévy gallery will present a book launch at the New York gallery, including a panel discussion with Koichi Kawasaki, **Alexandra Munroe**, Ming Tiampo, and Reiko Tomii, on February 12, 2015.

A Collision of Body and Matter

Body and Matter will showcase 23 important works made by Kazuo Shiraga from the 1960s through the 2000s. Among the highlights of the exhibition is his extraordinary *Suijū* (1985), which held a prominent place in the personal collection of Spanish artist Antoni Tàpies and is widely considered one of the best examples of Shiraga's work from the 1980s. Satoru Hoshino is represented in the exhibition



by nine key outstanding abstract ceramic sculptures—pedestals and wall pieces—created in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Kazuo Shiraga emerged as one of the most prominent members of the avant-garde group Gutai with his sensational 1955 performance *Challenging Mud*. In a work that has become one of the canonical touchstones of

postwar Japanese art as well as performance art, Shiraga used his entire body to aggressively manipulate a plot of mud, enacting a struggle between the human body and matter. The formless wall mud (*kabetsuchi*) used in *Challenging Mud* was made of cement, gravel, clay, plaster, pebbles, and twigs, and constituted a site of destruction against which the artist violently engaged his body. Through the various performances of *Challenging Mud*, Shiraga suffered physical injury in order to foreground the possible creative potential of destruction. He emerged from performances of *Challenging Mud* completely covered in congealing and caking material, ultimately obfuscating the line between his own body and the indexical marks made in the mud by his forceful movements.

This performance emerged out of Shiraga's "foot painting" practice, a radical mode he developed to express himself more fully. Shiraga set a canvas on the floor of his studio and, suspending his body from the ceiling for support, used his feet to paint powerful and energetic abstract forms. The artist continued to paint in this manner for the majority of his career, and *Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino* includes these important foot paintings. Displayed in a Western context, these canvases challenge preexisting notions of artistic creation and the verticality assumed in the act of painting to emphasize the corporeal meeting of body and matter.



Shiraga engaged in the historical Japanese techniques of painting with the body rather than brushes (as finger-painting is a centuries-old technique developed in China) and laying the canvas directly on the floor. Introduced in a Western context, these techniques take on the valence of cultural reclaiming in the face of global modernism.



Satoru Hoshino's ceramics similarly explore the visceral and nonhierarchical relationship between the body of the artist and matter. Hoshino has spoken of his artistic practice as an act of "baptism by... a wave of muddy water": the body of the sculptor, rather than shaping and sublimating clay, is subsumed by the base materiality of mud and dirt. A prominent member of *Sodeisha* from 1974 to 1980, Hoshino, along with fellow members of the group such as Yamada Hikaru (1924-2001) and Suzuki Osamu (1926-2001), questioned virtually all the conventions of ceramic materials, form, decoration, and function, and he addressed broader issues of presentation, social hierarchy, and the political role of art. After a landslide destroyed his studio in 1986, the artist experienced fresh revelations about the physicality and force of his material, and was inspired to work in a less controlled manner with it. Hoshino roughly shapes his sculptures by prodding and pushing clay with his fingers, and says of this process, "the finger mark is pushed to the clay unconsciously... [and so] the various elements that are in the body are put in the clay... there is no will to make a specific form." Hoshino's ceramics are often comprised of hundreds of finger marks, imprinted in the clay via a fierce, pulsating motion, assembled and reassembled without the orientation established by a potter's wheel or the traditional vessel form dictated by function. In works such as *Beginning Form with Spiral* on view in *Body and Matter* Hoshino allows the clay to form and coil without any aesthetic preconceptions and the artist's intervention in the traditional sense.

Mud, "Slippage," and Life Force

In his writings on the concept of the *informe*, Georges Bataille establishes the distinction between the "formless" as opposed to the "academic." The art historical "academic" has to do with the idea of the hand being an extension and a direct agent of the mind. Bataille's "formless" finds its echoes in both Hoshino and Shiraga's respective ways of mark making.



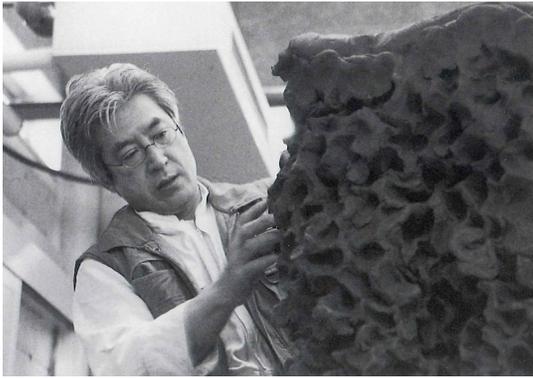
Shiraga placed his canvases on the studio floor and used his entire body, including his feet, to performatively manipulate thick layers of pigment. This treatment of paint enacts what Rosalind Krauss has termed a “slippage”: a relegation of the artist's (once revered) material support to the base status of mud or dirt. Both Shiraga and Hoshino eschewed the formal intervention of the artist's hand—and thus the “academic” artist's mind—and instead favored the

unpredictable, unsystematic, and often savage marks that ensue from a collision between animate and inanimate matter. In choosing to interact forcibly with detritus, dirt, earth, viscous pigment, and unformed *matter*, both Shiraga and Hoshino work to give life to their respective media. In pairing Shiraga's paintings with Hoshino's ceramics, *Body and Matter: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Satoru Hoshino* highlights the ways in which these artists acted to both make and destroy art: here, destruction acts as a creative life force, and this force *becomes* painting, *becomes* sculpture.

