

MEDIA RELEASE

EXHIBITION REVEALS POWERFUL IMPACT OF ASIAN ARTS AND THOUGHT ON AMERICAN ARTISTS FROM THE LATE 19TH THROUGH 20TH CENTURIES

Approximately 270 Works by 100 Artists and Literary Figures

Exhibition Features Live Performances by Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Yoko Ono, and Robert Wilson during Run of Exhibition

Exhibition: *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia , 1860-1989*

Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York

Dates: January 30 – April 19, 2009

Preview: Thursday, January 29, 10AM - 1PM

(NEW YORK, NY – September 11, 2008) – From January 30 – April 19, 2009, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum will present *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, an exhibition that considers the dynamic and complex impact of Asian art, literature, music, and philosophical concepts on American art. The exhibition features approximately 270 works by more than 100 artists across a broad range of media, including painting, sculpture, video art, installations, works on paper, film, live performance, books and ephemera. The project received a \$1 million Chairman’s Special Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and an additional NEH planning grant. These NEH grants have been augmented by significant funding from the Terra Foundation for American Art, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and The W.L.S. Spencer Foundation.

The exhibition was conceived and organized by Alexandra Munroe, Senior Curator of Asian Art of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and a leading authority of Asian art. “*The Third Mind* promises to be revelatory exhibition,” Munroe commented. “Visitors will see 130 years of American creative culture through an entirely new lens and should appreciate the transformative influences of Asian art and ideas on the formal and conceptual achievements of American modern and avant-garde art.”

Thomas Krens, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, remarked: “This extraordinary survey of American art promises to be a paradigm-shifting exhibition at the highest level of innovation and aesthetic refinement.” Mr. Krens continued: “We at the Guggenheim are honored by the National Endowment for the Humanities’ recognition of the scholarly and educational merit of this exhibition.”

Exhibition Overview

The Third Mind proposes a new art historical construct, challenging the widely accepted view of the development of American modern art as a dialogue with Europe by alternatively focusing on artists’ prolonged engagement with forms and ideas aligned with Asia. The exhibition will illustrate how Asian art, literature, music, and philosophical concepts were incorporated, interpreted, and mediated to inspire new modes of experiential, contemplative, process-oriented, and interactive art. The exhibition ventures beyond standard accounts of the history of American modernism in which Asian influence is reduced to stylistic appropriations of Japanese forms among Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and artists involved in the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements. The project’s scope will include the impact of the classical arts of India, China, and Japan, and the systems of Hinduism, Taoism, Tantric Buddhism, and

Zen Buddhism. The exhibition title refers to a “cut-ups” work by Beat writers William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind Untitled (“Rub Out the World”)*, ca. 1965, in which unrelated texts are combined and re-arranged to create a new narrative, evocative of the eclectic method by which American artists appropriated from Asia to create new forms, structures and meanings for their own art.

The Third Mind features over 100 artists and literary figures representing the activities of artistic communities in the United States, including New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and beyond. Selected for their demonstrable engagement with Asian art, thought, or forms of spiritual practice, the artists represented in the exhibition include: John La Farge, James McNeill Whistler, Mary Cassatt, Arthur Wesley Dow, Georgia O’Keeffe, Augustus Vincent Tack, Ezra Pound, Isamu Noguchi, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, David Smith, John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Jordan Belson, Ad Reinhardt, Anne Truitt, Agnes Martin, Dan Flavin, Walter de Maria, Adrian Piper, Bill Viola, and Tehching Hsieh, among others.

The exhibition is organized chronologically and thematically into seven sections:

Aestheticism and Japan: The Cult of the “Orient”

American artists’ fascination with the East began in the late 1850s and developed from the intellectual circles radiating from Boston, especially the interlocking communities of Harvard University, the Unitarians, and the Transcendentalists. This opening section explores an interconnected group of artists who, in the wake of Commodore Matthew Perry’s opening of Japan in 1853–54, turned to the philosophies and artistic practices of “the Orient” and especially as an alternative to European sources of cultural identity and creative inspiration. Economic and political developments spurred their Eastward gaze, as America was rising as a Pacific power invested in expanding trade and diplomacy with China and Japan. Artists associated with the Aesthetic Movement and Tonalism developed specific techniques, compositional devices, and an appreciation of numinous forms derived from their studies of Asian art and texts.

