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**STYLIZED SCULPTURE:  
CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE FASHION FROM THE KYOTO COSTUME INSTITUTE**  
*October 12, 2007–January 6, 2008*

San Francisco, CA, July 11, 2007: Japanese fashion: It's more than meets the eye. From October 12, 2007, through January 6, 2008, the Asian Art Museum will present *Stylized Sculpture: Contemporary Japanese Fashion from the Kyoto Costume Institute*, the first major exhibition to combine the collective talents of leading Japanese fashion designers with new work by Hiroshi Sugimoto, one of today's most compelling artists. This special exhibition—conceived by Sugimoto—spotlights the extraordinary sculptural quality of contemporary Japanese fashion through 21 seminal masterworks by Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, Junya Watanabe, and Tao Kurihara. The presentation will also feature four new,



Photograph by Hiroshi Sugimoto, 2007.  
Dress by Junya Watanabe for Junya Watanabe Comme des Garçons, Spring/Summer 1999. Cotton-polyester, metal rods. Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute.

large-scale photographs by Sugimoto—never-before-seen pieces from a forthcoming body of work—which capture the garments' shadows, lines, and fullness of form, alongside the innovative creations that inspired them. The garments—borrowed from the Kyoto Costume Institute, one of the world's leading repositories of haute couture—date from 1983 to 2007, and include a range of materials and methods from various seasons. Co-curated by Kyoto Costume Institute chief curator Akiko Fukai, Sugimoto, and the Asian Art Museum, *Stylized Sculpture* will be on view exclusively at the Asian Art Museum.

In conceiving of *Stylized Sculpture*, Sugimoto states that he “looks at the human body and the man-made skins that envelop it as contemporary sculpture. Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, and other Japanese designers have defiantly challenged the elegance of European mainstream fashion, vastly expanding the very concept of this artificial skin ... and they have incarnated these creations with textures, colors, and shapes worthy of definition as sculpture.” In an effort to respect, and not distract from, the sculptural aesthetic of the garments

on view, the Asian Art Museum's installation will be sleek and minimal, with careful lighting to heighten the effect of the shadows, as in Sugimoto's photographs. The garments will be presented on mannequins alongside the photographs, in galleries uncluttered by wall text or object labels. A complimentary brochure will provide didactic information about the exhibition, the garments and the designers, and will include further examples of Sugimoto's new photography not included in the exhibition.

**Japanese Fashion 1983–2007:****Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, Junya Watanabe, and Tao Kurihara**

In the early 1980s, Japanese designers Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, and Yohji Yamamoto took Paris by storm with avant-garde styles that overturned traditional Western conceptions of chic. Informed in part, perhaps, by traditional forms of Japanese clothing such as the kimono, the designers produced radical garments with shapes and textures that didn't necessarily respond to the contours of the human body. Though they work independently, Miyake, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto share an interest in integrating Japanese tradition and tailoring with contemporary ideologies and technologies, resulting in exaggerated, voluminous pieces made out of unexpected materials. The creations on view in *Stylized Sculpture* will reflect the broad aesthetic of Japanese fashion over the past twenty years, as well as pinpoint the features for which each designer is best known.

Issey Miyake, born in Hiroshima in 1938, founded Miyake Design Studio in 1970 after early couture training in Paris and New York. By the end of the 1980s, in his effort to increase mobility of the wearer, flexibility of fabric, and ease of production, Miyake had begun to develop an innovative technique he entitled "Garment Pleating," which ultimately evolved into his iconic 1993 "Pleats Please" line. Miyake's pleated garments, lying flat and folded like origami, expand dramatically when put on a body. Since turning over the design of his signature label to his understudy in the late 1990s, Miyake now focuses on special projects. One of the most important of these projects has been the "A-POC" collection (the acronym refers to "A Piece of Cloth," a concept Miyake conceived early in his career), developed together with textile engineer Dai Fujiwara in 1999. A-POC garments come off the loom as single flat tubes of fabric that can be transformed into clothing by cutting along faint outlines on the cloth—requiring no sewing. Along with three key examples of Miyake's earlier work, the exhibition will feature an A-POC garment that alternately covers the human body and serves as "upholstery" for an Italian chair by renowned product designer Ron Arad.

Rei Kawakubo, born in Tokyo in 1942, is the head and sole owner of Comme des Garçons, the fashion house she founded in 1973. Comme des Garçons gained international recognition in the early 1980s for its achromatic palette, asymmetry, and deconstructed, frayed edges. The exhibition will feature six original Kawakubo designs, including signature distressed looks from her early career, as well as more playful examples from the 1990s, such as a baby pink sweater and skirt ensemble with pronounced bustle and petticoat from the 1995 “Sweeter Than Sweet” line and a stretch nylon dress with a huge Quasimodo-like protuberance, which radically distorts the female figure, from the famed Spring/Summer 1997 collection, popularly known as “lumps and bumps.”

