EXHIBITION EXPLORES IMPACT OF ASIAN ART AND THOUGHT ON MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ART

Approximately 250 Works by 100 Artists and Literary Figures from James McNeill Whistler to Robert Rauschenberg and from Ezra Pound to Allen Ginsberg

Exhibition Features Site-Specific Commission by Ann Hamilton and Live Performances by Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, and Robert Wilson

Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Dates: January 30–April 19, 2009
Preview: Thursday, January 29, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

(NEW YORK, NY – January 27, 2009) — From January 30 to April 19, 2009, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum will present The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989, an exhibition that illuminates the dynamic and complex impact of Asian art, literature, music, and philosophical concepts on American art. The exhibition features approximately 250 works by more than 100 artists across a broad range of media—including painting, sculpture, video art, installations, works on paper, film, live performance, literary works, and ephemera—and draws from over 100 major museum and private collections in North America, Europe, and Japan.

This exhibition is made possible by a Chairman’s Special Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Generous support is provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art, The Rosenkranz Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation.

Additional funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, The W.L.S. Spencer Foundation, and the United States-Japan Foundation.


The exhibition was conceived and organized by Alexandra Munroe, Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and a leading authority on Asian art. In commenting on the show, Munroe said, “It is my hope that The Third Mind will be a revelatory exhibition, enabling visitors to see 130 years of American creative culture through an entirely new lens—a lens that reveals the
transformative influences of Asian art and ideas on the formal and conceptual achievements of American modern and contemporary art.”

Richard Armstrong, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and Museum, remarked, “It is always exciting when an exhibition invites us to contemplate an historic span of art and culture from an entirely new perspective.” Armstrong continued, “Everyone at the Guggenheim is looking forward to this stimulating exhibition and series of programs, and we are honored by the recognition of its scholarly and educational merits by the National Endowment for the Humanities.”

Exhibition Overview

The Third Mind proposes a new art-historical construct—one that challenges the widely accepted view that American modern art developed simply as a dialogue with Europe—by focusing on the myriad ways in which vanguard American artists’ engagement with Asian art, literature, music, and philosophical concepts inspired them to forge an independent artistic identity that would define the modern age and the modern mind. These artists developed a new understanding of existence, nature, and consciousness through their prolonged engagement with Eastern religions (Hinduism, Tantric and Chan/Zen Buddhism, Taoism), classical Asian art forms, and living performance traditions. Japanese art and Zen Buddhism dominated in part because America’s political and economic ties with Japan were historically stronger than those with China or India, the other prime source nations examined in this exhibition.

Beginning with the late nineteenth-century American Aesthetic movement and the ideas promulgated in transcendentalist circles, The Third Mind illuminates the Asian influences shaping such other major movements as abstract art, Conceptual art, Minimalism, and the neo-avant-garde as they unfolded in New York and on the West Coast. It also presents select developments in modern poetry, music, and dance-theater. According to Ms. Munroe, “What emerges is a history of how artists working in America interpreted, mediated, and incorporated Eastern ideas and art forms to create not only new styles of art, but more importantly, a new theoretical definition of the contemplative experience and self-transformative role for art itself.”

The title of the exhibition refers to Untitled (“Rub Out the Word”) from The Third Mind (ca. 1965), a “cut-ups” work by Beat writers William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, which combines and rearranges unrelated texts to create a new narrative. The mixed-media piece, which will be on view, evokes the eclectic method by which American artists adapted ideas from Asia to create new forms, structures, and meanings for their own art.

The Third Mind features over 100 artists and literary figures from artistic communities throughout the United States, including those in Boston, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The artists are selected for their demonstrable use of Asian aesthetics, techniques, and/or materials; their engagement with Asian philosophies; or their experience with forms of Asian spiritual practice. The key artists represented in the exhibition include, chronologically per the exhibition layout: James McNeill Whistler, John LaFarge, Mary Cassatt, Arthur Wesley Dow, Augustus Vincent Tack, Georgia O’Keefe, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Ezra Pound, David Smith, Isamu Noguchi, John Cage, Robert
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 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 Japan as an alternative to European sources of cultural identity and creative inspiration. Artists associated with the Aesthetic movement and Tonalism developed specific techniques, compositional devices, and an appreciation of numinous form derived from their studies of Asian art and texts. This section features important works on paper by John La Farge which he made in Japan, such as *The Great Statue of Amida Buddha at Kamakura* (ca. 1887, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco) and paintings by James McNeill Whistler, including *Nocturne: Blue and Gold–Old Battersea Bridge* (ca. 1872–75, Tate, London). Both artists deployed Asian techniques in their work and were central in fostering interest in Asian art among their peers, as was Mary Cassatt, whose 1890–91 suite of ten color drypoint etchings, manipulates conventions and themes drawn from Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Thomas Wilmer Dewing and Abbott Handerson Thayer, artists who were championed by the great Asian art collector Charles Lang Freer, are also included. A key piece in this section is a plaster cast of American Renaissance sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens’s famous memorial sculpture for the grave of Henry Adams’s wife, “Clover” Marion Hooper Adams. This work was conceived and styled, in part, as a nondenominational evocation of the “White-Robed” Buddhist bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