Landscapes of the Mind: Early Modern Conceptions of Nature

This section features leading artists of the early to mid-twentieth century who championed modern and abstract art in while invoking Asian aesthetics and philosophies that conceived of nature as a unity of matter and spirit. Informed by syncretic spiritualist discourses such as Transcendentalism and Theosophy, they appropriated from Asian art forms an aesthetic of transparency, weightlessness, dematerialization, silence, and rhythmic form. Opening with teacher and Japanese-art specialist Arthur Wesley Dow, this section features paintings, woodblock prints, and photographs by Georgia O’Keeffe, Alvin Langdon Coburn, and Arthur Dove; by the Photo-Secessionists Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz; the Synaesthesia painters Marsden Hartley and Stanton McDonald-Wright; and by the Northwest School artists Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, among others who were directly engaged with Asia. Increasing Asian immigration contributed to the dissemination of Buddhist centers along the West Coast, inspiring some artists to become students and practitioners of meditation techniques and East Asian calligraphy. These influences can be seen in Graves’s masterwork, *Time of Change* (1943), which demonstrates his desire “to move toward Eastern art’s basis of metaphorical perceptions ... as an outflowing of religious experience.”

Ezra Pound, Modern Poetry, and Dance Theater: Transliterations

This section explores American translations of classical Asian literature and dance theater spanning World War I and the interwar period. Both were well-known among visual artists and inspired experimentation with Asian “thought-forms.” Featured are

rare first-edition books by such influential writers as Ezra Pound and Lafcadio Hearn, as well as manuscript pages from T.S. Eliot's masterwork, *The Waste Land* (1921). Pound's seminal translations of classical Chinese and Japanese poetry revolutionized modern English literature with their terse, powerful, and imagist language. Pound also introduced classical Japanese Nô dance-theater to American modernists, and this section features documentary photographs of the charismatic Japanese dancer Michio Ito performing Yeats' Nô-inspired play, *At The Hawks Well* (c. 1916). These metaphoric literary and dance-theater aesthetics influenced Martha Graham and Isamu Noguchi, represented by a video documentary of their seminal collaboration of the dance performance, *Frontier* (1935).

Calligraphy and Metaphysics: The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art

This section explores the transformative influences of calligraphic brushstroke and metaphysical speculation that were based on Asian traditions in postwar American abstract art. The calligraphic brushstroke was an approach to abstract painting that focused on the spontaneous gesture of the artist's hand and was informed by the East Asian art of calligraphy and popular writings on Zen and its ethics of direct action. Paintings, ink paintings, and sculpture by such towering artists as Franz Kline, Sam Francis, Philip Guston, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, David Smith, and Mark Tobey reveal how this cross-cultural discourse inspired the creative culture of postwar America. The traditions of metaphysical speculation in Hinduism, Taoism, and Zen Buddhism provided artists with a conceptual basis for the understanding and representation of the spiritual and universal potential of abstract art. Natvar Bhavsar, Gordon Onslow Ford, Lee Mullican, and Isamu Noguchi reinterpreted Asian cultural theory and artistic practices to enhance the meaning and value of abstraction during a period when it was considered the most significant and progressive form of modern art.

Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Cage Zen, Beat Zen, and Zen

This section follows three interconnected collectives of artists and writers whose sustained if eclectic connections to Zen and other forms of Mahayana Buddhism emerge as critical methodological and philosophical influences in the American postwar neo-avant-gardes. These collectives are "Cage Zen," linking the activities of neo-Dada, Fluxus, and Happenings through the mediation of John Cage; Beat Zen, revealing how the spontaneous writings and modes of subjectivity forged by Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and others in the Beat movement appropriated Buddhism; and Bay Area conceptualism, which stemmed from both Cagean and post-Beat approaches to Zen as method. Zen rhetoric gave these artists and writers the conceptual framework to abandon artistic intention and compositional structure. It corresponded with the manifestos of Cage's "silent music," Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," George Maciunas's "anti-art," and Tom Marioni's "situation art"—all of which disposed of orthodox modernism in favor of the sheer immediacy and authenticity of everyday life.

