



press release

at la maison rouge, February 18th to May 13th, 2007

preview, Saturday February 17th, 2007, 2pm to 7pm

press preview, Friday February 16th, 2007, 2.30pm to 5pm



Tetsumi Kudo

*The mountain we're looking for
is in the greenhouse*

curated by Anne Tronche



Mutatis, mutandis

works from the private collection
of Antoine de Galbert



mounir fatmi

I love America

Homage to Jacques Derrida

presentation

La maison rouge is a private non-profit foundation which opened in Paris in June 2004. Founded by the contemporary art collector Antoine de Galbert, it hosts three temporary exhibitions a year, certain of which are staged by freelance commissioners.

the building

The foundation is housed inside a converted factory in the Bastille district, overlooking the marina. It extends over 2,500 sq. m. including 1,300 sq. m. of exhibition space.

The foyer interior is by the artist Jean-Michel Alberola.

la suite

La maison rouge continues its extracurricular activities and, working with Gérard Wajcman, has created “la suite”, a spacious hotel room within the foundation, reserved for guests from every sphere of contemporary thinking and creation, for some original encounters with the public (programme at www.lamaisonrouge.org).

for children

One Wednesday a month, la maison rouge welcomes children aged 4 to 11 for stories and an afternoon snack.

Upcoming dates: February 21st, March 21st, April 18th, May 9th at 3pm.

Full details at www.lamaisonrouge.org

les amis de la maison rouge

A non-profit organisation, les amis de la maison rouge actively supports Antoine de Galbert's project. It contributes to reflection and debates on the theme of the private collection, organises activities to coincide with the exhibitions, and helps spread the foundation's message to audiences in France and around the world (amis@lamaisonrouge.org).

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The mountain we're looking for is in the greenhouse

curated by Anne Tronche



Your portrait – For Nostalgic Purposes, Piazza San Marco, Venice, 1966 © Photo Shunk Kender (DR)

A Japanese artist who moved to France in 1962, Tetsumi Kudo's first works were part of the Neo-Dada current which, in nineteen-fifties Tokyo, looked for ways to mix performances and installations that gave new importance to the object.

The singular nature of Kudo's world was made evident in *Philosophy of Impotence*, his first Paris happening. Prompting doubt and defiance, both his acts and his objects question human freedom in hyper-mediatized modern society. Using every instrument of control, from box to cage, from deposit receipt to transistorised garden, he set out to recount the metamorphosis of modern man. An ironic narrator, in the different stages of his work Kudo considers the bio-chemical survival of the human phenomenon and envisages its organic transformation. Heads are locked in cages, human limbs are connected to plants by electronic circuits, hands are held captive in an aquarium because Kudo cultivated, with perverse refinement, a sense of humour and cruelty. In his world, man and technology are not in opposition. Raised together, they engender a new culture which he named "new ecology". Man as we knew him has disappeared from Kudo's world, despite the flowers, cigarettes and crucifixes, the last remaining souvenirs of a long-ago existence. A new world takes its place, a world that no doubt remembers the unbearable violence of Hiroshima and which resolutely drapes itself in fluorescent colours.

Described by Alain Jouffroy as an "Objector" in 1965, Kudo showed his ability to associate, in a disconcerting manner, the disciplines which preside over all new forms of research, beginning with art, ecology, technology and fundamental science. His last works, made with coloured wires, are about "black holes" and represent structural relations between the two worlds of East and West.

At a time when the body becomes an experimental medium for contemporary creation through artificial limbs, cyber appendages, and attributes in chrome or latex, when it comes to us encircled by genetics, cloning and new technologies, Kudo's work reveals and elucidates his remarkable intuitions.

The first major showing of Kudo's work in France, this exhibition is an opportunity to retrace the artist's trajectory from his arrival in France to the years before his death in 1990. Certain of the works, including some from European collections, have rarely been shown before.

the exhibition structure



Happening, *Philosophy of Impotence*, Cinéma-Studio, Boulogne, February 1963 © Photo Hiroko Kudo

The exhibition opens with *Philosophy of Impotence*. This was the first installation presented in France as part of a happening initiated by Jean-Jacques Lebel in 1962, and entitled “*Pour conjurer l’esprit de Catastrophe*” (“*Exorcising the spirit of Catastrophe*”). Dark-coloured, bandaged phallic shapes hang in clusters from the ceiling like bizarre stalactites to create a sort of “penetration” with the elements that attach them. On the day the show opened in 1962, Kudo gave a performance in which he appeared with his body bound in ropes. Photos shown as large posters recall the highlights of the performance.

