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– Exhibition Announcement –

Saburo Murakami



Work (Sakuhin) | 1957 | 27 x 22.5 cm | Synthetic-resin paint on canvas

Artcourt Gallery would like to announce an exhibition of works by Saburo Murakami. An attempt to shed further light on various aspects of Murakami's renowned "Paper-Breaking" (*Kami-yaburi*), in which he burst through sheets of kraft paper mounted on wooden frames, this exhibition will take a many-sided approach, presenting *Entrance* (1955/2003), the sole extant trace¹ of this work in Japan, together with videos of his performances during the '80s and '90s, and photo sequences of *Passage* that were taken by the photographer Kiyoji Otsuji at the 2nd Gutai Art Exhibition in 1956. Further, by making a general survey of Murakami's "Paper-Breakings" alongside his sculptural work *Air* (1956/1994) and his painting works from the '50s and '60s, we will take a fresh look at his practice of bodily actions and painting, and his relationship to conceptual expression, while also exploring the awareness of issues that runs through this artist's work.

Saburo Murakami's "Paper-Breaking", which has to some extent become synonymous with the artist himself, has often been treated as a forerunner of performance art, and an experiment in dismantling the existing frameworks of painting by destroying the screen (painting surface), and in pursuing painting's essence and new possibilities. To the artist himself, however, it was something that came out of a sense of curiosity, which led him to want to grasp what would emerge from the collision between the material and his own body and mind; and it was also an expressive act based on the desire to free his own existence by liberating, all at once, the time-space sealed up inside the wooden frames and paper, and it was the extremely personal and fundamental desire to try to face the actual feeling that can be gained from that, of "here and now" and "life".

Through "Paper-Breaking", Murakami was attempting to examine firsthand such themes as time and space, necessity and contingency, and self and otherness; and these issues that are inextricably tied to "living" are raised in

various ways in his painting works as well. A work produced by leaving a paint-slathered canvas face down overnight (1957) presents a vibrant materiality together with a screen space which, created by the passage of time and the action of gravity, becomes a harmonious whole of necessity and contingency. A work comprised of a canvas mounted onto another, supporting canvas (1959) dissimulates the structure of planar painting, and its painted imagery is experienced freshly as something possessing spatial-temporal depth.

"Paper-Breaking" and these paintings embody the sincere attitude, which runs through Murakami's art, of trying to grasp the aspects of existence that are formed within their relationship with the world. But that was always something that was two sides of the same coin with his own philosophy of approaching a state of "no-mindedness" (*mushin*) upon having thoroughly investigated oneself, without being constrained by such things as experiential knowledge, prediction or intent. In a late 1960s painting work, his movement of a brush along the contours of paper fragments pasted onto canvas yields tension-filled shapes from the curving and straight lines and color planes. Here, in the work of an artist who attempted to transcend his own consciousness in a form of expression of painting surface creation that contrasts sharply with "Paper-Breaking", the competing tracks of the intentionality and unintentionality of that artist's attempt seem to have been carved. And the work *Air*, with its glass plates that are reassembled for each showing, is intended to contain the air of each place in much the same way as "Paper-Breaking"; and one may regard this as an indication of the "no-mindedness" he sought, and further, of the encountering of the very emergence of images that convey abundance while being unstable and still unformed.

In a note on "Paper-Breaking" from his later years, Murakami makes the following statement:

—“**Having the feeling something is there beforehand, I don't search. Even without a premonition of its substance, of what that something is, through the guiding of action by a writhing vitality, I arrive at a psychological exaltation that can only be said to be a certain type. The thing I obtained in my performances of breaking paper is an "indescribable energy (ki)"?**”²

Unlike the actual substance that is secured by prediction and artifice, when coming in contact with an undifferentiated "thing" that is at this very instant about to be born out of a "no-mind" action that is brimming with free energy, as if in accordance with that, one's own "life" manifests brilliantly. It would seem that to Murakami, expression was the ceaseless striving to experience that moment.

*1: Refers to an object consisting of materials left over after a performance, i.e., torn paper and wooden frames. *2: From a handwritten note by Murakami. Inscribed with the date and time "91.5.29 2:00AM".

【Exhibition】

Exhibition Title : Saburo Murakami
Dates : October 14 (Sat) - December 9 (Sat), 2017 / Closed on Sundays, Mondays & holidays
Venue : ARTCOURT Gallery OAP Art Court 1F, 1-8-5 Tenmabashi, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0042
Hours : 11:00am – 7:00pm (until 5:00pm on Saturdays)

◆ Related Events: October 20 (Fri)

Talk : 6:00pm - 7:00pm
[Sadaharu Horio (artist) & Atsuo Yamamoto (curator, Yokoo Tadanori Museum of Contemporary Art)]
Reception : 7:00pm - 8:00pm

*RSVP is required for the talk. Please email info@artcourtgallery.com, or call +81(0)6-6354-5444. *Free admission.