**Landscapes of the Mind: New Conceptions of Nature**

This section features leading artists of the early to mid-twentieth century who championed modern and abstract art in America 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. Eschewing traditional Western schemes of landscape as monumental and eternal, they took from the East the notion of landscape as ephemeral form and dynamic process. They appropriated techniques like ink brushwork and compositional devices like multiple viewpoints in Chinese landscape painting to achieve a dynamism that suggested something numinous and wondrous beyond external form. Opening with the influential 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; and the Synchromist painters Marsden Hartley and Stanton Macdonald-Wright. This development culminates with the Northwest school of painters that coalesced in the 1930s around Mark Tobey and included Kenneth Callahan, Paul Horiiuchi, and Morris Graves. Increased Asian immigration inspired many artists to study Buddhism 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.” Highlights include Steichen’s *The Pond–Moonrise* (1904), O’Keeffe’s *Abstraction* (1917), and Dove’s *Fog Horns* (1929).

**Ezra Pound, Modern Poetry, and Dance Theater**

This section explores American translations of classical Asian literature and dance-theater spanning World War I and the interwar period. Both art forms 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 (1922). Pound’s seminal translations of classical Chinese poetry (Cathay, 1915) revolutionized modern Anglo-American literature with their terse, powerful, and imagist language and free-form verse. Pound also introduced classical Japanese No dance-theater to American modernists, and this section features documentary photographs of the charismatic Japanese dancer Michio Itō performing William Butler Yeats’s No-inspired play, At The Hawks Well (ca. 1916). These metaphoric literary and dance-theater aesthetics influenced Martha Graham and Isamu Noguchi, represented by a video documentary of their landmark collaboration in the dance performance Frontier (1935).

Abstract Art, Calligraphy, and Metaphysics
This section explores the calligraphic brushstroke, which 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 as well as 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, Isamu Noguchi, 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 visionary, spiritual, and universal potential of abstract art. Rare and important paintings by Natvar Bhavsar, Georgia O’Keeffe, Okada Kenzō, Gordon Onslow-Ford, and Lee Mullican 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. A centerpiece of this section is Brice Marden’s breakthrough series of calligraphic ink-on-paper works based on Chinese calligraphy, Cold Mountain Studies 1–35 (1988–90). Other works on view include Pollock’s Untitled [Red Painting 1–7] (ca. 1950) and Kline’s Mahoning (1956).

Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde
This section follows three interconnected collectives of artists and writers whose sustained if eclectic connections to Zen and other forms of Buddhism emerge as critical methodological and philosophical influences in the American postwar neo-avant-garde. 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. This section features sixteen scores, prints, drawings, and watercolors by Cage dating from 1952 to 1992, which will be installed using Cage’s chance operation method. Other key works are a live projection of Nam June Paik’s Zen for Film (1964); Yoko Ono’s twenty-two Instructions for Paintings (1961–62); Robert Rauschenberg’s Gold Standard (1964), which he made in Tokyo using a Japanese folding-screen; and Jasper Johns’s Dancers on a Plane (1980–81), which is inspired by a Tantric Buddhist painting. An original manuscript of Kerouac’s Dharma Bums (1957), his best-selling novel that recounts his experiences as a mountaineering Zen Buddhist, is featured together with important publications, photographs, and paintings by the Beat writers Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and an abstract film by Harry Smith (Abstract Film Number. 11: Mirror Animations, ca. 1957). Four panels from Arakawa and Madeline Gins’s seminal Conceptual artwork, The Mechanism of Meaning (1963–71) will be on view, while William Anastasi and Marioni will each reenact historic works for the exhibition. In addition, Paul Kos’s Sound of Ice Melting (1970) will be installed in the rotunda.