Following this installation is *Garden of the Metamorphosis in the Space Capsule*. This is a large blue cube whose walls, marked with white dots, suggest the different faces of a die. Inside the cube, which is illuminated with fluorescent lighting, the visitor finds a box filled with cocoons, a cage holding organic debris, a cube filled with everyday objects, and flowers growing out of a part of the floor made to resemble human skin. This work, the last in a cycle of dice-like cubes, summarizes one of the main themes of Kudo’s art: despite what man may think, he is not the master of his destiny – chance is.

Other cubes of variable dimensions were created between 1962 and 1966. Either attached to the walls or standing in columns, they are dispersed throughout the surrounding space. Most open up to reveal cocoons or body parts (mouths, brains, eyeballs) which appear to be kept alive by electronic circuits. Everyday objects are also present: alarm clocks, sunglasses (for protection from radiation), tea balls, etc., all of which ironically evoke the slow death of individuals in closed spaces entirely controlled by an all-powerful technological presence. For a group show at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1976, the artist wrote a text which sheds light on the function he intended to give his cubes: “...We are born from a box (the womb), live our lives in a box (an apartment) and after death we end up in a box (a coffin).”

The space reserved for these cubes and boxes opens onto two rooms bathed in black light. The objects here, from different periods and of variable sizes, have been coloured with fluorescent paint. Through this luminous and chromatic process, which he frequently used throughout the 1960s and 70s, Kudo sought to dematerialize the surrounding space and to give his works the power of incongruous apparitions which optically invert the memory of white shadows on the walls of Hiroshima. The half-melted remains of bodies on two brightly-coloured lounge chairs (*Votre Portrait Mai 66*, loaned by SMAK in Ghent) emphasize the detachment of which Kudo was capable, enabling him to turn horror into black humour, cruelty into an energy which surges from the absurd. These skin-like remnants, which represent the “evaporation” of human forms, are protecting their endangered existence under a parasol. In this environment – where black light sometimes takes on the appearance of a death ray – eyes, bald heads, penises, pressure gauges and radios are preserved in cages. In these small, modern temples where humanity lies in ruins, the artist often places artificial flowers in an

almost complete state of decomposition. The chrysanthemums that poke between the bars of the cages, painted pink and green in a gesture of perverse refinement, suggest a new era of technology, pollution and artifice.

This impression is confirmed in the following room, where several cages and gardens develop the theme of a possible biological relationship between a polluted environment, the decomposition of human bodies and the transformations of technology. This theme, which Kudo began to work with in the late 60s with his cages, later took on the force of a presage with his gardens, most of which he entitled, *Pollution – Cultivation – New Ecology*. Phalluses and wilted flowers growing from heaps of earth, electronic hearts and enchained human members represent a carefully dissected humanity so that human cells are able to organically metamorphose next to and interacting with the plants that are nourished by the same transistorized humus.



Pollution – Cultivation – New Ecology (Grafted Garden), 1970-1971.

Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou, Photo CNAC/MNAM © Philippe Migeat, ADAGP.

The next room opens with the very large garden piece *Pollution – Cultivation – New Ecology, Grafted Garden* (1971), from the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris. This work has a highly complex structure: human members, hair and organs are suspended from strange prostheses. Numerous and various flowers, plants, ears and phalluses appear to be growing from the sludge. There is also an unusual head which bears a striking resemblance to Ionesco. This same resemblance can be seen on some of the other heads imprisoned in cages. Kudo's fascination with the playwright, who revolutionized the theatre of the absurd, finds its origin in *La Vase*, a 1970 film collaboration between the two for which Kudo was set decorator. This proved to be a difficult venture which, for a certain time, led Kudo to "personalize" his portraits with a cruelty that makes his approach to the violence endured by man even more terrifying. Through both its size and its highly evocative nature, *Grafted Garden* was to become a symbol of the artist's transformative work. In it, movement, decomposition, metamorphosis and growth establish connections which nullify the usual distinctions between animal and plant orders. As if the main objective of this change in perception, illustrated here in a highly radical manner, was to remind us that nature is conditioned by the overall behaviour of the species. And that this behaviour leaves no room for individual free will. This absence of freedom expresses itself in Kudo's work through the transformation of one species into another and by a hybridization of organs, confirming a statement he made in an interview: "There is no difference between a fish living in an aquarium and a human being."