Organized by ARTCOURT Gallery / Sponsored by Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, Mitsubishi Jisho Property Management Co., Ltd



Entrance | 1986 | "Group Gutai: Action and Painting"
Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art | Photo: Hideo Natsutani

*Please contact Yuki Hamada or Mizuho Haida at ARTCOURT Gallery for any inquiries including photographic materials.

OAP Art Court 1F, 1-8-5 Tenmabashi, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0042 | info@artcourtgallery.com | T: (+81) 6-6354-5444 | F: (+81) 6-6354-5449 | artcourtgallery.com

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Saburo Murakami

▪ About the works to be shown: Sculpture, Painting, & Photography



Entrance (Iriguchi)

1955/2003 | 267.5 x 190 x 6.5 cm | Paper, wooden frame

*Created by the artist's son, Tomohiko Murakami, at the Saburo Murakami Exhibition at Gallery KURANUKI (now ARTCOURT Gallery) in 2003. (Performed on March 29)

Photo: Shigefumi Kato/ ART VISION



Work 'Air' (Sakuhin 'Kūki')

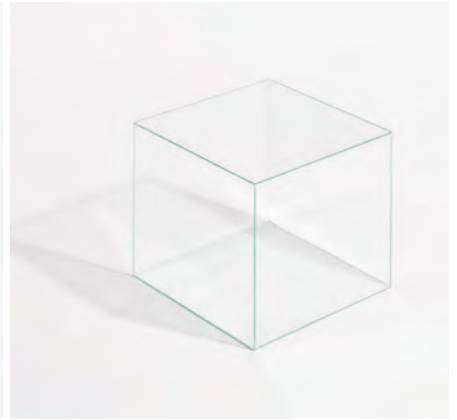
1956 (Reproduced in 1994)

21 x 21 x 21 cm

Glass, cellophane tape

*First appearance: 1956, 9th Ashiya City Exhibition (Seidō Elementary School, Ashiya)

Photo: Nobutada Omote



Work (Sakuhin)

1957 | 27 x 22.5 cm | Synthetic-resin paint on canvas

*First appearance: 1957, 3rd Gutai Art Exhibition (Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art)

Photo: Takeru Koroda



Work (Sakuhin)

1959 | 91 x 72.5 cm |

Synthetic-resin paint on canvas

*First appearance: 1959, 8th Gutai Art Exhibition (Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art/ Ohara Hall, Tokyo)

*This work is scheduled to be replaced with a different work during the exhibition.



Work (Sakuhin)

Late 1960s | 224 x 180 cm

Synthetic-resin paint, paper on cotton cloth



© Makiko Murakami
© Seiko Otsuji

Courtesy of Musashino Art University Museum & Library and Tokyo Publishing House.

From the portfolio "GUTAI PHOTOGRAPH 1956-1957."

Passage (Tsūka)

1956 | 20.5 x 31.5 cm each (image)
6 photographs (gelatin silver print,
Ed. 10/17, 2012)

Photographed by Kiyoji Otsuji

Created on October 10, 1956, the day before the opening of the 2nd Gutai Art Exhibition (Ohara Hall, Tokyo). Murakami arranged 21 wooden frames with kraft paper stretched across them like a drum, (for a total of 42 sheets of paper), and ran through while piercing the paper by throwing himself at every single sheet. Kiyoji Otsuji, who was the commissioned photographer for *Geijutsu Shincho* magazine at the time, witnessed the scene and successfully captured the shifts and intensity of the action with these continuous photographs.

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Saburo Murakami

▪ About the works to be shown: Performance Videos

Edited in 2017, 2 - 4 minutes each

Filmed by Makiko Murakami/ Edited by Ufer! Art Documentary/ Produced by ARTCOURT Gallery

© Makiko Murakami, © 2017 ARTCOURT Gallery, Courtesy of the estate of Saburo Murakami



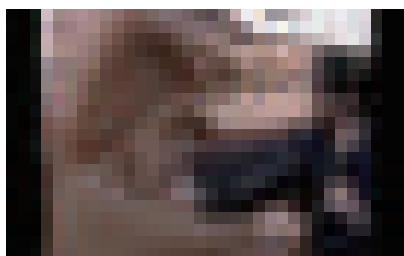
Entrance

August 30, 1986

“Group Gutai: Action and Painting”

Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art

First produced in 1955 at the 1st Gutai Art Exhibition (Ohara Hall, Tokyo). As the opening ceremony of the exhibition, the Gutai Art Association's leader, Jiro Yoshihara, broke through the gold-painted kraft paper that was stretched across the entrance of the venue. The sound and impact of the moment the paper was broken through resonated throughout the entire space. Strongly ceremonious and the most representative work even among the paper-breaking pieces.