Yohji Yamamoto, born in Tokyo in 1943, launched his own collection in 1977 and debuted in Paris in 1981. While throughout his career Yamamoto has exhibited a great amount of loyalty to the fabric and structured planes of traditional Japanese clothing, the kimono in particular, in the past decade he has moved to incorporate more aspects of traditional Western tailoring. *Stylized Sculpture* will present four original Yamamoto designs, including a highly formal, wool felt dress from the 1996 Autumn/Winter collection that recalls in its refinement the work of the great post-World War II couturier Christobal Balenciaga; at the same time it evokes the appeal of the Japanese kimono with its sculptural back. *Stylized Sculpture* will also feature a Yamamoto creation from 1998 that demonstrates the designer’s method of twisting and wrapping the fabric around the body, in a way sculpting the shape of the female figure without extensive cutting of the cloth—another characteristic of traditional Japanese clothing.

While Miyake, Kawakubo, and Yamamoto continue to design, they also mentor younger designers, and ensure the future of their respective fashion houses, through an age-old, and uniquely Japanese, apprenticeship system. The presentation will contain five pieces by Junya Watanabe, who, under Kawakubo’s tutelage, has come to design under his own name at Comme des Garçons. Born in Fukushima in 1961, Watanabe is often referred to as a “techno couture” designer, utilizing industrial or technologically advanced materials in his creations. An ensemble from Watanabe’s 1998 line, which incorporates wire and wool serge to create a capacious structure around the waist of the wearer, will be on view. Also included in the exhibition is a striking new 2007 work by Watanabe’s 33-year-old protégé Tao Kurihara. Considered one of the hottest new talents on the Paris runway circuit, Kurihara now designs under her own name for Comme des Garçons.

### **About the Kyoto Costume Institute**

Founded in 1978, the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI) is one of the world's leading repositories of historical costumes and contemporary fashion with a collection of more than eleven thousand original works. Under the leadership of Chief Curator Akiko Fukai, who has been with the Institute since its inception, KCI has organized numerous critically acclaimed fashion exhibitions in Japan and throughout the world, including *Ancien Regime* and *Japonism in Fashion*, and generated important publications such as *Fashion: A History from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century; Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute* (Taschen, 2002). In recent years, the Institute has placed greater emphasis on Japanese contemporary fashion and its position within the global context.

### **About Hiroshi Sugimoto**

Born in Tokyo in 1948, Hiroshi Sugimoto, best known for his photographic series of ethereal seascapes, dioramas, empty movie theaters and wax museums, has recently turned his attention to contemporary Japanese fashion, with a stunning new series of black-and-white photographs that highlight the sculptural, almost architectural, formations from Japan's fashion pioneers.

### ***Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History***

Sugimoto is also the subject, and curator, of the critically touted *Hiroshi Sugimoto: History of History*, which will be on view at the Asian Art Museum—in the final stop of an international tour—concurrently with *Stylized Sculpture*. *History of History* juxtaposes Sugimoto's exquisitely minimalist photographs with fossils, artworks and religious artifacts ranging from prehistoric to the fifteenth century, all drawn from his own collection. The result is an extended exploration of time, life, and spirituality as perceived in the contexts of nature and history.

### **Acknowledgments:**

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### **Media Preview:**

A media preview for *Stylized Sculpture* will be held in conjunction with a preview for *History of History* on Thursday, October 11, 2007, from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM, with a gallery walk-through at 10:45 AM led by

members of the curatorial team. Complimentary refreshments will be served. Please RSVP to [pr@asianart.org](mailto:pr@asianart.org) or call (415) 581-3713.

#### **About the Asian Art Museum**

The Asian Art Museum is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience in discovering the unique material, aesthetic, and intellectual achievements of Asian art and culture. Holding nearly 17,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history, the museum is one of the largest museums in the Western world devoted exclusively to Asian art. Once located in Golden Gate Park, the museum now resides at its new, expanded facility at Civic Center Plaza. An architectural gem featuring a dynamic blend of beaux arts and modern design elements, the museum's new home is the result of a dramatic transformation of San Francisco's former main library building by renowned architect Gae Aulenti (designer of Paris's Musée d'Orsay) into a showcase for the museum's acclaimed collection and exhibitions.

- **Information:** (415) 581-3500 or [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org).
- **Location:** 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.
- **Hours:** The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, with extended hours until 9:00 pm every Thursday.
- **Admission:** \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$7 for youth 13–17, and free for children under 12. Thursday evenings after 5 pm admission is just \$5 for all visitors except those under 12 and members, who are always free. **Target Tuesdays:** The museum offers FREE admission to all on the **first Tuesday** of every month, courtesy of Target Stores
- **Access:** The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access, please call (415) 581-3598; TDD: (415) 861-2035.

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