In the same room as the large garden piece, two other works reflect a new phase in Kudo's artistic creation. These installations, which he made in France following a period spent in Japan, use coloured string, which in his language represents the exchange of genetic information. Both *La survivance de l'avant-garde (Vestiges of the avant-garde)* (1985) and *The Wandering Boy is Forever Attractive*, (1985) (respectively loaned by the FNAC and by the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris) suggest a rare serenity and peacefulness. Despite the presence of a white skull in both works, the coloured string makes these installations highly appealing in a

deeply enigmatic way. String woven into nets by imprisoned hands or skeins placed over a face is a recurrent element in the cage series. Here the multicoloured string has lost the disturbing character it once had. Now rolled around reclining cylinders (*Axe magnétique et axe vide, [Magnetic axis and empty axis]*, 1982-83) or forming a link between disc- or dome-like shapes, it has acquired an autonomy which suggests at most the kind of energy cyclotron produced by over-mediatized societies. Using the simplest, most fragile material – string or twine – Kudo sought to create volume and a semblance of living bodies as an expression of the structural differences between East and West.

From 1984 to 1987, Kudo spent his time between France and Japan. Faithful to his new medium of coloured string, he began to create pieces which often seem to be flying toward the ceiling. In one such work, *Âmes d'artistes d'avant-garde (Souls of avant-garde artists)* (1986) (loaned by the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille), a transparent umbrella is adorned with balls of string sporting long tails like those of kites. This fragile sculpture gives the impression that it wants to leave earth and fly through the air, trailing its strings like a comet tail.

The exhibition ends with a series of wall pieces. These relief and painted works on canvas were created using a computer printer (*Translation painting by computer – Cultivation by radioactivity*). They are an interpretation, in 1971, of objects created by Kudo using one of the first ink-jet printers able to handle large formats. Most of the relief panels were created during this period. Many of them show sections of ground with footprints slipping in a substance resembling something between loose soil and excrement. Imitation lawn, plastic flowers and coloured resin made into rustic earthworms represent the triumph of the artificial while mischievously asserting the death of good taste. Certain works incorporate Christian crucifixes and images of the Virgin Mary. When speaking about the monumental work he sculpted in 1969 in the rock of Mount Nokigiri (a film shown at the exhibition documents its creation), Kudo violently attacks the "repugnant slogan about the resurrection of humanity." This theme is expressed in his art when he abandons objects with a religious connotation next to matter in an advanced state of putrefaction.

Documents displayed in glass cases retrace a number of Kudo's exhibitions, with posters, photos taken during happenings, and small objects created especially for his performances, such as *Instant sperm*, the more or less transparent phallic shapes that were decorated with ribbons, placed in plastic bags and handed out to the audience by hostesses dressed in kimonos in a highly codified ceremony that was both aggressive and ironic in nature.

Anne Tronche, curator of the exhibition

Art critic, until 1989 a member of the editorial board of the review *Opus International*, and an Inspector for Artistic Creation with the French Ministry for Culture between 1982 and 1999, Anne Tronche's publications include *Gina Pane*, published by Fall, 1998; *Peter Saul*, (group work), published by Somogy, 1999; *Laura Lamiel*, published by Actes Sud, 2001; *Roland Flexner*, published by Michel Baverey, 2002; *Corps et traces dans la création tchèque (1962-2002)*, published by Hazan-Musée de Nancy, 2002; *Hervé Télémaque*, published by Flammarion, 2003; *D'une image qui ne serait pas du semblant – La photographie écrite –1950-2005*, (with Jean-Michel Ribettes), published by Paris- Audiovisuel/Passage de Retz, 2005.

Anne Tronche has curated numerous exhibitions:

- Présence Panchounette, CNAC, Rue Berryer, 1988
- Irwin Group, CNAC, Rue Berryer, 1988
- Aurélie Nemours, CNAC, Rue Berryer, 1990
- Nature artificielle, Espace Electra, Paris 1990
- Feux terrestres, Année Paul Valéry, Centre régional d'art contemporain, Sète 1995
- Au verso de l'Histoire, (six Georgian artists), Mitteleuropa Biennale, Schiltigheim, La Ferme du Buisson 1999-2000.
- Gina Pane, Ecole supérieure des beaux-arts, Le Mans, 2000
- Corps et traces dans la création tchèque (1962-2002), Musée de Nancy, 2002
- Aurélie Nemours / Agnes Martin : L'écriture comme dévoilement, Espace de l'Art Concret, Mouans-Sartoux, 2005.

publications

To coincide with the exhibition, Les Éditions Fage is publishing a book, part of the *Varia* collection, about Tetsumi Kudo (text by Anne Tronche with a reprinted article by Alain Jouffroy and colour illustrations).

related events

Saturday March 10th at 4pm: guided tour of the exhibition with its curator, Anne Tronche.