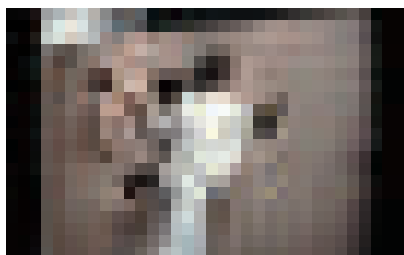
Isshun ni shi te rokko no ana wo akeru (Six Holes)

March 24, 1991

“Gutai: Japanische Avantgarde 1954-1965”

Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt

First produced in 1955 at the 1st Gutai Art Exhibition (Ohara Hall, Tokyo). Using the wooden frame made for a size 200 canvas, and 2 wooden frames made with the same dimensions, stretched kraft paper across both sides of all 3 frames, and connected the frames together. There are two layers of paper stretched on the outer side of the first frame in front to add resistance. Murakami threw himself through this side to make all 6 holes at once. Produced publically the day before the 1st Gutai Exhibition opening, it was shown on the wall along with the other two-dimensional works during the exhibition. The first paper-breaking piece where the process was made public.



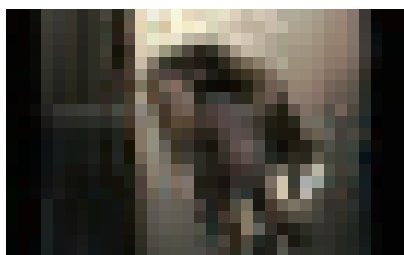
Work (Six Holes)

October 15, 1993

“Gutai 1955/1956: A Restarting Point for Japanese Contemporary Art”

Penrose Institute of Contemporary Arts, Tokyo

Likewise, first produced in 1955 at the 1st Gutai Art Exhibition (Ohara Hall, Tokyo).



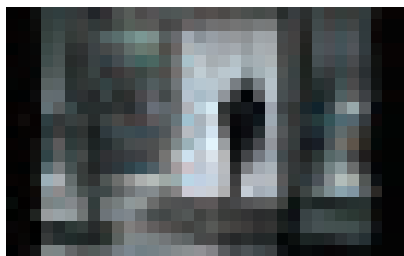
Traversant les écrans de papier (Passage)

November 8, 1994

“Hors Limites: L'arte et la vie 1952-1994”

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

First produced in 1956 at the 2nd Gutai Art Exhibition (Ohara Hall, Tokyo). Arranged 21 wooden frames with kraft paper stretched across them like a drum (for a total of 42 sheets of paper), and ran through while piercing the paper by throwing himself at every single sheet.



Exit

November 12, 1994

“One Day Museum: Feeling from Seeing”

Kawanishi City Hall

First shown at the 1993 exhibition, “Gutai...suite?” at Palais des arts in Toulouse, France. He exits the exhibition venue by quietly tearing through loosely stretched tissue paper. A new development for the paper-breaking series, it is like the reverse of *Entrance (Iriguchi)*, where tautly stretched gold paper is pierced with a sharp sound. This '94 performance was the last paper-breaking piece performed by Murakami himself.