About the Artists

Kazuo Shiraga was born in 1924 in Amagasaki, Japan. After studying *Nihon-ga* (Japanese-style painting) in Kyoto and growing frustrated with the stylistic and material confines he found in *Nihon-ga*, Shiraga participated in *Gendai Bijutsu Kondankai* (Contemporary Art Discussion Group) with several other students and began experimenting with making oil paintings using his hands and fingers. Shiraga found the viscosity of tube-ready oil paint more “free” than the inconvenient and thin ink-based pigments he had used in painting school. In 1954, Shiraga joined renowned Japanese avant-garde collective Gutai and was inspired by Gutai's leader, Jirō Yoshihara, to further push his performative, material-driven painting practice in order to “make something that never existed” before. During his time as a member of Gutai, Shiraga simultaneously pursued oil painting and performance, often integrating the two practices in performance-painting pieces as *Challenging Mud* (1955), in which the artist used his entire body to manipulate mud as if it were thick, pliable paint, and *Ultramodern Sanbaso* (1957), in which he wore a dramatic red costume with elongated and wing-like arms, his movements creating slashes of color against the stark black backdrop of the stage. Shiraga continued

this exploration of the relationship between body and material over the course of his career, and is best known for the large-scale foot paintings he made well into his eighties. The foot paintings explore themes of Japanese history, Chinese mythology, and Buddhism while preserving the explosive movements of an artist who continuously sought a dynamic and collaborative relationship with his medium.



Satoru Hoshino was born in 1945 in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, and graduated from Ritsumeikan University in 1971. Hoshino began working in clay in the early 1970s and was an active member of the *Sodeisha* group between 1974 and 1980. After a landslide destroyed his studio in 1986, the artist recognized the physicality and force of his material, and was inspired to work in a less controlled manner with his material. In his later work, Hoshino self-

consciously relinquishes his agency to the clay he works with, and considers his interaction with clay to be collaborative: both artist and material act upon each other to create ceramics in which the physical trace of this relationship is foregrounded. Hoshino often smokes his ceramics to produce a deep and velvety black finish or glazes them and allows the glaze to pool and drip around his indexical finger marks. Hoshino has been awarded several prizes in Japan, and has lectured and demonstrated in workshops throughout the world. His work is represented in the collections of numerous museums, including The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; the Musée Ariana, Geneva; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota.

About the Participants

Koichi Kawasaki

Independent art historian and curator

Curator of *Between Action and the Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga*

John Rajchman

Professor of Theory and Criticism, 20th-century Art and Philosophy
Columbia University

Author of *The Deleuze Connections* (The MIT Press, 2000)

Co-curator of the 30th Sao Paulo Biennial

Ming Tiampo

Associate Professor of Art History
Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

Author of *Gutai: Decentering Modernism* (University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Co-curator of *Gutai: Splendid Playground* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum in New York (2013)

Reiko Tomii

Reiko Tomii

Independent art historian and curator

Publications include "Kazuo Shiraga: Six Decades" (2009) and contributions to
"Yanagi Yukinori: Inujima Note" (2010) and "Xu Bing" (Albion Editions, 2011)

Co-founder of PoNJA-GenKon (Post-1945 Japanese Art Discussion
Group / Gendai Bijutsu Kondankai)

Alexandra Munroe

Samsung Senior Curator, Asian Art
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Co-curator of *Gutai: Splendid Playground* (2013); Curator of *Lee Ufan: Marking
Infinity* (2011), *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (2009),
and *Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe* (2008)

Author of *Japanese Art after 1945: Scream Against the Sky* (1994)

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Kazuo Shiraga

Suiju

1985

Oil on canvas

75 3/4 x 101 1/4 inches (192.4 x 257.2 cm)

Photo: Courtesy Axel & May Vervoordt Foundation

Kazuo Shiraga painting in his studio, 1960

Photo: Courtesy Amagasaki Cultural Center

Kazuo Shiraga, *Challenging Mud* (third execution), 1955

Photo: Courtesy Amagasaki Cultural Center

Satoru Hoshino

Surfacing Bird (Icarus I)

1992

Smoked earthenware

28 3/8 x 25 9/16 x 5 1/8 inches (72 x 65 x 13 cm)

Photo: Courtesy the artist

Satoru Hoshino

Appeared Figure III

1989

Smoked Earthenware

10 5/8 x 28 3/8 x 22 13/16 inches (27 x 72 x 58 cm)

Photo: Courtesy the artist

Kazuo Shiraga

Chizokusei/Kojoso

2001

Oil on canvas

51 3/16 x 63 3/4 inches (130 x 162 cm)

Photo: Courtesy Collection Thuault-Lemogne

Satoru Hoshino in his studio

Photo: Courtesy the artist

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