MURAYAMA, Tomoyoshi (January 18, 1901-March 22, 1977)

Murayama Tomoyoshi was a leading artist in Japanese interwar avant-garde and leftwing theatre movements. After briefly attending Tokyo Imperial University, Murayama moved to Berlin in 1922, where he met Herwarth Walden and participated in “The Great Futurist Exhibition” at Galerie Der Sturm. Upon returning to Japan, Murayama held his first solo exhibition in Tokyo in 1923 and developed a theory of “conscious constructivism” that called for the incorporation of everyday life into aesthetic practice. As founding member and spokesman of the art collective Mavo, Murayama challenged prevailing notions of “pure” art and medium specificity. His mixed media assemblages included references to popular culture and industrial materials. He also produced work in many distinct media, including children’s illustration, commercial design, theatre, and film. Murayama’s theatre affiliations included the Kokoro-za Theatre and the New Cooperative Theatre. He also designed the constructivist-style set for the Tsukiji Little Theatre production of *From Morning Till Midnight* in 1924. An active member of proletarian art associations, Murayama was detained multiple times under the Peace Preservation Law and made to renounce his political affiliations in 1933. In 1940, the New Cooperative Theatre and New Tsukiji Little Theatre were disbanded, and Murayama imprisoned. After his sentence, Murayama spent the end of the war in Korea and Manchuria, later resuming activities in Japan. His late novel *Shinobi no mono* (1960-62) was adapted as a film series, play, and television program. He completed a four-volume autobiography before his death.

Further reading:

Weisenfeld, G. (2002) *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

\_\_\_\_. (1996) ‘Mavo’s Conscious Constructivism: Art, Individualism, and Daily Life in Interwar Japan’, *Art Journal* 55 (3): 64-73.

List of works:

*Portrait of a Jewish Girl* (1922). Oil, paper, wood, collage.

*Sadistic Space* (1921-1922). Oil painting.

*From Morning Till Midnight* set design for Tsukiji Little Theatre, 1924.

*Construction* (1925). Oil, paper, wood, cloth, metal, and leather.

*Research on Constructivism*. Tokyo: Chuo Bijutsusha, 1926.

*Introduction to Proletarian Film*. Tokyo: Zen’ei Shobo, 1929.

*Shinobi no mono*. Tokyo: Rironsha, 1962.

Paratextual material:

These websites feature images of works by Murayama—

<https://www.frieze.com/issue/review/tomoyoshi-murayama/>

http://ashbeesfragments.com/category/tomoyoshi-murayama/

Diane Wei Lewis

Washington University in St. Louis

diane.wei.lewis@gmail.com

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1174, One Brookings Dr., St. Louis, MO 63130-4899