

We are pleased to present the upcoming exhibition of works by Keiichi Tanaami, featuring a display of drawings, collages, paintings, and animations created in the '60s and early '70s that were recently discovered in the artist's studio.

Keiichi Tanaami was born in Tokyo in 1936 and graduated from the college of design at Musashino Art University. Since the 1960s he has traversed the boundaries of media and genre, going beyond the confines of graphic design, such as art direction and illustration, to work in a wide variety of mediums including animation, experimental film, painting, and sculpture. An iconic forerunner as a variable artist, Tanaami has had considerable influence on young artists throughout the world.

During the '60s, Tanaami's works played a significant role in the introduction of pop art and psychedelic culture into Japan. He designed for instance album jackets for the Japanese releases of legendary rock bands The Monkees' Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones Ltd (1967) and Jefferson Airplane's After Bathing at Baxter's (1967), and contributed a series of silkscreened works entitled No More War to the anti-war poster contest held by American magazine Avant Garde in 1968.

From early on he worked on the theme of the "the art book as a work of art", pouring his energy into art folios Tamago-gata (Egg Shape) (1963), Portrait of Keiichi Tanaami (1966), and Kyozo Mirai Zukan (Illustrated Book of Imaginary Tomorrow) (1969). Tanaami was quick to focus on the possibilities of pop art in its application of the rules of design, and was verifiably experimenting with the application of techniques such as multicolor printing and image sampling as well as the concept of "facsimile within art" in his works starting no later than the mid-'60s.

During this same period, Tanaami, inspired by Andy Warhol and Jonas Mekas, also concentrated his efforts on creating experimental film and animation. These works have received high acclaim and have been invited to enter into numerous international film festivals and film exhibitions including the New York Film Festival (1976), a feature exhibition of experimental Japanese films (MoMA, NY, 1978), the London International Avant-Garde Film Festival (England, 1979, 2003), and Japanese Underground Cinema Program 6: Radical Experiments in Japanese Animation (MoMA, NY, 2013). His works have also recently been housed at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Contemporary Art in Berlin.

The main works to be displayed at Fondation Speerstra, inspired by the contexts of American pop art as driven by Andy Warhol and the shock of Tanaami's first visit to NY in 1967, were made during the latter half of the '60s through the beginning of the '70s and include drawings such as original sketches of illustrations, personal collage books, oil paintings of the contemporary celebrity

idols and actresses of the time, and erotic animation created for the late night TV program 11pm. The flag-bearer of the counter culture that blossomed as a reflection of the tumultuous times symbolized by events such as the Vietnam War, the revision to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, the Cultural Revolution in China, and the 1973 oil crisis, the ironic, pop modes of expression for which Tanaami's works are valued have not lost their luster over the past fifty years but rather today seem to have gained radiance. Reflecting upon the era that was the 1960s, Tanaami made the following comment:

“Looking back at the path I have taken to get here, with all of its twists and turns, it is clear to me that the special period of the '60s still casts a sharp, bright light from the distance. It would be appropriate to say that everything, all of the illustrations, animations, experimental films, paintings, prints, and sculptures, were born in the '60s and have now grown to maturity.” The title of the exhibition, Killer Joe's, comes from the name of the legendary discotheque for which Tanaami worked on art direction. Concurrent with the exhibition, a complete catalogue of these early works by Keiichi Tanaami is being published by contrarede.

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