**Murayama, Tomoyoshi (村山知義)**

**(18 January 1901, Tokyo – 22 March 1977, Tokyo)**

As the leading figure of the vanguard group Mavo (1923-25), Tomoyoshi Murayama worked across a number of media, including typography, assemblage and dance. In 1921, he studied philosophy at Tokyo’s Imperial University, but it was his exposure to Expressionism, Dada and Constructivism in Berlin in 1922 that turned him towards the visual arts. Upon his return, this experience attracted him to Japan’s radical avant-gardes, who were discontent with a stuffy art institution that ignored modernity’s political and social problems. In 1923, he formulated his theory of ‘conscious constructivism,’ launched the Mavo journal, and wrote its manifesto. In print media and collage, Murayama’s clique found the means to affront taste, expose hypocrisy, and address everyday reality. Exploring this in three dimensions, *Construction that is Difficult to Name* (1924) incorporated disparate ‘found’ elements from modern industry, fashion and advertising, and developed a strategy of anti-art aimed at dismantling the barriers between art and life. In the ruins of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, they saw the urban landscape itself as a field in which to work, and made several proposals for facades, billboards, towers and monuments. By 1924, Murayama was gravitating toward the theatre, with fantastic stage sets for the experimental Tsukiji Little Theatre, and a style of dance that involved androgynous makeovers pitting eroticism against all restrictive conventions. After leaving Mavo, he embarked on an overtly Marxist literary career, continuing to inflame the authorities with his art.

**Further Reading:**

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