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Saburo Murakami

Selected Chronology • Major Exhibitions

- 1925 Born in Kobe (June 27).
- 1943 Enters a prep course at Kwansei Gakuin University. Joins the school painting club, Gengetsu-kai. Studies with Hiroshi Kanbara and starts oil painting.
- 1944 Begins working at the Mukogawa factory of Kubota Iron Works as part of the war effort.
- 1945 Joins the Tottori 40th Infantry Regiment. Later transferred to Takanabe, South Kyūshū. The Second World War ends (August 15).
- 1947 Readmitted to Kwansei Gakuin University (under the old education system), where he enters the philosophy department (graduates in '48). Around this time, adopts the pen name "Murakami-Hiko."
- 1949 Begins studying with Itō Tsugurō.
- 1951 Enters the aesthetics department at Kwansei Gakuin University Graduate School (under the old education system).
- 1952 5th Ashiya City Exhibition, Buddhist Hall, Ashiya, Hyōgo. Participates in every exhibition until the 47th Exhibition in '94. Around this time, along with Akira Kanayama, Kazuo Shiraga, and Atsuko Tanaka, Murakami joins the Zero Society (*Zero-kai*), a radical faction of the Shinseisaku Art Society.
- 1954 Two-person show: Murakami-Hiko / Shiraga Kazuo, European Painting Gallery, Hankyū Department Store, Osaka.
— Meets Jirō Yoshihara for the first time at this event.
Zero Society Exhibition, show windows, Sogō Department Store, Osaka.
— Shows *'Throwing Ball Painting'*, made by throwing a paint-covered ball at the face of the painting.
- 1955 Around this time, joins Gutai Art Association.
Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Midsummer Sun, Ashiya Park, Hyōgo
— Shows a work in which Murakami tore apart a piece of asphalt roofing as he ran across it, and other works.
1st Gutai Art Exhibition, Ohara Hall, Tokyo.
— Produces *'Paper-Breaking'* for the first time, and shows works such as *'Six Holes'* and *'Entrance.'* *'Entrance'* was performed by Jirō Yoshihara.
Begins a lifelong involvement in children's art education at various kindergartens in Itami, Nishinomiya, and Osaka.
- 1956 6th Kansai Art Exhibition, Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts.
Shows *'Work (Please Sit Down)'*, commissioned by the painting division of the exhibition, and arouses controversy.
Shinkō Independent Exhibition, 3rd floor hall, Shinkō Shinbun newspaper office, Kōbe, Hyōgo.
— Shows *'Box'*, a work made by placing a wall clock inside a wooden box.
9th Ashiya City Exhibition, Seidō Elementary School, Ashiya, Hyōgo. — Shows *'Air.'*
Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, Ashiya Park, Hyōgo — Shows *'All Landscapes'* and *'Sky.'*
2nd Gutai Art Exhibition, Ohara Hall, Tokyo — Shows *'Passage'* (Paper-breaking).
- 1957 3rd Gutai Art Exhibition, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art.
— Shows works such as a painting made by placing a canvas heaped with paint facedown overnight, and a large painting with a surface of paint that continues to crumble off, depending on the changing state of the paint and glue.
Gutai Art on the Stage, Sankei Hall, Osaka/ Sankei Hall, Tokyo.
— Presents a performance, *'Confronting Screens'*, in which Murakami destroys panels of stretched paper using his hands, feet and a stick.
- 1958 *International Art of a New Era: Informel and Gutai*, 3rd floor hall, Takashimaya Department Store, Osaka (exhibition travels to 4 other cities).
The Gutai Group Exhibition / 6th Gutai Art Exhibition, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York (exhibition travels to 4 other American cities).
From around this time, produces many paintings using vigorous brushstrokes until the early '60s.
- 1959 8th Gutai Art Exhibition, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art/ Ohara Hall, Tokyo.
— Shows paintings with canvases attached to the face of the work.
- 1963 Solo exhibition, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka.
— Shows 21 works, including paintings with wooden frames attached to the face of the work, and paintings with protrusions of plaster.
- 1964 14th Gutai Art Exhibition, 3rd floor hall, Takashimaya Department Store, Osaka.
- 1965 15th Gutai Art Exhibition, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka.
- 1968 20th Gutai Art Exhibition, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka.
— Shows works made by attaching paper to a canvas and tracing its outline.
- 1969 *Gutai Art Small Works Exhibition*, Gutai Pinacotheca, Osaka.
- 1971 *Saburo Murakami "Box" (Hako) One-Man Show*, Mori's Form, Osaka.
Around this time, submits letter of resignation to Gutai Art Association which is subsequently rejected.
- 1972 Gutai Art Association dissolved (March 31).
- 1973 Murakami Saburo Solo Exhibition / *'Wooden Clappers'* (Hyōshigi), Gallery Shunjūkan, Osaka.
Murakami Saburo Exhibition / *'Silence'* (Mugon), Mugensha, Osaka.
- 1974 Murakami Saburo Exhibition / *'Water'* (Mizu), Shinanobashi Gallery Apron, Osaka.
Murakami Saburo Exhibition / *'Lines'* (Suji), Shinanobashi Gallery Apron, Osaka.
- 1975 *Murakami Saburo Kakikuke Solo Show* (Kakikuke koten), Gallery Seiwa, Osaka.