Thursday April 5th at 7pm: "Résistance de Kudo à l'usure du temps", a conference by Alain Jouffroy, art critic and the first person to have reviewed Kudo's work in France.

Mutatis, mutandis*

works from the private collection of Antoine de Galbert

(“the necessary changes having been made”, this expression is used to make two things comparable by taking their respective differences into consideration)*

To coincide with the exhibition, at la maison rouge, of works by Tetsumi Kudo (1935-1990), Antoine de Galbert presents, for the first time, a selection of pieces from his own collection, including a work by Kudo himself.

This untitled work from 1971 is a hybrid garden of artificial flowers and germinating phalluses under a Plexiglas globe. It is the starting-point for the highly personal sequence of works chosen by Antoine de Galbert from his collection.

Kudo's work contains many themes: the question of survival of the species in a world overwhelmed with technology, the ecological evolution of the planet and also, on a wider level, an interrogation of organic matter and its transformation. Clearly, death is omnipresent, but while Kudo addressed the issue in a grave manner towards the end of his life, it is most often treated with humour and even derision.

These subjects are of great interest to Antoine de Galbert, a collector of contemporary art, photography, outsider art and primitive art for over 15 years.

The collector has allowed himself great liberty in bringing together works which sometimes diverge as to their periods, styles, media and their place in the history of art.

It is this juxtaposition, typical of many private collections, that we have sought to preserve and present for the first time to visitors.

Exhibited works (provisional list)

On the work of Tetsumi Kudo, *Untitled*, 1971:

HANS BELLMER (Kattowitz, Poland, 1902 – Paris, 1975)

La Poupée, 1949

argentic print



MICHEL BLAZY (Monaco, 1966 - lives and works in Saint-Denis)

Voyage au centre, 2002

DVD, Pal, 4:3 format, stereo sound

PETER BUGGENHOUT (Dendermonde, Belgium, 1963 - lives and works in Ghent)

The Blind Leading The Blind #4_3, 2003-2004

trestles, glass case

DADO (Cetinje (Montenegro, 1933 - lives and works in Chaumont-en-Vexin (Oise) since 1956)

N°23, 1957

oil on canvas

DOMINIQUE FIGARELLA (Chambéry, 1966 - lives and works in Montpellier)

Untitled (Chewing-gum), 2000

chewing-gum, varnished wood

Untitled, 2000

sticking plaster, acrylic on wood

GELATIN / GELITIN

Since 1995, the group comprises Wolfgang Gantner, Ali Janka, Florian Reither and Tobias Urban. They live and work in Vienna (Austria).

Operation Rose, 2004

mixed media

GUILLAUME HERBAUT (France, 1970)

Urakami, 2003-2004

18 colour prints

JOHN ISAACS (Lancaster, UK, 1968 - lives and works in Berlin)

Is More Than This More Than This?, 2001

wax, body hair, polystyrene, hair, plastic, wood plinth

RICHARD JACKSON (Sacramento, USA, 1939 - lives and works in Los Angeles)

Toy Bear, 2002

stuffed bear, wood, black and white paint



JACKIE KAYSER (Regny, 1946 - Villefranche sur Saône, 2004)

“Objet petit a” à la tentation, 1991

wood, steel, straw, clay, glass, pigskin

Container for “Objet petit a” à la tentation, 1989

cardboard, plaster, wood, leather, foam, velvet, silk, beads

JURGEN KLAUKE (Cochem, Germany, 1943 - lives and works in Cologne since 1968)

Transformer, 1972

6 colour prints

EDWARD LIPSKI (London, 1966 - lives and works in London)

Chinese God, 2006

mixed media

YAYOI KUSAMA (Matsumoto, 1928 – lives and works in Japan)

Tray, 1965

mixed media

ELSA SAHAL (1975 - lives and works in Paris)

