

# THE PATINA OF MODERNITY ■ A SAMPLER OF JAPANESE AVANT- GARDE BOOK DESIGNS FROM THE 20TH & 21ST CENTURIES

Scholar, poet and raconteur

## John Solt

shows and discusses a selection from his important (and possibly impossible to duplicate today) collection of avant-garde / modernist Japanese books.

Tuesday 18 Nov 2008, 6:00 pm  
Design Seminar Room H-309  
Montserrat College of Art



John Solt is author of *Shredding the Tapestry of Meaning: The Poetry and Poetics of Kitazono Katue (1902-1978)* (Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1999), and other books of scholarship, poetry and translations.

Japan was the only Asian nation to create avant-garde art before World War Two (Shanghai modernism was influenced by Tokyo rather than the West). This activity occurred in all spheres, including architecture, fine arts, literature, sculpture, photography and book design. I will discuss books and journals published before the war that were largely influenced by European and American styles, followed by avant-garde art books from 1945 to the present, noting continuities and differences.

Among the materials we will examine are the rare journals

*Shoso* (書窓, ed. Onchi Koshiro),

*Yoru no fonsui* (夜の噴水, ed. Yamamoto Kansuke),

*YOU* (ed. Kitazono Katue) and

*TRAP* (ed. Torii Shozo).

We will also examine books designed by

Onchi Koshiro,

Yamamoto Kansuke (山本悍右),

Torii Shozo (鳥居昌三),

Kitazono Katue,

Sugiura Kohei,

Takahashi Shohachiro (高橋昭八郎),

Yamaguchi Kenjiro,

Mabuchi Akira (馬淵晃), and

Ohie Toshio (大家利夫).

The material shown will form the basis of a paper to be given in the conference **The Artifact of Literature : Japanese Books, Manuscripts, and Illustrated Scrolls**, 21-22 November 2008 at the Barker Center for the Humanities, Harvard University.

Hosted by Montserrat College of Art Design department. Contact John McVey.

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~eaah/artifact/index.html>

### \* Takahashi Shohachiro (高橋昭八郎, 1933- )

With his base in the Japanese postwar avant-garde scene firmly established, his production took a quantum leap in the late 1960s with a series of three innovative pieces that erase the boundaries between the genres of origami ("paper folding"), book, and sculpture. In the same period he produced one of his better known works, an **astrolabe poem** which includes a ring of Braille.