Art of Perceptual Experience: Pure Abstraction and Ecstatic Minimalism
This section traces the development of a new iteration of Asian rhetoric in American art of the 1960s that
recasts the art object as a specific focus of contemplation and perceptual experience aimed at the transformation of consciousness. Ad Reinhardt’s radical conclusion that art is a perceptual experience with the specific power to purify consciousness through concentrated contemplation was constructed from his close readings of Asian art and religious thought. The “pure abstraction” and reductive forms of Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, Anne Truitt, Dan Flavin, and Robert Irwin shifted the conception of seeing from an optical event to a phenomenological process, and made durational time (spent looking at the object) a medium of ontological awareness. In addition to sculpture associated with Minimalism, such as Flavin’s icon IV (the pure land) (to David John Flavin 1933–1962) (1962/1969), and Irwin’s Untitled (1969), this section features the experimental cinema of Jordan Belson, and a continuous electronic sound environment in luminous fields of colored light, Dream House ([1962-present]), 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.

**Experiential Performance Art: The Aesthetics of Time**

The final exhibition section presents video, installation, and live performance art of the 1970s through 1989. 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. Several of the artists in this section, such as Laurie Anderson, Linda Montano, Adrian Piper, and Bill Viola, are advanced practitioners of an Asian contemplative discipline and meditation technique, have spent an extended period of time in Asian countries, or in the case of Kim Jones, served in the Vietnam War. As part of their practice, they explore endurance and extreme duration to achieve self-awareness. Highlights include Viola’s Room for St. John of the Cross (1983), Adrian Piper’s Here and Now (1968), and Hsieh’s One Year Performance, 1980–1981. Performances by Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, and Robert Wilson will be presented in the rotunda and the Peter B. Lewis Theater as an integral part of this section.

In addition to the two site-specific installations by James Lee Byars and Young and Zazeela included in the exhibition, Ann Hamilton responds to the exhibition thesis with human carriage (2009), a new work created especially for the Guggenheim’s rotunda. Focusing on themes of transmission and transformation—specifically on the artist’s act and use of reading Asian source texts and how that process can change an artist’s conceptual approach to art-making—Hamilton devises a mechanism that traverses the entire Guggenheim balustrade, taking the form of a white silk “bell carriage” with Tibetan bells attached inside. As the cage spirals down along the balustrade, the purifying bells ring, awakening viewers. The mechanism is hoisted back up to a post at the uppermost Rotunda Level 6, where an attendant exchanges weights composed of thousands of cut-up books that counter the pulley system that propels the mechanism itself. According to Hamilton, the elements of human carriage compose a visual metaphor for the processes of “reading which leaves no material trace but which might forever change you.”

**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 Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Art of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, contributed expertise and the selection of works for the opening section Aestheticism and Japan: The Cult of the Orient, along with a scholarly essay in the exhibition 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 provided input and insight into the development of this project.

**Exhibition Catalogue**

The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989 is accompanied by a richly illustrated
440-page catalogue edited by Alexandra Munroe. It includes scholarly essays by 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.-Asia relations, a bibliography, and artists’ biographies compiled by Ikuyo Nakagawa. The cost is $85 for the hardcover edition and $55 for the softcover version.

**Third Mind Live Performances, Education, and Public Programs**

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Guggenheim Museum presents *Third Mind Live*, a performance and lecture series that will bring world-renowned practitioners in the fields of dance, music, performance art, and theater to the museum’s theater and gallery spaces. The program is subject to change, but is scheduled to include:

**Meredith Monk**

*Ascension Variations*

Thursday, March 5, 6:30pm and 9pm; tickets $50, $40 members, $20 students under 25

**Laurie Anderson**

*Transitory Life: Some Stories*

Thursday, March 12, 8pm and Friday, March 13, 8pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**Just Alap Raga Ensemble featuring La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela performing in their sound and light environment, Dream House**

Saturday, March 14, 9pm and Saturday, March 21, 9pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**Jung Hee Choi, performing in the sound and light environment, Dream House Rice**

Saturday, March 28, 9pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**Merce Cunningham in conversation with Laura Kuhn**

*Dancers on a Plane*

Tuesday, March 31, 6:30pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**yoko ono in conversation with Alexandra Munroe**

*Passages for Light*

Thursday, April 2, 6:30pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**Marina Abramović**

*Night Sea Crossing*, a lecture

Tuesday, April 7, 6:30pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

**Robert Wilson**

*KOOL – DANCING IN MY MIND*

Presented through Works & Process at the Guggenheim

Friday, April 17, 7:30pm and Saturday, April 18, 7:30pm; tickets $30, $25 members, $10 students under 25

The museum will provide additional context through discussions with artists about their relationship with Asia as a source of creative and conceptual inspiration, along with other extensive public programs presented by the Sackler Center for Arts Education. These panel discussions, lectures, and performance programs will take a multidisciplinary perspective drawing from 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 or tickets, contact the Box Office at 212 423 3587 or visit www.guggenheim.org/education.

On view in the Sackler Center for Arts Education
Presented concurrently with *The Third Mind* in the Sackler Center for Arts Education is *Noguchi: The Bollingen Journey 1949–56*. Renowned Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was deeply affected by the tragedies of World War II. His resulting loss of faith in the meaning and purpose of art led him to investigate what he termed as “the environment of leisure”. Defining leisure as “… free time, time spent away from the necessities of life, where life is tasted and enjoyed…,” Noguchi’s Bollingen Journey photographs, taken on several around-the-world voyages between 1949 and 1956, focus on communally enjoyed leisure spaces such as public plazas, religious sites, market places, and amusement parks conceptualized for the recreation of the mind. Noguchi spent most of his time in Asia, traveling to countries including India, Bali, Cambodia, Japan and Nepal, with funds provided by The Bollingen Foundation, which had been established in 1945 by Paul and Mary Conover Mellon to assist scholars and intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences. Noguchi's subsequent proposals for artworks, playgrounds, parks, and public plazas were deeply impacted by his Bollingen travels, as he continued to seek the reintegration of art in the social fabric of life.

In many respects, Noguchi embodies the conversation of cultures traced in *The Third Mind*. His mother Leonie Gilmour was an American teacher and writer, and his father was Yonejiro Noguchi, a Japanese poet who wrote modern verse in English and was well acquainted with such towering figures of Anglo-American poetry as W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound. Raised between America and Japan, Noguchi began making sculpture as a young man and his studies took him to Paris. He worked in the studio of the abstract sculptor Constantin Brancusi, and became close friends with Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, and other members of the Parisian avant-garde. When he traveled to Japan and China for the first time in the early 1930s, he came to believe that the classical principles of Asian art and modern abstract art share affinities of form and spirit. Throughout his career, Noguchi forged a complex relationship between modernist movements and Asian art traditions.

*Noguchi: The Bollingen Journey 1949–56* also includes a limited edition book by Ivory Press with reproductions of drawings the artist made on his Bollingen travels and a text by the essayist and novelist Pico Iyer. This exhibition has been co-organized by The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum and the Sackler Center for Arts Education at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

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.

About the National Endowment for the Humanities
Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supports learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities. NEH grants enrich classroom learning, create and preserve knowledge, and bring ideas to life through public television, radio, new technologies, exhibitions, and programs in libraries, museums, and other community places.
Additional information about the NEH and its grant programs is available at www.neh.gov.

About the Terra Foundation for American Art
The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

About the Henry Luce Foundation
The Henry Luce Foundation was established in 1936 by Henry R. Luce, the cofounder and editor-in-chief of Time Inc., to honor his parents who were missionary educators in China. The Foundation builds upon the vision and values of four generations of the Luce family: broadening knowledge and encouraging the highest standards of service and leadership. The Henry Luce Foundation seeks to bring important ideas to the center of American life, strengthen international understanding, and foster innovation and leadership in academic, policy, religious, and art communities and pursues its mission today through the following grant-making programs: American Art; East Asia; Luce Scholars; Theology; Higher Education and the Henry R. Luce Professorships; the Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs; Public Policy and the Environment; and the Clare Boothe Luce Program for women in science, mathematics and engineering.

About The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation
The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation is a private philanthropic organization with deep roots in Chinese culture and a strong belief that Buddhist philosophy has much to offer the modern society. From its Hong Kong base, the Foundation supports and develops programs throughout the world. A significant supporter of the arts, the Foundation establishes and funds projects to promote creative arts education, nurture young talent, encourage cross-cultural understanding through the arts, and revitalize and preserve traditional Chinese arts and cultural heritage. The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation also provides a variety of views and tools to promote understanding of Buddhism and to explore ways of applying its insights to everyday life.

VISITOR INFORMATION
Admission: Adults $18.00, students/seniors (65+) $15.00, members and children under 12 free. Admission includes audio guide tour.

Museum Hours: 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 call, 212 423 3500, or visit www.guggenheim.org.

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