

**Yamashita Kikuji****15 March – 01 April 2016  
1 Davies St London W1**

In spring 2016, Sadie Coles HQ presents five works by Japanese painter Yamashita Kikuji (1919 – 1986), dating from 1968 to 1975. These Surrealist paintings focus on the metamorphic human figure, teasing the body into suggestive, comical or abject guises. The nude body, and its potential to morph into something uncanny or grotesque, is a continual subject of Yamashita Kikuji's phantasmagorical paintings.

Born in 1919, Yamashita studied under the Surrealist Japanese painter Ichiro Fukuzawa in Tokyo, and as a young man he travelled to Europe where he was introduced to the works of artists including Max Ernst, Salvador Dali and Hieronymus Bosch. Yamashita transposes the perverse and fantastical imagery of Bosch into an explicitly Surrealist register. In Yamashita's paintings, the body recurs in fragmentary, erotically suggestive and comedic forms.



In *MIKOGI (A Shine-maiden Geisha)*, Yamashita constructs an interplay of bodies and furniture; a stately chair has become the site of a profusion of dreamlike motifs – fragmentary visages, flowers and organic masses. Yet rather than being self-contained and earthbound, the symbolist bodies of Yamashita's painting appear to be floating and unfurling. A collision of figurative, architectural and geometric motifs is readily perceivable in Yamashita's other paintings. In *Dependence Gods* (1968), mechanical constructs – latticed frameworks, chequered patterns – are interrupted by more unstable, near-formless organic spectres. *Ghost run* (1975) meanwhile abandons perspectival logic or narrative coherence in favour of a compression of differently sized, and contrastively rendered, figures – a matron with full breasts, a cavorting girl, or ghostly faces with saucer eyes. Yamashita's cast of characters are metamorphic in mood and appearance, whose effects range from coy playfulness to naked eroticism.

Yamashita Kikuji (b. 1919, Tokushima, Shikoku Island, d. 1986) was a Japanese painter, printmaker, collagist and teacher. He graduated from the Kagawa Prefectural Technical School in 1937 and later studied under the Surrealist painter Ichiro Fukuzawa in Tokyo. In 1939 he was drafted into the Japanese Imperial military to fight in China, and memories of what he saw and did as a soldier there, including killing a Chinese prisoner, indelibly informed his later production. His work became emblematic of the 'Reportage' style of painting, whereby artists expressed Socialist concerns in a style combining Social Realism and Surrealism. Selected exhibitions include his first one-man show at the Shinbashi Gallery, Tokyo (1962); a joint exhibition with the painters Tatsuo Ikeda and Hiroshi Nakamura at the Aoki Gallery, Tokyo (1963); *The Movement of Modern Art*, Kyoto Museum of Modern Art (1964); and the first Tokyo exhibition, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (1975). In 1974 he helped form the Hitohito society.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or [press@sadiecoles.com](mailto:press@sadiecoles.com)