

**Sadamasa Motonaga (1922-2011)**

Born in Mie, Japan, Motonaga was best known as a key member of Gutai Art Association founded in 1954. Having originally trained as a manga artist and worked as a newspaper illustrator, he began to turn to fine art in the late 1940s. He channeled the playful, quotidian aspect of manga in his works, which frequently incorporated everyday motifs.

Motonaga was invited to join Gutai by Jiro Yoshihara in 1955, and became known for his experimental performances, installations and paintings. Notably, Motonaga participated in Gutai's legendary outdoor exhibition in 1955, where he created an installation with liquid-filled vinyl tubes hanging on a tree. Playing with gravity and light, Yoshihara announced the work as being 'the world's first water sculpture'. In 1958, he invented a painting style inspired by the traditional Japanese technique called tarashikomi, which involved pouring different colored paints one upon another before the pigment is fully dry, to achieve a dripping effect. Motonaga's paintings are thus characterized by bold, organic forms and textures that playfully balance intention and intuition, control and chance.

In the 1960s, he presented his work abroad in Europe and the US, and was invited for a residency in New York in 1966. There, he began experimenting with airbrushes and acrylic paint, which led to his transition to a more contemporary, flat style, evocative of graffiti and animation. Motonaga's post-1966 era is defined by hard-edged tumescent shapes rendered in saturated hues and polished color gradations. In the 1970s, he expanded his practice to include printmaking, stage design and children's books. Motonaga's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions at home and abroad, including large-scale retrospectives held at Mie Prefectural Museum of Art in 1991 and 2009. He passed away in Hyogo in 2011.

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**Biography**

- 1922 Born in Mie
- 1955 Joins Gutai Art Association
- 1966 Invited for a residency in New York
- 1996 Appointed professor of Art and Design at Seijo University
- 2011 Dies in Hyogo at the age of 88

**Selected Solo Exhibitions**

- 1998 Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe
- 2002 Otani Memorial Art Museum in Nishinomiya, Otani
- 2003 Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima
- 2005 Nagano Prefectural Shinano Art Museum, Nagano
- 2011 Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Tsu
- 2014 Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

- 1955 *1st Gutai Art Exhibition*, Ohara Kaikan, Tokyo  
1981 *ArtPop – Japan*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London  
2006 *Zéro*, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Étienne, Saint-Étienne  
2013 *Between Action and the Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX  
*Gutai*, Whitestone Gallery, Tokyo  
2015 *Slip of the Tongue - Punta della Dogana*, Fondation François Pinault, Venice

### **Awards**

- 1953 Holbein Prize, Ashiya City Art Exhibition  
1986 Hyogo Prefectural Cultural Award  
1983 Japan Arts Grand Prize  
Grand Prix, Seoul International Biennale  
1988 Conferred the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government  
1991 Awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, 4th Class, by the Japanese government  
1992 Osaka Art Prize

### **Major Public Collections**

The National Museum of Art, Osaka  
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto  
Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo  
Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro  
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX