

Press Release for immediate release

Frieze Masters Tajiri / Wagemaker

11 – 15 October 2023

The Mayor Gallery, London
in collaboration with
BorzoGallery, Amsterdam
Matthijs Erdman BV



"We cannot take anything away from the earth; we can only change its shape."

- Jaap Wagemaker

On the centenary of the birth of Shinkichi Tajiri (b.1923 Los Angeles, USA – d. 2009 Baarlo, NL) The Mayor Gallery, together with BorzoGallery and Matthijs Erdman, will present a selection of the artist's sculptures from the 1940s onwards alongside the wall reliefs of his contemporary, the Dutch Informel artist Jaap Wagemaker (b.1906 Haarlem – d. 1972 Amsterdam, NL) from the 1950s and 60s.

Shinkichi Tajiri was a child of first-generation immigrants to the USA from Japan, and grew up in the US. Following the Japanese attack in Hawaii the Tajiri family were detained in a US internment camp and lost their family home. More to escape the camp than out of Patriotism, Tajiri enlisted in the highly decorated all-Japanese American regiment of the American Army. After attending the Chicago Art Institute from 1946 to 1948 and working for the sculptor Isamu Noguchi in New York, he moved to Paris in 1949 and joined the CoBrA group showing at the 1949 CoBrA exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. In Paris he studied with Ossip Zadkine and Fernand Léger becoming a significant figure in the group of dispossessed Post-War artists, who, after the physical and moral devastation dreamed of a universal art that would transcend borders and nations.

Primarily a sculptor, the themes of Erotica, War and Violence were a way of Tajiri crystallising the horrors he had personally experienced expressed in his repeated imagery of the Knot and The Warrior, with his 1967-68 series Machines as a form of protest on the Vietnam War. Tajiri also made a number of award-winning films, videos, photographic series, works on paper and latterly, Computer Art residing in The Netherlands from 1956 onwards with his wife, Dutch artist Ferdi. One of the innovators of post-war Dutch sculpture Tajiri has work in the collections of all the major Dutch museums as well as MoMA, NY and The National Museum of Art, Japan. A major sculpture, *Machine No.6*, 1967, was acquired this year by Tate Modern (image alongside key work *Machine No.5*, 1966 exhibited on our stand).

Jaap Wagemaker studied Decorative Arts in Haarlem from the early age of 14 where he also studied Art History, Philosophy and Eastern Religion which became a lifelong interest. Linked to the experimental and political CoBrA group who explored painting in a lyrical-abstract manner, Wagemaker later became an influential figure in the 1950s 'Informal Art' or 'Matter Painting' movement. Any semblance of recognisably figurative forms and elements disappear from the painting and the material, the 'matter', becomes a crucial means of expression for a small number of like-minded European artists who were a great influence on him such as Jean Dubuffet in France, Antonio Tapiès in Spain, and Alberto Burri and the Arte Povera group in Italy.

An enthusiastic traveller and collector of ethnographic art, Wagemaker processes these influences in his own practice, using the elemental and fundamental media of sand, fibre, slate, ashes, bones, metals and wood his paintings characterised by brown and dark colours, reminiscent of aerial views of empty landscapes and dusty villages.

Wagemaker exhibited in major galleries such as Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam which acquired the first of his works in 1956 and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam who held his debut exhibition in 1957 and participated in the exhibition 'The Art of Assemblage' in the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1961.

Together, Tajiri and Wagemaker participated in the 1959 ZERO exhibition organised by Hans Sonnenberg in Rotterdamse Kunstkring alongside avant-garde artists including Piero Manzoni and Jan Schoonhoven. While enjoying an international success with museum exhibitions and participations to documenta for Tajiri, both artists reunited again representing The Netherlands at the 1962 Venice Biennale.

Image: Shinkichi Tajiri, *Warrior no. 5*, 1966, plastic and metal

High-res images available on request

Opening times: Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5.30 pm

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