Art of Perceptual Experience: Pure Abstraction and Alternative Minimalism

This section traces the development of a new iteration of Asian rhetoric in American art of the 1960s that recast the art object as a specific focus of contemplation and perceptual experience aimed at the transformation of consciousness. Ad Reinhardt's radical conclusion of art as a perceptual experience with the specific power to purify consciousness through the act of concentrated contemplation was constructed from his close readings of Asian art and religious thought. The "pure abstraction" and reductive forms of Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, and Robert Irwin shifted the conception of seeing from an optical event to a phenomenological process, and made durational time (of looking at the object) a medium of ontological awareness. In addition to painting and sculpture associated with Minimalism, this section features the experimental cinema of James Whitney and Jordan Belson, and the site-specific sound and light environment, *Dream*

House, by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. During the course of the exhibition live performances of Young's innovations in North Indian Classical Raga will be presented by Young and Zazeela with The Just Alap Raga Ensemble.

Meditation, Performance Art, and Video: The Body in Time

The final exhibition section presents video, installation, and live performance art of the 1970s through 1989. Artists such as Linda Montano, Bill Viola, and Tehching Hsieh explore endurance and extreme duration as techniques of meditation and self-awareness. Performances by Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson, will be presented in the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda and the Peter B. Lewis Theater as an integral part of this section. Several of the artists in this section are advanced practitioners of an Asian contemplative discipline and meditation technique; have spent extended period of time in Asian countries; or served in the Vietnam War. This period reflects the growing popularity of Asian wisdom traditions in American culture, and the gradual breakdown of the long-entrenched "East-West" constructs and worldviews in a postmodern, global era.

Exhibition Highlights

The Third Mind will feature major works from over 110 museums and private collections across Europe, North America, and Japan. Highlights include, in chronological order, **Section 1:** John La Farge, *Peonies Blowing in the Wind* (1889, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art); James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Gold – Old Battersea Bridge* (ca. 1872-75, Tate, London); and a complete suite of Mary Cassatt's drypoint etchings (1890-91, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and other collections); **Section 2:** Edward Steichen, *The Pond – Moonrise* (1904, The Metropolitan Museum of Art); Georgia O'Keeffe, *Abstraction*, 1917 (Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Peters, Santa Fe, NM) Arthur Dove, *Fog Horns* (1929, Colorado Spring Fine Arts Center). **Section 3:** Ezra Pound, *Cathay* (1913, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations); T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1921, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations). **Section 4:** Jackson Pollock, *Seven Red Paintings* (circa 1950, private collection, Berlin); Franz Kline, *Mahoning* (1956, Whitney Museum of American Art); Brice Marden, *Cold Mountain Studies 1-35* (1988-90, Collection of the artist, New York). **Section 5:** Robert Rauschenberg with John Cage, *Automobile Tire Print* (ca. 1953, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art); Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (1964, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit); Robert Rauschenberg, *Gold Standard* (1964, Glenstone); Jasper Johns, *Dancers on a Plane* (1980-81, Tate, London); Jack Kerouac, *Dharma Bums 'Greek' Reject* (1957, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations); Paul Kos, *The Sound of Ice Melting* (1970, Collection of the artist). **Section 6:** Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting* (1960-66, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum); Dan Flavin, *icon IV (the pure land) (to David John Flavin 1933-1962)*, (1962-69, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa); Robert Irwin, *Untitled* (1969, Museum of Contemporary Art , San Diego). **Section 7:** Bill Viola, *Room for St. John of the Cross* (1983, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles); Adrian Piper, *Hypothesis: Situation #4* (1968, Collection Adrian Piper Research Archive, Berlin); and Tehching Hsieh, *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance, 11 April 1980-11 April 1981* (Collection of the artist). Three site-specific installations are featured in the Guggenheim Museum show. The James Lee Byars' chamber that once hosted the performance *The Death of James Lee Byars* (1982-1994), overlaid entirely with sheets of gold leaf, will be constructed in the High Gallery, and a new commission by Ann Hamilton will be unveiled on the Museum's ramps upon the occasion of this exhibition. In addition, Young and Zazeela's *Dream House* will be created in an adjacent Tower gallery.

