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Indianapolis Museum of Art to Introduce Work of Contemporary Japanese Painter Tawara Yūsaku

Universe Is Flux: The Art of Tawara Yūsaku will be the first large-scale exhibition and United States debut of the artist's paintings

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, March 23, 2011— The Indianapolis Museum of Art will present the first large-scale exhibition of works by Tawara Yūsaku, a contemporary Japanese artist known for his highly energetic brushstroke. *Universe Is Flux: The Art of Tawara Yūsaku*, on view from November 11, 2011, to April 1, 2012, will feature works inspired by Tawara's belief that the universe is unstable and constantly changing. Executed primarily in ink on paper, his works use the cumulative effect of many brushstrokes to create powerful and expressive works, apparent in even his smallest 3 in. x 5 in. paintings. Although Tawara eschewed representational art, many of his paintings recall traditional ink landscapes or other forms in nature.

"With this exhibition, the IMA will introduce the inventive and insightful vision of Tawara Yūsaku to an American audience," said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA. "Tawara's great strength is an ability to create works that simultaneously exist in the realms of contemporary art and traditional Asian art, and are also strongly influenced by Buddhist concepts."

"Tawara's distinctive vision of reality was transformed into immensely complex paintings filled with monumental energy," said John Teramoto, curator of Asian art at the IMA. "Essentially he took motifs oft-employed in calligraphy and painted them—creating exciting effects that could never be executed with only a single brush stroke."

Tawara saw all existence as composed of vibrational energy, made up of wavelike forms he called "hadō." Fundamentally based on Buddhist thought, Tawara translated his vision of reality into paintings with intense visual impact. Highlights of the exhibition include several renditions of the Japanese character "ichi," which means "one." Traditionally executed in a single stroke in calligraphy, Tawara painted these ichi with his method of layering innumerable brushstrokes.

Featuring 77 works, mostly in ink on paper, *Universe Is Flux* will introduce audiences in the United States to this artist's unique philosophy and its impact on his paintings. The exhibition will feature works created in the 1990s, following Tawara's several decade hiatus from painting, as well as pieces created just before his death in 2004. Organized by the Indianapolis Museum of Art, *Universe Is Flux: The Art of Tawara Yūsaku* will be on view in the Thompson Gallery and Hurwitz Gallery.

Exhibition Catalogue

To accompany the exhibition, the IMA will produce an illustrated catalogue featuring a number of original scholarly essays, including a contribution by John Teramoto, IMA curator of Asian Art and exhibition curator. The catalogue, *Universe Is Flux: The Art of Tawara Yūsaku*, also will feature essays by Stephen Addiss, Tucker-Boatwright Professor of Humanities at the University of Richmond, and David Rosand, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History Emeritus at Columbia University. Generous support for the catalogue is provided by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

About Tawara Yūsaku

Tawara Yūsaku (1932-2004) was born in present-day Onomichi City in Hiroshima Prefecture. His original name was Okada Toshihiko. He began studying oil painting as a high school student under the tutelage of Kobayashi Wasaku (1888–1974), who gave him the artist name, “Tawara Yūsaku” (the character for “saku” being part of his teacher’s name). In 1951 he entered the Law Faculty of Chūō University in Tokyo. While still a university student he won awards for his paintings, which led to his decision to halt his university studies and turn to painting professionally. He formed a painters’ group with Kizawa Teiichi and Kondō Kazuo.

In 1963, he abruptly decided to put down his brush and quit painting, saying that he came to doubt the validity of his work. Later he often mentioned the opinion of the French artist Balthus, whom he met in 1965, that the oil paintings of Asian artists were lacking in power and that they were indeed more suited to working in ink. In the intervening period before returning to painting, he poured his efforts into polishing his artistic sensibilities through collecting and dealing in ancient and modern art from around the world, and focusing on folk arts and crafts by mounting and writing exhibition catalogues on folk art. His activities brought him into close contact with towering figures in the field such as Hamada Shōji (1894–1978). Through his close friendship Serizawa Keisuke (1895–1984), the textile design artist and Living National Treasure in Japan, he became absorbed in the expressive potential of brush and paper, and he began to paint again in 1993.

Asian Art at the IMA

The IMA has one of the nation’s largest and most significant collections of Asian art. One view in the galleries, more than 400 works of art provide a panorama of more than 4,000 years of Asian art from China, Japan, Korea, India, Tibet, and West and Southeast Asia.

An encyclopedic collection of Chinese art features ancient bronze ritual vessels, jades, ceramics, textiles and paintings, with special strength in paintings of the Ming and Qing dynasties. A Japanese collection features one of the finest collections of Edo-period painting in the United States; it also includes ceramics, lacquer ware, woodblock prints, sculpture and paintings. The collection also includes contemporary ceramics by Japan’s leading artists. The Colonel Jeff W. Boucher Collection of weavings by the Baluchi people of Iran and Afghanistan is one of the world’s finest such collections.

About the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the Indianapolis Museum of Art is among the 10 largest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The IMA offers visitors an expansive view of arts and culture through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world’s continents. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Additionally, art, design, and nature are featured at 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park and Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA grounds. Beyond the Indianapolis campus, in 2011 the IMA will open to the public the recently acquired landmark Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. One of the country’s most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist residences, Miller House was designed by Eero Saarinen, with interiors by Alexander Girard, and landscape design by Daniel Urban Kiley.

Recognizing the IMA’s positive impact on its community, the Museum was named a 2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Services – the nation’s highest honor for museums and



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libraries. The IMA's commitment to free general admission, programming for schools and teachers, environmental leadership and online initiatives were among cited community contributions in the Museum's selection for the award.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit www.imamuseum.org.

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