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Asia Society Texas Center Brings Japanese Noh Mask Exhibition to Houston

October 2, 2014 (Houston, Texas) — Asia Society Texas Center is excited to announce its upcoming exhibition, *Traditions Transfigured: The Noh Masks of Bidou Yamaguchi*, on view in the Texas Center's Louisa Stude Sarofim Gallery from October 25, 2014 through February 15, 2015. Inspired by Japan's expressive Noh theater, the masks in this exhibition apply the forms, techniques and mysterious elegance of Noh masks to iconic female portraits from the European art historical canon, and to Kabuki actor prints by Sharaku (1794-95), Japan's enigmatic 18th century portrait master.

"By bringing Bidou Yamaguchi's sculptures to Houston, Asia Society hopes to share with visitors the layered conversation between tradition and innovation in contemporary Asian art," explains Bridget Bray, Curator & Director of Exhibitions at Asia Society Texas Center. "This exhibition is the first in the region to feature his work in such depth, and we are pleased he will join us to celebrate the opening."

Traditions Transfigured is organized into four distinct parts. The introduction sets up the exhibition, explaining what Noh theater is through video, Noh robes used in performances, and works by master Noh print artist Tsukioka Kōgyo (1869-1927). The continuing legacy and power of classical Noh Theater can be seen in the second portion of the exhibition, which features Yamaguchi's "reproduction" or *utsushi* masks paired with additional prints by Japanese artist Tsukioka Kōgyo. The second gallery also features masks representing different stages of the carving process and a video explaining the techniques of Noh mask making. Works from Yamaguchi's *Edo Pop* series are included in the third gallery, alongside the Sharaku prints that inspired each mask. These sculptures are unique for their faithful capturing of surface details from the original prints, including their flaws and blemishes. The fourth portion of the exhibition features the artist's European portraits series, complete with three-dimensional Noh mask-interpretations of iconic women from familiar European oil paintings, such as da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, and Botticelli's *Venus*.

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Traditions Transfigured concludes with educational and interactive components. A digital display shows a female Noh mask nodding to express different emotions, which helps visitors connect to the subtle gestures of Noh actors and their psychological effects. Visitors can also try on two masks to engage them as an actor would. Photographs of visitors' transfigured appearances can be taken and shared through social media.

To celebrate the opening of the exhibition, the Texas Center will host an exciting Night Market complete with vendors, free food and a free look at the artwork on October 24 from 6:00 - 9:00 PM. Playing homage to the origins of Noh theater, the Night Market will center around Japan. The Night Market is sponsored by American First National Bank.

Following the October 24th opening, regular admission to this exhibition is free for Members and \$5 for Non-members. Asia Society Texas Center is open to the public, Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 AM – 6:00 PM. A fully illustrated color catalogue of the travelling *Traditions Transfigured* exhibition will be available for purchase. For more information, please visit AsiaSociety.org/Texas.

About the Exhibition

Traditions Transfigured: The Nob Masks of Bidou Yamaguchi was organized by the University Art Museum at California State University Long Beach in conjunction with Dr. Kendall H. Brown. Major support has been provided by the McLeod Family Foundation and a grant from Instructional Related Activities at CSULB.

The exhibition includes works from national and international collections, both private and public. Lenders to the exhibition include: Target Corporation; Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College; University of Southern California Pacific Asia Museum; Sebastian Izzard, LLC; the Collection of Kelly Sutherlin McLeod and Steve McLeod; Alan Kennedy; and Bidou Yamaguchi.

The exhibition at the Texas Center was made possible through generous support from the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance. Lead funding also provided by The Clayton Fund and Nancy and Robert Carney, with additional support from Nancy Allen, Anne and Albert Chao, Eagle Global Advisors, The Favrot Fund, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, Dorothy Carsey Sumner, and The Japan Foundation. Funding is also provided through contributions by Friends of Exhibitions at Asia Society Texas Center. [About Bidou Yamaguchi](#)

Bidou Yamaguchi (b. 1970, Fukuoka, Japan) has been a Noh mask creator affiliated with the Hōshō school of Noh in Tokyo since 1998. His “reproduction” masks are in collections including Nihon University, Tokyo, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Target Corporation. He has shown his

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work at venues including the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Portland Art Museum, and Carleton College, and has lectured widely in the United States and Europe. His Sharaku masks were featured in the *Edo Pop* exhibition.

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 11 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach. www.AsiaSociety.org/Texas

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