

October 2, 2023

## Space In-Between: Shizuko Yoshikawa and Josef Müller-Brockmann exhibition

### Outline Prospectus

#### ■ Purpose

This exhibition showcases the activities and work of the husband-and-wife couple of Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–1996), Switzerland’s best-known typographer, and his wife, Japanese artist Shizuko Yoshikawa (1934–2019). The exhibition commemorates the 160th anniversary (in 2024) of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Japan, and is the first large-scale exhibition to feature either Yoshikawa or Müller-Brockmann in Japan.

The couple were both Zurich-based artists and teachers. After Müller-Brockmann’s death, Yoshikawa remained in Zurich, where she worked as a painter until the end of her life. The two met at the 1960 World Design Assembly in Tokyo. Yoshikawa, who had studied English at Tsuda University, was taking part in the assembly as an interpreter. Inspired by this global event, she moved to Zurich to study, and met Müller-Brockmann again there. Having established a bond of trust between them, the couple married, and spent the rest of their lives together while each breaking new ground as artists.

The purpose of this exhibition is to display both Müller-Brockmann’s superb structural designs and Yoshikawa’s works of art, and expand awareness of this unparalleled example of fruitful international collaboration between Switzerland and Japan.

#### ■ Overview

As the first major exhibition of the work of both artists, this exhibition provides an overall retrospective of Müller-Brockmann’s graphic designs and Yoshikawa’s paintings, sculptures, designs, and other works, categorized by decade and style.

The title, “Space In-Between,” carries several different meanings. The first refers to the relationship between Yoshikawa and Müller-Brockmann. The relationship between the two was based on mutual respect between independent individuals. This exhibition is based on the idea that their relationship with each other was not one of clinging dependency, but that each was an individual both as a person and as an artist, and it was this that enabled them to live such rich lives together. The inclusion of the word “space” in the title symbolizes the relationship of independence between the two. From the viewpoint of the distinctiveness of their work, what is important in the grid system achieved in the works of Müller-Brockmann is the blank space on the page, and “space” also refers to this. The style of Yoshikawa’s works moved from two-dimensional to three-dimensional, with spatiality as an important characteristic, and the title is also a reference to the “space” of this spatiality. In a further level of meaning, Yoshikawa and Müller-Brockmann were most active in the 1960s and

1970s, when space exploration was at its peak in the Space Age symbolized by the Apollo 11 moon landing, in an era of expanding hopes and dreams for an uncharted new world not yet visible from Earth. “Space” also refers to the astronomical space representative of this era. The title thus incorporates multifaceted layers of meaning, and the exhibition has been structured with these as key words.

#### ■ Exhibition Details

Because her studio was in Zurich, the majority of Shizuko Yoshikawa’s works are still there, managed by the Shizuko Yoshikawa and Josef Müller-Brockmann (SYJMB) Foundation. The costs of this exhibition are being borne by the SYJMB Foundation, which is due to send over approximately 100 of Yoshikawa’s works (paintings, sculptures, and designs). In FY 2022, the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka purchased approximately 60 of Müller-Brockmann’s works for the museum’s collection from the SYJMB Foundation with funding from the Administrative Agency for Osaka City Museums. With the addition of a further five or so works by Müller-Brockmann from the Suntory Poster Collection deposited in the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka, the exhibition will be held in the 5th floor galleries of the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka (a space of approximately 1700 m<sup>2</sup>). Some other works by Müller-Brockmann, including designs, may also be borrowed from the SYJMB Foundation. Graphic works will be framed and displayed in general-use frames owned by the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka, and drawings shipped from Zurich will also be framed in this museum or displayed in the museum’s own display cases. Biographies of the couple will also be displayed alongside their works, including a focus on the World Design Assembly held in Tokyo in 1960 where they first met. Together with the international situation at the time and the historical background, the relationships between Japan and Switzerland both before and after 1960 will also be brought into relief.

Related events will also be held during the exhibition to encourage a deeper understanding of this project and increase its contemporary significance by addressing highly topical issues. Specifically, famous designers, researchers, and other eminent authorities working in Japan will be invited to attend a discussion meeting to deepen the discussion of the contemporary relevance of Müller-Brockmann’s designs, and there will also be a lecture given by Gabrielle Schaad, a researcher on Shizuko Yoshikawa who is the co-curator of this exhibition, and others by people with connections to Yoshikawa and Müller-Brockmann in both Japan and Switzerland.

#### ■ Event Overview

Venue: 5th floor galleries, Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka

Dates: Saturday, December 21, 2024 to Sunday, March 2, 2025 (62 days)

Anticipated attendance: 20,000 visitors

Admission: General 1,900 yen/High school and university students 1,600 yen/Elementary

and junior high school students 500 yen (anticipated)

Organizers: Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka

Special Collaborators: Shizuko Yoshikawa and Josef Müller-Brockmann Foundation

Support: Embassy of Switzerland in Japan

Planning and Arrangements: Naoko Hirai (Senior curator, Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka)

Co-Curator: Gabrielle Schaad (Research Associate of Zürcher Hochschule der Künste/Zurich University of the Arts.)

Event Collaborator: Miho Takechi (Director of mihoproject)

Advertising materials/exhibition catalog designer: Sebastian Fehr (Swiss designer. Resident in Tokyo)

Exhibition catalog: B5, 128 pages

## ■ Artists' biographies

Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–1996)

Switzerland's best-known graphic designer and typographer. After studying at Zurich University and the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich (Zurich School of Arts and Crafts, now Zürcher Hochschule der Künste/Zurich University of the Arts), in 1936 he opened a design studio in Zurich. He established the Grid System of graphic design using sans-serif typefaces, which was highly influential both domestically and internationally. In 1957 he took up a position teaching graphic design at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich (until 1960). During this period, he also founded the design magazine *Neue Grafik* (1958–68). He attended the World Design Conference in Tokyo in 1960, and returned to Japan in 1961 to give special lectures at Naniwa Junior College (now Osaka University of Arts Junior College) and the Japan Design School. In 1965 he founded a gallery for Constructivists in Rapperswill, an old castle town in the suburbs of Zurich: founded to support "Constructivist and Concrete art," where he held exhibitions, made prints, and engaged in publishing. (It was initially called galerie 58, but was renamed galerie seestrass in 1974 and remained open until 1990.) He was a guest lecturer at Osaka University of Arts, which possesses one of his sculptures, *A Pillar of 7 Parts with Golden Cut* (1974) (in the first-floor entrance hall of the Hideyo Tsukamoto Memorial Hall Arts Information Center). He was married to Japanese painter Shizuko Yoshikawa, who had studied at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm (Ulm School of Design).

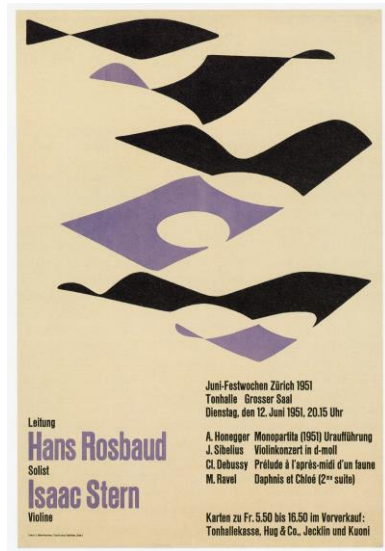
Shizuko Yoshikawa 1934–2019

Born in Omuta, Fukuoka Prefecture, Yoshikawa graduated in English at Tsuda University in Tokyo and went on to study architecture and design at Tokyo University of Education (now the University of Tsukuba). In 1960 she worked for the Organizing Committee of the World Design Conference, and was an interpreter during the conference. In 1961 she moved to Germany to study, majoring in visual communication at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm

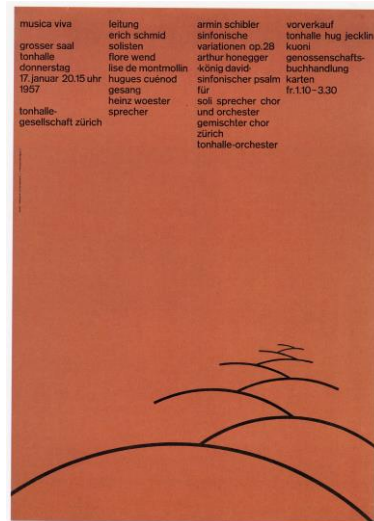
(Ulm School of Design). There she met Josef Müller-Brockmann, whom she married in 1967. While working to extend her husband's design ideas, she was also independently active as a graphic designer and artist, holding a solo exhibition in Tokyo's Nantenshi Gallery in 1978. While based in Zurich for the rest of her life, she continued to be active internationally through both solo exhibitions and teaching, not just in Japan but also in New York, Bonn, and elsewhere. A monograph of her work was published in 2018 to coincide with her solo exhibition in AXIS Space Tokyo. She died in 2019.

## ■ Artwork captions

Josef Müller-Brockmann



01



02



04



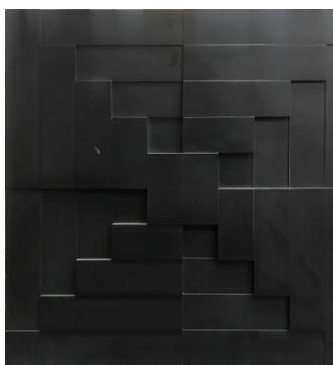
03

## Artwork captions

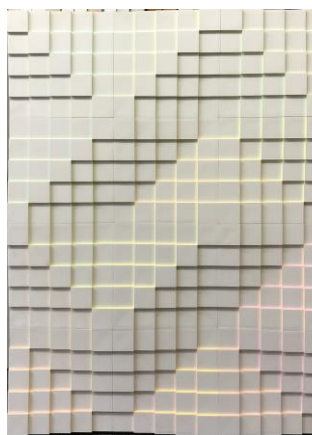
01 Juni-Festwochen concert, Zurich, 1951. Silkscreen on paper, 100 × 70.2 cm. 02 Musica Viva, 1957. Silkscreen on paper, 128.3 × 90.8 cm. 03 Musica Viva, 1961. silkscreen on paper, 128.3 × 90.8 cm. 04 Musica Viva, 1970. Silkscreen on paper, 128.3 × 90.8 cm.

\*All in the collection of the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka. ©Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Switzerland

Shizuko Yoshikawa



05



06



07

Artwork captions

05 Untitled, 1972–1975. Acrylic on wood, 50 × 50 × 3.8 cm. 06 COLOR SHADOW NO. 86, 1979–1980. Lacquer and acrylic on polyester, 100 × 75 × 6 cm. 07 m432 ‘cosmic fabric’ – radiant – 2, 1991–1993. Tempera and acrylic on canvas, diameter 150 cm. \*All copyright and courtesy of the Shizuko Yoshikawa and Josef Müller-Brockmann Foundation.