

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

NO. 20

FOR RELEASE: February 26, 1972

PRESS PREVIEW: February 25, 1972,

11 a. m. - 4 p. m.

GRAPHICS BY TADANORI YOKOO AT MUSEUM

Tadanori Yokoo, a graphic designer, painter, printmaker, film and television actor, writer and scenic designer, enjoys the kind of popularity in Japan usually accorded film stars and rock musicians. An exhibition of posters, record jackets, book and magazine illustrations, political cartoons, and other work by the prolific Japanese artist, will be on view from February 26 through April 24, 1972, in the Goodwin Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art. Graphics by Tadanori Yokoo is directed by John Garrigan, Assistant Curator of Graphic Design, Department of Architecture and Design.

Born in Hyogo Province in 1936, Tadanori Yokoo worked as a printer's assistant and designer before moving to Tokyo at the age of 25. In his early design work, Yokoo consciously attempted to eliminate from his art the traditional and popular imagery of Japan. Upon joining the Japan Design Center in Tokyo, however, he became increasingly sensitive to the rapid Westernization of Japan and sought an alternative to the "cold rationalism" of much contemporary international design.

Yokoo's alternative involves an increased subjectivity, pointed satirical observations, and the re-integration of distinctly Japanese imagery into his work. This Japanese imagery -- flags, kimono labels, family crests, details of ukiyoe prints -- appears juxtaposed with images from masterpieces of Western art, American advertising and comic books, and with original, sardonic images of violence and eroticism.

While Yokoo's posters are advertisements, they become primarily vehicles for the expression of the artist's unique sensibility, and the client's message is often minimized or even satirized by its presentation within an incongruous context. In a poster advertising an electric razor, the shaver is barely visible in a decorative border which itself surrounds a profusion of imagery unrelated to the product. Huge photographs from girlie magazines are the primary visual elements of a series of posters announcing Christmas sales at a department store.

(more)

The restoration of subjectivity and of a Japanese spirit to Yokoo's work was increasingly evident after the formation of his own studio in 1964. As his confidence in his ideas and abilities developed, the range of Yokoo's activities expanded. In 1967, he collaborated with Yukio Mishima on posters and illustrations for Mishima's books. The same year Yokoo organized an avant-garde theatre with Shuji Terayama and produced the sets and posters. Poster commissions from film directors during this period led to his being cast, in 1968, in a leading role in the film "Diary of a Shinjuku Burglar."

"Yokoo is completely uninhibited-- for him nothing is unspeakable," notes John Garrigan. "He is as likely to shock and repel as to amuse and delight." Or, as Yukio Mishima wrote in his introduction to The Posthumous Works of Tadanori Yokoo: "In his concretized satire the crueler realities of life unwind, as from a tightly coiled spring within his inner world. He sees the world as singular, vast, and ridiculous-- but different from that of a madman which is constantly bent toward his inner life. His range is, in effect, what constitutes the 'health' of his art."

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296.