

**exhibition review**

**MARCI KWON**

*Richard Tuttle, Tetsumi Kudo, Pollution is Ecology*  
Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, until October 17th 2009

“For what is now necessary?” Tetsumi Kudo, *Pollution – Cultivation – Ecology*, 1971

For Tetsumi Kudo, this was always the essential question. Born in Osaka, Japan in 1935, Kudo used art to explore the process of moving forward, both acknowledging the past and using its charred bits to construct a radically transformed present. He seized trauma as an opportunity to cultivate what he called a “new ecology,” a human condition based on the decomposition of contemporary culture.

A concise selection of Kudo’s work is on view at *Richard Tuttle, Tetsumi Kudo: Pollution is Ecology*, at Andrea Rosen Gallery until October 17. Tucked into a small gallery behind Rosen’s main space, this jewel box of an exhibition includes five works by Kudo that date from the early to mid 1970s, more than ten years after he moved from Japan to Paris. *Graft ’72* is an excellent example of Kudo’s Paris period. In constructing this piece, Kudo planted technological ephemera and latex body parts into artificial soil, forming an ecosystem that simultaneously flowers and molders. Intertwining such concepts as decay, regeneration, technology, and abjection, Kudo proposes that these seemingly antithetical concepts are all situated on the same continuum.

More subdued are the works on paper from 1976 that comprise the rest of the installation. Kudo rarely worked in two dimensions after the Art Informel-



TETSUMI KUDO, *Graft '72 (Grefe '72)*, 1972,  
Plastic, metal, soil, thermometer, wire, resin, adhesive,  
paint, hair, rope  
35 x 23 x 15 inches (88.9 x 58.4 x 38.1 cm)  
ARG# KT1972-002  
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Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York  
Photo by Chris Burke

inspired paintings he produced immediately after art school. Not surprisingly then, he has turned these flat sheets of paper into three-dimensional objects, embossing them with impotent phalluses and melting flowers. He enhances this effect with a judicious application of day-glo spray paint, rendering the impressions almost holographic.

Richard Tuttle, who conceived this show with Andrea Rosen, has installed several of his own Painted Frame works directly across from Kudo's. At first glance, the juxtaposition between Kudo's baroque sensibility and Tuttle's minimal one (his work was famously excoriated by Hilton Kramer, who wrote in 1975, "less has never been as less than this,") is puzzling. Yet, the combination turns out to be theoretically and formally illuminating. Like Kudo's embossed paper, Tuttle's delicate watercolors project out into real space via a graphite line that runs through the center of each work onto the gallery walls. The artists also share a similar color palate, although in Tuttle's works the pigments are locked into the overall composition, bleeding into each other and gaining vibrancy from his pointed juxtapositions.

In contrast, Kudo's spray-painted colors look like an application of fine dust, their glowing artificiality recalling the radioactivity that haunted his generation. Kudo welcomed and even nurtured this association, seeing the literal explosion of technological modernization as a necessary part of humanity's remaking. In his 1971 manifesto *Pollution – Cultivation – Ecology* Kudo provocatively proposes: "perhaps it must irradiate the instinct – the cells of the genes and of the brain – by irradiating their bodies with radioactivity, to reform their conservative and egoistical heads."



TETSUMI KUDO, *Fossil in Hiroshima*, 1976  
Embossing, spray paint on paper  
25 13/16 x 19 11/16 inches (65.6 x 50 cm)  
Frame: 28 x 22 x 1 1/2 inches (71.1 x 55.9 x 3.8 cm)  
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Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York  
Photo by Tyler Campbell Wriston

This exhibition is a part of a burgeoning rediscovery of Kudo's work, which began nearly a year ago with his first solo museum show in the United States at the Walker Art Center, curated by Doryun Chong. Like the Gutai group, Kudo was until recently a relative unknown in the United States, despite his renown in Japan and Europe. Not only was he included in Allan Kaprow's important book *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (1966), he was also a key figure in the postwar Japanese art scene, where he coined the fractious term "anti-art," to describe his painting performances. His example demonstrates the luminous possibilities of art history's struggle to incorporate artists that chafe against its prescribed narratives.

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25 13/16 x 19 11/16 inches  
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Frame: 28 x 22 x 1 1/2 inches  
(71.1 x 55.9 x 3.8 cm)  
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Courtesy of Andrea Rosen  
Gallery, New York  
Photo by Tyler Campbell Wriston



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