Saburo Murakami

- 1976 *Murakami Saburo Exhibition / 'Floor'* (Yuka), Shinanobashi Gallery Apron, Osaka.
- 1977 *Murakami Saburo Exhibition: Displeasure by the Principle of Identity* (Jidōritsu no fukai), Galerie Kitano Circus, Kōbe, Hyōgo.
- 1979 *Jirō Yoshihara and Today's Aspects of the Gutai*, Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art.
- 1986 *Group Gutai: Action and Painting*, Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art (exhibition travels to Madrid and Belgrade).
Japon des Avant-gardes 1910-1970, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 1990 *Giappone all'avanguardia: Il Gruppo Gutai negli anni Cinquanta*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome.
- 1991 *Gutai: Japanische Avantgarde / Japanese Avant-Garde 1954-1965*, Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt.
- 1992 *Gutai I: 1954-1958*, Ashiya City Museum of Art & History, Hyōgo. (Gutai II and III were held in 1993)
Revived Outdoor Exhibition, Ashiya Park, Hyōgo (planned in conjunction with Gutai I).
- 1993 *Passaggio ad Oriente*, La Biennale di Venezia: XLV Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venice.
Gutai...suite?, Palais des arts, Toulouse.
— Presents 'Exit', in which Murakami breaks through tissue paper.
Gutai 1955/56: A Restarting Point for Japanese Contemporary Art, Penrose Institute of Contemporary Arts, Tokyo/ Kirin Plaza, Osaka.
MUSIC / every sound includes music, Xebec Foyer, Kōbe, Hyōgo.
- 1994 *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky*, Guggenheim Museum SoHo, New York and other venues.
Hors Limites: L'arte et la vie 1952-1994, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
— The museum acquires 'Passage', which was shown in the exhibition.
One Day Museum: Feeling from Seeing, Kawanishi City Hall, Hyōgo.
— Presents 'Exit', which becomes his last performance.
- 1996 Stumbles in front of his house before dawn and is rushed to the hospital (January 6).
Dies of a cerebral contusion at the age of 70 (January 11).
Saburo Murakami Exhibition, Ashiya City Museum of Art & History, Hyōgo.
- 1998 *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, The Geffen Contemporary at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles/ Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and other venues.
- 1999 *Gutai*, Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris.
- 2001 *Le Tribù dell'Arte*, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome.
- 2003 *Saburo Murakami*, Gallery Kuranuki, Osaka
- 2004 *Gutai Retrospective*, Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art.
Traces: Body and Idea in Contemporary Art, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto/ The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
- 2006 *ZERO: Internationale Künstler-Avantgarde der 50er/60er Jahre*, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf/ Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Étienne Métropole
- 2007 *Artempo: Where Time Becomes Art*, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.
- 2009 *Fare Mondi*, La Biennale di Venezia: 53a Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venice.
- 2010 *Gutai: Dipingere con il tempo e lo spazio*, Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Lugano, Parco Villa Ciani, Lugano.
- 2011 *Saburo Murakami: Focus on the 70s*, ARTCOURT Gallery, Osaka.
- 2012 *Gutai: The Spirit of an Era*, The National Art Center, Tokyo.
Destroy the Picture: Painting the Void, 1949-1962, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles/ The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
TOKYO 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 2013 *Parallel Views: Italian and Japanese Art from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, The Warehouse, Rachofsky Collection, Dallas.
Gutai: Splendid Playground, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
- 2016 *Performing for the Camera*, Tate Modern, London.
— Six continuous photographs of 'Passage' (2nd Gutai Art Exhibition, 1956) taken by Kiyoji Otsuji shown.
The Emergence of Contemporary: Avant-garde Art in Japan, 1950-1970, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro.
A Feverish Era: Art Informel and the Expansion of Japanese Artistic Expression in the 1950s and '60s, The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.
New Beginnings: Between Gesture and Geometry, The George Economou Collection, Athens.
A Feverish Era in Japanese Art, Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels.
- 2017 *Japanese Art of the 1950s: Starting Point after the War*, The Museum of Modern Art, Hayama.

Major Public Collections

Ashiya City Museum of Art & History/ Osaka City Museum of Modern Art/ Kitakyūshū Municipal Museum of Art/ The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto/ The National Museum of Art, Osaka/ Chiba City Museum of Art/ Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo/ Ōtani Memorial Art Museum, Nishinomiya City/ Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Art/ Fuchū Art Museum/ The Miyagi Museum of Art/ Axel and May Vervoordt Foundation, Wijnegem/ Guggenheim Abu Dhabi/ The Art Institute of Chicago/ The George Economou Collection, Athens/ The Museum of Modern Art, New York/ Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris/ M+, Hong Kong/ Rachofsky Collection, Dallas.