Le bon larron, 2005

enamelled white ceramic with 9 element on a table, metal top and steel legs

JANAINA TSCHÄPE (Munich, 1973 - lives and works in New York)

Dreamsequences 1&2, 2002

DVD, 1/3, 4'43''

NOBUKO TSUCHIYA (Yokohama, 1972 - lives and works in London)

Micro Energy Retro, 2004

mixed media

HENRI UGHETTO (Lyon, 1941 - lives and works in Lyon)

Mannequins Imputrescibles (series)

artist's collection

WOLS (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze, known as Wols) (Berlin, 1913 - Paris, 1951)

Sculpture, 1937

argentic print

ERWIN WURM (Bruck an der Mur, Austria, 1954 – lives and works in Vienna (Austria))

Home, 2006

resin, acrylic

in the patio, mounir fatmi

J'aime l'Amérique, Homage to Jacques Derrida

Installation proposed and produced by les amis de la maison rouge

Each year, les amis de la maison rouge produces a work specifically for the patio at la maison rouge. All the association's members are encouraged to suggest a name and to vote for one of the three artists selected by a committee which this year is chaired by Patricia Falguières.

By looking back on the history of art, from Jasper Johns to Joseph Beuys, from Pop Art to Arte Povera, from art itself to politics, mounir fatmi transforms the Star-Spangled Banner into an enormous, insurmountable obstacle. He places the viewer in front of a wall, like the one which is planned to separate the US from Mexico, making history fuse with the present.

J'aime l'Amérique ("I love America") is a construction-deconstruction of the American flag in the manner of the philosopher Jacques Derrida. It is also an unequivocal response to the national security policies and accusations of rich countries faced with the flood of immigrants who dream of crossing their borders and overcoming obstacles, and are often willing to risk their lives in doing so. This complex mass of red, white and blue stripes is at the centre of all longing and fear, since by choosing a side one inevitably also chooses an enemy – the enemy on the other side of the wall.

Surmounting the obstacle means going beyond the idea of a flag, a border, a territory or an identity.

The piece functions as a link between the history of art and the history of relations between Europe, the rest of the world and the United States.

It evokes Joseph Beuys' performance piece, *I love America and America loves me**, during which the artist lived for three days with a coyote, an animal which symbolizes the native American community, in the René Block Gallery in New York (May 21st-25th, 1974).

Biography and selected exhibitions

Born in Morocco in 1970, mounir fatmi moves between Paris, Amsterdam and Tangiers

- 2007 *Something is possible*, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Los Angeles
Sans histoire, Musée Picasso, Vallauris
- 2006 Grand Prix Léopold Sédar Senghor, the highest award at the 7th Dakar Biennale
The Unhomely, 2nd Seville Biennale, Seville
Tête dure / Hard Head, Galerie La Bank, Paris
- 2005 *Meeting Point*, The Stenersen Museum, Oslo
Tourist Class, Konstmuseum, Malmö
Cohabitation forcée, Centro d'Arte Contemporanea Ticino, Bellinzona
- 2004 *Africa remix*, Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Hayward Gallery, London, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
A drop of water, a grain of dust, Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju
- 2003 *Obstacles, Next flag*, Migros Museum, Zurich,
Observatorio #9, a project for the Luanda Triennale 2005, Espace Camouflage, Brussels
Cinéma d'avant-garde, contre-culture générale, Cinémathèque Française, Paris

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practical info



getting there

metro stations: Quai de la Rapée (line 5) or Bastille (lines 1, 5 or 8)

RER station: Gare de Lyon

bus n° 20, 29 or 91

accessibility

the exhibition areas are accessible to disabled visitors and people with restricted mobility.

opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm

late-night Thursday until 9pm

closed December 25th, January 1st and May 1st

admission

full price: €6.50

concessions: €4.50 (13-18 years, students, full-time artists, and over-60s).

free: under-13s, the unemployed, companions of disabled visitors, members of ICOM and les amis de la maison rouge.

annual pass

full price: €16

concessions: €12

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions.

free or reduced rate admission to related events.

la maison rouge café

open to the public during the foundation's opening hours for lunch and refreshments.

Tuesday to Sunday, with brunch every weekend.

tel. +33 (0)1 43 41 95

la maison rouge bookshop

located at 10bis boulevard de la Bastille, this specialist bookshop proposes publications on contemporary art and artists, on the theme of private collections, and art DVDs and videos.

tel. +33 (0)1 43 43 02 76

www.bookstorming.com