



The Smile in Japanese Art: From the Jomon Period to the Early Twentieth Century

Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

27 January (Sat) – 6 May (Sun) 2007

Includes Recent Discoveries and Works Never Seen Before

To kick off 2007 the Mori Art Museum is proud to present two exhibitions dealing with laughter. “The Smile in Japanese Art: From the Jomon Period to the Twentieth Century,” examines the many faces of the smile in Japanese art from the prehistoric Jomon Period until the Taisho Period (1912-1926). “All About Laughter: The Role of Humor in Contemporary Art,” looks at the multifaceted role of humor in contemporary art across the whole world. Start 2007 with a double dose of laughter at the Mori Art Museum.

***Clay Mask* (Excavated from Butsunami site) Late Jomon Period
Osaka Center for Cultural Heritage**

Mori Art Museum Public Relations Dept. | 24 August 2006
tel: +81-3-6406-6111 | pr@mori.art.museum | www.mori.art.museum | 1

About “The Smile in Japanese Art”

“The Smile in Japanese Art” starts with a happily smiling clay figurine, called a *dogu*, made several thousand years ago. Being so old, it is impossible to say whether this figurine is actually laughing or crying, but, by the Kofun period (300-600AD), clay tomb guardians called *haniwa* appeared, their broad smiles leaving little doubt as to whether they were intended to be laughing – no doubt to ward off unfriendly spirits.

In the Japanese Middle Ages, the rise of Zen Buddhism led to a reverence for paradoxical questions or riddles based on humorous themes and these became an enduring part of Japanese art. The many pictures of Kanzan and Jittoku are classical examples of this genre and, from the Middle Ages to modern times, hanging and hand scrolls in great numbers were produced. Many of these, while more or less keeping to Buddhist conventions, had the effect of making observers burst out laughing. For this exhibition, some of these stories are presented both in the original and through digital media, providing a rare opportunity to examine the whole work in detail.

Paintings by Ito Jakuchu, Maruyama Okyo, Nagasawa Rosetsu, Soga Shohaku, and other popular 18th Century Kyoto artists are included in the exhibition for the ways in which they use animals as a vehicle for laughter. Also exhibited are paintings and sculptures by Hakuin, Enku, and Mokujiki, who dedicated their lives to creating works that would help further the spread of Buddhism amongst the common people of Edo. For them, laughter was not an end in itself, but rather a means through which to achieve this objective.



Kishida Ryusei *Portrait of Reiko* 1923
Oil on Canvas 40. 9×31.7 c m
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

A number of Kishida Ryusei's famous paintings of his daughter, Reiko, find their origins in images taken from works in his collection of old Japanese art and the exhibition presents a screen that Kishida once owned alongside the Reiko paintings they are thought to have inspired. *Nihonga* by such artists as Kaburaki Kiyokata and Kainoshou Tadaoto will also be included in this part of the exhibition.

From ancient times, Japanese art has included many different aspects of laughter and humor. Sometimes this is deliberate, and sometimes the observer just happens to find them funny. This exhibition presents about 100 such works, ranging from the neolithic Jomon period to the early 20th Century, many of which have not been exhibited before.

The display cases and the gallery layout for this unique exhibition have been designed specially by architect Chiba Manabu. The Mori Art Museum's first presentation of Japan's classical art is sure to be a special experience.

Exhibition Sections and Selected Artists

1. Archaic Smile --- Dogu and Haniwa Figurines

2. The Enigmatic Smile --- Zen saints and genre images

Sesson, Maruyama Okyo, Nagasawa Rosetsu, Soga Shohaku, Kainosho Tadaoto, Kishida Ryusei

3. Tales of Laughter

Soga Shohaku, Hanabusa Itcho, Ike Taiga, Kawanabe Kyosai

4. Animals and Humor

Kano Sansetsu, Tawaraya Sotatsu, Maruyama Okyo, Ito Jakuchu

5. The Laughter of the Gods: Hakuin, Enku, Mokujiki, The Seven Gods of Good Fortune

Ito Jakuchu, Hakuin, Enku, Mokujiki

General Information

Organizers: Mori Art Museum, Nippon Television Network Corporation
Supported by: Japan Airlines, Okunomatsu Sake Brewery Co., Ltd.,
Curator: Mami Hirose, Project Manager, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
Advisors: Kobayashi Tadashi (Gakushuin University) and Yamashita Yuji (Meijigakuin University)

On at the same time: “All About Laughter: Humor in Contemporary Art”

Mori Art Museum: Roppongi Hills Mori Tower, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo
106-6150 Japan, Tel: 03-5777-8600 (Hello Dial)
www.mori.art.museum

Hours: 10:00 - 22:00 (Tues: 10:00 - 17:00)
* Open until 22:00 on 20 March and 1 May.
* Admission until 30 minutes before closing

Admission: Adult: ¥1,500
University/Highschool students: ¥1,000
Children (4 years to Junior Highschool students): ¥500
*Ticket valid for Tokyo City View observation deck.

Press Photographs: Images are available to download from the museum website:
<http://www.mori.art.museum/html/eng/press-re/>

Press Contact Details: Mr. Corkill, Ms. Takahashi, Ms. Miura, Ms. Inuzuka
Tel: +81-3-6406-6111 Fax: +81-3-6406-9351

E-mail: pr@mori.art.museum

Website: www.mori.art.museum