The Third Mind examines the aspirations to understand and internalize Asian art and thought among Asian-American and Asian-born artists working in the United States,

identifying the catalytic effect of the transmission of "Eastern" sensibilities and forms into the American vanguard by artists such as Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Isamu Noguchi, and Natvar Bhavsar.

The exhibition also recognizes the geopolitical conditions that made America's engagement with Asia unique, from the mid-19th century military expansion to the Pacific, through the occupation of Japan and wars with Korea and Vietnam. Several artists represented are those whose military service and war experience in Asia informed their work, namely Jasper Johns, Dan Flavin and Kim Jones.

The Third Mind positions the West Coast as central, rather than peripheral, to the narrative of American modernism through its high quotient of immigrant Asians, its early establishment of Buddhist centers, and through artistic movements, such as The Northwest School led by Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance including Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Michael McClure, and the Light and Space experiments conducted by Robert Irwin and James Turrell in Southern California.

Exhibition Team

The Third Mind was conceived and organized by Alexandra Munroe, Senior Curator of Asian Art of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Vivien Greene, Curator of 19th- and Early 20th- Century Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, contributed expertise and the selection of works for the opening section *Aestheticism and Japan: The Cult of the "Orient"* and contributed a scholarly essay to the catalogue. Research Associate Ikuyo Nakagawa, Assistant Curators Sandhini Poddar and Nat Trotman, and Asian Art Curatorial Fellow Yao Wu supported the realization of this project. An exhibition Advisory Committee of distinguished arts and humanities scholars has provided expertise and insight into the development of this project.

Exhibition Tour

Following its presentation at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989* will travel to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO and will be on view from September 26, 2009-January 3, 2010.

Exhibition Catalogue

The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989 will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue of nearly 500 pages authored by Alexandra Munroe and including scholarly essays by museum curators and academics specializing in American art history, intellectual history, Asian studies, and postcolonial religious and cultural studies. The catalogue also features a comprehensive chronology of events in U.S.-Asian relations; a bibliography; and artists' biographies compiled by Ikuyo Nakagawa.

Performance Cycle, Education, and Public Programs

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Guggenheim Museum is organizing a six-week "performance cycle" that will bring world-renowned practitioners in the fields of dance, music, performance art, and theater to the museum for a series of unique events devised specifically for this occasion. Participants will include Laurie Anderson, Marina Abramovic, The Just Alap Raga Ensemble (featuring La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela), Meredith Monk, Yoko Ono, and Robert Wilson, whose production will be organized as part of the celebrated *Works & Process* at the Guggenheim program.

The Museum will also present extensive public programming under the auspices of the

Sackler Center for Arts Education to provide additional context and share discussions with artists about their relationship with Asia as a source of creative and conceptual inspiration. These events will include panel discussions, lectures and performance programs drawing from a multidisciplinary perspective including the fields of visual art, music, literature, dance, philosophy and cultural studies. In addition, programming will feature a film and video series, a school tour and workshop program, after-school and technology based programs, professional development workshops for educators, curriculum guides, family events and tours, and integrated digital components such as podcasts and an audio tour. For updated program information contact the Box Office at 212 423 3587 or visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.guggenheim.org/education"](http://www.guggenheim.org/education)
www.guggenheim.org/education.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. Currently the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation owns and operates the Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue in New York and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection on the Grand Canal in Venice, and also provides programming and management for two other museums in Europe that bear its name: the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin. In early 2013 the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, a 452,000 square foot museum of modern and contemporary art designed by architect Frank Gehry, is scheduled to open.

Admission and Museum Hours: \$18 adults, \$15 students/seniors (65+), children under 12 free. Admission includes an audio guide. Saturday to Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 7:45 p.m. Closed Thursday. On Friday evenings, beginning at 5:45 p.m., the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information, please call 212 423 3500, or visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.guggenheim.org/"](http://www.guggenheim.org/)
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September 11, 2008

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

Betsy Ennis, Director, Media and Public Relations

Lauren Van Natten, Senior Publicist

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

212 423 3840

E-mail: [HYPERLINK "mailto:pressoffice@guggenheim.org"](mailto:pressoffice@guggenheim.org) pressoffice@guggenheim.org

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